



**Research Article**

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## Sports-media reports as correlates of perceived performance among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis

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**Abstract**

Female athletes have been known to complain about sexism (gender bias and sexist comments by the sports-media) opining that it impacts negatively on their perception of performance. This research investigated the impact of sports-media narratives (positive or negative) on female track and field athletes' perceived performance in the Ibadan metropolis. A

survey research design was used. It was anchored on the Hypodermic Needle Theory and Media Agenda Setting Theory, which stresses audience weakness and malleability in the face of the deliberate media onslaught. Three (3) Female Athletic Clubs were conveniently selected and the 120 female athletes purposively sampled for the study. Author-developed and validated Female Athletes Sports-media Response Questionnaire (FASRQ) with (r=86) was the instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Results indicated positive significant relationship between positive sports-media narrative and perceived performance among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis ( $r = .785^{**}$ ,  $N= 117$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and positive significant relationship between negative sports-media narrative and perceived performance among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis ( $r = .638^{**}$ ,  $N= 117$ ,  $P < .05$ ). It was recommended that sports-media should endeavor to balance their reportage, be neutral and objective, and portray a good image of female track and field athletes in their narratives.

**Keywords** – Perceived performance, Sexism, Female athletes, Sports-media reports, Track and field.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Track and field sport form part of various athletic contests involving running, jumping, and throwing skills. The track and field use typical sporting venues such as a stadium that has an "oval running track" surrounded by grass field where the jumping and throwing events occur (Rosenbaum, 2014; Tracy, 2008). Athletes win running events, which includes "sprints, middle and long-distance" races, and hurdling. The fastest time wins the race while jumping and throwing events; athletes who achieved the greatest distance or height wins. Regular jumping events consist of "long jump, high jump, triple jump, and pole vault." Most times, discus and hammer, shot put, and javelin is the most common throwing events. However, athletes can compete in combined events involving the decathlon and heptathlon.



Individual sporting can occur on track and field involving a single winner, while some are relay races. Although the competitions are gender-based, these sporting events can be categorized by gender, but the event is held in the same venue. The track and field are classified under athletics sports, including cross country running, road running, and race walking (Rosenbaum, 2014; Tracy, 2008; Jean-Paul, 1996). The best performance in any given event is kept at the personal, national, and world levels.

Despite the many advocacies for female athletes to receive the same media coverage level as their male counterparts, evidential studies reveal major discrepancies in attention and exposure against female athletes (Laura, 2015; Leigh & Bonin, 1977). For example, most lists of the greatest athletes of all times tend to be dominated by male athletes. Female athletes who have come of age are discouraged by the frequency of sexist phrases towards them due to biased sports-media. Sports-media in the context of this study refers to sports narratives, sports writing and storytelling, game coverage, feature productions, information, and news programming centered around athletes and athletic performance, while sexism refers to gender bias and sexist comments by the sports-media. Sports-media can be positive or negative. Positive sports-media attracts increased money, sponsorship, education, role modeling, inspiration, and coaching aid. Negative sports-media on the other hand attracts the opposite (Trevor, 2013).

Sports-media have been found to influence the individual athlete's perception of performance. Publicity has been a big and integral part of sports for a long time. The stress of sports-media always watching, criticizing and scrutinizing every move of athletes may affect athletes either positively or negatively depending on the framing of the reportage. Dissection of athletes by the sports-media is constant. Win or lose, the sports-media is always around to pry into their personal lives and research unusual information. Steven (2011) reports that, many athletes have suffered criticism from the sports-media, and that there have been cases of intense, ill and false reports on some athletes by the sports-media. Studies, for example Trevor (2013) indicate that, females are rarely presented in exciting and engaging ways as their male counterparts. According to Sanders (1983) model, one entity that affects one's mental functions is arousal level. If an athlete exhibits a low level of arousal, his or her perception declines. Based on this note, the research investigated the influence of sports-media reportage on perceived performance among female track and field athletes in the Ibadan metropolis.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sports-media reportage on individual or group of athletes usually impacts spectators' opinion, appreciation, love, and support. This can lead to better perception of performance by the athletes especially when such sports-media reports are positive or at least objective; but when it is sexist, subjective and biased, it can affect the confidence of such athletes leading to poor perception and actual poor performance. Female athletes have been known to complain more as victims of sexist sports-media reportage. However, there is a noticeable dearth of domestic empirical or evidential works in this area. This yawning knowledge gap made this investigation imperative. This research was conducted to investigate sports-media as correlates of perceived performance among female track and field athletes in the Ibadan metropolis.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

A survey research design of correlational type was used for the study. The study deployed convenient and purposive sampling techniques in the selection and sampling. The convenient sampling technique were deployed to select the three (3) athletic clubs - Godspeed Athletic Club, Oyo State Sports Council Athletic Team, and Olubadan Athletic Club - in Ibadan metropolis. Simultaneously, a purposive sampling technique was used to sample all the one hundred and twenty (120) female athletes from the clubs at 60, 30, and 30 respondents, respectively. One hundred and twenty (120) self-administered questionnaires were circulated, out of which one hundred and seventeen (117) were completed properly (97%) and returned and used for the analysis.

