

From Gold to Gaze: The Gendered Lens of Body Shaming in Online Media Coverage of Female Athletes

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Subject Area: Media and Communication

Abstract

This study examines the construction of gender identity in online media coverage, focusing on the issue of body shaming directed at female athletes. The case of Indonesian weightlifter Nurul Akmal, who experienced body shaming after her participation in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, is analysed using Alan McKee's text analysis method, a descriptive qualitative approach, and a constructivist paradigm. News articles from eight prominent Indonesian online media outlets — CNNIndonesia.com, Kompas.com, Tempo.co, Detik.com, Republika.co.id, Liputan6.com, and Okezone.com — were selected as the primary data sources. The findings reveal that online media frequently frame negative commentary on female athletes' physical appearance as innocuous humour or mere jest. Furthermore, the portrayal of female athletes as passive or powerless reinforces their subordinate status within the patriarchal structure, limiting their ability to resist or challenge such derogatory narratives. This media construction not only perpetuates gender stereotypes but also undermines efforts to promote gender equality within the realm of sports. The study highlights the need for more critical and gender-sensitive reporting practices to counteract these harmful representations.

Keywords: Text Analysis; Body Shaming; Online Media; Gender Stereotypes.

Introduction

Imagine an athlete standing on the global stage, achieving a remarkable milestone after years of dedication and perseverance, only to have her triumph overshadowed by comments about her physical appearance. For many female athletes, this scenario is an all-too-common reality. Instead of celebrating their athletic prowess, societal and media narratives often focus on their bodies, reducing their identities to how well they conform to societal beauty standards. This phenomenon underscores the media's influential role in shaping public perceptions of gender and identity. In particular, sports media has long been criticized for perpetuating gender biases, often marginalizing female athletes by portraying them as secondary to their male counterparts (Gill, 2007). These representations reinforce harmful stereotypes and diminish the professional achievements of women in sports. Body shaming represents one of the most overt and damaging manifestations of these biases, where female athletes are judged and criticized based on their physical appearances rather than their performance. This issue is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms that prioritize a woman's aesthetic appeal

over her professional skills, reducing her to an object of public scrutiny rather than recognizing her as a capable and accomplished individual (Frederick et al., 2017). This dynamic is especially harmful in sports, where physicality and performance should be the primary focus. A striking example is Nurul Akmal, an Indonesian weightlifter who competed at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Despite achieving a historic fifth-place finish in the +87kg category, her remarkable accomplishments were overshadowed by body-shaming remarks about her appearance. These incidents highlight how systemic gender biases in media reporting continue to undermine female athletes' contributions.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics, however, aimed to challenge these inequities by becoming the first gender-equal Olympic Games in history. With 49% of its athlete quota allocated to women, the event set a new benchmark for inclusivity and representation. The organizers went beyond participation quotas to ensure gender equality in various aspects of the event. For example, for the first time in Olympic history, each country's flag bearers during the opening ceremony were both male and female. Additionally, there was an explicit effort to encourage gender-neutral coverage, addressing long-standing criticisms of sexist portrayals in sports media. This progressive approach was designed to showcase female athletes as equals, focusing on their skills and achievements rather than perpetuating stereotypes. Despite these advancements, media representation of female athletes in several regions, including Indonesia, revealed a disheartening disconnect from the ideals promoted by the Tokyo Games. Nurul Akmal's experience serves as a poignant example of this gap. Instead of highlighting her groundbreaking performance as a top-ranked weightlifter, much of the attention she received centred on derogatory comments about her body. Such coverage not only diminishes her achievements but also perpetuates harmful societal norms that equate a woman's value with her adherence to unrealistic beauty standards. These narratives undermine the progress symbolized by events like the Tokyo Olympics and hinder the broader movement toward gender equality in sports.

The case of Nurul Akmal illustrates the persistent challenges faced by female athletes in gaining recognition and respect for their accomplishments. Media narratives that emphasize physical appearance over professional skill reflect entrenched patriarchal ideologies that continue to shape public perceptions of women in sports. These portrayals are not merely reflective of societal attitudes but also play a constitutive role in reinforcing and perpetuating gender biases. By framing female athletes through a lens of aesthetic judgment, media outlets fail to acknowledge their contributions to their respective sports, limiting their potential to inspire and empower future generations of women. The disconnect between the gender equality goals of the Tokyo Olympics and the reality of media coverage highlights the systemic nature of these issues. While the Games demonstrated significant progress in ensuring equal participation and representation, media narratives in countries like Indonesia still fell short of these ideals. The focus on Nurul Akmal's appearance, rather than her achievements, underscores the need for a fundamental shift in how female athletes are portrayed. Such a shift would require media to move beyond superficial evaluations and adopt an approach that prioritizes performance, dedication, and skill, reflecting the values of equality and inclusivity championed by global sporting events.

