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Disability Representation in French and Tunisian Media: A Comparative Analysis of Paralympic Games Coverage

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Abstract: *This study is part of a broader investigation into the portrayal of disability within the context of the Paralympic Games. Focusing on media coverage from 2008, 2012, and 2016 in French and Tunisian newspapers, representing two distinct cultural landscapes, we explore the nuances of how disability is depicted. Employing a multifaceted approach involving statistical analysis utilizing the Chi-squared test, discourse content analysis, and photo analysis, we delve into uncharted territory by examining the treatment of impaired athletes in Tunisian media. Our findings highlight significant disparities and instances of discrimination, not only between disabled and able-bodied athletes but also among genders within each nation. Of particular concern are the disparities in photo representation, notably the portrayal of Tunisian women athletes. By contextualizing our findings within the existing body of literature, this study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of disability representation in sports media. Furthermore, it contributes to a deeper understanding of societal attitudes towards disability and offers actionable recommendations to foster more inclusive media coverage in the future.*

Keywords: *body; social representations; athletes with disability; media coverage; Paralympic Games; gender.*

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Introduction

Claude Levi-Strauss held that the social world is constructed through rules designated to regulate various forms of personal relations and exchange. The most basic form of interaction and exchange is verbal communication, which is the base for Lacan's symbolic order (Scubla, 2011). This symbolic order guarantees the maintenance of the completeness of the group of the social order (Cooley, 2017; Iordache et al., 2010), and it is this order that preserves the internal coherence of our society. Imbued with this vision, men define the law, the law defines the order, the order defines the rules, and the rules define the excluded. From the rules, we can therefore define the margins, those who belong to the marginality, such as disabled people whom society marginalizes (Beauchesne, 1985; Altiparmak & Karahan, 2022) and who seem to be an important category to study because they are stigmatized (Goffman & Kihm, 1975).

According to a recent study carried out by INSEE (the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies), almost a fifth of the French population has an incapacity, an activity limitation, or a disability, divided into six groups (isolated and minor incapacity, dependent elderly people, people with one or more disabilities, diffuse unidentified incapacity, intellectual or mental disability, and those having "limiting illnesses"). Only 0.3% of this population is licensed and participates in sports events. In Tunisia, the disabled population is 1.7% according to the MASSTE (Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity, and Tunisians Abroad), divided into five groups (mental, hearing, visual, motor, and multiple disabilities). Of this population, 3% are licensed and represent Tunisia in sporting events. These figures, even if they are incomparable, show that disability is not contradictory to sports practice; on the contrary, it allows a certain physical and mental well-being. Most of the sports practiced by an able-bodied athlete can also be practiced by a person with a disability; sport is seen as an element of normalization (Ville et al., 2003). As a result, several specific sports competitions pitting people with disabilities against each other in many disciplines have multiplied both in a local and international context since 1948 and the Stoke Mandeville Games. In 1989, an International Paralympic Committee (IPC) was created, proposing to bring together all disabled athletes in a major international event just like Olympic athletes; Paralympians will reside in the same Olympic village. This sporting event began to receive some media coverage.

Construction of the Research Object

The study we are conducting is part of the research on the representations of disability and the construction of disabled identity. It combines a sociological approach, a cultural approach, and an "information and communication sciences" approach and aims to produce innovative knowledge on the images and representations of disability conveyed through the media coverage of people in disability sports events. This project was born following participation in the ISSA (International Sociology of Sport Association) congress in Paris in June 2015. Indeed, it has been found that the visibility of efficient and perfectly controlled bodies, as well as their mediatization, plays a crucial role in the current processes of identity construction. So, what about people whose disabled bodies do not correspond to the dominant models? This question has been addressed by several researchers, particularly in Europe and Asia (Pappous et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2017). The idea was then to extend the problem and explore a new context, until now unexplored: the Maghreb. Since then, we have started thinking about the feasibility of this study.

Representation of disability in contemporary society

For all those who deal with the issue of disability and people with disabilities, the question of the "representations" that we have of disability weighs heavily in the choices that are made (Purdue & Howe, 2012). Social representations determine our conception of disability as well as our social relations with disabled people. They convey our ideologies and cultural stereotypes about others in their differences and similarities. Bazier & Mercier (2001) have highlighted five types of social representations about disability: representations that underlie and are underpinned by concepts that classify disabilities; representations are sources of exclusion, rejection, and refusal of differences; representations that reduce disability to technical, human, physical, or institutional prostheses; representations that reduce disability to suffering; and representations that equate the disabled person with a child.