Author-developed and Validated 17-item questionnaire, Female Athletes Sports-media Response Questionnaire (FASRQ), with ( $r = .86$ ) was the instrument for data collection. The split-half method was used in obtaining the index. The two-sectioned questionnaire (A and B) tapped demographic and variables-related data for testing. The instrument was scored on a matrix format of “Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).” There was no contingency question. The instrument contained scales on the positive and negative effects of sports-media reportage on female track and field athletes. The researcher analyzed data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Both statistics are guided by the “Pearson product-moment correlation Coefficient” (PPMCC). Stated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

### 3.1 Research hypothesis

The research hypothesis tested states that:

**Ho1:** It implies no significant relationship between perceived performance in sports and sports-media reports (positive or negative) among female track and field athletes in the Ibadan metropolis.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Demographic data

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
15-20 years	36	30.8
20-25 years	40	34.2
25-30 years	23	19.7
30-35 years	10	8.5
35+	8	6.8
Total	117	100.0

Table 1 above showed that 36(30.8%) of the respondents are aged 15-20 years, 40(34.2%) are aged 20-25 years, 23(19.7%) are aged 25-30 years, 10(8.5%) are aged 30-35 years, and 8(6.8%) are aged 35 years and above.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	80	68.4
Married	37	31.6
Total	117	100.0

Table 2 above showed that 80(68.4%) of the respondents are single, while 37(31.6%) are married.

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents by Event Type

Event Type	Frequency	Percent
Track Events	94	80.3
Field Events	23	19.7
Total	117	100.0

Table 3 above showed that 94(80.3%) of the respondents engage in Track Events, while 23(19.7%) engage in Field Events.

#### 4.2 Hypothesis

**Ho1a:** It shows no significant relationship between perceived performance in sports and positive sports-media reports among female track and field athletes in the Ibadan metropolis.

**Table 4:** Relationship between perceived performance in sports and positive sports-media coverage among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Perceived performance	5.5385	2.4337	117	.785*	.000	Sig.
Positive effect of sport-media coverage	16.7179	5.8070				

\* Sig. at .05 level.

It is shown in the above table 4 that there is a significant positive relationship between positive sports-media coverage and perceived performance in sports among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis ( $r = .785^{**}$ ,  $N= 117$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected.

**Ho1b:** There is no significant relationship between perceived performance in sports and negative sports-media coverage among female track and field athletes in the Ibadan metropolis.

**Table 5:** Relationship between performance in sports and negative sports-media coverage among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	r	P	Remark
Perceived performance	5.5385	2.4337	117	.638*	.000	Sig.
Negative effect of sport-media coverage	8.0085	3.5245				

\* Sig. at .05 level.



It is shown in the above table 4 that there is a significant positive relationship between negative sports-media coverage and perceived performance in sports among female track and field athletes in Ibadan metropolis ( $r = .638^{**}$ ,  $N = 117$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Ho.1a:** It shows no significant relationship between perceived performance and positive sport-media reportage/coverage. Table 4 shows the  $F$ -value of positive sports-media coverage, which indicates the level of its contribution to the dependent variables (perceived performance). The standard regression weight (Beta) of perceived performance and positive sports-media coverage is .700, which explains that independent and dependent variables have some common relationship. The  $f = 8.050$  is statistically significant at 0.000. Since  $0.000 < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The finding is in tandem with and corroborates the result of Steven (2011), which reported that positive sports-media reportage has a positive effect on athletes' perception of performance. Sports-media reports such as newspapers, magazines, and the rest can make or mar the athletes' preparation and actual performance during competition. Though athletes tend to focus more on themselves than outside influence, research indicates that sports-media reportage influences their self-perception and performance perception.

**Ho.1b:** It proves that no significant relationship exists between perceived performance and negative sport-media reportage. Table 5 showed the  $F$ -value of sports-media reportage, which indicates the level of its contribution to the dependent variable (perceived performance). The standard regression weight (Beta) of perceived performance and negative sports-media coverage is .113, which explains that independent and dependent variables have some common relationship. The  $f = 1.295$  is statistically significant at .198. Since  $.198 > 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. The findings are congruent with the result of Laura (2015), which indicates a relationship between athletes' perceived performance and negative sports-media attention. It was discovered that negative attention like scandals and negative sports-media reports could derail the performance of athletes.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study findings above, it is recommended that sports-media should portray a positive image of female track and field athletes and that awareness should be created by coaches, agents, and media houses on the consequences of sexist sports-media. It is also recommended that government and non-governmental organizations and agencies should organize seminars, workshops, and conferences to enlighten the sports-media on the dangers and consequences of negative and sexist reportage on female track and field athletes. The study also recommends that there should be a cordial relationship between the female track and field athletes and sports-media.

## 7. CONCLUSION

From the result of the findings, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between perceived performance and positive sport-media reportage. When good images are portrayed about athletes, they tend to perform well at competition. The study findings proved a significant relationship between perceived performance and negative sport-media reportage. It was empirically discovered that negative sport-media reportage impacts negatively on female athletes and can derail their performance perception.



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