Designing a model of media literacy in order to organize sexism in women's sports

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Abstract

Background: sports can be seen as a tool for social change, a way to move and improve social status. **Aim**: to investigate the model of media literacy in order to organize sexism in women's sports. **Material and Methods**: this research was of the type of applied purpose, in terms of the method of collecting descriptive-survey data. In the first part (qualitative) to conduct field interviews, the statistical population of the research consisted of Asian and world champion female athletes, members of the academic staff of the specialized field of media management in sports, who were selected purposefully and snowballed (25 interviews with 25 people theoretical saturation limit continued). In the second part (quantitative), the statistical population included female national athletes in various sports, female graduate students in physical education, and finally, 450 correct questionnaires were analyzed. **Results**: the findings showed that in the qualitative part of the research, it was determined that the categories were extracted in the form of 45 conceptual codes and 8 subcategories. In the quantitative part, it was also determined that at the level of 0.99, each of the components of the source of information, criteria for media selection and media analysis, honesty and truthfulness, responsibility, loyalty, compliance with social values and compliance with collective ethics the components of media literacy and professional ethics are; It was also found that media literacy has an effect on professional ethics. **Conclusion**: considering the important role of media literacy on women's sports, it is suggested that the country's sports managers organize the necessary training courses for athletes to improve their media literacy.

Keywords: media, sports management, women's sports, professional sports.

Introduction

Today, we live in the age of information and communication explosion. Communication technologies have become so diverse and numerous that people can easily communicate with anyone anywhere in the world at any time. The media are very powerful and useful tools that enable the transmission of information around the world by using advanced technologies (Alikhani & Karimi, 2016). In the last ten or twenty years, the information landscape has changed fundamentally due to the rapid and dramatic increase in access to information production and consumption. Meanwhile, the role of traditional filters that monitor the accuracy and balance of information has basically decreased. On the other hand, citizens with knowledge can learn, participate and share their personal and public information. On the other hand, abuses such as the unwanted publication of false news and misuse of personal information have become common, and citizens should understand the complex features of today's media (Jolls & Johnsen, 2018). According to the definition of the Center for Media Literacy (CML), media literacy is a framework for accessing, analyzing, evaluating and using media. In fact, the development of critical thinking and message production skills, which are needed for the development of the media culture of the 21st century. Through the four-step process or questioning, evaluation, reaction and behavior, media literacy helps people to gain the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce media messages. Bulger and Davison (2018) have described media literacy as skills that support critical interaction with information presented by the media and provide ways to deal with fake news. In general, in a definition, media literacy is a kind of skill-based understanding based on which one can recognize and distinguish and identify different types of media and their productions (Safahiye & Moghadzadeh, 2018).

Kiani (2024) found in their research that the development of communication and information technologies, including the Internet and the emergence of social media, while creating a new form of communication model, has fundamentally changed the way users deal with the messages of these media. In such an environment, the need for users to benefit from social media literacy becomes more important (Safahiye & Moghadzadeh, 2018). Various researches show that "media literacy" plays an important role in media and communication policies of different countries, and for this purpose, numerous researches have been conducted to investigate, analyze, educate and raise awareness of media works on different sections of the society. Most of them indicate the role of the media in cultural transmission, cultural change, cultural formation and media literacy education (Aghamohammadi & Taslimi, 2016).

Several models for "media literacy" have been presented, among which the comprehensive model of EC (European Commission) can be mentioned (Livingstone, 2011). This model explains the characteristics of media literacy in two components: "individual abilities in using media" and "background and environmental factors" (European Commission, 2011. During the past few decades, "media literacy" has been introduced with abilities such as the analysis and appropriate use of printed newspapers, film productions, radio and television programs, and even computer

information exchanges in the web space (Brown, 2007). Khattri (2019) examining the problems of journalists to produce content, pointed out the need to pay more attention to journalists' media literacy. The results showed that journalists were not familiar with media analysis frameworks, especially modern media, and about 78% of them had used invalid information from social media. Research results in Iran also pointed to the need for radio and television to use employees with high media literacy to meet the needs of audiences with high media literacy (European Commission, 2011). The research shows that the quantitative and qualitative development of the mass media, the information and media literacy of the audience is also increasing. The results of the research on sports science students showed that media literacy has an effect on information literacy, success seeking, creativity, risk taking and ambiguity tolerance, and information literacy also affects entrepreneurship abilities. It means that media literacy can play a role in students' entrepreneurship ability (Zardoshtian et al., 2018). In another research, it was reported that the level of media literacy and information of female and male students was favorable and at the same time related to gender (Bani et al., 2018). In another study, media literacy had a direct and significant effect on the attitude of athletes in the consumption of sports supplements (Bahrami, 2019).

