

## Discrimination in the Media's Content towards Specially Challenged Population: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

Disability issues are few of the least covered issues in Indian Media. However, it is the most vital area which should be covered, as more than 2.21% of Indian populations are differently abled (Census of India, 2011) more than the total population of several countries. Disability discrimination is visible not only in routine news coverage but it can also be easily seen in all sort of places and organizations (Barber, 2014). It was a shocking fact that there were no rights holding broadcaster in India for the last Paralympics Games coverage. On the other hand, the coverage of Olympics 2016 and the heroic image created by Indian media of the Olympic winners clearly forms a wide gap between differently-abled and abled people. People with disabilities have undergone lack of representation in news. This paper will focus on the coverage given by media to the issues of disability. The paper is a comparative analysis of media coverage by Indian Media of the "Rio Paralympics games, 2016" and "Rio Olympics, 2016", it examines the different treatment these games faced in the past media reportages. This research might help 'Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities', Government of India, in framing better policies for the betterment of those players; will help the media organizations in framing strategies for better representation of the population..

**Keywords:** Indian Journalism, Education, Equality, Accessibility, Equity, Disability discrimination.

### Introduction:

Disability discrimination is where organizations treat a qualified individual/aspirant/applicant unfavorably because she/he has a disability (Stone & Colella, 1996). Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell did a thorough study on media coverage of Sydney Olympics & Paralympics in 2000. They found that Australian media did not give the proper coverage to Paralympics games which is especially for differently able people, although during the Olympics games Australian newspapers were not only full of its coverage they were also publishing 18 to 20 pages supplement pull out for these games (Goggin & Newell, 2000). Prior to this study, only very few studies were done on this subject, one of them was done by Schell and Duncane in 1999 which focused mainly on American television coverage of 1996 Atlanta Paralympics, where they did the content analysis of the broadcast, and found how negative stereotypes were formed against the Paralympic athletes and they were discriminated not only in

the volume of coverage but also in terms of quality (Schell and Duncane, 1999). Both the studies describe the discriminations against Paralympics in different corners of the world. After 17 years of these studies, the world has changed rapidly, in terms of both technological as well as socio-economic point of you, but neither the psyche nor the discriminations have changed against the Paralympic Games and the Paralympic athletes. The Internet has changed the whole scenario of content creation, distribution, and intake, but the situation and vision of Media towards the differently abled people still remain the consistently same. According to 2011 Census of India, more than 2.21% populations is differently abled (Census of India, 2011), but the representation of differently abled people in government and private organizations is largely insignificant. Media is also a part of these organizations and the discrimination with differently abled people is visible in this society too, discrimination is there not only in the terms of employment but also while representation in media coverage.

Nowadays as technology has changed the life of every person in our society, including the people with disabilities are also benefited. Many success stories of differently abled people (like Oscar Pistorius) are heard through different mediums (Burkett, McNamee, & Potthast, 2011). Media can play an important role to aware the people with these latest technologies through different stories, which are mainly ignored by the market-driven media. The absence of media coverage given to

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differently-abled people from is a major socio-cultural lacuna in the minds of not only the media personnel's but in the psyche of society as a whole and requires a detail study and research for finding the causes and cure.

Olympics & Paralympics 2016 games were organized in Rio, Brazil, where India got four Medals in Paralympics while fetched only two medals in the Olympics (Indian Express, 2016). According to which, Paralympics Games should have had more media coverage in media than the Olympic Games, but the reality is harsher than our imagination. In spite of the better performance Paralympics players were not only under displayed by the media but also by the government. This discrimination by the media and the government organizations has to lead us to do this study. In this study, we will try to see the media coverage, the portrayal of Olympics and Paralympics in Indian media and how the government is pursuing towards it. The introduction is followed by a very brief history of the Paralympics, which is followed by the research methodology followed used in this paper and the findings and analysis, this study has been concluded with the conclusions of the study and the policies recommended in the concern. In the end, the researchers have also included the Appendix, representing the detailed records of the content analysis.

