

Working in a male-dominated universe: Stereotypical attitudes towards Greek female sports journalists

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the existence, the nature and the penetration degree of stereotypical behaviours in the field of sports journalism in Greece emphasizing on the perspective of female sports journalists. Semi-structured interviews with nine female sports journalists who had at least five years of experience were conducted, recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data was analyzed by the principles of thematic analysis. Four themes (and also four subthemes) emerged: 1) Stereotypical and [mainly] sexist attitudes towards female sports journalists, 2) The future presence of female in sports journalism, 3) The difficulties in the workplace and 4) Sports audience's treatment of the female sports journalists. The findings suggest that there are stereotypical and mainly sexist attitudes and behaviours in the profession of sports journalism. It is still considered to be a male-dominated field where there is no place for women.

Keywords: Sports journalism; women sports journalists; stereotypical behaviours; sexism; Greece; qualitative method.

1 Introduction

It is commonly accepted that the field of sports journalism in many countries has traditionally been «a male stronghold» (Franks & O'Neil, 2016, p. 7), and generally, there was an ideology that sport was considered to be a male “feud / fief” (Norbert & Eric, 1994). Nowadays, female sports journalists do not face the same difficulties compared to those that encountered the first women who had entered this profession (Eberhard & Myers, 1988) since they have managed to penetrate and have an increased presence in the male-dominated area of sports journalism; however, the acceptance and respect their male colleagues possess is not yet achieved. (Hardin & Shain, 2005). Instead, they are treated with hesitation, harassed by male athletes or other leaders / chiefs who are unwilling to accept their presence (Cann & Mohr, 2001) or are opposed in being judged by a woman (Miloch et al., 2005); this behaviour is mainly detected in “men's” sports (Ann & Rodriguez, 2000). The dominant position held by male sports journalists is not only expressed by the given opportunity to present and report the most significant athletic events but also, by their continuous reproduction of stereotypical attitudes towards their female colleagues. The vast majority of studies on the working conditions of female sport journalists has been conducted in North America and Europe. Little is known about other socio-economic cultural contexts, like Greece, which has been characterized as semi-collectivistic. Another aspect that differentiates Greece from other

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countries is public's high interest in sports news consumption. This interest is reflected by the large number of sports media. According to recent data, Greece holds the world record of publishing daily sports newspapers (Spiliopoulos, 2020). At the end of 2020, six daily sports newspapers were circulating nationwide (<https://www.frontpages.gr>, 2020), and one (Metrosport) in Northern Greece and Athens. Furthermore, three sports radio stations were broadcasting in Thessaloniki and one in Athens, while the public "ERA Sports 101.8" was transmitting nationally. In addition, many sports channels were delivered over the Nova and Cosmote TV OTT platforms, while hundreds of sports websites flooded the Internet (Panagiotopoulou, 2013). Thus, the purpose of the present study was to extend the existing literature by examining the degree to which female sports journalists' encounter stereotypical behaviours in their workplace.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Gender as a social construct and as a criterion of professional hierarchy

Harding (1986) defined gender as "an analytic category within which humans think about and organize their social activity rather than as a natural consequence of sex difference, or even merely as a social variable assigned to individual people in different ways from culture to culture" (p. 17). The term "gender order" was introduced by Matthews (1984) and is referred as the constructed model of a dominant relationship between men and women as well as between the relative definitions / meanings of masculinity and femininity. According to Connell (1992) "the gender order itself is the site of relations of dominance and subordination, struggles for hegemony, and practices of resistance" (p. 735).

Significant attention has recently been paid to the characterization of organizations and professions based on gender. Scholars, engaged in the gender theory, emphasize that the structure of large institutions, workplace included, is depended on the gender, in ways that men are usually given specific advantages over women (Lachover, 2005). According to them, gender is not a distinct phenomenon that is simply inherited to individuals due to their biological status but is determined by specific factors such as family, social influences or work environment. For example, an individual may express femininity in a specific social environment while in another one which is related with power and social status, the same person may reveal masculinity. Leading to the conclusion that certain series of interactions determine the gender behaviour as well as the definition of a specific gender.