Mass media have the functions of "informing, raising awareness, setting the stage for the display of conflicting opinions, education, helping the cultural and intellectual growth of society, entertainment, increasing participation in development programs" (Khaledyan et al., 2014). For this purpose, the media produces content in different ways. Media products are very diverse in order to meet people's expectations. In this way, some owners of capital and power seek to use the media and its monopoly to maintain and increase their power (Inal, 2009).

Sports is one of the most prominent media products with a wide audience. According to their goals and structure, the media cover various sports topics and produce various types of specialized content. Sports in today's world is known as a phenomenon with conflict in most of the human society and mass media as an integral and inseparable part of sports has played an effective role in its prosperity. The fun and useful aspect of healthy physical activity is obvious to everyone as far as governments invest in popular sports with the approach of developing national goals. The media play an essential role in informing and providing access to sports news with details, and sometimes by publishing false, unreal news and challenging rumors, they cause chaos and disorder among managers, athletes, sports enthusiasts and people. Some nations and human tribes are known in the world through sports media and sports television shows and their athletes have found a better basis for information and understanding. This issue causes the recognition of the nature of sports as a phenomenon beyond its borders (Ghasemi et al., 2019). The results of Pevneva et al. (2019) research, showed that sports media have a high capacity for role models for young people and create a positive image of sports achievements in various fields. In this study, the group under media literacy training had a negative attitude towards the use of energy-enhancing substances

and doping and a positive attitude towards healthy sports, in other words, a positive and meaningful relationship was seen between having media literacy and improving sports literacy.

Media literacy and the issues of the effects of mass media and the mechanism of turning these works into educational and positive experiences have been given special attention (Kubey, 2006). In this approach, the ability of the audience to understand how the media works and the methods of creating meaning from them is emphasized as a permanent habit and duty (Afshani et al., 2019). Farhani and Nasiri (2017) introduces the goal of media literacy to alert, empower and liberate the audience. Some experts point to the negative effects of weakening individual or national identity caused by weak media literacy in the face of extensive information from non-native mass media (Nasiri, 2017). According to Kiani (2022), the power of the media in harmonizing the audience with a particular point of view, behavior, speech and way of thinking is unconscious, that is, the media creates a worldview with common value in its audience; Therefore, media literacy does not necessarily mean that the audience knows how to deal with the media, but must be able to recognize the goals and effects of the media and how they manipulate thoughts. In other words, media literacy is a kind of cognitive skill in the audience (Bahrami, 2019).

On the other hand, moral receptions of messages, with emphasis on personal relationships and ethics of care, can lead to the value of human relationships and social responsibility of society members. The development of human ethics, especially the ethics of care, can be accompanied by characteristics such as care, compassion, benevolence, fostering kindness and responsibility towards the same kind. Ethical dimensions are focused on moral judgment and acceptance of moral and social responsibility of the individual towards the society. Since the components of media literacy include cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and moral dimensions; Therefore, the relationship between ethics and social responsibility is included in the ethical dimension of media literacy. Because ethics is one of the constructive dimensions of social responsibility (Nasiri, 2017).

The ethical functions of sports behaviors have always been a subject of reflection, but the desire to succeed in championship sports has created a challenge in this field (Hadder, 2020). The topic of professional ethics is very important in all jobs; But it seems that this importance in sports has a double value (Kamrani et al., 2021); Because the experts say that whatever integrity or corruption a society has, its reflection can be seen in the ethical or unethical sports behaviors of athletes, coaches, referees, managers and in general sports people of that society (Milanovic et al., 2021); In other words, the meaning of professional ethics in sports is to apply moral values in different sports situations or related decisions (Salimi & Khodaparast, 2018). Because sports, despite the favorable behavioral results, can lead to the appearance of unethical behaviors on the part of the sports community at different levels due to its large audience, competitive nature, and significant financial turnover (Khodaparast et al., 2022).

