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9. Public Perception of Memes: A Study based on the Depiction of Women in athletics

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Abstract

Memes have a special way of breaking things down into simple, relatable ideas. Gender bias is something we see everywhere whether it's in society, culture, business, or academics and unfortunately, it found its way into sports too. Even with progress toward gender equality, these biases still creep in. With more time spent online, memes have become a popular way to share ideas, spread awareness, and even spark rumors. Derogatory memes about women athletes reflect gender stereotypes and common perceptions, which should be questioned and re-evaluated.

This research looks at how people perceive memes about women in sports. Memes might seem like harmless fun, but they influence how people think and reinforce cultural norms. Women athletes, despite their incredible achievements, are often portrayed in ways that downplay their skills or focus too much on their appearance. This paper explores research on digital media, gender studies, and sports communication to understand whether memes empower women or strengthen existing biases.

Looking ahead, the findings from this research could help media professionals, sports organizations, and policymakers recognize the impact of digital humour and push for fairer representation. It also opens the door for more studies on how memes shape society's views, particularly around gender and sports. By analysing how women athletes are portrayed in memes, this paper hopes to encourage more balanced and respectful media representation in the digital world. This study has adopted the method of literature analysis.

Keywords: Gender biases, memes, athletics, public perception, women athletes.

Introduction

With so much content flooding social media, memes have become a powerful and effective way to express ideas and convey messages with humor. The term "meme" comes from the Greek word *mimeme*, meaning "imitated," and was introduced in 1976 by British evolutionary



biologist Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*. He describes a meme as a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation. A meme is an idea, behavior, or trend that spreads from one person to another, often changing along the way. While it originally referred to how ideas spread, today, memes are mostly associated with funny or viral content shared online.

In ancient times, women's participation in sports was rare due to societal restrictions. However, things started to change by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with women stepping into sports. Fast forward to today, and we've come a long way. The Paris 2024 Olympics made history as the Games to have equal representation of male and female athletes. However, challenges still persist. Gender inequality, pay gaps, limited sponsorship opportunities and cultural barriers continue to hold many women back. While progress has been made, there's still work to be done to create a truly level playing field for women in sports.

Social media platforms today allow memes to spread rapidly. Memes often focus more on the appearance of women athletes rather than their skills, which can reinforce harmful stereotypes and make it harder for them to be seen as serious athletes. How women athletes are portrayed in memes plays a big role in shaping how they're viewed in the sports world. Memes have the ability to offer fresh perspectives, helping people understand and talk about different ideas and messages. However, memes also have the power to either challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes among those who see them.

This research looks at how memes shape public opinion, especially when it comes to women athletes. By studying how memes impact the way female athletes are seen and their role in sports culture, the study aims to promote a fairer and more inclusive environment for women in athletics.

Review of literature

The role of memes in shaping public opinion

Mememes have become a powerful tool for shaping opinions in today's digital world. Shifman (2014) described them as "cultural information units" that spread quickly online, simplifying complex ideas into relatable and engaging content for a wide audience. According to Knobel and Lankshear (2007) because memes go viral so easily, people often underestimate their influence on themselves while assuming they affect others more. This leads to a more passive acceptance of the messages they carry.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Gal, Shifman, and Kampf (2021) observed that memes helped people cope and form opinions. They offered a humorous and creative lens to reinterpret traditional media narratives, helping people reflect and stay emotionally strong. This shows that memes are more than just entertainment, they influence how we perceive and react to major events.

How Gender Stereotypes Affect the Way We Talk About Women Athletes



The way we talk about women athletes is often shaped by gender stereotypes, and sadly, this takes the focus away from their incredible achievements. Instead of highlighting their hard work and talent, people sometimes dwell on things like their appearance, emotions, or personal lives.

The media adds to this problem by emphasizing things like their femininity or struggles instead of their athletic abilities. You'll often hear terms like "female athlete," which feel unnecessary and make it seem like sports are naturally a male domain. And let's not forget how women's sports often get less funding, fewer sponsorships, and hardly any media attention compared to men's.

These stereotypes hold women back and discourage young girls from pursuing their dreams in sports. To change this, we need to shift the conversation. Let's focus on their dedication, skills, and achievements, treating them with the same respect and admiration we show male athletes. Their stories can inspire so many if we start focusing on what really matters: their incredible contributions to sports.