Researchers involved in the study of the relationship between gender and work have noted that gender holds a prominent role in the workplace, without of course being necessary, resulting to conclusions based on related stereotypes (Lachover, 2005). A stereotype is "a generalization about a category of people that is negative and / or misleading. Stereotypes are used to predict and explain the behaviour of a social category; in doing so they obscure the variability within such categories" (Davis & Harris, 2003, p. 239). For instance, most surveys on the relation of gender and consumption focus exclusively on females. However, this shows that people always have a complete and obvious gender identity in advance: women are women and men are men; yet, this perception presents man as the normal sex and woman the deviant one (Ang & Hermes, 2016). Women should not be confronted as simple, natural collective entities with specific role and identity, inherent in the biological category of the female sex. Women, like a social class, are an inextricably indeterminate, fluid category. The gender identity of a subject is diverse and at the same time partial, ambiguous and heterogeneous,

while it is involved in a continuous, dynamic process of construction and deconstruction, confirmation and challenge.

2.2 The ideological waves of feminism

Feminism studies are classified into three distinct ideological waves (Liberal, Socialist and Radical feminism); that help us understand how feminist thinking perceives the media (Van Zoonen, 2016). For the purpose of the present research, the approach of liberal feminism was adopted. Therefore, the interpretations of our results which were drawn from this theoretical perspective are presented below.

Liberal feminism is also known as the "equal rights" or "reformist" feminism. According to Van Zoonen (2016) it is considered a somewhat conservative form of feminism, although its roots originate from liberalism. Liberal feminism argues that the media perpetuate stereotypes of sexual behaviour since they reflect dominant social values and because these stereotypes influence the male producers. It encourages women to take on non-traditional roles and occupations and to develop masculine qualities in order to gain power. In addition, it suggests that women should achieve equality comparing to men in a society, by penetrating in areas dominated by men, and furthermore to acquire authority. The media can assist this procedure, by presenting more women and men in non-traditional roles and by not using sexist language / messages (Van Zoonen, 2016). Criticism on liberal feminism, concerns the emphasis on the reversal of female roles, which results in the creation of a new stereotype i.e. the "superwoman". This consists of the woman who follows her career, is independent, confident, a successful mother and husband and always beautiful, just like she was a young girl. The consequence of which is those who follow the model of the perfect woman tend to experience severe symptoms of exhaustion and depression (Van Zoonen, 2016). In Media, female journalists have increased significantly in the United States and are currently more than men. According to Creedon (1989) this "is not interpreted as superior power or influence for women: instead, it led to a decline in salaries and status for the field" (p. 3).

3 Literature review

3.1 The stereotypes faced by female sports journalists during their work

Scientific literature highlights that in the past, sports journalism was a male-dominated field (Norbert & Eric, 1994) while it has identified numerous acts of discrimination against female journalists. Although it has been recorded that female sports journalists recently do not face the same difficulties compared to the first women in the profession (Eberhard & Myers, 1988). However, research shows that they are still treated with hesitation or harassment by male athletes or other leaders who are bothered by their presence and critique (Cann & Mohr, 2001; Miloch et al., 2005). This is observed mainly in "men's" sports (Ann & Rodriguez, 2000). In addition, female sports journalists have been reported as victims of sexual harassment by males' sports fans, an example of which an incident that occurred in June 2018 during the Soccer World Cup in Russia (Caron, 2018). In men's locker rooms, a strong male hegemony is apparent and women are becoming the target of exclusion, ridicule, sexist behaviour and sexual assault (Bruce, 2016; Creedon, 2003; Kane & Disch, 1993; Lachover, 2005). In addition, studies show that women journalists feel that they need to be especially careful about their attitudes to

avoid stereotypes such as "seducer" or "lesbian", by which they are stigmatized (Hardin, & Shain, 2006, p. 331).

3.2 The femininity as a mean in sports journalism

The professional ability of a female sports journalist / reporter seems to be questioned more often than of a male journalist when an athlete is dissatisfied with a criticism (Bruce, 2016). Female journalists are also subject to arrogant behaviour by athletes and "most of them have been the subject of seductive behavior" (Schoch, 2013, p. 101).

However, being a woman is not necessarily a disadvantage when working in sports journalism. Especially in interactions with fact-checking sources, they may present an advantage in accessing them. Miloch's et al. (2005) study showed that women journalists in the American daily press are privileged in relation to their male colleagues when it comes to accessing sources. Furthermore, female American sports journalists use their femininity to gather information from their sources and have exclusive news (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Some sports journalists also make use of their feminine nature and are willing to flirt and seduce their sources so as to get more and better information. "To a certain extent, yeah, you have to play on the Seduction / feminine side, but then on the other hand, you don't overdo it because they'll immediately put you in that category" refers a participant in Schoch's (2013, p. 104) research. Others endure the non-sexual abuse by male athletes and sports writers which is more obvious (Steiner, 2009). Iker Casillas' example with the journalist Sara Carbonero, who later became his wife, is very recent (https://www.ethnos.gr/lifestyle/40109_sara-karmonero-love-story-me-ton-kasigias-kai-htypima-tis-moiras).