The body shaming case experienced by Nurul Akmal is a serious matter that has attracted the attention of many parties, including the Ministry of Youth and Sports as a stakeholder in the sports sector in Indonesia.

Through a statement by the Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Gatot S. Dewa Broto, the Ministry of Youth and Sports firmly condemned this act of harassment because it contradicts what is contained in the Olympic Charter which prohibits any action that leads to a notation of degrading the self-esteem and identity of athletes. This case was then widely covered by the media in Indonesia, including being published in various online news channels. News published in online media is included in the text is a combination of signs. These signs play and produce meaning in a text, including in the news of body shaming experienced by Nurul Akmal. This research seeks to explore these narratives in greater depth, using Nurul Akmal's case as a focal point to examine how media constructs and disseminates gender-biased portrayals of female athletes. By analysing the coverage of her experience, this study aims to uncover the underlying societal attitudes and media practices that perpetuate these biases. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering a more equitable and respectful representation of women in sports, ensuring that their achievements are celebrated on their own merits rather than being overshadowed by outdated and discriminatory societal norms.

Literature Review

In general, the media depicts women and femininity in narrow and stereotypical ways that convey unrealistic standards of physical appearance (Ward & Harrison, 2005). Several researchers have also stated that the media promotes unrealistic beauty standards and narrow definitions that have negative effects on an individual's body image (Barlett et al., 2008; Frederick et al., 2017; Grabe et al., 2008). In a study entitled "Misogynoir in women's sport media: race, nation, and diaspora in the representation of Naomi Osaka" in 2020, it was stated that Naomi Osaka, a Japanese athlete of Haitian descent, received discrimination and misogynistic representation from the mainstream media. This is because Naomi's dark-skinned physical appearance is considered inappropriate for the country she represents in sports events. Gender stereotypes that place women in a subordinate position still apply in Naomi Osaka's case, where her body or physical condition is seen as an aesthetic object that can be commented on. This proves how the participation of female athletes in sports events is still viewed from a patriarchal perspective rather than from their performance or achievements on the field.

Patriarchal culture is a social system that exists in society, where men are the ones who have the main authority and thus become the center of control in the social system. Patriarchal culture upholds the view that men have superior control symbolized by 'male power over women' (Wood, 2009). This gender superiority then results in inequality and several problems. The problems of gender inequality experienced by women according to Bemmelen (2003) include limited access to education, values adopted by society, gender values and roles that are generally known to society, and internalized values and gender-biased policies. Societies with patriarchal systems also develop a justification to perpetuate this inequality with the phrase "this is the way the world is" (Jensen, 2002). The existence of gender inequality also triggers discrimination against women as a weaker group in terms of power. Zulhayatin (2013) explains the forms of discrimination against women into five forms, namely stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, excessive burdens and violence. On the other hand, there is a study by Jessica Shaller entitled "Female Athletes in the Media: Under

Representation and Inadequacy" in 2006 which emphasized the existence of inequality in media coverage related to female athletes in the leading sports magazine in America, namely Sports Illustrated. Through the content analysis method, it was found that female athletes consistently and continuously receive less coverage or media coverage than male athletes, and if female athletes are featured on the cover of the magazine, the strategy focuses on physical attractiveness which leads to sexualization which causes discomfort for the individual who is the subject (Shaller, 2006) . Gender stereotypes in sports are complex social constructions influenced by demographics, beliefs related to gender roles, sports participation, and media consumption (Hardin & Greer, 2009).