Logic would dictate that the recent increase in the participation and success of women in sports would correspond with an increase in media coverage and representation and also social

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acceptance and prestige equivalent to the male athletes. However, despite participation growth, no significant gains have been made in the media coverage of female sports (Mannion, 2016). The media influence our daily lives through their preservation, transmission, and creation of important cultural information, and for years, female athletes have been searching for social acceptance in their coverage. The concept of media framing allows for a reporter's choice as to what aspects of a story in the news are emphasized the most, and what characteristics of individuals are highlighted (Shaller, 2006).

There are two interrelated issues to consider. First, the under-representation of sports women in media, and second, whenever sports women actually appear in the media they are often misrepresented and/or sexualized. Much research has been conducted regarding media portrayal of sportswomen, and it has been found that there is a gross misrepresentation of what it means to be a female athlete in both television and print media (Mannion, 2016). When female athletes are represented in visual or written text, their femininity and sexuality are emphasized far more than their athletic ability (Kane, 2013).

Kane et al. (2013) found that a number of female athletes in their study pointed out their desire and obligation to increase interest in their sport and to promote women's sports overall. The study participants indicated that the best way to do this was by "selling sex". If you search Google images for 'female athlete' the majority of the images generated from the search depict women posing rather than action shots from actual competition, partially clad, or participating in an activity unrelated to their actual sport.

In contrast, the same exercise applied to 'male athletes' yields photographs primarily depicting men actively competing in their respective sports. Furthermore, the female athletes who are most photographed while actively competing, highlight sports that are considered 7 gendered and socially acceptable sports for women to participate in, such as gymnastics, swimming and tennis (Shaller, 2006).

In spite of the many topics that were proposed in the field of media literacy, the results of some research indicate that the educational system has not played an effective role in improving the level of media literacy (Solouki et al., 2018). On the other hand, the results of some studies showed that there is no significant difference between physical education specialists in different trends in media literacy, and the media literacy status among physical education specialists is not at a favorable level (Ghasemi et al., 2018). This is while the need to have media literacy is essential for all professionals in today's conditions and it is considered a kind of competitive advantage and personal brand for an individual. Considering the challenges created, this general question was created for the audience that what is the appropriate and valid model of media literacy in women's sports?

Literature review

Sport can be regarded as a tool for social change, a way of enabling mobility and improvement of social status. It also plays an important role in the processes of social inclusion, and alternatively allows for the realism of social exclusion as well. The global political situation and cultural changes in different countries constantly provide new contexts for sociological analysis of gender studies. Underscoring this current is the understanding that the meanings of femininity or masculinity are always in motion (Bruce, 2017). This means that context makes a difference, be it historical time period, national context or culture. Beliefs about femininity and masculinity have been around for a long time and have formed strong and powerful tendencies surrounding societal precedent that can be highly resistant to change (Bruce, 2017). Our different and complex societal customs and norms precede any one individual within it; therefore as a participant within society, a woman must learn how to act based on these prescribed norms.

Women in sport must routinely manage being objectified and sexualized by the media and the general public (Daniels, 2012). Critically reflecting on the sexual objectification of female athletes through the lens of objectification theory allows for further understanding and promotion of research; it may also lead to interventions to improve women's lives in a sociocultural context that sexually objectifies the female body and equates a woman's worth with her body's appearance and sexual functions (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification takes place within social encounters, as well as through an individual's personal interactions with visual media. There is growing evidence documenting the widespread objectification of women in media and the negative correlation of this objectification felt by female viewers (Daniels, 2012).

As Walker and Sartore (2013) discuss, sexism in sport seems to be an impermeable institution. Sexism as a norm is so entrenched within the institution of sport that it is rarely even perceived at a conscious level, and if detected, most consider change impossible because, "that's just the way things are". Ultimately, it needs to be seriously considered whether media outlets believe in sexualizing female athletes as the only means to reach a greater audience, or are they simply catering to pre-existing historical sexist notions of female sport? Female athletes are often forced to balance the emergence of multiple identities that form out of being members of these two different social spheres, each of which demands separate behaviors (Kane et al., 2013). First, she is a female member of society where she must negotiate being female based on the prescribed notions of what feminine behavior entails. Second, her role as an athlete demands an alternative set of behaviors such as being assertive, aggressive, strong, and powerful, characteristics not traditionally associated with females. As both a female and an athlete, a woman must negotiate these two identities as they contribute to her overall sense of self within this male-dominated landscape.