From the above-mentioned studies is derived that stereotypes about women journalists are maintained, as they defy the belief that their motivation for joining sports journalism was not professional, but apparently motivated by their eagerness to work with male athletes that they find attractive. Schoch (2013) characteristically states that the use of the female stereotype as an "object of seduction" is detrimental to the progress made to prevent sexual harassment (p. 103).

3.3 Problem definition

From the literature review it is obvious that the field of sports journalism is a male stronghold, with numerous acts of discrimination against women journalists. Therefore, the present study was based on the findings of international studies, and to their knowledge that until this point there are not any published researches on this issue about Greece, especially through qualitative approach. Therefore, in order to fill this research void, the current study focused on investigating whether there are stereotypical behaviours against women sports journalists and their extent, , from perspective of the participants themselves. To achieve this, the documented testimonies from the professional experiences of women sports journalists, in one of the first studies on the Greek literature (Spiliopoulos, 2020) were examined. The research questions «will be, to a significant extent, prompted and stimulated by the literature review» (Bryman, 2017, p. 416). Based on the theoretical background and according to the ontological and epistemological viewpoint of the researchers, as well as their academic interests, the following research questions were formed in order to investigate and explain the phenomenon (Willig, 2015):

RQ1: What kind of difficulties do women sports journalists experience / handle during their work?

RQ2: According to the views of women sports journalists, are there stereotypical behaviours in the workplace of sports journalism? If so, what are they and to

what extent do they exist a) by their male colleagues, b) by male news sources and c) by the audience to which they are addressed?

4 Methodology

4.1 Selection of research method

A qualitative approach was adopted, and data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. Researchers who are involved in qualitative methods tends to be concerned with meanings and words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2017); they are interested in the way people perceive their experiences and consequently, how they comprehend and interpret the world (Willig, 2015). This research strategy aims to answer the questions of “how” and “why” as well as interpret the meanings given to the events by the participants themselves. Its advantage, as a technique, lies in the fact that it helps the researcher to understand in depth the subjective perceptions, experiences and beliefs of the interviewees in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 1998). Besides, qualitative research is related to the nature of the research questions and aims at the generation of “descriptions and [possible] explanations” (Willig, 2013, p. 59), as well as at the interpretation of what people say, yet without predicting them.

Aiming to answer the research questions, Elliott, Fischer and Rennie’s (1999) guidelines were adopted, in the framework to provide the journalists with the opportunity to narrate their experiences in the workplace, thus explaining the phenomenon under study (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). This process has been successfully followed by Spiliopoulos (2020) in a similar study in Greece. The data obtained from the transcribed interviews were analyzed employing the thematic analysis’ method by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019). According to which, the “theme” is concerned with a particularly prominent and important issue that is included in the contents and is identified as a recurring pattern in the data set that derive from the statements of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

4.2 Participants

For the purposes of the research, a sample of nine female journalists was selected following a minimum requirement of at least five years of professional experience in sports media and the prerequisite to own working experience in all media types i.e. television, radio, newspaper and website. The selection of the interviewees was made from the population of working sports journalists in Greece. Initially, it was purposive, and then it was enhanced with the snowball sampling method (Flowers et al., 1998). Therefore, the selection of individuals in the sample was combined and inductive (Ando, Cousins, & Young, 2014; Moritz, 2014), among individuals who share some common characteristics or know other peers.

4.3 Data collection instrument

Data were collected through individual interviews using a semi-structured guide (Bryman, 2017). The semi-structured interview is proposed for research in sports, in the media and sports journalists (Spiliopoulos, 2020). The offered flexibility to adjust the series of questions according to the researcher’s judgment and the interviewee, is considered its advantage. The semi structured guide of the study consisted of four main issues containing questions that prompt interviewees to: a) report whether they have

experienced stereotypical behaviours in their work, b) describe the position of women in sports journalism, c) list the difficulties they face in the workplace and, d) record the stance of the sports audience towards them. Prior to the conduction of the interviews, all the participants were informed for the purposes of the research, for the scientific ethics and their anonymity was assured. The interviews were conducted in October 2019 and a non-guiding approach was followed, as the questions should not manipulate the respondents, while at the same time they should be encouraged to freely develop their narratives on their experiences (Mason, 2011). The geographical distance between the participants and the researchers did not allow face-to-face meetings, and therefore, six interviews were conducted by telephone calls (Bryman, 2017; Willig, 2015). In total, they lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. They were recorded digitally, with the consent of each interviewee, and then they were transcribed verbatim in Microsoft Word Professional Plus 2010, using a simplified version of the Jeffersonian system (2004) and coded as J1 to J9 (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Subsequently, their contents were carefully verified, by repeatedly listening to the relevant audio files (Spiliopoulos, 2020). Upon completion of the investigation, the audio material was deleted.