The Role of Memes in Shaping Conversations About Women Athletes on Social Media

Memes are a powerful way to shape how people talk about women athletes on social media. They can shine a light on their achievements and celebrate them in fun ways. But sometimes, memes focus on their appearance or personal lives instead of celebrating their skills and success, which reinforces outdated stereotypes.

Some memes even compare women to male athletes, making their efforts seem less important. This hurts their credibility and adds to the idea that women's sports aren't as serious. However, when memes are positive and empowering, they can challenge these biases and highlight the talent, dedication, and determination of women athletes.

By sharing thoughtful and respectful memes, we can create a more positive and inclusive space online, encouraging meaningful conversations about women in sports.

Exploring diversity and representation in memes featuring women athletes

Memes are a fun way to express ideas and share stories, but they also reflect how society sees certain topics. When it comes to women athletes, memes often show how we view diversity and representation. When it comes to women athletes, memes can either celebrate their achievements or, unfortunately, reinforce stereotypes and biases.

The issue is that diversity in these memes is often lacking. They often focus on just a few well-known athletes or sports and sometimes emphasize looks instead of talent. This leaves out amazing women from less popular sports or underrepresented communities, who also deserve the spotlight.

To truly support women athletes, we should create memes that highlight their skills, cultural backgrounds, and unique journeys. By doing this, memes can go beyond entertainment and become a powerful way to recognize and celebrate the incredible diversity in women's sports.



Using humour and satire in memes about women in sports

Humour and satire in memes about women in sports can be a powerful way to bring attention to important issues while keeping the conversation engaging. On one hand, they can spotlight challenges, celebrate achievements, and break down barriers with relatable humour. On the other hand, poorly executed satire can reinforce stereotypes, trivialize efforts, or belittle contributions.

When humour is used thoughtfully, it can shed light on issues like gender inequality, unfair treatment, or double standards in sports. Satire can be a great tool to expose double standards or outdated stereotypes, but if it crosses the line into mocking or belittling, it risks reinforcing the very biases it should challenge.

When used responsibly, humour and satire can empower women athletes, promote awareness, and spark meaningful discussions about fairness and equality in sports.

Research Objectives

1. To study public perception of memes.
2. To analyze gender discourse in memes on women athletes.
3. To evaluate the impact of memes on their recognition.
4. To explore the positive potential of memes.

Research questions

- How do memes featuring women athletes influence public perception and attitudes toward women in athletics?
- What are the common themes and characteristics of memes about women athletes, and how do they shape discussions on gender and sports?
- To what extent do memes reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and biases in the world of athletics?
- How do memes affect public engagement with women athletes and their careers?

Research gaps

- This study addresses a research gap by exploring how memes shape public perceptions of women athletes' expertise, skills, professionalism, and qualifications, especially compared to traditional media, which often focuses more on their appearance or personal attributes.
- Memes play a growing role in shaping public opinion and conversations about athletics on social media, among policymakers, and in society as a whole. However, there is little



research that explores how memes shape perceptions of gender in sports and the athletic world.

While some research explores this topic, this paper emphasizes the importance of creating memes responsibly and ethically. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how these visuals impact public perception and calls for greater awareness of the different ways athletics memes can shape discussions about women athletes in a constructive way.

Research methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and qualitative content analysis. The content analysis provides a detailed examination of memes featuring female athletes, while the surveys collect quantitative data on public perceptions and opinions about these memes. Together, these methods offer deeper insights into how memes are interpreted by audiences and how they influence people's perceptions.

Content Analysis - This method is a systematic and objective way to measure variables in communication studies. It helps analyse athletic memes effectively while keeping the study focused and manageable.

In this study, the analysis focuses on: Memes featuring women athletes.

- Memes highlighting the activities of women athletes.
- Memes showcasing statements made by women athletes on various topics.
- How netizens react to these memes.

The three main themes for analysis are:

- What the meme portrays, including its patterns and characteristics related to women athletes.
- The underlying meanings behind these memes.
- The impact of these memes on audiences and how their effects vary across different memes.

Survey - The survey method was used in this study to empirically examine the influence of social media. It was considered the most suitable approach for understanding the perceptions of netizens regarding memes that depict women athletes. A structured questionnaire was developed as the primary tool for data collection.

