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# Photographic Representation of Women Athletes in the Indian Print Media during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Games: A Study of Select Indian English Daily Newspaper the Hindu

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Received: 20 October 2021

Accepted: 10 January 2022

Published: 10 February 2022

**Abstract:** *Content analysis of 347 photos from the Hindu newspaper was conducted from 23<sup>rd</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup> August. The aim was to add new knowledge in understanding the sportswomen coverage and the space they are given in the visual form in Indian print media. Previous studies have documented firm growth in the visual representation of female athletes especially in mega-events, as (Lee, 1992) found 26% female photos, 27% (Alexander, 1994), Pringle, Richard, and Sandy Gordon, 1990, 37%, (Pedersen, 2002) 32%, 43% (Vincent, 2004) 39% (Vincent, Inworld, Johnson and Massey, 2003) and 42% (King, 2007). This study shows that only 35.2% coverage was given to women athletes which is not good sign, looking at the previous studies, where a study growth was demonstrated*

**Keywords:** *Photographic Representation, Women Athletes, Indian Print Media, 2020 Tokyo Olympics Games*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sport is not only a source of entertainment but a language and a tool to evade all human biases that people carry within themselves. Sports events like the Olympics bring almost all countries' athletes and audiences to a single platform. Despite the sport having such attributes, there is a definite dearth of competitive research on the print-media coverage of sports, especially in Indian print media. With "243 million interest users, over 12,000 newspapers titles, a growing print market, close to 400 million TV viewers and 237 radio stations that reach over a billion people, India boasts of the world's largest media industry," [bbc.com](http://bbc.com),2015. In Tokyo 2020-2021 the number of athletes who participated in the Event was "11,656 athletes in 339 sports events with 33 sports and 50 disciplines," (2020 Summer Olympics - Wikipedia, 2021).

The number of sportsman and sportswomen athletes who were competing at the Tokyo Olympics 2020, by gender were, "women athletes 5,498 compared to men athletes 5,982, having the lowest gender gap ever in terms of participation in any of the previous hosted Olympics games," (Japan: number of athletes competing at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics by gender 2021 |



Statista, 2021). Despite such huge participation of women athletes in the event, the photographic representation of women athletes is discriminatory focusing on men athletes more. Comparing the space provided to women athletes at the top half the scanty of women's athletes is visible. Even when India has produced global women sports stars like Lovlina, P.V.Sindhu, and more in the form of women's hockey team who are continuously proving their astounding athleticism.

### **Gender Analyzation**

The representation of women athletes in the newspaper has continuously demonstrated, the discrepancy in the coverage of women and man athletes has been visible particularly during Olympic Games as pointed out by Vincent et al, that more focus stays on women attributes than the game they play, like more coverage is given to 'swimming, gymnastics, diving, and tennis women sports athletes,' Vincent el ai, 2003, compared to weightlifting, rugby, and boxing. This study investigates whether the framing of women athletes in Indian print media has changed or not with much focus on the framing of photographs.

### **Framing Of Photographs and Gender Difference**

With the growing popularity of sports, the print media industry has doubled its focus on sports coverage. Photographs are powerful means of delivering a message, not that text does not have the same influence, but it does cost time which photograph does not. The space covered by photographs the location of those photographs and their positioning, types, and color of clicks, the angles used while taking the photograph, and the Game they depict are all ways that can depict sexual differences.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The content analysis was done on the 'The Hindu' a daily English newspaper of India. According to Bryman, "an analysis of document and text that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories systematic and reliable," 2008, the social research method. This content analysis method has a much better transparency rate compared to other research methods, as data collected can be re-checked at any time by accessing the same document. This method is widely used by researchers to analyse print media coverage be it sports or any other beat. Scholars apply this method to analyse articles, headlines of the newspapers, Magazines during mega sports events as well as other day-to-day news reporting. The Hindu newspaper was selected because it was the second-largest English circulated national daily of the country with 1,415,792 during July-December 2019 as per the Audit Bureau of Circulation 2019. The Hindu is generally regarded as the most influential dailies, which was established in 1878 first as a weekly and then became daily in 1889. The Hindu enjoys mass high circulation and eighth position in most trusted news source among all media outlets as per Reuters survey 2021. Compared to other dailies it was the second most circulated newspaper in the second half of the year 2019 (see table 1)

Table 1 Indian circulation figures of daily newspapers in 2019 July-December

Newspaper	Circulation Jul-Dec, 2019
A. The Times of India	2,880,144
B. The Hindu	1,415,792
C. Hindustan Times	1,072,966