4.4 Data analysis

For the purposes of the present study the proposals of Braun and Clarke (2006), Creswell (2009), Tsiolis (2020) and Willig (2015) for data analysis were followed in a process of methods triangulation so as to achieve higher credibility. At the same time, a scientific reflection of researchers was conducted (Bryman, 2017). The analysis process was inductive (Ando et al., 2014) and began after the transcript of the first four interviews, while the rest were ongoing. The derived data were read to get acquainted with and at the same time notes were kept and some initial codes were assigned. Coding refers to the "ascribing of meaning or information in parts of data" (Iosifidis, 2008, p. 179). This was followed by the gradually development of a code list, which included the initial coding of the data. A total of three hundred and eighteen (318) codes were generated, expressing basic concepts and ideas of the data. In this procedure, only codes that emerged and developed as a result of the data were used, several of them *in vivo*, i.e., derived from the phrases of the participants themselves (Willig, 2015), while there was not made any use of pre-determined codes, that might have limited or excluded important aspects which were mentioned by the participants and were not provided for.

In the next stage, secondary codes were assigned, or the original ones were revised where necessary. The new codes reached two hundred and forty-seven (247) and after their grouping, seventy-seven (77) categories arised, which led to the overall meta-themes that emerged afterwards. Although the analysis was considered sufficient after the sixth interview with female journalists from Athens, three additional –face to face - interviews were conducted with female journalists from Thessaloniki (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), intending to improve the findings and to bring about theoretical saturation. Achieving a saturation point in the thematic analysis is important for the validity of the study according to Ando et al. (2014). However, the additional interviews did not add any new information / data to the existing ones, nor did they differentiate them (Guest et al., 2006). The research questions were then re-adapted to match the findings and to be sufficiently based on the data (Spiliopoulos, 2020). The data extracted were in depth and detailed, thick, and complete. Consequently, since it was ascertained that the extracted data was scientifically strong (Braun & Clarke, 2019), the interviews were ceased and those scheduled for alternatively discovering new data were not conducted (Guest et al., 2006).

The next step concerned the revision and improvement of the prospective themes, during which some of them had to be compacted, others to be rejected or some to be analyzed in individual topics. At the end of this process, a satisfactory picture of the composition of the different thematic areas was formed, of the way they fit together and what they “say” about the data. Then, to finalize the thematic units, subthemes were created in the cases where the original ones were considered extensive and complex, in order to facilitate the drawing of conclusions and help the reader. In these cases, each of the subthemes dealt with relatively different but at the same time directly intertwined aspects of the wider subject area. This stage was completed with the attribution of definitions and the naming of the four (4) in total final themes as well as their subthemes, four (4) in total, too. Throughout this process, excerpts from the data were transferred to each subject area, thus providing a clear understanding for each area, based both on the statements of the participating journalists and on the number of samples that mentioned each aspect.

A conducted research is obliged to present a report on the data that replies to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thus, the last step concerned the academic report authoring on the analysis, with discussion and interpretation (Flowers, et al., 1998), with direct and reflective involvement of the researchers. In this case, the procedures followed or suggested by various authors were adopted (Creswell, 2009; Willig, 2008; 2015). In particular, the data from the transcribed interviews were analyzed by the principles of Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012). In the final report, only the most important excerpts from the participants' accounts were included, as they were identified as typical of the patterns identified in the data. The interpretations of the results explain the various aspects of the phenomenon under investigation, giving answers to the questions of how? and why? (Willig, 2015) and were drawn mainly from the literature review as well as the feminist theoretical perspective that has been aforementioned. For the purposes of the present academic report, extracts have been translated from Greek to English by the authors. A native English speaker ratified the translation, as well back translation was also used. As Figgou (2020) notices, a “translation unavoidably involves the danger of losing subtleties of meaning” (p. 206).

