

The Coverage of Female Athletes at London 2012 Summer Games in Turkish Sports Media

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ABSTRACT Female athletes and women's sports were disregarded or ignored by the media in many countries including Turkey. The purpose of this research was to analyze the gender role portrayals of female athletes in the Turkish news media. A content analysis was conducted in 1001 articles covering the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games by two Turkish sports newspapers, *Fanatik* and *Fotomaç*. Findings revealed that Turkish sports media favoured male athletes in general, in terms of number of articles devoted to them. Female athletes were depicted as mostly participating in individual sports, both in the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (71.6% and 95.2%, respectively). Athletic achievement was mostly covered in the content of articles (n=575). While athletes participating in the Olympic Games were depicted as active in articles for both genders, athletes participating in the Paralympic Games were depicted as passive.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the media in the development of the globalization of sports cannot be ignored. The media deliver instant information through newspapers, TV and the internet about athletes and sports, especially when there is a special event such as the Summer Olympic Games. Therefore, it is vital to understand the relationship between sports and the media to promote gender equality in society. As Pauline (2014: 5) stated, "Media's improved coverage of sport can help shape men's perceptions of girls in sport and also enhance women's appreciation of their own capabilities." For decades, however, the coverage of female athletes mainly involved the question of underrepresentation as well as the ways in which female athletes were represented (French 2013; Packer et al. 2015; Pradeep 2016). A series of studies in many countries have pointed out the media's underreporting and trivialization of female athletes in many sports events including the Olympic Games (Galily et al. 2011; Jones 2013; Packer et al. 2015; Pradeep 2016) and Paralympic Games (Buisse and Borcharding 2010; Pappous et al. 2011). Studies of the Turkish media have

also revealed similar patterns of disregard for women's sport and female athletes (Aslan and Koca 2007; Ayvazoglu 2015; Bakan 2014; Özsoy 2010).

A vast literature of studies reported that male athletes were more likely to be portrayed as dominant, vigorous, competitive and courageous, thus promoting traditional concepts of masculinity. However, female athletes were more likely to be described as emotional, dependent, family-oriented or beautiful, thus conforming to traditional feminine stereotypes in the media (Galily et al. 2011; Knijnik and Sauza 2011; Petca et al. 2013). The representation of females in the Turkish media is no exception in that sense. Traditional attitudes about gender roles are also present in the Turkish media (Arslan and Koca 2007). Women are depicted as dependent and obedient and framed as family people or homemakers in Turkish culture (Ersoy 2009). Bakan (2014) reported that Turkish newspapers emphasized the gender roles of female athletes' as mothers, grandmothers, wives or sex objects in their content.

Female athletes with disabilities share the same fate as their counterparts in terms of representation in the media. Buisse and Borcharding (2010) analyzed coverage of the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games in 12 print newspapers and reported that male athletes (58%) had more coverage than female athletes (41%) and were featured as competent athletes more than females. Moreover,

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female athletes with disabilities were represented in non-active or passive poses, which reinforces stereotypes and underestimates their athleticism (Trolan 2013). Team sports are considered more masculine since they consist of more masculine characteristics such as endurance, aggressiveness and stamina (Hardin and Greer 2009; Koivula 2001). Individual sports, on the other hand, are perceived as feminine where grace, beauty and aesthetic appeal are favored (Trolan 2013). Female athletes with disabilities are depicted more in individual sports in the media, which does not challenge the stereotypical gender roles (Trolan 2013) and supports the notion that sporting body continues to be constructed around the ideals of physicality, masculinity, and sexuality as DePauw (1997) argued two decades ago.

Galily et al. (2011) suggested that male athletes are more represented with their achievements in today's media than their female counterparts. Female athletes, on the other hand, get more coverage with their personal lives and appearances, their romantic and other relationships or with their traditional roles as wives and mothers rather than their performances, skills and achievements (Aslan and Koca 2007; Jones 2013). Representing female athletes with their personal lives or appearances, instead of their athletic achievements, gives the implication that female athletes have no achievements that are newsworthy (Jones 2013).

Although there is extensive literature covering female athletes in the Olympic Games (Galily et al. 2011; Özsoy 2010) or the Paralympic Games (Buysse and Borchering 2010; Maika and Danylchuk 2016; Pappous et al. 2011) separately, limited research has analyzed coverage of female athletes both in the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Chang and Crossman 2009; Packer et al. 2015). Unfortunately, there is no known research that analyzed the coverage of female athletes including those with disabilities participating in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Turkish literature. How often female athletes are depicted in the sports media and what is depicted is important in order to promote the athleticism of female athletes in Turkish society. This research offers an indication of status quo of *Fanatik* and *Fotomaç*'s coverage of Turkish female athletes who participated in London 2012 Summer Games.