Manstead and Hewstone (2018) define stereotypes as socially shared beliefs about characteristics (such as personality traits, expected behaviors, or personal values) that are considered true by a social group and its members. Thus, gender stereotypes can be interpreted as beliefs about gender characteristics that are considered true. In general, women considered to be submissive, emotional, weak, housewives, and obedient, while men considered to be authoritarian, rational, strong, money-making, athletic, and rational (International Labor Organization, 2014). In addition, the biggest differences between genders appear in motor skills and physical aggression (men considered to be more physically aggressive than women) (Hyde, 2005). Stereotypes that originate from patriarchal culture certainly show that men occupy a superior position while women are only placed in a subordinate position. This gender stereotype is present in various fields, including sports. In general, sports are considered a male preference domain (Messner et al., 2003). Especially considering that sports are identical to physical strength, which is a male stereotype. Thus, a general idea is formed in the world of sports, that women are considered no better than men, for example men are considered more competitive than women (Cambridge, 2016). This stigma is formed because of the inappropriate choice of words or terms, so that this choice of words can collectively create a gender dichotomy based on biological differences . In fact, sports should be one of the fields to realize gender equality and to implement gender justice (UN in Omrčen, 2017). However, the presence of female athletes in sports events is hampered by stereotypes built by the dominant group and placing women in marginal positions in the world of sports, as stated by the UN (2008),

"The positive outcomes of sport for gender equality and women's empowerment are constrained by gender-based discrimination in all areas and at all levels of sport and physical activity, fueled by continuing stereotypes of women's physical abilities and social roles".

According to Trujillo (2013), sports are institutions that teach and reinforce culturally idealized masculine characters, including competition, physical strength, heterosexuality, and the subordination of women. This form of masculinity reinforces gender stereotypes, resulting in a narrow definition of "what it means to be a man" and what kind of masculine behavior is acceptable. Unlike men whose stereotypes are exactly like the definition of an athlete himself, namely fast, agile, strong, and accomplished, stereotypes of women are focused on physical appearance or sexual attraction as stated by Kane in Alper et al., (2002). Women are depicted only in the position of entertainers or enliveners of the sporting event through the beauty or sexiness of their curves. Stereotypes about women's body shape also occur in sports, where women with slim or slender bodies are considered ideal (Ludfy, 2005). The media also reinforces these gender stereotypes

through unequal coverage of women and men, news about feminine sports, coverage of athletes' physical appearance, athletes being linked to others in relation to their current achievements, emotional depictions, athletes' failures or successes, and the use of sexist language (Kinnick, 1998).

The above research also shows that in sports coverage, journalists usually focus more on the body parts of female athletes than on their performance during competition (Kian et al., 2013). Sports are associated with an ideal and athletic body shape, which is believed to be very important to support performance during competition, thus creating a bias towards body shapes that are considered normal (Cosh et al., 2012; Papathomas & Lavalley, 2014). It is not surprising that much sports news coverage in online media focuses on comments about the physical appearance of female athletes, because men prefer female athletes who maintain a feminine image compared to female athletes who go against the gender roles expected by society (Jones & Greer, 2011), for example, slim female athletes are considered more attractive than strong female athletes.

The view that strength, both physical and mental, is a characteristic of masculinity perpetuates the dominance of the masculine, in this case men, and perpetuates the subordination of women and female athletes (Koivula, 2001). As a result, female athletes have conflicts regarding their body shape, because on the one hand, in order to be successful in the sports they participate in, they must have a strong, muscular, and powerful body (Steinfeldt & Steinfeldt, 2012), and on the other hand, they must not be too muscular or have masculine characteristics in order to remain within the ideal body type constructed by society (Krane, 2018). These standards can have negative impacts such as dissatisfaction with body shape which leads to excessive dieting (Cohen et al., 2017), depression (Liss & Erchull, 2015), and low self-esteem (Stapleton, 2021).

McMahon in his study entitled "Body Shaming And Associated Practices As Abuse: Athlete Entourage As Perpetrators Of Abuse" revealed how physical abuse of athletes has proven to be a type of violence that is so normalized in the context of sport, that they generally tend to accept comments about their physique. This physical abuse is generally experienced by athletes whose body shape is considered less than ideal, for example too fatty. This act of physical abuse or body shaming is normalized by those involved in sports because a body shape that is considered ideal will be able to help athletes achieve their best performance. The body shaming that is thrown considered to be able to improve and restore their athletes' bodies (Rich et al., 2022) to the appropriate shape which will ultimately lead to increased competitive performance.