4.5 Assessment of the data quality

To ensure the reliability of the research, a “respondent validation” (Bryman, 2017, p. 420) was sought, to confirm that the findings and impressions of the researchers match the viewpoints of the participants. One of them, confirmed the evaluation of the research (Willig, 2015, p. 507-512). In addition, respondent validation enhanced the validity of the study (Low, 2019). Furthermore, an independent analyst provided feedback and pointed out some weaknesses of the study, contributing to the formulation of “an accurate, comprehensive, thick and extended descriptive report” as suggested by Ramsok (2018, p. 22). Consequently, the above detailed presentation of the research course enables its “audit trail”, and therefore, constitutes another factor of its documentation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In addition, it allows readers to identify the researchers' logic and helps other researchers to “determine whether the study’s findings may be relied upon as a platform for further inquiry” (Carcary, 2009, p. 16). In conclusion, the criteria for validity and reliability, as set by Yardley (2000) and revised by Tracy (2010), are considered to be met.

5 Results

5.1 Theme 1: Stereotypical and sexist attitudes towards sports journalists

Most women journalists reported that they have lived experiences and continue to experience stereotyped behaviours in their work environment, mainly sexist, performed by their male colleagues, by male athletes, but also by the media themselves.

Sexist behaviour by male sports journalists

J1 (Journalist 1) characteristically stated that a large percentage of male sports journalists in their conversations, which she can listen to, "repeat by name for women, that they have reached high posts using their vagina"! J2 added: *"Such sexist jokes are constantly heard in the newsroom and on social media"*. They also comment that *"because you are a woman, you have been given the information and talked to"* (J3). On the contrary, as far as men are concerned, no one has said for example *"he is the owner's chick"* when someone gets a promotion. J4 also knows very well the mentality of her male colleagues, who easily present *"aggressive sexual attitude"*, while for example and contrary to the previously said (J3) when a woman gets promoted, they say that *"the boss liked her"* (J6). J6 faced the sexist behaviour of a much older male sports journalist, while she was at the age of 20: *"There was an inside joke that whoever went on a trip overseas was going to brothels / prostitutes to get away from his wife and they all made this fun of each other [...] So, as we were returning from the trip what was the question, they asked me and then they laughed? "Did you fuck"? That was the question, one word [...] Someone close to getting his pension literally said it to me, for fun [...] and I say to him "is that why you go abroad, to fuck?"*

On the other hand, J9 stated that she never faced *"sexist behaviour from any colleague"*, while J7 said that the fact that she got married and had *"a family with a husband from the same workplace"* helped her to avoid such issues.

Stereotypical behaviour by male sports writers

According to the participants in the research, male sports journalists easily criticize their female colleagues (J4) and strongly question their journalistic skills: *"I have had the chance to have an exclusive report on which they wasted time double-checking it and thus lost their exclusivity"* revealed J5. *"The stereotypes are in soccer"* said J7, since there is competition, which is the reason that *"they very rarely give it to women [to cover it], especially when it is of a high league"* (J9). J6 agrees with the stereotypical perceptions of men of sports reporting, as well as J8, who stated that she considers it unfair to fall *"a victim of their inferiority complex"*. Consequently, women sports journalists are limited to the less popular sports (J5).

Contrary to the above, J2 claimed that she was treated better by the men of the field compared to her colleagues, as she had a famous surname from her relative who was a distinguished athlete and this helped her survive in the professional environment: *"Because they knew him too many people I dealt with on a daily basis, athletes I reported to and colleagues older than me [...] I was treated more favorably"*. Positive findings are being made by J9, who realizes that she is now respected, while at the beginning she was facing *"definitely a challenge"*.

Sexist behaviour by male athletes

There are several journalists who have been sexually harassed by male athletes in the course of their work: *"I had a meeting with a [she mentions the team's name] basketball player [...] while waiting outside the court for the interview [...] he grabbed me by the*

hand into the locker room, he showed me 5 of his teammates and told me 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 you do not want them", said J1. Also, J2, during an interview with a well-known athlete, received a "proposal to go out", as well as J6, who revealed that she went for an interview and realized that the "interviewee was obviously making moves on me". J8 on the one hand was the "apple of discord" for an American athlete on one of the social media, who harassed her by sending her "constant messages", and on the other hand, of a "young football player - **obviously because that's what he learned from the other female colleagues** - [emphasis added by the authors] who considered he could impose his opinion on me, taking advantage of his charm". This finding is a direct accusation for the behaviour of some women sport's journalists.