A convenience sampling method was adopted to gather a diverse group of participants. The questionnaire focused on public perceptions of memes featuring women athletes. Participants included students, intellectuals, members of the working class, and academicians. Responses were collected through an online mode, and the questionnaire was circulated across the Delhi NCR region. In total, 106 participants submitted their responses.



Content analysis

For this content analysis, we have selected two individual athletes and a women's sports team as our subjects: Claire Polosak, Imane Khelif, and Iran's women's football team. The study explores memes related to these athletes and uses them for analysis.

1. Claire Polosak

Meme 1: The meme (Fig. 1.1) features Claire Polosak, a pioneering Australian umpire who has made history in cricket by becoming the first woman to officiate a men's One Day International (ODI) and later achieving another milestone as the first female umpire in a men's Test match. Her presence in a traditionally male-dominated role is a significant step forward for gender inclusivity in sports, demonstrating that expertise and professionalism are not determined by gender.

The structure of the meme follows a familiar format, the top portion formally acknowledges Polosak's groundbreaking accomplishment, highlighting her role in breaking barriers within cricket. However, the bottom part introduces a comedic twist that plays on gender stereotypes, suggesting that instead of focusing on their game, bowlers might jokingly propose marriage to her. While seemingly humorous, this punchline reflects a broader societal issue how women in sports are often perceived through a gendered lens rather than being recognized for their skill, professionalism, and contributions to the game.

This form of humor, though subtle, reinforces long-standing biases that women face in male-dominated professions, including sports officiating. Instead of celebrating Polosak's expertise and her ability to make precise and fair decisions on the field, the joke reduces her role to that of a novelty or a distraction. This reflects a persistent trend where women's presence in professional settings, particularly in sports, is often overshadowed by perceptions rooted in gender rather than merit.

Claire Polosak's achievements should be viewed as a testament to her dedication, deep understanding of the game, and ability to command authority in high-pressure situations qualities essential for an umpire at the highest levels of cricket. However, humor that diminishes these attributes contributes to the larger issue of undermining women's credibility in professional sports.



Fig. 1.1: Meme 1

2. Imane Khelif

Meme 2: The meme (Fig. 2.1) features Imane Khelif, a highly skilled Algerian boxer known for her impressive performances on the international stage, including World Championships. Her talent, resilience, and dominance in the ring have earned her a reputation as a formidable athlete in women's boxing. However, rather than focusing on her accomplishments and technical prowess, the meme introduces a gendered narrative that detracts from her success.

The meme incorporates a tweet from the user "SwatKat" (@swatic12), which critiques the participation of muscular women in sports, particularly in boxing. The tweet insinuates that men are now competing as women, implying that female athletes with muscular physiques do not fit conventional expectations of femininity. The image used in the meme captures a moment from a match between Khelif and Hungary's Anna Luca Hamori, in which Hamori appears emotional, while Khelif, with her visibly muscular build and braided hair, embodies physical strength and intensity. The contrast between the two athletes is leveraged in a way that fuels outdated stereotypes about gender and athleticism.

The criticism of Khelif's physique reflects a broader societal bias that equates muscularity with masculinity and assumes that physical power is an inherently male trait. This perspective fails to recognize that athletic excellence is not defined by gender but by dedication, discipline, and rigorous training.

Social media has become a platform where gender biases in sports are both amplified and challenged. While some celebrate female athletes for breaking barriers, others use these platforms to reinforce limiting stereotypes. The tweet included in the meme exemplifies how digital spaces can be used to undermine female athletes by reducing their hard-earned achievements to debates over gender norms.



Fig. 2.1: Meme 2

3. Iran's Women's Football Team

Meme 3: The meme (Fig. 3.1) features Iran's women's football team and references accusations that some players were actually men posing as women. These claims, which have

surfaced multiple times over the years, were largely based on the perception that certain players appeared "too masculine" or possessed physical traits that did not align with traditional expectations of femininity. Such accusations not only undermine the integrity of female athletes but also reveal deep-seated gender biases that persist in sports.

The skepticism directed at Iran's women's football team is not an isolated case. Throughout history, female athletes across various sports have been questioned and subjected to invasive gender verification tests simply for excelling in physically demanding fields. This scrutiny is often rooted in the assumption that strength, speed, and endurance are inherently male traits, leaving successful female athletes open to baseless allegations and unfair treatment.