The combinations of these different social representations generate complex images of the disabled person and confirm the sustainability of the stigmatization of people with disabilities (Kolotouchkina et al., 2020); they are children, classified prosthetic, rejected, institutionalized, suffering (Kim et al., 2017).

Sociology of the body

We have seen that society has undergone profound changes which have affected, above all, relations between individuals and relations to the body. Consequently, there has been a focus on the "self" and a narcissistic focus on the body. Laslett (2015) and Neveu (1991) have been following this process for a long time. The body has become a double instance. It is both a tool for the struggle of equals in competition for a social position and a kind of surface from which the individual will have to measure the success of his choices (Chauvy, 2005). If the sociology of the body is particularly justified and necessary today, it is because through the processes of contemporary reflexivity, the body becomes a fundamental mediation of the relationship with oneself, with others, and with the environment. It's difficult to avoid the ubiquity and the presence of the body as a sign and symbol of social and political process (Featherstone & Turner, 1995). At the beginning of the 21st century, society and mass media in particular disseminate images of ideal bodies which impose them as standards and models to be achieved. It is especially since the seventies that the concern of the body and its claim with the daily newspaper becomes one of the significant concerns of the population (Raveneau, 2000). Sport, being one of the key elements for understanding social phenomena (Cazeneuve, 1971), traces the contours of our daily universe by highlighting its imponderables and by bringing out tangible elements that constitute the state of our contemporary society.

The role of mass media in contemporary society

Print media, radio, cinema, television, and advertising are an integral part of the daily life of Western societies. In just over a century, the development of mass media in all its forms has influenced lifestyles, consumer habits, and the human body. The relationships that individuals develop with them in modern societies have not ceased to arouse reflection and questioning in the human sciences (Rieffel, 1997). The media has become a social phenomenon. As an ideological and cultural vehicle, the media build our social and cultural reality and contribute to creating in our minds representations, imaginaries, and stereotypes (Abu-Lughod, 1997; Fürsich, 2010). They occupy an important place in our society because they constitute the principal actor of public opinion by proposing a certain reading of the world which influences our relationship to the self and others. Through the media and the readings it proposes, the individual reconstructs an image of himself, of his body, and of the social and physical environment that surrounds him. Duncan (2004) speaks of the "mirror effect" produced by the media because it reflects and reinterprets the dominant codes, but

also because it produces representations of the world which influence the individual and collective imagination. The role of the media is all the more important as it is a means of recognizing certain forms of human activity that would otherwise remain in the shadows (Burch, 1990). The treatment of information and the frequency of its diffusion influence the individual's relationship to the world (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001). This shows us how decisive it is for the individual to be supported by the media in his actions and initiatives, as well as for social groups and organizations (Featherstone & Turner, 1995), because they convey representations that forge social identity and reinforce self-esteem. In our case, the media - as a vehicle for social norms - will impose a certain image of the disabled athlete as a hero; thus, participating in social recognition and in the de-stigmatization of disability (Clogston, 1990). What kind of image is the media going to offer us for this category of athletes? How are the body and disability staged and presented?

In our case, we wanted to verify if the media have a crucial role in the way they represent disability, especially in sports events. This is why we chose the daily press for our study, which remains, compared to other media, a privileged means of distributing and managing public opinion (de Léséleuc & Marcellini, 2012). So how do media discourse and representation of the disabled athlete help to build their social recognition?

Theoretical positioning

Goffman & Kihm (1975) defines stigma as a phenomenon of devaluation of an individual, which makes him different from others and marks him in relation to others in society. The devaluation affects not only the person with a disability but also his or her family and all those who identify with him or her. For a person with a disability, he emphasizes the relationship between the "virtual social identity" (defined by society) and the "actual social identity" (defined by the individual). Disability is therefore a discrediting attribute, leading to the reduction of the person who has it, which will lead to a modification of their identity and marginalization (Beauchesne, 1985). Stigma is "a sign of disgrace or disqualification" (Goffman & Kihm, 1975). The concept of "stigma" is part of the field of social and human sciences and in particular sociology. In recent years, this concept has been the subject of various studies and research. Several disciplines such as medicine, psychology, and sociology have looked at the issue of stigma, as well as social psychology which has studied the construction of stigma through representation processes. The concept of stigma is defined as "the negative label, attribution, or generally devaluing identification attributed to a person or a group by others (individuals,

groups, institutions, etc.) in a context of social interaction and influencing the relationship between them" (de Souza & Brittain, 2020). The concept of stigma is omnipresent and universal (Kim et al., 2017). This phenomenon can also be associated with other marginalized groups in society, such as people with mental disorders, drug addicts, and those living with HIV. The common element among these groups is that they share a characteristic that makes them socially devalued and stigmatized.