Instead, J9 is more relaxed in dealing with the situation, as she considers that "receiving a flirt [...] is very natural" and has happened to her "either by text messages or by phone calls". For her part, however, as she stated and in contrast to the previously mentioned (J8), she set her limits. Finally, J7 stressed that she puts out as a defense method "a profile which insinuates that the other cannot approach me, I am somewhat inaccessible" so as not to be harassed.

5.1.1 Subtheme 1a: Clothing choices and workplace

Due to the fact that the female journalists who participated in the research experience sexism in their workplace, they stated that they pay special attention to their appearance, as they do not want to provoke additional comments from their male colleagues, nor to embarrass the Media for which they work (J5). Therefore, most of them manage on their own their work clothes choices. Also, as noted, the modest appearance stems from their family upbringing which also was dominated by stereotypical perceptions (J1). That is the reason why they choose to be properly dressed and not provocatively: "So, at work I make sure to go with long sleeves, not to wear a deep décolleté, so that no one can say that I caused it" (J1). The type of clothing that can be considered provocative such as e.g., the mini dress or skirt does not fit in sports shows according to J6, nor does J4 wishes for it, while J2 stated "I do not want the fuss. I am always dressed very sporty, very casual and not feminine".

On the contrary, J3 does not renounce her femininity and stressed that in the medium where she works, in terms of clothing, "there is a line, but always in consultation with us". J7 wants to be unnoticed, so she mentioned "you will not go to a stadium wearing 12-inch heels". In fact, "when it is summer you cannot go with the shorts to the newspaper, when you know that you are with 50 men inside" underlined J9, who nevertheless dresses "modern and sexually".

5.1.2 Subtheme 1b: The impact of stereotypes on the female sports journalists

Most participants feel that they have been negatively affected in terms of their mental state by what they face in their workplace. As J1 characteristically stated, "My personal life has also been affected on many levels [...] and in personal relationships, because [...] you constantly hear sexist comments". J8 stated that bearing this, she has reached "the point of getting sick", while in the past, she carried "all the negativity from work to home". Female sports journalists have also felt the disappointment (J2), the anxiousness about any controversy that may arise by accidental mistakes (J4) and in the end this leads them to "become a brutal girl so that you can face all this" (J5). "In a way you have to become a man too," said J9, while J7, who at first cried because of "reactions and behaviours", also became "tougher" and now she "does not give a shit!"

On the other hand, J7 stated that when a woman is facing difficulties, this does not mean that she should become "a jerk". Finally, J3 stated that she feels "welcome" in her workplace and that no male colleague has ever made her feel bad or uncomfortable.

5.2 Theme 2: The future of female presence in sports journalism

According to the interpretations by most journalists through their experiences, the future for the female presence in sports journalism seems to be anything but hopeful, as long as male hegemony is perpetuating (J9). J1 is "the first female sports journalist in history [of the medium where she works] and the only one", but in reporting that was traditionally practiced by men, which is why she thinks that "things are more difficult". Also, J2 works "only with men" (as well as J7), as always "they are the majority", since "there are no women reporters". As stated by female journalists, the field is entirely male dominated; given the fact that up until now, "in the stadiums they were not accustomed to seeing women" (J3) who are still less in proportion (J5, J6). Soccer reporting was and still is a stronghold of men, perhaps because, as J5 ironically says, it is a sport that "is recognized only by the male and not the female brain".

Two of the participants mentioned that the veteran of sports journalism Vasso Morali, is still the only woman who broadcasted a football match in Greece for television. J4, transferring her experience from abroad, stressed the situations are not better for women in sports reporting in other countries. But there is an improvement and now women are "reporting from the bench, meaning they are inside the courts" (J4) for television and radio, even in very violent sports, such as American football. In contrast to the above, J3, although agreeing that the field of sports journalism is male dominated, nevertheless she considers that "a woman is always welcome in a male-dominated space".

5.2.1 Subtheme 2a: Rivalry between the two sexes

The rivalry between the sexes stems from the fact that women sports journalists are trying to survive in such a male-dominated space as that of sports journalism. Six out of the nine participants in the survey reported experiencing competition from men in their workplace: "In the beginning there is definitely a dispute, there is definitely a competition" said J9, while J1 experienced "all this negativity towards me and the competition". J2 further explained that there is competition "when you see that [a woman] has prospects and that is where the injustice begins". J1 and J3 were in line with the previous viewpoints, adding that the field of journalism is competitive anyway and along with J6 they stated that themselves do not serve journalism in a competitive way in terms of gender. However, it has been reported that competition is greater between men than between the sexes (J1, J2). J6, on the other hand, seems to have been lucky, as she said, for the reason she worked with male colleagues who did not cause her much trouble, with J8 stating that all this, in the end, "does not have any meaning".