Methodology

This study uses the textual analysis method from Alan McKee. McKee (2003), explains that textual analysis is a method used in research related to cultural studies and media studies in mass communication. Textual analysis is an interpretation produced from a text, which in the process does not require standardization because the feasibility of the interpretation is determined based on arguments based on evidence and facts. According to McKee, text is everything that is written, pictures, films, videos, photos and so on that produce meaning, not limited to writing alone. This analysis method aims to reveal what and how knowledge is produced in a societal context, understand the role of media in our lives and find out how the media messages we receive every day contribute to our culture to create a mindset in society in responding to something.

In this study, McKee's textual analysis method was chosen because it is appropriate for interpreting the meaning related to body shaming in the news text of female athletes in online media which is the aim of this study. The methodology employed in this study adheres to a qualitative approach, utilizing Alan McKee's textual analysis method to explore the construction of meaning within online news articles addressing the issue of body shaming against female athletes. The qualitative approach is well-suited for this study as it seeks to uncover the nuanced interpretations and representations embedded within textual content. McKee's textual analysis provides a systematic framework to investigate how signs and symbols within a text contribute to the creation of social realities. This method emphasizes understanding texts as cultural artifacts that reflect societal norms, ideologies, and power structures.

The process of analysis involved four primary steps. First, the researcher conducted purposive sampling to select news articles from eight prominent Indonesian online news portals, using the keywords "Nurul Akmal body shaming" in a search engine. The articles chosen were those ranked on the first page of search results to ensure high visibility and audience reach, reflecting significant societal engagement with the issue. Second, the texts were reviewed to identify elements such as language choices, framing, and thematic patterns that reflect societal attitudes toward body shaming and gender stereotypes. This step involved a close reading of each article to extract relevant excerpts for analysis. Third, the extracted data were interpreted to identify underlying meanings, particularly how the texts perpetuate or challenge patriarchal norms and gender biases. The analysis focused on the portrayal of the female athlete, the contextual framing of body shaming, and the narrative strategies used by the media. Finally, the findings were synthesized to draw conclusions about the broader societal implications of these portrayals, particularly in the context of gender equality and media responsibility. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive examination of the texts, allowing for a critical interpretation of how media constructs and disseminates cultural narratives surrounding female athletes and body shaming.

Results and Discussion

The results of textual analysis of news about the physical harassment incident that befell Indonesian lifter Nurul Akmal after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in eight different online media show that in the news related to the body shaming case that befell athlete Nurul Akmal, in Indonesia, the problem of body shaming is not considered a serious matter.

Table 1 Media Representation of Body Shaming after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics

News Source	Title	Publication Date	Key Findings	Interpretation
CNN Indonesia	<i>Nurul Akmal Ketawa Soal Dugaan Body Shaming yang Viral</i>	5 Aug 2021	Media highlights Nurul's laughter and her dismissal of the incident as a joke, alongside netizens' outrage about the comment.	Reflects normalization of body shaming as "humor" and diminishes its seriousness. Shows subordinate role of women in dealing with negative comments about their bodies.
Kompas	<i>Lifter Nurul Akmal Minta Kasus Body Shaming Tak Dibahas Lagi</i>	7 Aug 2021	Emphasizes Nurul's request to stop discussing the issue and move on. Highlights her focus on training and the upcoming events.	Portrays women as non-confrontational and accepting of such incidents, perpetuating the patriarchal norm of female submissiveness.

Tempo	<i>Jadi Korban Body Shaming, Nurul Akmal: Jangan Diambil Hati</i>	8 Aug 2021	Reports on Nurul's advice to "not take it to heart" and her attempt to focus on her goals instead of the incident.	Implies that body shaming is not worth serious attention, further trivializing the issue and undermining the impact on women's self-esteem.
Detik	<i>Alami Body Shaming di Tanah Air, Nurul Akmal: Mungkin Bercanda</i>	5 Aug 2021	Covers Nurul's perception of the comments as potentially just jokes, showing her tolerance and adaptation to such remarks.	Shows how societal norms pressure women into accepting body shaming as normal or insignificant, reinforcing stereotypes and victim-blaming.
Republika	<i>Jadi Korban Body Shaming, Ini Reaksi Nurul Akmal</i>	9 Aug 2021	Focuses on Nurul's calm response and her effort to downplay the incident, requesting for focus on her achievements.	Undermines the structural issue of gender discrimination and presents the athlete's personal acceptance as the solution, sidelining the need for societal or institutional accountability.
Liputan6	<i>Atlet Indonesia Nurul Akmal Alami Body Shaming Sepulang dari Olimpiade Tokyo 2020</i>	5 Aug 2021	Highlights the incident and public reaction, but also mentions Nurul's focus on her achievements instead of the insult.	Balances public outrage with Nurul's dismissal, showing a societal conflict between patriarchal norms and emerging awareness of gender equality.
Okezone	<i>Nurul Akmal Alami Body Shaming, Ketua KOI: Dia Ingin Tenang dan Fokus Latihan</i>	7 Aug 2021	Quotes Indonesian Olympic Committee's statement supporting Nurul's focus on training and mental peace, downplaying the severity of body shaming.	Frames body shaming as a distraction rather than a societal problem, reflecting media's patriarchal bias in shaping public discourse.