The accusations against Iran's women's football team highlight the need to move beyond narrow perceptions of femininity and focus on the qualities that truly matter in sports: skill, determination, and perseverance. Every athlete, regardless of gender expression or physical traits, deserves respect for their hard work and passion.



Fig. 3.1: Meme 3

4. Vinesh Phogat

Meme 4: This meme (Fig. 4.1) features Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat, focusing on her struggles at the Olympics and comparing her reaction to that of javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra. The meme creates a sharp contrast, the top half highlights Vinesh's Olympic loss, subtly implying that she failed due to personal shortcomings. Meanwhile, the bottom half shows Neeraj looking disappointed despite winning a silver medal, suggesting that his hunger for more is admirable.

At first glance, the meme might seem motivational, showcasing the pursuit of excellence. But looking deeper, it has some problematic undertones it undermines a female athlete's achievements while glorifying a male athlete's ambition.

Vinesh Phogat wasn't just another competitor she was the first Indian female wrestler to reach the Olympic finals and has won multiple international medals, including Commonwealth and Asian Games gold medals. Despite these accomplishments, the meme unfairly frames her through the lens of failure while ignoring her contributions to Indian sports.

This meme isn't just about two individuals it reflects a larger issue where men's struggles are seen as stepping stones to greatness, while women's setbacks are treated as defining failures. Breaking free from these biases will create a more inclusive and supportive sports culture, where every athlete regardless of gender is valued for their dedication and hard work.



Fig. 4.1 Meme 4

Survey analysis

Findings and interpretations



In this research study, a diverse group of respondents provided valuable insights into public perceptions of memes and their depiction of women athletes. The findings reveal an intriguing gender distribution, with 63.5% of the respondents being female and 36.5% male. Age-wise, the study captured a wide spectrum of perspectives. The largest group of participants, 64.4%, were aged between 18 and 24 years, reflecting the engagement of younger generation on the topic. A portion of 20.2% belonged to the 25-34 age group, showing that the young adults also participated in the study. Close behind, 15.4% of respondents fell within the 34-44 age range.

Geographically, the research reached respondents from various regions. Urban respondents constituted 66%, while 15.5% hailed from suburban areas, and 18.4% represented rural communities. In terms of education, the study provides valuable insights from diverse academic backgrounds. A significant proportion, 39.4%, were undergraduates. Graduates represented 26.9%, followed by postgraduates at 26%. Additionally, 7.7% of respondents are doctorate holders, showcasing a well-educated pool of respondents.

Analysing the social media consumption patterns and its influence on respondents, it was observed that 42.7% of participants use social media for below 2 hours, 36.9% engage with it between 2 to 4 hours, and 20.4% spend more than 4 hours on these platforms. Regarding the impact of social media on sports communication, a significant majority of respondents, 50%, agreed that social media holds significant sway in this realm. Additionally, 35.6% of participants strongly agreed with this notion. A smaller proportion, 7.7% respondents, expressed a neutral stance, while 6.7% respondent disagreed.

Among the 106 respondents, a large majority believe that social media memes influence public perception. The highest percentage, 43.3%, agree that memes have an impact on how people perceive individuals and issues on social media. This is followed by 39.4% who strongly agree, showing a strong belief among many respondents that memes significantly shape public opinion. A smaller portion, 13.5% disagree, indicating that some respondents do not think memes play an important role in influencing perceptions. Finally, 3.8% remain neutral, reflecting a small group that is uncertain about the influence of memes on public perception.

When it comes to the prevalence of Sports memes on social media platforms, Instagram emerged as the top choice, with 50% of respondents reporting frequent encounters with such content. Following closely behind, Twitter and Facebook were also popular platforms, with 25% and 10.6% of respondents, respectively, finding sports memes there. YouTube and WhatsApp secured the fourth and fifth positions, being cited by 6.7% and 3.8% of respondents, respectively. The remaining 4 respondents reported discovering sports memes on other platforms.

All the respondents shared diverse views on memes depicting women athletes. 36.5% found these memes both humorous and offensive, acknowledging the fine line between humour and



perpetuating stereotypes or disrespecting women athletes. Meanwhile, 22.1% perceived such memes as informative, appreciating their ability to convey sports information and generate discussions about women's roles in athletics. In contrast, a percentage of 21.2% considered these memes irrelevant, implying minimal impact on their perceptions of women athletes. Additionally, 15.4% perceived such memes as empowering, recognising their potential to inspire and uplift women in sports. A mere 4.8% of respondents had unique viewpoints classified as "Others," suggesting diverse interpretations beyond the given options.