Methodology

The methods used to conduct this study are based on qualitative and quantitative analyses of the content of newspaper articles (Thurman, 2018). These methods involve various procedures for coding and categorizing the data, which enable us to highlight the specificities of the representations of disability in the context of sports events in the written press. For this study, a corpus of 200 articles published in French and Tunisian newspapers during the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Paralympic Games was analyzed.

Data collection

The data collection involved three main stages:

1. Selection of newspapers -we selected five newspapers from each country that had the highest circulation rates and regularly covered sports events. The French newspapers included "Le Monde," "Le Figaro," "L'Équipe," "Libération," and "La Croix." The Tunisian newspapers included "La Presse," "Le Temps," "Le Quotidien," "Assabah," and "Al Chourouk."

2. Selection of articles -we selected all articles that covered the Paralympic Games during the periods of study (2008, 2012, and 2016).

3. Data extraction -we extracted information related to the representation of disability, the portrayal of athletes, the type of sports covered, and the language used in the articles.

Data analysis

We employed a multi-step analysis procedure:

1. Content Analysis -we analyzed the content of the articles to identify themes, categories, and representations of disability. This involved coding the data to find recurring topics and how disability was framed in relation to sports and athletes.

2. Discourse Analysis -we examined the language and rhetoric used in the articles to understand the underlying discourses and ideologies. This analysis focused on how disability was discussed and the narratives constructed around disabled athletes.

3. Photo Analysis -we analyzed the visual representation of athletes in the articles. This involved comparing the surfaces of photos of male and female athletes in both French and Tunisian media to uncover any gender disparities in representation. Specifically, we measured the size and prominence of the photos to assess visibility and emphasis on athletes with disabilities.

Two specific analysis grids allow us to extract all the information necessary to validate or not our hypotheses. We count all the occurrences of mentions of women or men (we take the grammatical proposition: subject + verb + complement as the unit of analysis). One occurrence is counted for each different person mentioned.

The information and occurrences obtained through these two grids allow us to make our quantitative and qualitative analyses and thus validate and/or invalidate our hypotheses.

In the French newspapers, 42 articles and 19 photos specific to the Paralympic Games were analyzed as well as 132 articles talking about the Olympic Games. The Tunisian newspapers published 37 articles and 23 photos specific to the Paralympic Games as well as 95 articles about the Olympic Games.

Quantitative indicators

The quantitative indicators are then analyzed using a chi-square test (χ^2). It, therefore, allows us to see if:

•There is a difference in the treatment of disabled and able-bodied athletes in the print media.

•There is a difference in treatment between men and women in the press covering the Paralympic Games.

•There is a nationalization of sports results in the press of each of the countries analyzed in the two games.

•There is concealment of certain forms of disability.

Qualitative indicators

1. Content analysis

For the qualitative indicators, an analysis of the themes of the journalistic discourse allows us to identify the contents of the newspapers' representation. This analysis was chosen because it is consistent with the implementation of explanatory models of practices or representations (Blanchet et *al.*, 2007). The thematic analysis consists of a breakdown of

themes and sub-themes using the occurrences identified earlier. This exploratory research aims to analyze the discourse on disabled sportspeople.

2. Photo Analysis

So far, the methodology of photo analysis is not very well defined. Some scientists state that an analysis method can be constructed based on a category scheme (Alexander, 1994).

These categories, according to (Prosser, 1998), are necessarily derived from the theoretical part and the hypotheses. They help to sort and organize the different visual data of the photos. Analysis grids will be established according to the categories. These allow a certain number of observations to be made for each category. Statistical tests will be carried out to test the significance between the groups; this method is only used if enough data are recovered. . In the case of a small sample, the literature does not offer any means of analysis. An interpretative analysis allows us to discuss the results obtained, which is the case in this study.

Results

Quantitative indicators

The difference in treatment between disabled and able-bodied people in the print media

The number of mentions of able-bodied athletes in the Olympic Games and disabled athletes in the Paralympic Games is crossed with the number of participants and the number of medals won by these athletes (two independent variables to be considered).

The chi-square test informs us whether the difference between the groups is significant or not. Each country is treated independently of the other.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of French athletes, as well as their participation and medals (statistics obtained from the French Federation of Handisport and the National Olympic Committee). It can be seen that French disabled athletes are less represented in the articles with their participation rate and the medals they have won. Checking this discrepancy with the chi-square test confirms this "under-representation" of disabled athletes. The difference between the number of mentions in the articles and the number of participants is significant (χ^2 (1) = 70.02, p <0.01). Furthermore, the comparison with the number of medals won shows a very significant difference (χ^2 (1) = 320.46, p < 0.01). Therefore, they are not sufficiently presented with their success.