Through the data collected, the researcher observed that all media outlets concentrated on the same narrative in their coverage of the body shaming incident involving Nurul Akmal. The joke made by a male figure, referring to Nurul Akmal as "the thinnest," was consistently portrayed as harmless, with the victim herself considering it a mere joke. The media reinforced this perspective, thereby normalizing body shaming and presenting it as a trivial issue not requiring serious follow-up. This portrayal suggests a broader tendency within the media to downplay the significance of such behaviors, potentially influencing public perception in ways that minimize the harm caused by body shaming. The sources analyzed in this study were among the most prominent in search engine rankings, thus ensuring their widespread reach and substantial readership. This highlights the considerable influence these media outlets have on shaping public discourse, particularly in relation to sensitive issues like body shaming. Despite their extensive audience base, the coverage of the incident showed minimal variation across platforms. This uniformity in reporting could be interpreted as evidence of a broader cultural tendency to trivialize body shaming, even when it has the potential to cause lasting harm to individuals affected by it. The consistency of the media's treatment of this issue may reflect a societal norm that fails to critically address such behaviors.

An intriguing aspect of the study was the identification of ideological differences among the media outlets, such as Antaranews.com, which espouses a nationalist ideology, Republika.com, with its Islamic religious perspective, and Okezone.com, which adopts a youthful and friendly tone. Despite these ideological differences, the study found that they did not notably affect the manner in which the body shaming incident was reported. This finding suggests that, irrespective of their ideological stances, the media outlets treated the incident similarly, further reinforcing the notion that body shaming is often normalized within mainstream media narratives. This uniformity in coverage underscores the need for a more critical approach to addressing such issues in media discourses.

Physical harassment is widely recognized as a form of psychological violence against women, and the incident experienced by Nurul Akmal exemplifies a particular type of body shaming, specifically fat shaming. Fat shaming is characterized by the use of derogatory language, name-calling, or jokes aimed at individuals who are perceived as overweight, often to belittle or criticize their body size (Tempo, 2018). In the case of Nurul Akmal, the joke "the thinnest" was a clear example of this type of shaming. The statement was intended to negatively comment on her body shape, which does not conform to the societal ideal of female physique in Indonesia, given her profession as a weightlifter weighing 87 kilograms. Such remarks contribute to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes about body image, particularly in relation to women who do not fit traditional beauty standards.

Legally, verbal body shaming is subject to penalties under Indonesian law, specifically Article 310 of the Criminal Code, which addresses defamation. In this context, fat shaming, as exemplified by the comments directed at Nurul Akmal, can lead to criminal charges, carrying a penalty of up to nine months in prison (Tempo, 2018). This legal framework highlights the severity of the offense and underscores the potential consequences for perpetrators of body shaming. It is evident that physical harassment, in the form of verbal body shaming, can have serious legal and psychological repercussions for the victim. The harm caused by such acts extends beyond immediate emotional distress, as it also challenges the victim's sense of self-worth and social acceptance. Despite the serious implications of body shaming, media coverage of the incident largely trivialized the matter, framing it as a harmless joke. This normalization of physical harassment in media narratives undermines the potential for meaningful societal discourse about the harm caused by such behaviour. The media's portrayal of the incident as a benign comment rather than a form of psychological violence reflects a broader tendency to downplay the severity of body shaming, further perpetuating the stigmatization of individuals who deviate from societal beauty standards. This discrepancy between the legal and media treatment of body shaming reveals a gap in how such issues are understood and addressed in public discourse.