London 2012 Summer Games and Female Athletes

The media declared the London 2012 Summer Games as "The Year of Women" (total number and percentages of athletes including Turkish athletes competing in London 2012 Summer Games are presented in Table 1). Since the Olympics were first held in 1896, female athletes had come a long way in London 2012. While every participating country sent at least one female athlete to compete in the games, female athletes also competed in every sport in the London 2012 Summer Games including boxing, which is considered a men's sport (Donnelly and Donnelly 2012). It was also the first time for some countries to have female athletes to compete in the Olympics. Saudi Arabia, for example, sent two female athletes to the competition for the first time in their Olympic history. Moreover, the London 2012 Summer Games had a higher percentage of female athletes than any previous Summer Olympics (Donnelly and Donnelly 2012).

In their report, Donnelly and Donnelly (2012) argued that although London 2012 was first in many things, there were still major gender inequalities, including the representation of female athletes and women's sports in the media. According to their report, female athletes and women's sports were sexualized and trivialized in the London 2012 Summer Games (Donnelly and Donnelly 2012). The media gave female athletes secondary status compared to their male counterparts, still treated them as "girls" rather than "women" and undermined their skills and athleticism (Kian et al. 2013).

London 2012 Summer Games and Turkey

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games took place shortly after a time when Istanbul was selected as a candidate city for the 2020 Summer Olympics. Istanbul being a candidate city for the 2020 Olympics as a motivation at the time, the Turkish Olympic team put impetus for 2012 London Summer Games and had a higher participation rate in terms of female athletes and athletes with disabilities in the London 2012 Summer Games compared to previous games (the number of Turkish athletes in the London 2012 is presented in Table 1). Berlin 1936 was the first Olympic Games in which Turkey participated with two female athletes (Türkiye Milli Olimpiyat

Table 1: Number and percentages of athletes competing in London 2012 summer games

Gender of Athletes	Number of Turkish athletes in London 2012		Total number of athletes in London 2012	
	Olympics ^a (%)	Paralympics ^b (%)	Olympics ^c (%)	Paralympics ^d (%)
Male	<i>n</i> = 5892 (56%)	<i>n</i> = 2736 (65%)	<i>n</i> = 48 (42%)	<i>n</i> = 46 (69%)
Female	<i>n</i> = 4676 (44%)	<i>n</i> = 1501 (35%)	<i>n</i> = 66 (58%)	<i>n</i> = 21 (31%)
Total	<i>n</i> = 10,568 (100%)	<i>n</i> = 4237 (100%)	<i>n</i> = 114 (100%)	<i>n</i> = 67 (100%)

Source: ^a http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reference_documents_factsheets/London_2012

^b <http://www.paralympic.org/Paralympic-games/London-2012>

^c <http://www.olimpiyatkomitesi.org.tr/olimpikoyunlar.aspx?id=1>

^d <http://www.tmpk.org.tr/?p=poyun&id=15>

Komitesi 2014). The London 2012 Olympic Games, however, was the first Olympic Games in which female athletes outnumbered male athletes in the Turkish team, with 66 female athletes (57.89%) and 48 male athletes (42.11%), a total of 114 athletes (Atik 2012). Besides, out of the five medals Turkey won at the Olympics, three of them belonged to female athletes (Türkiye Milli Olimpiyat Komitesi 2014).

Competing with only one athlete with a disability at the 1992 Barcelona Paralympic Games, after twenty years, London 2012 Paralympic Games were also many firsts for the Turkish Paralympic team. Turkey participated with 67 athletes with disabilities, 21 females (31.34 %) and 46 males (68.66%) in London 2012 (Atik 2012) and won five times more medals in London 2012 than in Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008. For the first time, Turkey competed in ten branches, both individual and team sports, including shooting, track and field, futsal, goal ball, weightlifting, judo, table tennis, archery, wheelchair basketball, and swimming (Özbey 2013; Türkiye Milli Paralimpik Komitesi 2012). This was also the first time for a Turkish female archer, Gizem Girismen, to be selected to serve on the International Paralympic Athletes Council (Özbey 2013). Besides, in the London 2012 Summer Games, Turkish female athletes have shown remarkable performances in 1500 m running and weightlifting (for example, Asli Çakiraptekin won a gold medal in 1500m running at the Olympic Games and Nazmiye Muslu broke the world record in weightlifting at the Paralympic Games).