5.3 Theme 3: The difficulties in the workplace

All the female journalists claimed that they encounter many difficulties in their workplace in relation to the male gender: "Personally, I was called upon to work much harder than the respective male colleague of mine" stressed J1, who had to prove every day that she even knows the basics, such as what the "offside" [rule] is, so that "I can gradually gain my editor's and then my colleagues' trust ". J2 also testified that "it is difficult for a woman to work as a sports journalist" and that women are in fact obliged to "work twice as much, we will sit longer hours [...] to show that we deserve our pay". J4, J5 and J9

agreed with her, while J6 stated that *"if I was a man I would not have to work more or rather if I was a man, I know I would be paid more"*, with J9 equally agreeing. At the present time J8 does not feel that she must prove *"anything to anyone"*, although this took her many years to understand. J3 revealed that she faced all the adversities of the profession with courage, even during her pregnancy! *"I always said yes to whatever I was asked to do, in the craziest weather conditions, the craziest things regarding time [...] I never put in front: I cannot do it because I am a woman"*. J9 is on the same wavelength (*"I also worked like a mad dog"*). In addition, the financial crisis in Greece in the decade of 2010, brought great unemployment in the industry and now female sports journalists state that they are afraid even to speak so as not to lose their job (J1, J2, J5, J7).

5.3.1 Subtheme 3a: The ambiguous relationships among female sports journalists

Most female sports journalists said that their relationship with their female colleagues does not create problems at work. On the contrary, there is understanding, mutual respect, cooperation, solidarity and sometimes friendship between them (J1, J2, J4, J6, J7, J8, J9). *"Women cooperate better voluntarily and achieve results without a leader that they have to obey out of fear, like men do"*, J1 explained, with J2 adding: *"We women have a much better relationship with each other [...] Men have lots of infighting between them"*. J6 also referred to the Radio section where she works: *"We have the best relations, we understand each other [...] I have not worked in a competitive atmosphere"*.

However, there were serious admissions that women are also competitive with each other in their workplace (J3), especially in television. There, *"there is competition between the girls"*, according to J5. In addition, three of the journalists who participated in the study were also expressed about women who take the side of men and are hostile towards their female colleague (J1): *"I often see too many female colleagues engaging in such comments and discussions, agreeing with men, belittling female colleagues and behaving like men, instead of saying no to talking shade about another colleague without proof"*. Similar words were said by J6 as well as by J9, for whom *"men are more obvious than women"*.

5.4 Theme 4: Sports audience's attitude towards female sports journalists

This theme includes the attitude of the male sports audience towards the texts of women sports journalists. Most women remember in a good way the male audience that follows them and said that they were recognized and respected. *"I had not encountered sexist comments, on the contrary I can say that I had many male fans, who have congratulated me for my reporting"*, said J1, with J3 and J4 remembering only good things, having heard positive comments. *"I was treated with respect"* J4 said, while J5 did not receive any sexist comments.

However, there were four journalists who do not have pleasant memories from the acquaintance with the male sports audience. J2 mentioned comments such as *"what can you tell us, little girl"* and *"leave us alone"* etc.". Most of the comments are not about her job *"but about my gender"* as admitted by J6, while J2 explained that male journalists agree with the viewpoints of the majority, in order to gain the public's acceptance: *"You know that when you satisfy the feelings of the person that reads your work and he is identified with you, you gain more clicks"*. J9, on the other hand, stated that the public does not respect her because she is a woman, so, *"if you write something and they do*

not like it, they will fight you", and J7 adds that *"they finish with the classic [saying] 'just wash the dishes'"*.

6 Discussion-Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to examine the existence, the nature and the penetration degree of stereotypical behaviours in the field of sports journalism in Greece, from the perspective of female sports journalists. Data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed by the principles of thematic analysis and four themes as well as, four subthemes emerged. The limited academic interest regarding the status of the female journalists within the Greek sports journalism field does not allow us to make a comparison with previous studies. Therefore, it leads us to resort to international scientific publications, to compare them with the results of this research (Spiliopoulos, 2020). Moreover, the methodological strategy followed does not allow the generalization of the conclusions, except to the extent that the participants represent the general population (Willig, 2015). However, the choice of the qualitative method offered the possibility, in a field to be investigated, in order to understand, in a first stage, the lived experiences of sports journalists, regarding the issue of stereotypical behaviours they face in their work environment.