Paralympics games were initially started for the Second World War veterans and civilians who had been injured at war, held at London on 29 July 1948, where 16 injured service personnel's took part in the archery (IPC, 1960). But at that time these games were organized under Olympics games only. Later in 1960 these games were separated from the Olympics and were named Paralympics, where almost 400 athletes from 23 countries participated in Rome Paralympics. Since then this sports festival is organized every fourth year in different cities. From 1988 these games are organized in the same cities where Olympics are

held in that year, this was the first breakthrough of Paralympics because these games started attracting international media attention (Hughes, 1999).

### **Methodology**

This study was mainly exploratory in nature, initial views were gathered through various secondary sources like newspaper articles, research papers, interviews and official reports by sports authorities and various governing bodies. For analysis mainly the quantitative content analysis technique is used.

For the Comparative content analysis in this study, the researchers have chosen 'Dainik Jagran Newspaper, National Edition' as it has found to have the maximum Readership and is the most circulated newspaper in India (Jagran Prakashan Limited, 2016), and the content is analyzed during the period while these games were running. Researchers also interviewed five industry experts, where one among them had a physical disability in walking. All of them had more than ten years of experience each in print media, for gaining better insights about the topic. Researchers have taken the help of Microsoft Excel for the statistical analysis part.

### **Findings and Analysis**

The analysis is done by using the Quantitative content analysis of the Newspaper content of Dainik Jagran, during the Olympic and Paralympic games, 2016. Olympics analysis covered 19 days i.e. 17 days during the Olympics games from Aug, 3, 2016 to Aug, 21, 2016 and additional two days i.e. Aug, 22, 2016 and Aug, 23, 2016 and Paralympics analysis covered 12 days i.e. 10 days during the Paralympic games from Sep, 7, 2016 to Sep, 18, 2016 and additional two days i.e. Sep, 19, 2016 and Sep, 20, 2016. Additional two days are taken to cover the time lag of seven and half hour between Rio, Brazil, and India, plus to cover the limitations of time cycles in print media.

In the analysis, it was found that Olympics media coverage was much higher than the Paralympics

that 15.3% of the world's population deals with a disability of one kind or the other, but in India

**Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage of Olympics and Paralympics by 'DainikJagran National Newspaper' as done through content analysis. (Source- Primary data collected through Content Analysis)**

	Olympics			Paralympics			Amount by which A <sub>O</sub> is higher than A <sub>N</sub> (in %)
	Total (t <sub>O</sub> )	Average (A <sub>O</sub> )	Maximum (M <sub>O</sub> )	Total (t <sub>P</sub> )	Average (A <sub>P</sub> )	Maximum (M <sub>P</sub> )	
Stories on first Page	21	1.17	2	2	0.14	1	736
Stories	217	11.42	18	19	1.35	4	746
Colum	393	20.68	29	60	4.28	17	383
Number of Images	211	11.1	18	19	1.35	3	722
Size of Images Used	258	13.57	22	28	2	7	579

Note: Detailed report of the above-mentioned study is mentioned in Appendix-1 and 2

coverage, in all the parameters studied i.e. stories on the first Page, total Stories, number of columns, number of images, size of images used etc. and in all the factors Olympic coverage was 383% to 746% more than the Paralympic coverage. The media is currently working just like an entertainer, which, provides news as per the interest areas of its major readers. This could be the major reason for the difference in the coverage of the Olympics and Paralympics. Secondly, people working in these institutions are generally not disabled. The representation of disabled people is negligible in those news organizations. And the normal employees cannot understand or empathize with the disabled population. This is what happened with Paralympic, coverage of these games was done by those who neither had an interest in those games nor did they understood the struggle beneath those achievements. This biases appears in their journalism. Disabled people have no contribution in the entire process of writing news stories. For this reason, they did not get the space they deserved even after unmatched achievements.

During the study researchers also found that this representation is not only there in the media but also in the calculation of their number, India reports lower instances of disability than most of other places in the world. According to World Health Organization (WHO) report in 2011, (Mampatta, 2015, September 16), it was estimated

this figure lies at 2.21% (Kaipa & Shenoy, 2012, September 10). which clearly shows the lower representation or calculation of their number, which could be due to weak policies, or due to lower awareness among people towards various kinds of disabilities or may just because of consented ignorance. But in spite of such lower estimations, India houses the largest population of differently abled people, making it even more important to raise their voices.