Figure 1. *Comparison of the percentage of occurrence of French athletes with their participation rate and success*

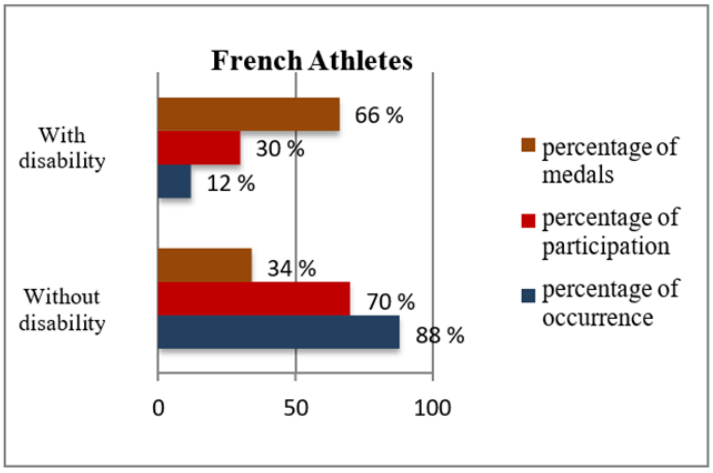
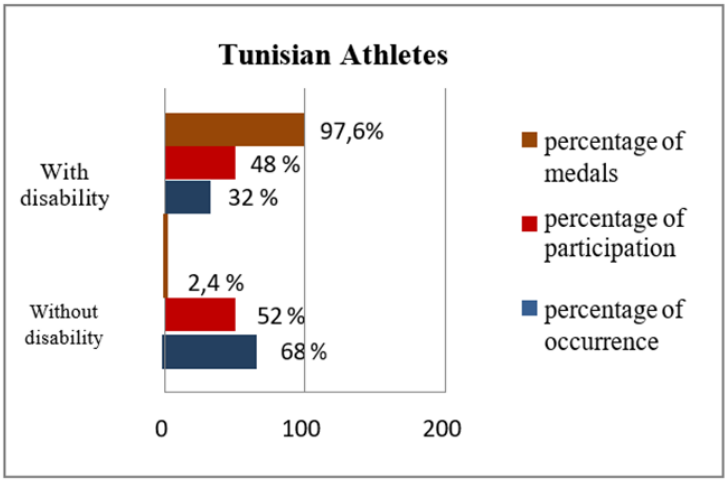


Figure 2 shows the percentage of Tunisian athletes, as well as their participation and medals (statistics obtained from the Tunisian Federation of Handisport). The results show that there is an "under-representation" of Tunisian disabled athletes. The difference between the number of mentions and participation is significant (χ^2 (1) = 11.45, $p < 0.01$). The comparison with the number of medals won also shows a significant difference (χ^2 (1) = 51.74, $p < 0.01$).

Figure 2. *Comparison of the percentage of occurrence of Tunisian athletes with their participation rate and success*



The difference in media treatment between men and women with disabilities

1. *In the photos*

Table 1. Comparison of photo surfaces of men and women in France and Tunisia

Country	Men	Women
France	2215 cm²	1135 cm²
Tunisia	1171	403 cm²

Both in French and Tunisian newspapers, the under-representation of sportswomen are well verified.

2. *In the article*

The Number of mentions of disabled men and women is cross-referenced with the number of participations and medals won by gender.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of occurrences, participation, and medals of French disabled athletes by gender. The results show that there is an "under-representation" of women with disabilities compared to men. The difference between the number of mentions and participation is significant (χ^2 (1) = 18.7, $p < 0.01$). The comparison with the number of medals won also shows a significant difference (χ^2 (1) = 4.86, $p < 0.05$).