The survey with 106 respondents unveiled diverse opinions on the impact of memes featuring women athletes. Approximately 46.6% believed these memes expressed concerns about diminishing women's sports achievements. break gender stereotypes, challenging traditional perceptions. However, 33% felt these memes reinforce gender norms. About 14.6% viewed them as promoting healthy sports discussions. Additionally, 5.8% held unique perspectives beyond the given options. These findings highlight the complexity of how memes influence the portrayal and perception of women athletes in sports.

As shown in the Table 1, respondents' views on whether memes depicting women athletes contribute to increasing gender inequality in sports were diverse. A significant proportion, 39.4% agreed, indicating a consensus among a considerable number of participants regarding the memes to contribute to greater gender inequality in the sports domain. Whereas, 30.8%, strongly agreed with this statement regarding gender inequality. A sizable group of 20.2% took a neutral stance and 8.7%, disagreed with the notion. Only 1 respondent strongly disagreed with the idea.

Table 1: Memes depicting women athletes contribute to increasing gender inequality in sports

S.No.	Memes accurately depicting qualifications and capabilities of women as women athletes	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Strongly Agree	32	30.8%
2.	Agree	41	39.4%
3.	Neutral	21	20.2%
4.	Disagree	9	8.7%
5.	Strongly Disagree	1	1%

As shown in the Table 2, a significant proportion, 21.6%, strongly agreed that memes accurately represent the qualifications and capabilities of women athletes as leaders. Additionally, 32.4% agreed, demonstrating general agreement on this notion. However, 28.4% remained neutral, indicating uncertainty. Conversely, 13.7% disagreed, and 3.9% strongly



disagreed, reflecting scepticism towards the accuracy of memes in portraying women athletes' qualifications and leadership abilities.

Table 2: Memes depicting qualifications and capabilities of women athletes

S.No.	Memes accurately depicting qualifications and capabilities of women as women athletes	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Strongly Disagree	35	34%
2.	Disagree	38	36.9%
3.	Neutral	12	11.7%
4.	Agree	16	15.5%
5.	Strongly Agree	2	1.9%

As shown in the Table 3, the perception of whether memes about women athletes focus more on appearance than on athletic performance is varied among respondents. A notable 48.1% strongly agree that such memes emphasize appearance rather than sports performance. An additional 37.5% agree, indicating that a large number of respondents also share this opinion. A smaller portion, 7.7% remain neutral, reflecting some uncertainty or mixed views on the issue. On the other hand, 4.8% disagree, suggesting they believe memes do not primarily focus on appearance. Finally, 1.9% strongly disagree, representing a very small group that firmly rejects the idea that memes about women athletes emphasize appearance over athletic ability.

Table 3: Memes about women athletes focus more on appearance than athletic performance

S.No.	Memes about women athletes focus more on appearance than athletic performance	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Strongly Agree	50	48.1%
2.	Agree	39	37.5%
3.	Neutral	8	7.7%
4.	Disagree	5	4.8%
5.	Strongly Disagree	2	1.9%

As shown in the Table 4, the perception of whether positive meme culture can help increase visibility for women athletes is largely supportive among respondents. A significant 42.7%



strongly agree that positive memes can play an important role in increasing the visibility of women athletes. An additional 46.6% agree, indicating that a majority of respondents believe that meme culture, when used positively, can promote and highlight women athletes. A small portion, 4.9% remain neutral, reflecting uncertainty or mixed opinions on the impact of positive memes. Meanwhile, 3.9% disagree, suggesting that some respondents do not believe memes significantly contribute to increasing visibility. Finally, 1.9% strongly disagree, representing a very small group that completely rejects the idea that positive meme culture can help promote women athletes.

Table 4: Positive meme culture can help increase visibility for women athletes

S.No.	Positive meme culture can help increase visibility for women athletes	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Strongly Agree	44	42.7%
2.	Agree	48	46.6%
3.	Neutral	5	4.9%
4.	Disagree	4	3.9%
5.	Strongly Disagree	2	1.9%

Discussion

This study highlights the complex relationship between humour, satire, and sports commentary in digital spaces, particularly when it comes to the portrayal of women in athletics. Memes have the power to simplify big conversations like gender pay gaps or media bias into quick, easy-to-understand content that grabs attention and sparks discussions. By doing so, they bring more public attention to some issues in sports. This idea aligns with Lim and Choi's (2017) research, which shows how memes can simplify complex discussions and shape public opinion.