Narratives discussed by Western researchers on the topic of media coverage of sportswomen usually pertain to historical marginalization, trivialization, and feminization of sportswomen (Bruce,

2017).In addition to the unequal types of coverage that female athletes receive, they also receive less overall coverage. Furthermore, evidence has been consistent that the type of coverage that is portrayed is highly sexualized (Scheadler & Wagstasff, 2018).This inaccurate portrayal of female athletes affects society as a whole. If female athletes continue to be portrayed and promoted in ways that emphasize their physical attractiveness over their athletic skills, they will literally and figuratively be stripped of their power not only in sport but in society overall (Kane et al., 2013).

The media and entertainment culture are a growing part of our daily discourse that dictate information about and construct our social identities through framing, enforcing one idea as being more important or acceptable than another (Shaller, 2006). Increasing awareness of the nature of these discourses will allow people to participate actively and knowingly in these ways of thinking. To be understood by their audiences, media workers have had to learn what are "the best sense-making practices in their culture and think within them" (Bruce, 2017). Their success depends on being able to present information that best intersects cultural discourse and how media interpret and represent women's involvement in sport. Through a critical examination of print media, we can transform literacy education into an exploration of the ideological role of language and communication to define relationships of power and domination (Kellner & Share, 2007).

In reviewing the literature, we can conclude that sport is a prominent institution in our society as it draws on and celebrates valued characteristics. These characteristics include respect, hard work, and integrity, but also can be gender categorized and thereby influence our social norms and expectations of others (Ellison, 2017). Women are continuously confronting and defying the many different obstacles that impede equality and advancement for all. This includes challenging the role of the media in representation and objectification of women, defining female athletic identity, defining their professionalism, denouncing sexism in the workplace, and working against the inequality that is present in all facets of life. There is much room to grow and further studies and education are necessary to evoke permanent change and resonance.

Method

The current research is a descriptive-survey type of research and was conducted in the field; In terms of purpose, it is in the category of applied research. In the first stage, the qualitative method of content analysis was used to build the model, and the descriptive-analytical quantitative method was used to test the model, and the correlation type based on the structural equation model was used. The mixed research method was sequential exploratory, the tool used in this research was compiled after conducting interviews and reaching theoretical saturation; which included 8 open questions and questionnaire questions including 45 items and in the form of two main components of media literacy and professional ethics, in the form of five Likert options (Strongly agree, 5 points to Strongly disagree, 1 point).

In the first part (qualitative) to conduct field interviews, the statistical population of the research was experts and faculty members in the field of media management in sports from Razi Universities

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of Kermanshah, Payam Noor Tehran Center, Al-Zahra University, Tehran and Shahid Beheshti University, Kurdistan University and Gilan University. Also, there were national female athletes who had championship titles at the international level in various sports (karate, swimming, athletics, taekwondo, etc.), who were selected purposefully and snowballed (25 interviews with 25 people continued until theoretical saturation). In the second part (quantitative), the statistical population of the research is female national athletes in various sports fields (members of the women's national volleyball team, members of the judo team, members of the women's national karate team, members of the athletics team) and also female students of post-graduate studies in the field of physical education. They have formed in universities (Razi Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Gilan, Shahid Beheshti, Al-Zahra, Azad University of Kermanshah) and finally 450 correct questionnaires were analyzed.

The index of the KMO test measures the adequacy of sampling and the value of 0.74 was obtained for this test, which indicates the appropriate adequacy of the samples. In the qualitative part of the research, believability, transferability and verifiability were used to check validity. For this purpose, in order to check the reliability, the researcher used the confirmation of the research process by eight experts, as well as the use of two coders to code several interview samples to ensure the uniformity of the coders' point of view. Also, in order to check the transferability of the opinions of three experts who did not participate in the research, they were consulted about the findings of the research. Also, in order to check the verifiability, all the interviews were recorded and reviewed at the required times.

In the qualitative part of the research, specialized committees were used to check the reliability. In addition, in the current research, the intra-subject agreement method was used to calculate the reliability of the conducted interviews. The reliability between two coders using the formula is 94.6%, which is higher than 60%, so the reliability of coding is confirmed.

Reliability and validity in the quantitative section are calculated using the fit of the measurement model and the structural model. Regarding content validity, CVI and CVR forms of validity were used and the validity was confirmed. According to the number of professors (8 people), the value of CVR was 0.80 and the value of CVI was more than 0.77; Therefore, the content validity of our tool was confirmed. Divergent and convergent validity were also measured.

Results

Table 1. Secondary coding and formation of core code categories of media literacy.