Figure 3. *Comparison of the percentage of mentions of French disabled athletes by gender with their participation rate and success*

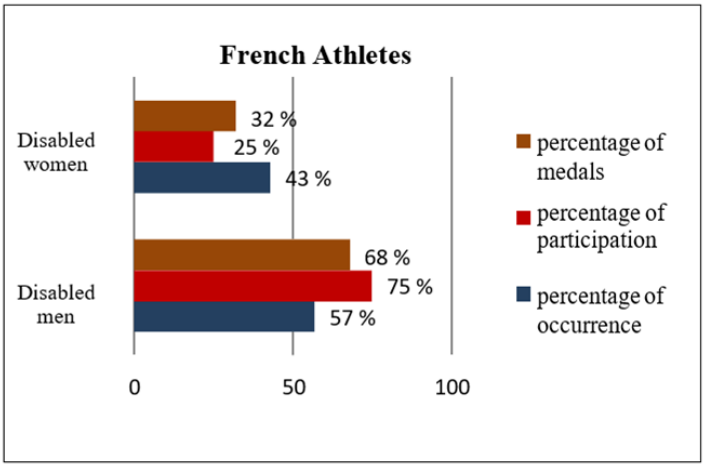
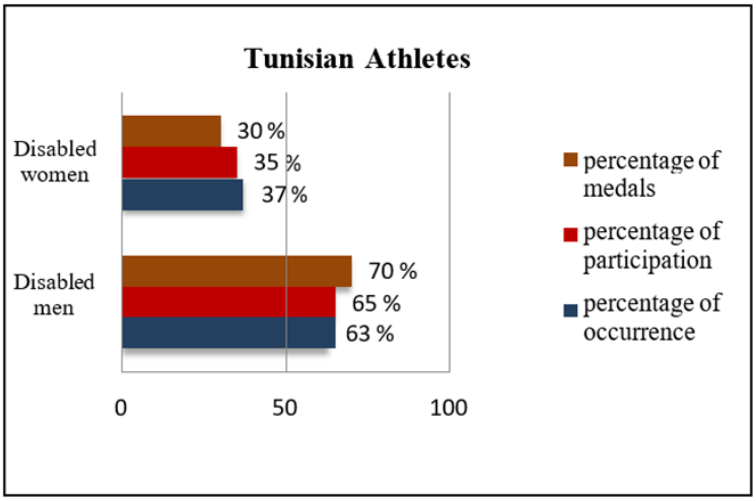


Figure 4 shows the percentage of occurrences, participation, and medals of Tunisian disabled athletes by gender. The results do not show an "under-representation" of disabled female athletes compared to disabled male athletes. By comparing the number of mentions and the number of participations, the results show that the difference is not significant (χ^2 (1) = 0.11, p >0.05). Similarly, when comparing the number of mentions and the number of medals, the difference is not significant (χ^2 (1) = 1.07, p > 0.05).

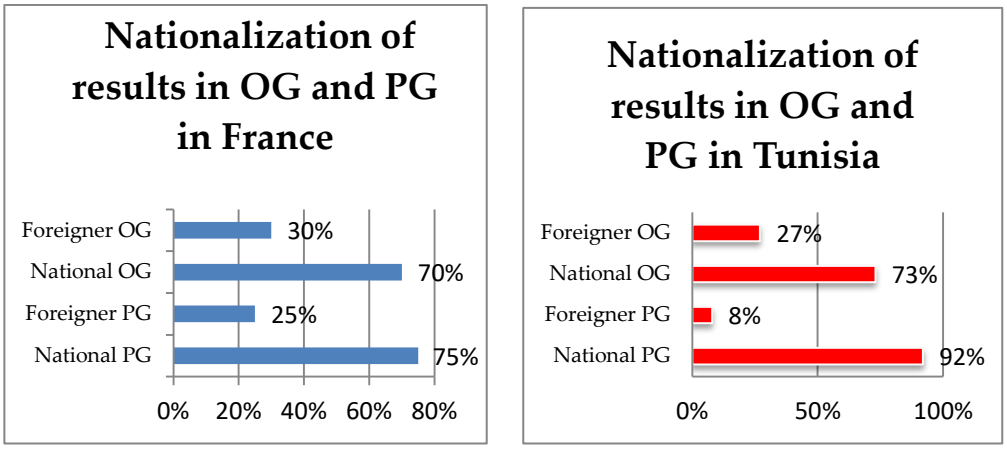
Figure 4. *Comparison of the percentage of occurrence of Tunisian disabled athletes by gender with their participation rate and success*



Nationalization of results in the press

The percentages of mentions of Olympic and Paralympic athletes, by nationality, in both countries are shown in (Figure 5). The results when we compare Olympic Games (OG) and Paralympic Games (PG) in France (b) show that the difference is not significant (χ^2 (1) = 2.45, p >0.05), contrary to Tunisia (a) where the difference is very significant (χ^2 (1) = 89.35, p< 0.01).