According to the analysis of the data collected from the transcribed interviews of women sports journalists, all of them have encountered at some point in their professional careers stereotypical behaviours from their male colleagues. This finding is in accordance with the study of Hyre, Chen, and Larson (2017). These behaviours, have mainly sexist characteristics. These events are not limited to the existence of sexist comments within the professional environment, ie in the editorial rooms. They are also found in conditions of journalistic information retrieval, when the editors communicate, mainly live, with their sources (*"because you are a woman, they gave you the information and spoke to you"*, J3). This point is in line with the findings of the international literature which show that female sports journalists are treated with sexism and are often the object of seductive behaviour (Lachover, 2005; Schoch, 2013). Creedon (2003), as well as Kane and Disch (1993), have described several cases of women being sexually harassed and even attacked by both male sports journalists and male athletes during their work. The consequence of the above is the folding of the sports journalists' femininity, to the extent that the decent clothing choices are a conscious defense strategy. The diligence in the choice of clothing preferences acts as a bulwark against the sexual stigma of the journalists and aims to avoid and limit sexist comments and behaviours, an observation that is consistent with the international literature (Hardin & Shain, 2006). The reference in the book of Fornoff (1993)'s is typical; she described that in order to survive in the world of male-dominated sports journalism in the United States, she would have to *"dress like a nun, drink milk and hide in my room"* (p. 4), a solution she ultimately did not choose (Creedon, 2003).

The perpetuation of sexist attitudes would not have been possible without the reproduction of male hegemony in the journalistic sports field and the position of women as a minority group within it. On the one hand, male hegemony is reproduced with the easier professional progress and occupation of authority positions by men, compared to those of women, which are limited to perform subordinate responsibilities (Kinkema & Harris, 2003). On the other hand, the impact of male dominance in the work environment is reflected in the clear professional discrimination, the preference for reporting on specific and mostly popular sports by men rather than women, which is based on the gender division of sports practices (Eberhard & Myers, 1988). In other words, the notion of the gender distribution and distinction of sports practices in male and female which is

observed in the sports field (Keshkar & Shiroei, 2019), is transferred to the journalistic sports field in a similar way. For women sports journalists to survive in this field, they often adopt masculine behaviours (*"you have to become a man in a way"*, J9), which is also in line with international studies. For example, Fornoff (1993) a female sports journalist, chose to dance with a football team manager, sunbath on a player's yacht, drink beers and socialize with those covered in their report, in an attempt to enter to the masculine world in order to become accepted as one of the guys without ever becoming one.

As emerged from the findings of this study, in this male-dominated universe, the strategies adopted by sports journalists in order to respond to the mental impact of stereotypical behaviours and competitions developed in the professional environment, are classified into two categories. The first one includes solidarity and cooperation strategies between female sports journalists (*"Women cooperate better voluntarily"*, J1 stated, with J6 adding: *"we understand each other"*), in order to overcome the problems and difficulties arising from the stereotypical behaviours that often lead them to end up with severe symptoms of exhaustion and depression (Van Zoonen, 2016). Relatively, J7 cried *"in reactions, in behaviours"*. The second category includes competitions between female journalists, which, although limited, lead a small group of them to join the team of male journalists and to present a negative attitude towards their colleagues. On the other hand, the revelation of J8 (*"obviously because that's what he learned from the other female colleagues"*) reinforces Schoch (2013)'s research on the role played by some female sports journalists in their professional interaction with male sources, during reporting.

6.1 Practical implications and proposals for future research

In summary, the research findings confirm the prevailing belief that the field of Greek sports journalism is monopolized by male hegemony. The results are largely in line with the international literature (Schoch & Ohl, 2011), insofar as the sports work environment is a condition in which various stereotypical behaviours are reproduced to the detriment of female sports journalists. As emphasized above, the understudied field of this phenomenon does not allow us to generalize the findings of the research, after all this is not the goal of a qualitative study (Bryman, 2017). Nevertheless, their transferability in environments of the general population is supported, to the extent and to the degree that they are represented by the participants (Willig, 2015). This research is a first attempt to outline the subjectivity of female sports journalists in the Greek cultural context, regarding the stereotypical behaviours they face in their workplace. In fact, it may not offer a complete a de facto picture of the field.

In any case, its findings complement the international literature and support the theory of liberal feminism. It is considered as a starting point for further academic research and deepening in this field in Greece, in order to illuminate more aspects of the specific research subject.

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