Row	Categories	Concepts (open codes)
1	Source of information	Visual media
2		Audio media
3		Virtual media
4		Word of mouth information
5		Media selection based on personal experience
6		Media selection based on friends' recommendations

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Row	Categories	Concepts (open codes)
7	Media selection	Media selection based on family recommendation
8	criteria	Choosing the media according to the desired goals
9		Media selection based on accessibility
10		Separation of yellow media from reliable media
11	Media analysis	Acquiring and analyzing the goals of media creators and operators
12		Analysis of media messages
13		Separating fake messages from real messages
14		Discover the hidden content of messages
15		Discovering media content by checking other people's opinions
16		Interpretation of media messages
17		Media analysis based on the degree of communication with the producer of the media message

Table 2. Secondary coding and formation of core code categories of professional ethics.

Row	Categories	Concepts (open codes)
1		Honesty in the speech of athletes
2	Honesty and truth	Honesty in the contract
3		Honesty in paying insurance
4		Responsibility for team results
5		Responsibility for your performance
6	Responsibility	Responsibility towards teammates
7		Responsibility for the teachers' learning
8		Responsibility for the interests of club managers
9	Loyalty	Loyalty to the team
10		Loyalty to fans
11		Adherence to the cultural principles of society
12		Adherence to the religious principles of society
13		Compliance with the customary norms of society regarding clothing
14	Compliance with social values	Compliance with the customary norms of society regarding behavior in private life
15		Observing the values of respect for elders
16		Respect for coaches
17		Avoiding smoking
18	Compliance with collective	Not spreading unethical behavior in cyber space
19	ethics	Observance of fair play on the field
20		Direct communication with fans
21		Respect to the judges and executive staff of the competitions
22		Thanks to the fans
23		Avoid using inappropriate words
24		Observance of discipline in exercises
25		Attending trainings and competitions on time
26		Sympathy with the fans
27		Sympathy with teammates
28		Respecting the opponent on and off the field

Finally, 45 conceptual codes and 8 main categories were extracted.

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Selective encoding (optional)

According to the theoretical foundations of the research, as well as the opinions of the interviewees, as well as the predetermined goals of the research, the investigation of the role of media literacy on the development of the principles of professional ethics of women athletes is the final result of the research model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Selective coding of the model of the role of media literacy on the development of the principles of professional ethics of female athletes.
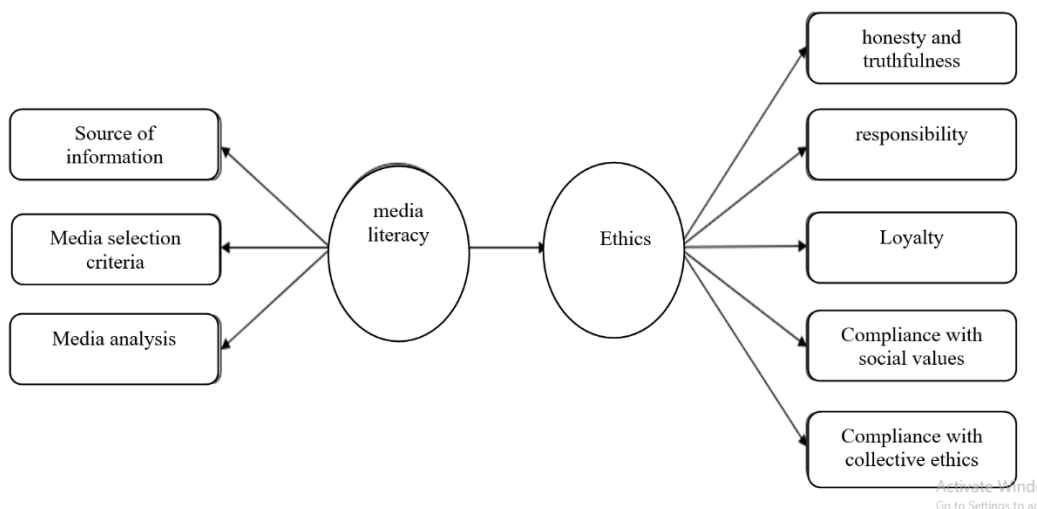
To check the fit of measurement models, three criteria of reliability, convergent validity and divergent validity are used, and the reliability itself is done in three ways by checking factor loading coefficients, Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability (Table 3).