Figure 5. *Comparison of the percentage of nationalization of athletes results in France and Tunisia in Olympic and Paralympic Games*

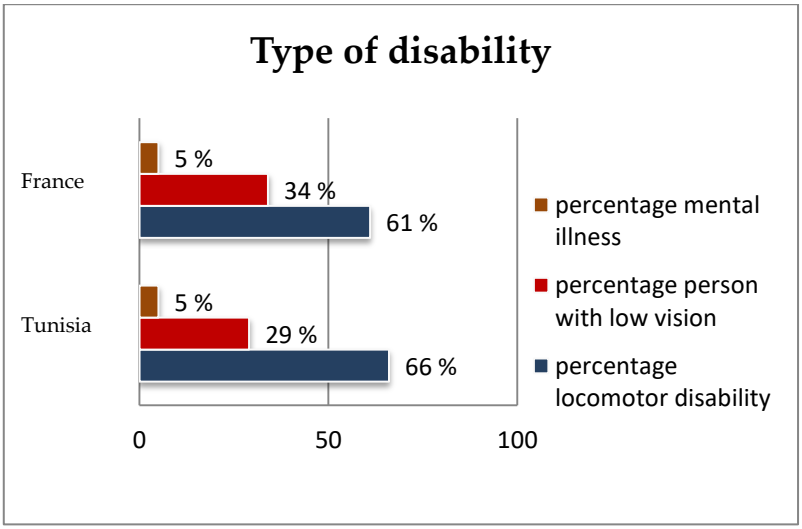


(b) (a)

Concealment of certain forms of disability

If we limit ourselves to a simple descriptive analysis of Figure 6, the under-representation of mental and visual disability is very noticeable compared to physical disability. This difference will be less significant if we cross-reference the number of mentions with the number of participants and the number of medals won.

Figure 6. *Differences between France and Tunisia compared to the type of disability*



It should be noted that people with learning disability were not allowed to participate in the 2008 Paralympic Games.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of mentions of each type of disability in relation to the participation of French athletes by disability. The results show a non-significant difference between the number of mentions and the participation rate of French disabled athletes (motor, visual and mental) (χ^2 (2) = 1.66, $p > 0.05$), so there is no difference in treatment between the different types of disability in France.

In relation to the participation of Tunisian athletes by disability, the results also show that there is no significant difference between the number of mentions and the participation rate of Tunisian disabled athletes (motor, visual and mental) (χ^2 (2) = 0.53, $p > 0.05$.

Qualitative indicators

Content of the speeches

We will first look at the themes covered by the newspapers in both countries. The thematic analysis shows that the French and Tunisian dailies preferentially expose "**sports stories**" (31% in Tunisia) and (17.3% in France), corresponding to summaries of sports events (individual and national results or medal predictions). A smaller proportion of the daily newspapers give "**raw results**" (16.6% in Tunisia) and (15% in France), relating to the number of medals obtained by the nation and by discipline. The description of the athletes is based on their "**social status**" (9.4% in Tunisia) and (6.2% in France), with age, type of disability, and previous medals being the most common. The information is marked by a "**testimony of non-sporting personalities**" (7% in Tunisia) and (13% in France), such as trainers, doctors, or presidents of federations. A set of themes shows from an organizational and institutional point of view, the "**equality of sports institutions**" by insisting on the equal treatment of the two games (5% in Tunisia) and (3.8% in France). Other themes describe the importance of the Paralympic Games from the point of view of "**Paralympic recognition**" (4.8% in Tunisia) and (7.5% in France), where statistics on sports participation, material, and financial investments are presented. Finally, the newspapers discuss "**technological performance**" (3.2% in Tunisia) and (5% in France) evoking humanism by pointing out a nation "s commitment to social integration, as well as **"the doping scandal"** that circulates in the Paralympic Games (2% in Tunisia) and (3.1% in France).

Other themes were addressed in the Tunisian newspapers like "**the origin of disability**" (14%) or "**anecdotes**" about events that occurred during the Olympics. French newspapers mentioned "**the legitimacy of**

competition" and its overly important role, as well as **"the conditions before and during the games"** (11%).

Content of the photos

Tunisian newspapers present athletes in photos using a close-up; they generally present them when they are not in motion, especially for women as no photos show them in action. Photos show very little evidence of disability, there is mainly a representation of the Wheelchair but not visual or mental disability. The images taken by the journalists do not show the athletes in the field but rather outside the sports arena; they are often shown with smiling faces. There is also a "masking" of the female body by showing pictures of veiled women who are not in sportswear.

Newspapers in France display photos mainly using a full-length shot, showing athletes in action, their disability is shown or mentioned. The images are often taken on the field of play, showing concentrated, suffering, and determined faces. Finally, the newspapers show an aesthetic image of the female body.

