

# **A Tale of Iranian Women Athletes: Elite Female Athletes Share Their Perspectives of Barriers and Consequences of Media Coverage**

**Mehrdad Ahmadi<sup>1</sup>, Yasamin Molana<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of management, PNU University, Iran

<sup>2</sup> PhD student, Department of Humanism, Ferrara University, Italy

## **Abstract**

Although historically female athletes have received minimal recognition in the male-dominated world of sports, many women have expanded their abilities in diverse sports. Also, pioneer females have paved the way for other women in their field who have succeeded in capturing perceptions of women's physical fitness to change. However, these achievements could not have impacted the media coverage of professional women's sports in Iran and it is still not appropriate. Therefore, this study utilizes content analysis to clarify the experiences of Iranian athletic females regarding poor media coverage and its influences on different aspects of female sports. Using this strategy, the researchers can systematically extract subscription funds from a large amount of data and theorize their field of research based on it. The main purpose of this strategy is to explain a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon and then classifying the relationships of these elements within the context and process of that phenomenon. In selecting the statistical sample for semi-structured (open) interviews, we tried to use women sports elites in three groups (elite athletes, coaches, and Vice Presidents of the Federation) with more than 10 years of experience including 22 participants. To sample the interviews, the purposive sampling method and snowball sampling technique were used. The steps proposed by Graneheim & Lundman (2004) were utilized for the data analysis process. Interviews were recorded, and transcribed and the transcribed files were reread to gain a general and accurate understanding. All interview information was considered as a unit of analysis. An extended body of this study has demonstrated that women's sport continues to be greatly underrepresented in the media due to cultural barriers, socialization, poor sports marketing, and lack of strategy for producing a program in mass media for women's sports. Consequently, these factors intensify the cultural fostering against women, as well as disrupt sports management. In contrast, the results reveal that social media could provide a platform for the much-needed promotion of women's sports, additionally increasing the recognition of these remarkable sports achievers.

**Keywords:** barriers, gender, Iran, media coverage, women's sports