Table 3. Fit of the measurement model.

| Components	Cronbach's alpha	Reliability/combination	AVE	Media literacy	Professional ethics
1. Media literacy	0/80	0/78	0/65	0/81	
2. Professional ethics	0/74	0/79	0/71	0/23	0/84

The results showed that the coefficients of factor loadings are more than 0.55. Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.7, composite reliability is greater than 0.7, and AVE value is greater than 0.6. Also, divergent validity in both methods, the first method (the questions related to each variable are more correlated with that variable than with other variables) and the second method (another important criterion that is characterized by divergent validity is the degree of relationship of a variable with its questions in comparison of the relationship of that variable with other variables). Considering the validation and reliability of the research questionnaire through structural equations, the relationships in the research model are examined using PLS software (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Measurement model (checking path coefficients).
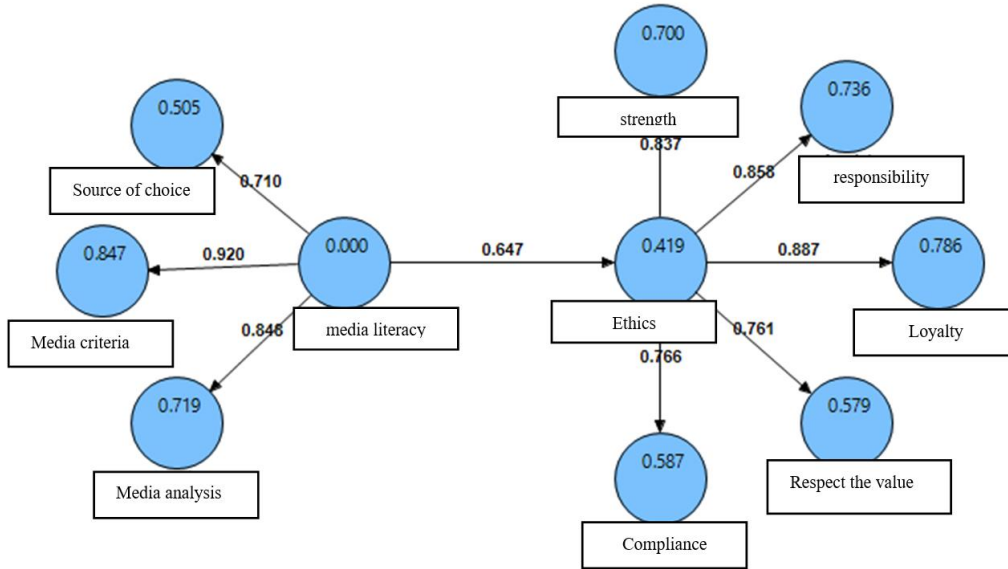
To check the fit of the structural model of the research, several criteria are used, the first and most basic criterion being the coefficients of significance (T). If the value of these numbers exceeds 1.96, it indicates the correctness of the relationship between the variables and as a result, the confirmation of the relationships in the research model at the confidence level of 0.95. Of course, it should be noted that the numbers only show the accuracy of the relationship and the intensity of the relationship between the variables cannot be measured with it.

Figure 3. The structural model of the research (examination of significance coefficients).
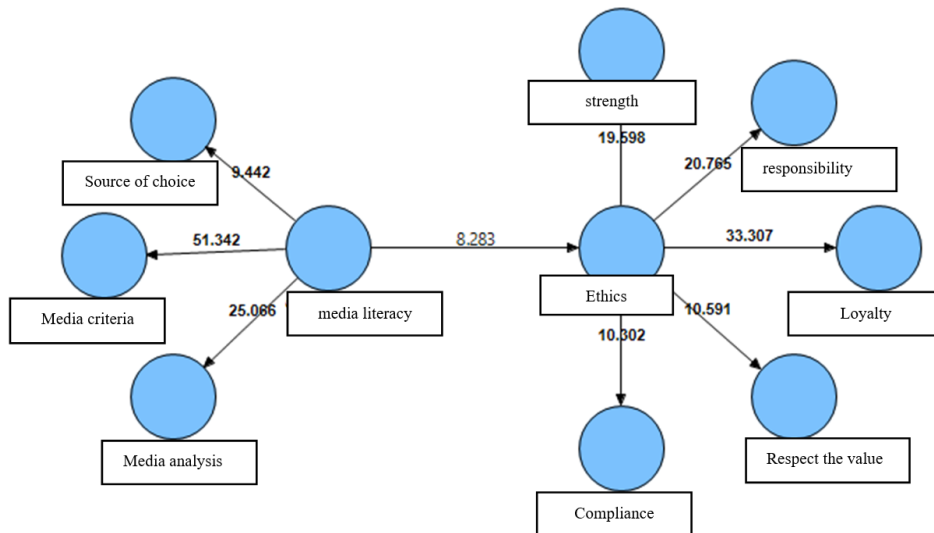
R^2 value for exogenous or independent variables is equal to zero. In this part, the value of R^2 for the main endogenous variable is more than 0.33 and equal to the average value. Q^2 value: This