Although the number of athletes in the Turkish Olympic and Paralympic teams participating in the London 2012 Summer Games is higher from previous games, how often female athletes are

depicted in the sports media and what is depicted is important in order to promote the athleticism of female athletes in the Turkish society. Özsoy (2010), for example, reported that even though the newspapers analyzed did not have gender discrimination in their content, in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the number of photos of female athletes were less than those of male athletes in five newspapers investigated. In that sense, this study is a peek through the coverage of female and male athletes in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games presented in the Turkish print media.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows: (i) to examine the coverage of female and male athletes in the London 2012 Summer Games presented in *Fanatik* and *Fotomaç*, the top two Turkish sports newspapers; (ii) specifically, to investigate gender role portrayals of female athletes in the Turkish news media by addressing the frequency of appearance of male and female athletes quantitatively as well as the ways in which they are portrayed.

Because of the limited number of studies on media coverage of female athletes with or without disabilities participating in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the Turkish media, the following hypothesis guided this study:

H1- Newspaper coverage of male athletes participating in the London 2012 Summer Games will be greater than that of female athletes.

H2- Female athletes will be shown in participating in individual sports, whereas male athletes will be shown as participating in team sports.

H3- Female athletes will be depicted in passive poses more frequently than male athletes in the articles published in both newspapers.

H4- Athletic achievement will be more prominent in articles covering male athletes, whereas personal story will be more prominent in articles covering female athletes in both newspapers.

METHODOLOGY

The Newspapers

Fotomaç and *Fanatik* are the top two popular sports newspapers in Turkey covering sports news and events. *Fotomaç* has a weekly circulation of approximately 201.068 and *Fanatik* has a weekly circulation of approximately 166.099 (<http://www.turkfutbol.com>). However, the real number of readers is difficult to establish precisely since many readers also access papers online. Besides, *Fanatik* itself has extensive sports coverage of athletes with disabilities under its disability sports section. Moreover, both newspapers had a specific section devoted to athletes participating at Olympic and Paralympic Games under the name of London 2012 Summer Games within the period. While the sample is limited to two of the most popular sports newspapers in Turkey, it is believed that this sample would be representative of the total population of Turkish daily sports news since the newspapers account for most of the sports newspaper readers nationwide.

The articles and photos of athletes competing in the London 2012 Summer Games were printed from the beginning date, July 27, 2012, to the ending date August 12, 2012, for the Olympic Games and from August 29, 2012, to September 9, 2012, for the Paralympic Games from the websites of *Fotomaç* (<http://www.fotomac.com.tr>) and *Fanatik* (<http://www.fanatik.com.tr>) day by day. Both newspaper sections specifically focused on the London 2012 Summer Games, and other sections were searched for news on athletes participating in the London 2012 Summer Games. Keywords of *Olympics*, *Paralympics*, *London 2012*, *female athletes*, *athletes with disabilities*, *women and sport* were searched in the newspapers every day during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Only articles that had both photograph and written texts on athletes participating in the London 2012 Summer Games were included in the study. A total of 1001 articles (969 articles on Olympic athletes and 32 articles on Paralympic athletes) consisted the sample of the study.

Coding Procedure and Variables for Content Analysis

Coding Instrument

A coding instrument guided by existing research was used to analyze the representation of female athletes in the print media during the London 2012 Summer Games (refer to Ayvazoglu (2015) for detailed coding instrument). Gender, type of sport, level of activity, and content of articles were the variables coded for the purpose of this study. After identification of 1001 articles on athletes competing in the London 2012 Summer Games, for each article published, gender was coded as (a) male only, and (b) female only. Type of sport was coded as (a) team's sport (that is, basketball, volleyball); (b) individual sport (that is, archery, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, weightlifting); level of activity was coded as (a) active (that is, athlete is in motion and clearly doing something competitive), (b) passive (that is, athlete is kissing the medal and posing); content of the articles was coded as (a) athletic achievement (that is, "Nazmiye Muslu broke the Paralympic and world records to reach the gold medal in weightlifting"); (b) athletic failure (that is, "Sibel Simsek could not succeed in her two attempts to lift 105 kilos"), (c) personal story (that is, "athlete from Tunisia was the first female athlete competing with hijab in the Olympics"); and (d) story on the event (that is, "tomorrow Turkish volleyball team will compete against Serbian team").