Discussion

Quantitative analysis

We hypothesized an unequal treatment between disabled and able-bodied athletes. The results showed a significant difference in treatment in both countries. Thus, it can be said that despite the rhetoric that the Paralympic Games are as important and well publicized as the Olympic Games, and that coverage of sporting events for people with disabilities is seen as a priority for the media, disabled sportspeople are "under-represented" compared to their "able-bodied" counterparts, and the difference in significance between Paralympic and Olympic sport is still unquestionable (Schantz & Gilbert, 2001).

The second hypothesis, which states that there is a difference in treatment between men and women in the Paralympic Games, is only validated in France. Indeed, the results from the articles showed that there is an "under-representation" of women compared to men in the French newspapers, both in terms of participation and in terms of the number of medals won. These results are in line with the work done by (Smith & Thomas, 2005) on British coverage of the Paralympic Games. On the other hand, the Tunisian athletes are not.

In fact, they are "under-represented" in the articles; on the contrary, they are "over-represented" in relation to the number of participation and medals won. This is what (Jones, 2006) concluded following the media

coverage of Australian athletes at the Sydney Games. The analysis of the French photos confirms the "under-representation" of women with disabilities compared to men, but only in terms of participation. In Tunisia, however, the "over-representation" of women in the media (articles + photos) is confirmed. This result confirms the work of (L. A. "Beez" Schell & Duncan, 1999), concerning the representation of women in Spain, France, Germany, and England, during the Sydney Paralympic Games.

The problem of nationalization of sports results in the media has been dealt with in previous works only in the Paralympic Games, the results of this work confirm the results of other researchers. There is a phenomenon of nationalization of results in Tunisia as well as in France, there is little mention of the results of foreign athletes, which confirms the work of (de Léséleuc et *al.*, 2010) concerning the results of European and foreign disabled athletes in the press. This result seems somewhat logical, but when one realizes that this phenomenon is not reproduced in the Olympic Games and with able-bodied athletes, one may wonder about differentiation in treatment.

The hypothesis that certain types of disability are hidden cannot be confirmed in this study, as motor, visual and mental disabilities are not treated differently by the press in the two countries. There is a higher percentage of athletes with motor disabilities in the Paralympic Games in both countries. The percentage of participation of mentally disabled athletes is lower, which explains their lack of mention. We also note that they were banned from participating in the Paralympic Games in Beijing. This result contradicts the research of (Combrouze, 2000; Marcellini, 2007), as concealment of mental disability is not noticed.

Our quantitative analysis reveals significant disparities in media coverage between disabled and able-bodied athletes, offering educators a deeper understanding of how media representations influence societal perceptions of disability. By examining statistical findings on the treatment of disabled athletes in media coverage, educators can promote data literacy skills among students, enabling them to critically evaluate quantitative information and understand its implications in shaping public discourse.

Qualitative analysis

Content analysis

The content analysis shows that the most common themes are individual wins and achievements. They mention that technically, sport for people with disabilities is comparable to sport for able-bodied people, but also that disability is reduced when people find themselves in contexts that

allow them to fully express their possibilities (Richard et al., 2020). This is the assumption made by all the non-sports personalities in the speeches.

One of the most important dimensions is the recognition of particularities. It characterizes the transformation of the disabled image through sport. It links the adaptation of sport, the resources of the subject, and the reduction of negative attitudes towards the disabled. It is therefore clear that there are external factors to be taken into account in explaining disability. The representation is based on a social model of treatment of exclusion; the abnormality is not determined by the organic affection, but by the non-activity of the subject (Ebersold, 1992; Wilhite & Shank, 2009). Access to sports symbolically makes the disabled person an active citizen.

Another dimension that seems interesting concerns the equality values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. On the one hand, it highlights the values of equality by rooting them in the everyday life of the most common sporting entertainment (spectacle, conviviality, social link) while at the same time underlining the injustices and discrimination. In this way, the representation popularizes and neutralizes the idea that the disabled involved in the Paralympic Games are sportsmen and women like any other but victims of exclusions (Ehrenberg, 1994; Howe & Silva, 2018). On the other hand, it is the criteria of the test in their technical, regulatory and human aspects that form the basis of the equalization. From this point of view, an ambiguity persists which places disabled athletes in a position of "liminality" (Murphy, 1987; Willett & Deegan, 2001). They share the same atmosphere, but not necessarily the same issues (the heterogeneity of disabilities and sports classifications discredits the value of performances). The multiplication of sports categories and medal awards due to the heterogeneity of disabilities introduces the logic of mass sport, where it is a question of extracting the figure of the elite. If the social model dominates in its formal aspects (personal rights, equal opportunities), it is at the same time questioned in its normalizing function leading the subject to "adopt values that deny him at the same time as they consecrate him" (Détrez, 2002), which leads us to say that, contrary to ordinary sport, the representation of the Paralympic Games does not have the characteristics of a sporting entertainment (Rees et al., 2018). It is made more complex by classification systems that make it difficult to read.