D. The Economic Times	359,142
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Source: Audit bureau, 2021.

Apart from “being serious” and accountable it is moderate in style in reflecting political views, class, and also best in terms of language, The newspaper was collected throughout the Tokyo Olympics 2020-2021 games (from 23<sup>rd</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup> August). As reflected in the above text, previous studies were examined on the photographic examination in the same field, and building upon that comprehensive data was collected from the News Paper ‘The Hindu’, including total no of pages, no of pages for the sports section. Based on that data, the identity of photos was set on. Three probabilities were taken: (A) photographs containing only women athletes. (B) Photographs containing only men athletes. (C) Photographs containing both men and women sports athletes. The location and position of all these photographs were examined, and again three probabilities were taken up. (A) Frontpage photos (B) photos on sports section (C) photos on the back page of Newspaper. Further photos were analyzed based on competing photos and non-competing photos. In addition to that Camera, angles were analyzed, and three probabilities existed, straight angle, high angle, and low angle. Straight angle reflects the impartial view and credibility of the subject, low angle implies that the subject is in a powerful position. High angle highlights the overall position of subject both, subservient and powerful positions. Further, the photographs were categorized based on gender, this time two probabilities were identified, the type of sports they play, individual sports or team sports, and whether their portrayal was gender appropriate. Sex typology of sports stated by Matteo’s that certain disciplines are promoted as ‘suitable’ for women athletes and men athletes. Like, sports that require strength, aggression, and speed such as weightlifting, boxing, and rugby are regarded as male-appropriate games. Similarly, sports that display elegance and poise, like gymnastics, horse-riding, and swimming are branded as female appropriate. Each photograph was analyzed based on identified probability and their findings are reported in the result section in the form of tables and graphs demonstrated in the result section which follows.

### 3. RESULTS

Identity of photos and their frequency from 23<sup>rd</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup> August, The Hindu published a total of 347 sports photographs on its front, sports, and back page. Out of these 347, photos, 200 were of man athletes only, which equates to 57.7% of all photos printed during the research period. There were 122 women-only photos, constituting 35.2% of all sports photos published and substantially fewer 25, women and man photos were printed 7.2% of the total, (see figure 1)

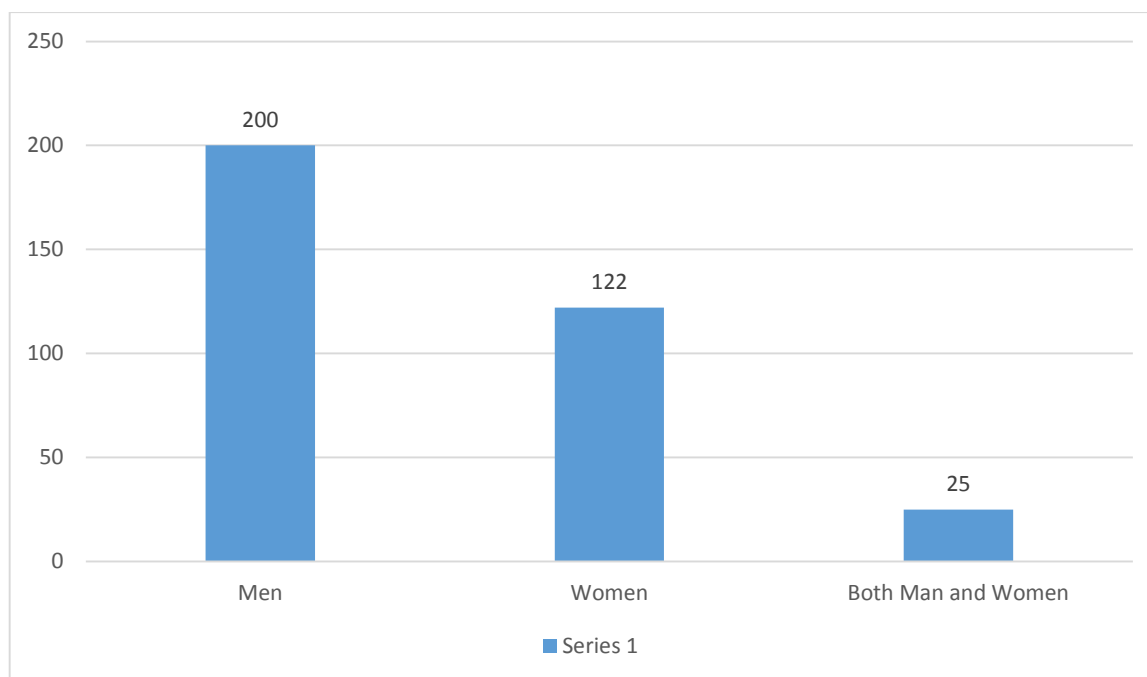


Figure 1. The Total number of photos by gender.