Reliability

Two coders independently coded the articles selected, both in the pilot and the actual data, in order to establish inter-coder reliability (Neuendorf 2011). The author acted as the first coder. In order to ensure the reliability of the coding procedure, a subsample of 150 articles, which were retrieved from another sports newspaper, were coded as pilot reliability test. Ten to twenty percent of the full sample was suggested as a subset by Neuendorf (2011). The second reliability check was performed with actual data. The category with the highest reliability was gender ($k = 1.00$) and the lowest reliability was for the content of the articles ($k = .93$; Cohen 1960). Inter-coder reliability for all variables in actual data was equal or higher than .93 for each variable analyzed, demonstrating that it was satisfactory to permit a subsequent interpretive analysis (Vi-

era and Garrett 2005). A chi-square statistical analysis was conducted to investigate whether variables varied by gender represented in the articles. Effect sizes were also reported as Cramer's V statistics.

RESULTS

Fanatik and *Fotomaç* published a total of 1001 articles during the London 2012 Summer Games. Of those, only 32 articles were related to athletes with disabilities. While a total of 551 (55%) articles were about male athletes, 450 (45%) articles were about female athletes competing both in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Even though the number of articles about female athletes ($n=429$, 44.3%) participating in the London 2012 Olympic Games is less than the number of articles on male athletes

($n=540$, 55.7%), the newspapers published more articles on female athletes with disabilities ($n=21$, 65.6%) than their male counterparts ($n= 11$, 34.4%). $\chi^2 (1, N=1001) = 5.71$; $p=.016$, Cramer's $V=.08$ (Table 2).

With respect to the type of sport, analysis of articles about the London 2012 Olympic Games published both in *Fanatik* and *Fotomaç* showed more frequent coverage of individual sports for both genders. $\div 2 (1, N=969) = 12.79$; $p=.000$, Cramer's $V=.12$. However, articles that covered the Paralympic Games depicted male athletes with disabilities participating in team sports (63.6%) more than individual sports (36.4%) than female athletes ($\chi^2 (1, N=32) = 13.34$; $p=.000$, Cramer's $V=.65$) (Table 3).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that female athletes would be shown in passive poses more frequently than male athletes. Articles focusing on fe-

Table 2: Number of articles on London 2012 summer games in Turkish sport newspapers

Gender	Olympic games (%)	Paralympic games (%)	Total (%)
Male	$n = 540$ (55.7%)	$n = 11$ (34.4%)	$n = 551$ (55%)
Female	$n = 429$ (44.3%)	$n = 21$ (65.6%)	$n = 450$ (45%)
Total	$n = 969$ (100%)	$n = 32$ (100%)	$n = 1,001$ (100%)

Note: Search was conducted daily through the respective papers' websites from July 27th, 2012 to August 12th, 2012 for Olympic Games and from August 29th, 2012 to September 9th, 2012 for Paralympic Games. ($\div 2 (1, N=1001) = 5.71$, $p = .016$, Cramer's $V = .08$)

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of variables in articles covering London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

Variable	Olympics (N=969)			Paralympics (N=32)		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
Type of Sport ^a						
Individual	$n= 439$ (81.3%)	$n= 307$ (71.6%)	$N= 746$	$n=4$ (36.4%)	$n= 20$ (95.2%)	$N= 24$
Team	$n= 101$ (18.7%)	$n= 122$ (28.4%)	$N= 223$	$n=7$ (63.6%)	$n= 1$ (0.48%)	$N= 8$
Level of Activity ^b						
Active	$n= 376$ (69.6%)	$n= 283$ (66%)	$N= 659$	$n=4$ (36.4%)	$n= 3$ (14.3%)	$N= 7$
Passive	$n= 164$ (30.4%)	$n= 146$ (34%)	$N= 310$	$n=7$ (63.6%)	$n=18$ (85.7%)	$N= 25$
Content of Articles ^c						
Athletic achievement	$n= 300$ (55.6%)	$n= 254$ (59.2%)	$N= 554$	$n=6$ (54.5%)	$n= 15$ (71.4%)	$N= 21$
Athletic failure	$n= 130$ (24.1%)	$n= 79$ (18.4%)	$N= 209$	$n=2$ (18.2%)	$n= 1$ (4.8%)	$N= 3$
Personal story	$n= 57$ (10.5%)	$n= 49$ (11.4%)	$N= 106$	-	-	$N= 0$
Story on the event	$n= 53$ (9.8%)	$n= 47$ (11%)	$N= 100$	$n=3$ (27.3%)	$n= 5$ (23.8%)	$N= 8$
Total	$n=540$ (100%)	$n=429$ (100%)		$n=11$ (100%)	$n= 21$ (100%)	