To validate the study and to increase its generalizability internationally we studied the US media as well through literature, in the USA, NBC had 5.5 hours of London Paralympics coverage in 2012 and of 66 hours in Rio Paralympics, 2016. It is a great improvement of 1100 %, but astonishingly for Rio Olympics, 2016 their coverage was 6,755hours, i.e. 10,134 % more than the Paralympics of the same year and venue (NBC Olympics, 2016; Gold & Gold, 2010; Heller, 2016, September 26; Duncanwood, 2013, September 24; Hill, 2016, August 5.)

#### Views of the experts

*In spite of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's suggesting the term "divyaang" instead of the usual "viklaang", despite of India being the nation where maximum laws are framed for the protection of disabled population, still the conditions of them are not being able to improve because for it, not the laws are*

*needed to be changed but the mindset of the people. Media is just the reflection of the society, consisting of the people from the same society; they don't think differently, they think, cover and show what the society wants to see. People in Journalism should be provided with sensitivity training as provided in the departments like human resource management, to make them compassionate towards that section of the society. You don't need a study to explore it or measure the discrimination, it is the bitter truth. Only the change in the mindset of people can change it. In fact, this change can even give public relation boost to the media house doing this.*

### Conclusion and Policy Implications

Although the government of India has taken major steps to improve the life of differently abled people, the study shows that these efforts are not sufficient enough. In India, media is known as the fourth pillar because of its role in strengthening the Indian democratic setup. It helps in raising the voice of Indian people and on another hand, the government uses the media to inform and educate the public of their policies and decisions. So it is even more important in a democratic country that media should be unbiased and cater the issues of all the sections of the society. It should be fair in its reporting because its coverage impacts the society as a whole, influencing the perceptions, attitudes, and values of everyone. In fact, only the media alone can also can't make the difference as media shows what people want or pay to see. This study shows the biases of media towards differently abled people. Keeping this study in mind the researchers recommend the people and government to show empathy towards the differently abled population, who against all odds try to show their part, and not only in games but also in public utilities, education, health sector, business organizations etc., although this Indian Government announced to award same amount of money to the winners, but still the biases can be seen while distributing Khel Ratna awards where Paralympians don't even qualify for it. The government should not only reserve jobs for differently abled people but also work on their skill development. Jobs should also be reserved in Media houses so that the players can be empathized from within the media houses. Public broadcasters of India like Doordarshan and Akashvani should provide proper coverage of Paralympics games. And the awards should be given to the media houses which gives the best coverage to every section of the society. Khel Ratna should be awarded to Paralympic players also. The budget of Paralympics games should be

increased as their needs are in fact more than the Olympic players. Most importantly it would be good for any media house from public relation point of view. And researchers recommend the government to find the discrepancy between India's 2.21% disabled population and world's 15.3% population.

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## Appendix:

### 1.1 Media coverage of Olympics 'Dainik Jagran National Newspaper' as done through content analysis.

Olympics	05-Aug-16	06-Aug-16	07-Aug-16	08-Aug-16	09-Aug-16	10-Aug-16	11-Aug-16	12-Aug-16	13-Aug	14-Aug	15-Aug	16-Aug	17-Aug	18-Aug	19-Aug	20-Aug	21-Aug	22-Aug	23-Aug
Stories on first Page	1	1	1	1	2	1	1		1	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
Stories	13	8	14	18	18	9	15	11	11	11	11	12	11	12	9	11	9	8	6
Coloum	19	14	19	24	28	18	25	19	26	20	21	24	29	26	24	14	20	17	6
Number of Images	15	5	8	10	9	4	8	6	11	11	10	16	17	13	16	14	9	11	18
Size of Images Used	17	7	15	12	16	7	11	10	12	12	14	21	18	14	13	16	10	11	22

**1.2 Media coverage of Paralympics by 'Dainik Jagran National Newspaper' as done through content analysis.**

Paralympics	07-Sep	08-Sep	09-Sep	10-Sep	11-Sep	12-Sep	13-Sep	14-Sep	15-Sep	16-Sep	17-Sep	18-Sep	19-Sep	20-Sep
Stories on first Page	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Stories	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	1	4	2	1	2	1	0
Coloum	0	0	5	3	10	4	6	5	17	2	1	3	4	0
Number of Images	0	0	3	2	3	3	1	1	3	1	0	1	1	0
Size of Images Used	0	0	7	2	3	4	1	2	5	1	0	2	1	0

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