**Location of Photos Gender-Wise.**

The photographs were analyzed by the location they hold on the newspaper, with three probabilities considered, front page, sports, and back page. Subsequently, there were 17 men, 9 women, and 1 man and woman, photos were published on its front page. On its sports page, 107 men, 78 women, and 17 men and women athletes’ photos were printed, among 347 photos only 27 photos found a place on the front page in comparison to 202 photographs demonstrated on the sports page and 123 photos on the back page respectively. (See table 3).

Table 2. Location of photographs gender wise

Gender	Front Page of News Paper	Sports Page	Back Page of News Paper
Men	17	107	80
Women	9	78	36
Men and Women	1	17	7

**Photos Representing Gender in Terms of Team Sport and Individual Sport.**

In terms of sports gender, reflecting team sports, 129 men athletes constituting 37.2%, women athletes’ 32.2%, man and women constituting 4.6% respectively. In terms of team sports, 68 men were representing individual sports, constituting 19.5%, women representing individual sports 13 constituting 4%, and men and women 9 constituting 2.5% respectively. There were far more team sports photos than the individual sports and a clear bias towards women individual sports coverage compared to male team sports and male individual sports constituting only 4% of the photographic representation (see table 3).



Table 3. Sports type they represent by gender

Team vs individual	total	%
Man team	129	37.2
women team	112	32.2
Man and women Team	16	4.6
Man individual	68	19.5
women Individual	13	4
Man and women individual	9	2.5

### Framing Of Photos by Gender

The demonstration of photos by gender was then subject to an analysis by considering their space on different pages of the newspaper, on the upper half 'The Hindu' published 106 photos of man athletes 30.5%, 77 photos of women 22.7%, 13 men and women photos 4.1% respectively

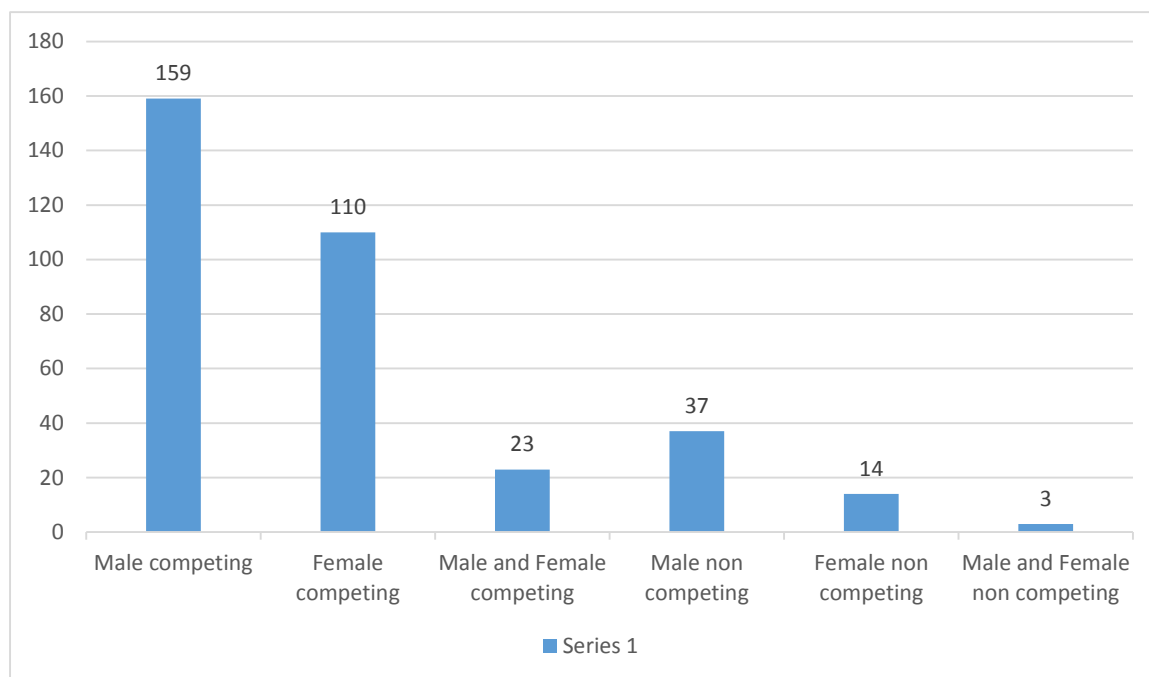
Comparing the same with the lower half of the front, sports, and back page of the newspaper, there were 93 photos 27% men only and 45 12% women only, and 13 photos of both men and women (3.7%).