Note: Olympics: ^a $\chi^2 (1, N=969) = 12.79$, $p=.000$, Cramer's $V = .12$; ^b $\chi^2 (1, N=969) = 1.27$, $p=.2593$, Cramer's $V=.04$; ^c $\chi^2 (3, N=969) = 4.57$, $p=.2058$, Cramer's $V = .07$

Paralympics: ^a $\chi^2 (1, N=32) = 13.34$, $p=.000$, Cramer's $V = .65$; ^b $\chi^2 (1, N=32) = 2.06$, $p=.1513$, Cramer's $V=.25$; ^c $\chi^2 (3, N=32) = 1.74$, $p=.6292$, Cramer's $V = .23$

male athletes participating in the London 2012 Olympic Games, however, contradicted this hypothesis. While majority of the articles depicted athletes competing in the London 2012 Olympic Games as active for both genders (69.6% of male athletes and 66% of female athletes), (χ^2 (1, N=969) = 1.27; p =.2593, Cramer's V =.04.), athletes with disabilities competing in the London 2012 Paralympic Games were depicted as passive for both genders (63.6% of male athletes and 85.7% of female athletes), (χ^2 (1, N=32) = 2.06; p =.1513, Cramer's V =.25). Moreover, female athletes with disabilities were depicted as passive more than their male counterparts in articles devoted to them in both newspapers. The comparisons were not statistically different, however.

Unexpectedly, the majority of the articles almost exclusively covered stories on athletic achievement of athletes in their content in both genders in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; χ^2 (3, N=969) = 4.57; p =.2058, Cramer's V =.07 (Olympic Games), and χ^2 (3, N=32) = 1.74; p =.6292, Cramer's V =.23 (Paralympic Games). The comparisons were not statistically different, however. Articles focusing on female athletes, both in the Olympic and Paralympic Games did not focus on personal story as hypothesized; on the contrary, athletic achievement was the main focus of articles covered in London 2012 (59.2% and 71.4%, respectively).

DISCUSSION

This paper offers an introductory look at sport, gender and disability in the Turkish print media by checking the ongoing messages sent to the Turkish society about female athletes including those with disabilities. As such, it is a starting point for further research on the framing of female athletes through the print media.

Overall, consistent with the findings of earlier studies done in Turkey (Aslan and Koca 2007; Ayvazoglu 2015; Bakan 2014; Özsoy 2010), as well as other countries (Buyse and Borchering 2010; Galily et al. 2011; Godoy-Pressland and Griggs 2014; Petca 2013), *Fanatik* and *Fotomac* favored male athletes in terms of the number of articles devoted to them in the London 2012 Summer Games in this research. Although female athletes participating in the Olympic Games outnumbered male athletes, the male athletes had higher coverage in the Turkish print media than the female athletes (55% and 45%, respectively). How-

ever, similar to Chang and Crossman's (2009) findings, female athletes with disabilities had more coverage than their male counterparts in the London 2012 Paralympic Games (65.6 % and 34.4%, respectively). The results indicated that, despite the lower number of coverage of athletes with disabilities in general, both sports newspapers favored female athletes with disabilities. In the London 2012 Paralympic Games, seven out of ten medals were won by female athletes. Therefore, the greater number of medals won by female athletes with disabilities in the Paralympic Games may partly explain the higher coverage of those athletes in the two Turkish sports newspaper or vice versa. Consistent with the majority of the literature, however (Buyse and Borchering 2010; Maika and Danylchuk 2016; Pappous et al. 2011), athletes with disabilities, in general, were underrepresented in the two sports newspapers *Fanatik* and *Fotomac* than athletes without disabilities. In spite of the London 2012 Summer Games representing "a major boost for gender equality", as Donnelly and Donnelly (2012: 7) wrote in their report as the first sentence, the Turkish print media did not boost gender equality in terms of number of articles devoted to female athletes, both in *Fanatik* and *Fotomac*.