However, memes can be a double-edged sword. While they often use humour to point out unfair treatment of female athletes, they can also reinforce negative stereotypes about their abilities. For example, comparing women athletes to male sports figures or controversial personalities might highlight inequalities but could also undermine their achievements. This connects to Bligh et al.'s (2012) work on how media influences perceptions of women's competence and leadership.



The survey results show interesting trends in how people engage with sports memes. Many respondents believe memes help challenge gender stereotypes in athletics, pushing back against outdated ideas of what female athletes can and can't do. This aligns with research by Dimar, Kamenica, and Tuki (2015), who discuss how gender bias has shaped sports coverage over time. The extra scrutiny female athletes face can affect public perceptions of their strength, skill, and competitiveness.

Interestingly, a large portion of respondents believed that memes accurately represent women athletes' abilities and qualifications. This suggests a shift in public perception, countering research by Ross and Searles (2020), which found that female athletes are often portrayed in the media based more on their looks or personal lives rather than their actual performance and expertise.

The study also found that most people see memes about women in sports as empowering, funny, and sometimes even offensive, while a smaller group finds them informative or irrelevant. This aligns with Zhang and Gearhart's (2022) research, which suggests that sports memes serve as both entertainment and a way to keep people engaged in discussions about athletics.

Overall, the findings highlight the power of digital content in shaping conversations around women in sports, showing both its potential to challenge stereotypes and the risks of reinforcing them.

Implications of the Present Study

This study explores how memes influence the way people perceive women athletes in sports media. In today's digital world, memes are more than just jokes they shape opinions, reinforce ideas, and sometimes challenge stereotypes. By looking at how humour and digital communication intersect with athletic representation, this research helps us understand how memes can either uphold outdated gender biases or push for a more inclusive view of women in sports.

Focusing on women in sports, the research contributes to broader discussions in gender studies and sports science. It reveals how digital media plays a role in either amplifying or breaking down biases, offering new insights into the relationship between gender, media representation, and power dynamics in athletics.

One of the key takeaways from this study is its relevance to media literacy. In a world where online content spreads rapidly and influences public opinion, understanding how memes shape narratives about women athletes is crucial. This research highlights the need to critically analyse digital content and be mindful of its impact.



Beyond media awareness, the study also emphasizes the need for responsible meme creation. It encourages athletes, sports organizations, and advocacy groups to use memes thoughtfully, leveraging them as a tool for promoting gender equality and challenging outdated portrayals of women in sports.

Ultimately, this research not only enriches academic discussions in media and communication studies but also offers practical insights for those involved in sports media, digital content regulation, and gender advocacy. By recognizing the power of memes in shaping perceptions, stakeholders can work toward more inclusive and fair representations of women in athletics.

Conclusion

This study explores the impact of memes on how people perceive women athletes and their role in sports. By analysing sports-related memes, the research shows that while some memes celebrate and support women in athletics, others criticize or downplay their achievements, often reinforcing gender stereotypes.

The findings reveal that memes have become a major part of sports conversations, often reflecting divided opinions. While some memes uplift women athletes and recognize their successes, others reinforce outdated stereotypes that undermine their contributions. This makes it important to understand how these memes shape attitudes toward women in sports.

Overall, this research highlights the growing influence of memes in shaping sports culture, fan engagement, and gender discussions in athletics. As digital media continues to impact public perceptions, sports organizations, social media platforms, and individuals must work toward fair and inclusive representation. Encouraging positive and respectful portrayals of women in sports will help support gender equality and create a more inclusive and empowering digital sports culture.

Limitations

- The study is limited by the availability and accessibility of memes depicting women athletes, which may affect the representativeness of the selected memes.
- The findings may have limited generalizability due to the specific characteristics of the sample used in the study.

Recommendations

This study highlights the impact of memes on how people perceive women athletes. The findings can help encourage a more inclusive and gender-equal sports culture. Media professionals, sports organizations, policymakers, and advocates can use these findings to promote fairer representation and support women in athletics.



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