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criterion for the main variable (professional ethics) endogenous to the model is more than 0.32, which shows that the exogenous (independent) variable is strong in predicting the dependent variable and the structural model fits well. It confirms the research once again.

Overall model fit: The overall model includes both measurement and structural model parts, and by confirming its fit, the fit check is completed in one model. According to the three values of 0.01, 0.25 and 0.36, which are introduced as weak, medium and strong values for partial least square fit, in the main variable, more than 0.36 was obtained, which indicates a strong overall fit. It has a model. Next, in table number three, the relationships in the research model are examined.

According to the results of the interviews conducted with the experts as well as the analysis and coding of the research data, it was found that media literacy includes the source of information acquisition, criteria for media selection and media analysis. Professional ethics also include honesty and truthfulness, responsibility, loyalty, compliance with social values and compliance with collective ethics. According to the value of T-Value, which are all values greater than 2.58, Therefore, at the level of 0.99, each of the components of the source of information, criteria for media selection and media analysis, honesty and truthfulness, responsibility, loyalty, compliance with social values and compliance with collective ethics are among the components of media literacy and professional ethics. It was also found that media literacy has an effect on professional ethics (a value greater than 1.96 was obtained (8.283).

Discussion and conclusion

Man lives in a world where the quality of the received information greatly affects his choices and consequences, and also plays a decisive role in his capacity to enjoy basic freedoms and his abilities to determine his destiny and development. This phenomenon has caused the evaluation of communication and information reliability, without violating the right to freedom of expression and access to information, to become a challenge (Hardy, 2015).

 Sport can be an amazing arena to learn about oneself, but it can also be a dangerous place to navigate. Sexualized images of female athletes encourage adolescent girls and women to self-objectify and focus on their physical appearance rather than their athletic ability, and women themselves already tend to self-objectify in response to exposure to sexually objectifying media (Daniels, 2012). A feedback loop is created, where the image creates reality and reality creates the image.

Within today's society, women face sexism, lack of opportunity, historical and hegemonic stereotypes, and societal expectations based solely on their gender. Women in sport face all these same issues with the addition of a constant internal battle regarding what they are willing to sacrifice and compromise in order to further their competitive career. According to Kane (2013), we should "never underestimate the significance of sports in preserving male power and privilege as well as the media's role in that regard". Media representations reproduce dominant ideologies

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and practices, which systematically position sport as a male terrain, a "cultural center of masculinity" whereby women's athletic achievements are either trivialized and marginalized or ignored altogether (Kane et al., 2013). The duality embedded in identity construction and maintenance has been studied in a variety of sport settings, and although this has allowed researchers to identify default settings of mainstream media, it has little impact on shifting these settings or the discourses that inform them. Kane et al. (2013) found through their research that female athletes described oppositional feelings about their multiple identities, expressing pride in their sporty, muscular bodies while sharing apprehensions about how these same bodies would be interpreted when placed in social contexts outside of sports. Media portrayals of female athletes rarely focus solely on their athletic accomplishments; instead, the focus is often on physical appearance, femininity, or heterosexuality. Keating (2017) proposes that "these practices are so pervasive, and they have become so deeply woven into the fabric of the marketing and production of women's sport, that most consumers do not notice, let alone question, their insidious nature". Advancing women's sport today proves to be a vicious cycle; increasing media exposure, sponsorships, and viewers seem only to be possible when female athletes degrade themselves or their sport, by focusing on their sexuality, and the physical appeal of their sport. Therefore, the importance of female athletes who push boundaries and demonstrate that women can be strong, muscular, beautiful, and successful is important for advocating the female athletic image. If females continue to be represented and promoted in ways that emphasize their physical attractiveness over their athletic ability, they will be stripped of their power not only in sport but in society as well.