Table 4. Photo positioning by gender

Position by gender	total	%
Men –upper half	106	30.5
women-upper half	77	22.7
Men and Women –upper half	13	4,1
Men-lower half	93	27
Women-lower half	45	12
Man and Women lower half	13	3.7

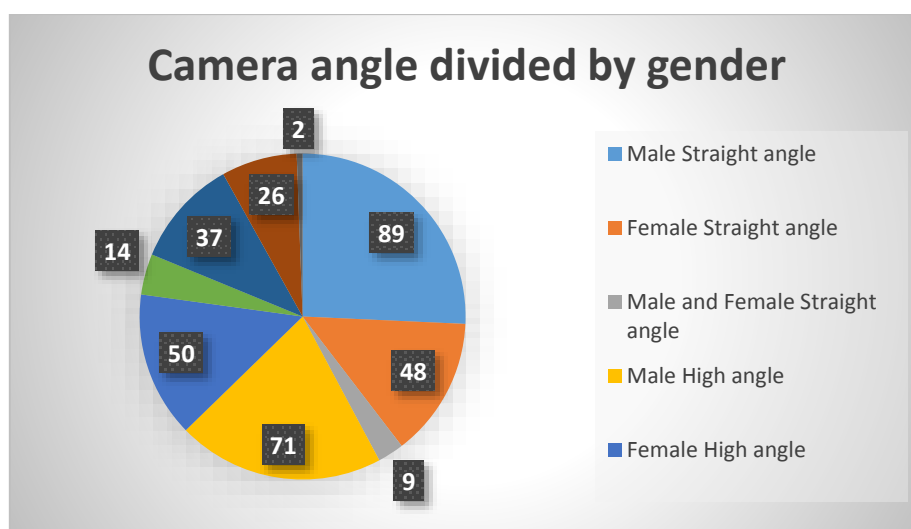
### Competing and Non-Competing Photos by Gender

To analyze photos based on of competing and non-competing, by gender Man competing photos were categorized as 159 men only competing, 110 women only competing, man and women photos comprised 23 competing, in comparison to 37 man non competing, 14 women non competing, 3 man and women non-competing photo, Were published by the newspaper The Hindu, (See figure 2).



**Camera Angle Used While Taking Photographs,**

Camera angles are power full way of making the subject look powerful or extremely incompetent, to study camera angles by gender, three probabilities were looked at, straight angle, low angle, and high angle, subsequently data were analyzed as per the three probabilities, 89 constituting (25.6%) photos of man athletes were shot with straight angle, 48 women only photos (13.8%) and 9 man and women photos (2.5%) were clicked using straight angle. With high angle 71 man photos (20.5%), 50 women photos (14.5%), 14 man and women photos (4.1%). Similarly, The Hindu published 37 man photos (10.6%), 26 women photos (7.5%), man and women 2 photos (0.5%) which were shot using low angle.



**4. DISCUSSION**





Numbers and identity of photos Discussion number and identity of photos published by the Hindu Newspaper, The photographic representation of sports athletes were examined during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games, A comprehensive difference was noted in the amount of space that was given to Women athletes compared to sportsman during the research time. Despite it being the most gender-equal sports event where women and mixed events outnumber the man for the first time in history it still could not make up for the gender bias that exists in the print media toward's women sports coverage. Findings indicate that an excessive amount of visual space was awarded to man only athletes, throughout the event, 35.2% photos of women-only athletes were published by the Hindu, in comparison to 57.7% man only athletes, this improper representation sports the idea that women sports do not hold same proximity, or equal attention compared to man's sports women's sport is considered less interesting or exciting. Given that, this edition of the Olympics had the lowest gap in terms of women and men athlete's participation still women athletes found themselves on the second line compared to men in photographic representation in the Hindu newspaper. 'The number of athletes competing at the Tokyo Olympics 2020 by gender was, women athletes 5,498 compared to men athletes 5,982,' (Japan: number of athletes competing at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics by gender 2021 | Statista, 2021) see table 5

Table 5. The number of athletes, events represented by gender at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

	Total	Women mixed/%	and Men
Number of events	339	174	165
Athletes who participated	11,656	5,498/ 47.2	5,982 / 51.3

Source; (Summer Olympics: number of events by gender 1896-2020 | Statista, 2021)

Women's sport indicates even less representativeness in the visual form, published by The Hindu during the event, meaning the paper published less no of women athlete photos than the number of sportswomen participating in Olympics 2020 compared to man athletes.