Godoy-Pressland and Griggs (2014) reported that the media favored men's team sports more than women's team sports in the British print media during the London 2012 Olympic Games, which is also consistent with the findings of the current research. However, when considered respectively, in terms of the type of sport, articles covering the Olympic Games had more coverage of individual sports regardless of gender (81.3% of male athletes; n =439 and 71.6% of female athletes; n = 307). Articles covering Paralympic Games had more coverage of female athletes (95.2%; n =21) participating in individual sports than their male counterparts (36.4%; n =11), which was consistent with Godoy-Pressland and Griggs's (2014) study. However, one point needs attention. Although female athletes with disabilities were depicted in individual sports more than male athletes with disabilities, suggesting the notion of femininity, the type of sports that the female athletes participated in were sports recognized as masculine such as weightlifting and judo, which involve strength, contact, or lift of heavy objects (Koivula 2001). Nazmiye Muslu, national weightlifter and a gold medalist, for example, was entitled to more recognition than other

female athletes with disabilities in the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Further research that analyses the type of individual sports is needed to determine whether those individual sports that male and female athletes participate in are “gender appropriate”, both in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In general, male athletes participating in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games were more often framed as active than female athletes in Turkish newspapers, which was consistent with previous researches (Godoy-Pressland and Griggs 2014; Jones 2013). However, athletes with disabilities were depicted as passive than athletes without disabilities, regardless of gender. Asli Çakıralptekin, an Olympic 1500m runner, for example, was covered as active in many articles devoted to her. Most female athletes with disabilities, on the other hand (85.7%; n=18), were depicted as kissing the medal or posing for the camera in the articles covered by *Fanatik* and *Fotomaç*. By covering Olympic athletes as active and Paralympic athletes as passive, as Buysse and Borchering (2010) argued, regardless of gender, the media undermines the athletic ability of athletes with disabilities, and it is more worrisome for female athletes with disabilities in that sense.

The media’s coverage of athletic performance impacts the perspectives of the audiences towards them (Daniels 2012). Therefore, how female athletes are framed in the media, whether with their athletic achievement or personal story, leads society to associate that frame towards female athletes in society in general. According to Yaprak and Amman (2009), women were represented by their physical appearances or personal lives in the Turkish sports media and thus their achievements were ignored. The findings of this research, however, were contradictory to Yaprak and Amman’s (2009) study. Although it was not statistically significant, athletic achievements were prominent in the contents of articles, both in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for both genders, which was consistent with the findings of Jones (2013). While athletic achievement was covered in 59.2 percent of articles related to female Olympic athletes, 71.4 percent of articles devoted their coverage to the athletic achievement of the female athletes that participated in the Paralympics. This again may bring to the fore the issue of medals won by female athletes during the London 2012 Summer

Games. Whatever the reason behind it, the coverage of the athletic achievement of female athletes, including those with disabilities, can lead to many outcomes, such as the recognition of and respect for women’s sport, increase in the number of women participating in sports and funding for women sports, and acceptance of women in all areas of society in Turkey. Representation of successful female athletes as role models, including those with disabilities competing in such international sports competitions as the Olympics and Paralympics, can also be inspiring for other women to achieve their goals. Ultimately, it can challenge the traditional hegemonic mindset in sports in Turkish society in general. The following statement is an example of the athletic achievement of a female athlete with a disability: “First day of Paralympics, Nazmiye Muslu made a history. ... Muslu lifted 109 kilos and broke both Paralympics and the world record.” (*Fotomaç*, September 8, 2012). In short, articles depicting female athletes’ achievement, as in the example of Nazmiye Muslu, would foster the credibility of female athletic performance in Turkish society and clearly send a message to the society that female athletes are as much newsworthy as their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

In summation, this paper provided a snapshot of the representation of female athletes, including those with disabilities, in the Turkish sports media during the London 2012 Summer Games. To have more Turkish female athletes, including female athletes with disabilities, participating in the London 2012 Games is a great start for changing the way society views women’s sport. In order to ensure that this attention does not get diverted after the Games, more coverage empowering female athletes and women sports in the Turkish media is needed. Even though London 2012 was the “year of women” as the media declared, apparently, male athletes and their sports were the story of many articles in the Turkish newspapers *Fanatik* and *Fotomaç*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional research needs to be conducted in several areas to analyze different media types such as TV and the internet. Also needed is more research on photographic coverage such as page

location and size of photograph, in-depth examination of the content of articles as athleticism, and investigation of type of sports that female athletes participate in; whether the sport is gender appropriate, masculine or feminine, will give a more comprehensive and complete idea about the representation of female athletes in the Turkish sports media. Since sports media including newspapers are mostly followed by men in Turkish society, research covering all types of newspapers (not only sports newspapers) will also provide a broader perspective and complete this picture.

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