Gender norms are often based on appearances; what appears masculine, and what appears feminine. Appearance is what gives humans a first impression. Thus it is imperative that our appearances project the image we wish to impart on others. The literature proposes that traditionally feminine appearances are those that are soft and pretty, with observable behaviors that display quietude and submissiveness. Therefore, the appearance of a female athlete is elementally different from what society has prescribed. Female athletes may be physically muscular, wear shorts or pants, get dirty, or be aggressive. This appearance makes them different and often leads them to be criticized or labeled with masculine traits and their sexuality questioned. Stereotypes of appearance are the main factor in determining whether a sport is considered masculine or feminine. As a result, sexualizing female athletes sends the message that physical appearance is more important than athletic performance, and dictates which sports are more feminine appropriate, resulting in a hierarchy of sports. It is imperative that all women continue to challenge constructions of femininity that divorce femininity from strength and power.

My interpretation of the images and their partnered articles in each case study reveal that female professional athletes have to contend with dated societal expectations while maintaining traditional feminine appearances and attitudes while acting within the sphere of sports. Female

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athletes are framed by their status as both athletes and women, their athletic identity overshadowed by either their physical appearance or caregiving maternal abilities (Hardy, 2015).

Female athletes are held to different standards and expectations than that of their male counterparts. Raw emotion and competitive drive are part of competition and play, but once the final whistle blows, these female athletes must return to their femaleness in shows of sportsmanship and socially prescribed and acceptable norms. Elite female athletes become the representatives for all women in sport and must behave in ways that will allow for the promotion and advancement of female sport to continue and thrive. This perpetuates the notion that female athletes feel the need to adopt multiple identities, catering to socially constructed concepts of femininity and sport in order to be successful.

One of the research components is media analysis; A person who is media literate understands the nature of the roles and functions of media and information providers in society. Media-literate citizens can check who are representative of the media and information providers and who are not, how they present themselves, what this presentation means, and which media and information providers promote certain points of view. Inevitably, considering the media life, the quality of received information affects our choices and its consequences; The media literacy program provides the necessary ability to interact with information and media platforms in order to create purposeful communication based on information needs for citizens and encourages them to research and search and not to give up and passivity in front of messages. Media literacy is required for all citizens and plays an important role for younger generations, both as citizens and as contributors to society. The basic factor in understanding that a society has an acceptable media literacy is to pay attention to the media literacy education of that society. Media literacy needs to become a serious demand for society's citizens through public culture and be pursued as an energetic movement (Memari et al., 2021). On the other hand, literacy is the key to our entry into the world and makes us know better about life and society. During the recent years, many changes have been made in our view about literacy and today we are aware of the importance of literacy more than before.

Another category of research is observing social values and observing collective ethics; Establishing communication arouses the feeling of sociality in humans and in establishing this communication, a person acquires new skills and new ways of thinking, until as the organizations expand, human communication takes on a more complex form. By praising moral athletes and prohibiting unethical behavior, the media can increase moral behavior, and the media, while playing an essential role in providing information, is one of the accessible and cost-effective sources for sports that provide all the details with the desired quality to the audience, therefore, Receiving appropriate and desirable sports messages among the huge number of messages requires media literacy. In this context, media literacy is considered as one of the most important phenomena of the information age in order to help the audience in increasing their level of information and

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awareness, gaining the necessary insight and knowledge to interpret messages. However, media literacy may be a suitable solution to increase the ethical behavior of athletes.

Inequality and sexualization of women is not isolated to the world of sport but rather is experienced in every facet of our society on a daily basis. Globally, women are objectified and degraded based on their gender, and therefore their supposed inherent skill set and ability. Even though femininity is produced, constructed, and experienced differently across bodies, hegemonic notions still frame depictions of feminine bodies (Boothroyd et al., 2017). We need to move forward by working to change the classification of 'female athlete' to simply 'athlete' in order to create spaces free from contested terrain. It may be a long and tough road to alter the focal point of 'sex sells' portrayed by the media industry. However, it is vital that we think critically to consider the difference that could be made in power, knowledge and desire just by how athletes and society address each other and themselves. Encouraging this mindset provides hope for upcoming generations of female athletes that their dreams are valid, and that talent and hard work is enough in order for a female to be successful in their sport.

There are parallels in the pathways women have taken towards equal education and equality in sport. Women lacked a place in education for a very long time and dominant contributions to the education field were disregarded because they came from women. Education can still be considered gender bound and biased, as is sport. As individuals, we need to strive to think without bias. Gender should make no difference in the ability of a person to contribute to any facet of society and culture.

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