### Location of Photos

The display of photos by their location shares an in-depth detail regarding the coverage of Olympics 2020 by 'The Hindu' in terms of gender. The Hindu published 27 photographs on the front page, which equates to one photo per day during the event. Throughout the event, The Hindu printed its normal sports section daily along with the Olympic supplement special. Out of the total 27 photographs that were published on the front page among them 16 were printed on the Ear section (right top corner) of the newspaper, and only 11 were given space on upper half of the news section on the front page, surprisingly not even a single photo was published on the front page bottom half, this shows the non-serious attitude of The Hindu Newspaper towards the promotion of Olympics and sports in general. The biased attitude of The Hindu was also visible as among the 27 front-page photos only 4 photos (14.8%) were given space in the Ear section, and only 5 photos (18.5%) were published on the FrontPage news section, on the upper half of the newspaper, compared to the man athletes 12 photos (44%) space on the Ear section of the newspaper, and 5 photos (18.5%) on the upper half of news section were published. In the sports



section of The Hindu newspaper, it published 107 men photos out of the 202 (53%), 78 women photos (38.7%), and only 8.3 men and woman photos (8.5%) were published on the sports page clearly showing male dominance, and treating women as second class sports athletes. This equates to massive gender discrimination towards women shown in Table 2 location of photos by gender. Out of the 123 photos that were published on the back page of the newspaper, 80 were male photos (65.1%), 36 women photos (29.2%), and 7 man and women photos (5.9%), considering the importance of back page sports news coverage, the male photos were almost twice of the women photos that were published during Olympics 2020.

### **Positioning of the Photographs by gender**

The position of photos by gender In previous research, have not only documented the proof of male athletes dominating the photo section of sports print coverage, but their positioning of photos was also better in terms of page prominence, with male athletes primarily occupying the top half both on the front page, sports page back page. The finding of this study does not indicate any progressive approach of media towards woman athletes, as 106 male photos (30.5%) were published on the top half of the newspaper by The Hindu out of total 347, 77 were of women athletes constituting only 22% of the representation in the form of visuals, 13 both man and women photos (3.7%), suggesting that the gap has narrowed compared to the location of the photos by gender but still possesses gender inequality towards woman sports. This variation is a positive indication of women's sports coverage. On the lower half of the newspaper, there were 93 man photos 27%, 45 women photos 12%

### **Camera angles**

The study found that (25.6%) photos of man athletes were shot with straight Angle, women-only photos (13.8%), and 2.5% of man and women photos suggesting almost double the number of men neutral photos compared to women athletes, using straight angle. With high angle 20.5% man photos, 14.5, women photos, 4.1% man and women photos respectively. Further, The Hindu published 10.6%, man photos, 7.5%, women photos man and women 0.5% photos which were shot using low angle. The above findings are strong evidence, and suggest that sportswomen were treated, unfairly, on the parameter of photo representation in comparison with sportsmen during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

### **Competing and non-competing**

Vincent et al, divided sportswomen and sportsman photos as “competing and non-competing, active and posed”, 2007, finding a minute difference in the representation of women athletes, in three categories, but in the category of pose photos, of which focus is on their head and shoulder only, Vincent et al study found, “8.4% man and 4.3% women only pose photos thus rejecting the results of previous studies which depicted a higher number of women athlete pose photos than man. This study found similar results as the percentage of non-competing man only photos were higher than the women non competing photos, the results demonstrate that 45.5% man only competing, 31.7% women only competing photos, man and women comprised 6.6% competing, in comparison to 10.6% man non competing, 4.1% women non competing, and 8% man and women non-competing photo, were published by the Hindu. Thus rejecting the idea that women find more space in the pose photo category.





## 5. CONCLUSION

This study suggests that there has been no significant improvement while covering the sportswomen athletes. These findings must not be ignored, as it does tell us a story about what media considers to be important and what it does not. Taking the rising number of women athletes into account media can make women athletes look invisible but at the same time cannot distort their social status as second class athletes. A major limitation of this study is that data was collected from a single newspaper The Hindu, thus provides an assessment of one subset of Indian print media to the omission of others. One important finding from the study for feminism and women's sports is that the level of coverage during mega-events has been maintained but not increased, stating that sportswomen coverage needs to be in the gender equality campaigns.

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