In a news article published by CNNIndonesia.com, Nurul Akmal admitted that she was sad and upset with the taunts thrown by people about her body shape. She also said that she didn't mind if people commented on her attitude of removing her hijab when competing, but she hated it when someone commented on her body negatively. However, the discomfort felt by Nurul Akmal when facing this act of physical harassment was not the focus of the news. In fact, the act of giving in and allowing the body shaming incident was highlighted by the media. This is related to the gender stereotype of women who in a patriarchal culture are closely associated with a gentle attitude. The media depicts women in their helplessness in the face of male dominance or masculine ideology (Susilo & Haezer, 2017), as Nurul Akmal is depicted as not taking any action against physical harassment by a male individual even though she admitted that she was uncomfortable and hated being treated like that. This is what makes the image of women until now still revolve around the subordinate area compared to men (Supratman, 2012). Despite being an accomplished athlete in a field that significantly challenges traditional gender stereotypes, such as weightlifting, Nurul Akmal's portrayal in the media emphasizes her vulnerability as a woman when confronted with physical harassment. The news text suggests that rather than confronting the perpetrators or taking action, Nurul Akmal chooses to forgive and let go of the

incident. This response highlights the societal expectations placed on women, especially those engaged in "masculine" sports, to conform to passive roles. It also reveals the tension between a woman excelling in a traditionally male-dominated field and the gendered expectations that continue to shape how her actions are perceived in the public eye.

The portrayal of Nurul Akmal's response to the harassment further underscores the cultural perception of weightlifting as a "masculine" sport, which is often associated with physical strength and power. This perception leads to heightened scrutiny of female athletes, who, despite their achievements, face more judgment and criticism than their male counterparts. Such gendered double standards not only contribute to the marginalization of women in sports like weightlifting but also reinforce the barriers that discourage women from participating in these fields. The case of Nurul Akmal thus serves as a reflection of the broader societal challenges women face when they break from traditional gender roles. The judgment faced by female weightlifters can be seen as a significant obstacle to their full participation in the sport, as noted by Salvatore & Marecek (2010). The societal pressure for women to adhere to conventional femininity creates an environment where women in "masculine" sports are more likely to encounter criticism, not only for their physical abilities but also for their emotional and behavioural responses.

This dual burden of professional achievement and gendered expectations illustrates the challenges faced by women like Nurul Akmal, who, despite excelling in their fields, must navigate a complex landscape of social judgment and harassment. Instead of choosing words that show Nurul Akmal's toughness and mental strength in facing the unpleasant incident, the media choose words that are identical to the stereotype of women's gentle nature, such as 'open-minded' and 'forgiving' in serious matters that should not be considered a joke, thus emphasizing the impression of helplessness. In fact, sports should be one of the issues that can fix the problem because it is related to other issues outside the field, especially those related to minority groups (Boyle, 2009). In addition, body shaming is also considered normal when done by people who are known, or people close to them. In fact, research from Parapuan (2022) shows that as many as 63% of the total respondents experienced body shaming from people closest to them, namely friends and family.

Conclusion

The inappropriate reality presented by the media certainly has an influence because it reflects the views of certain social groups. In the context of this study, the reality presented is a manifestation and reflection of a patriarchal culture that creates gender stereotypes that women's bodies are objects that can be commented on and women are in a subordinate position so that they are powerless when experiencing body shaming. The views of certain social groups then become views that are learned by society and are unconsciously accepted as normal by ignoring alternative views (Burton, 2008). The values that body shaming is a natural thing and is merely a joke, and how women must still take gentle attitudes when experiencing body shaming are included in news texts published on various online media portals. The interventions that journalists make in selecting and highlighting facts have the potential to influence the reality presented in the news (Pareno, 2015). Through the choice of words chosen by journalists and the media, the reality presented regarding body shaming becomes a form of normal behavior and women as victims of body shaming must remain fixated on gentle gender

stereotypes. The reality constructed by the media can be interpreted and given subjective meaning by individuals as something coherent (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), where society can assume that when a woman receives negative comments about her physical appearance, all she can do is let the comments be, give in, and not fight back.

Media that functions as an agent of reality construction should be able to represent female athletes more accurately. If female athletes are still stuck in the stereotype of weak and helpless figures, then the reality formed in the audience will be the same. The reality believed by society is formed by internalization, one of which is carried out by the media, which can influence both journalists and the audience in interpreting female athletes. The right depiction of female athletes as part of a minority group needs special attention from the media to be able to improve the reality that is formed so that it can be beneficial for both minority and majority groups (Gordon & Kitross, 1999).

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