The thematic analysis shows us that the processes of infantilization and trivialization of women are rarely made explicit in the discourse. In fact, they are even mentioned when talking about able-bodied athletes. We also note that in these same discourses on women, there is little reference to their femininity, their appearance is almost never mentioned, rather their strength

is highlighted by pointing out, for example, a shot put comparable to that of men. The absence of comments on sexism (body, face) can be explained by the fact that disabled women are aesthetically unpleasant ("Beez" Lea Ann Schell & Rodriguez, 2001).

In the newspapers, amputees are portrayed and the importance of technical aids, particularly prostheses, is stressed, as they sometimes cause problems for athletes. They are accused of technological doping, as in the case of Oscar Pistorius (Issanchou, 2014), but only mention mental disability without comment.

The theme of food doping, which is treated marginally, is a source of differentiation between the newspapers. While some newspapers are morally critical (*Le Monde*), others treat this phenomenon with humor and use doping as an identity claim by disabled athletes to be considered like others (*La Presse*).

In France, it can be seen that athletes play a less important role in the media coverage of the Paralympic Games. French newspapers do not talk much about disabled athletes, and only mention athletes who have been very successful, and won medals. Disability, its causes, and consequences are put forward in these often anecdotal discourses.

Unlike in Tunisia, where the newspapers present, above all, the results obtained in the games, the prize lists and even the history of participation and medals, suggesting a rather sporting treatment.

Through content analysis, educators can facilitate discussions on the representation of disability in media narratives. By unpacking themes such as individual achievements, equality values, and the recognition of particularities, educators empower students to critically evaluate media messages and understand their implications for societal attitudes towards disability. Our analysis highlights the transformative power of sports in challenging negative attitudes towards disability. By exploring narratives of resilience and inclusivity, educators can foster empathy and understanding among students, encouraging them to recognize and celebrate the diversity of human experiences.

Photo analysis

The close-ups used by newspapers to show athletes in Tunisian newspapers can be explained by the fact that they tend to hide the disability (Geok Cheong & Razman, 2016), the close-up takes away a large part of the body, usually the disabled part. In France the opposite is observed, there is a tendency to "normalize" the photos of disabled athletes.

In France, as in Tunisia, photos show few women in movement, there is a tendency to take photos of women when they are still motionless.

(Duncan, 1990). This aspect, which characterizes the illustration of photos of able-bodied sportswomen, is preserved among disabled women.

The results showed that newspapers tend to present disabled athletes without highlighting their disability (Geok Cheong & Razman 2016), in Tunisia, and to a lesser degree in France. The few photos that do show disability are photos of motor disabled people, their prostheses, and wheelchairs are shown. The visual disability is rarely shown, and when it is shown, it is implicitly shown by marking the guides holding ropes. As far as female athletes are concerned, their amputations are not shown (Buysse & Borcherding, 2010). Even though mental disability has not been included in the games since 2004, it is never shown in the newspapers (Marcellini, 2007). One possible explanation is that less attention is paid to certain visible indicators of disability (DePauw, 1997).

In Tunisia, newspapers rarely show athletes on the field, so the sporting aspect is not emphasized, unlike the French newspapers where the image of athletes is that of sportsmen and women rather than disabled people.

Another important point is the expression on athlete's faces, in Tunisia, the photos very often show smiling athletes, the most significant dimensions of sport such as effort, suffering and concentration are ignored. Competitiveness is not highlighted, unlike the French newspapers where the majority of photos show concentrated faces that remind us of the sporting stakes of the Paralympic Games (de Léséleuc et al., 2009).

About the clothing of athletes, the Tunisian newspapers do not mention the sexual nature of disabled women as they do for able-bodied women (Ferri & Gregg, 1998), it is rather the sportiness that is invoked, and the female body is even masked by the veil. In France it is the aesthetic aspect that is explained, sexuality is put forward with sportiness (Messner et *al.*, 2003).

Finally, we note the lack of presence of national flags in the photos, especially during the celebration of victories, as if the victory of disabled athletes is not considered a victory of the whole country (Pappous et al., 2011).

Through photo analysis, educators can promote visual literacy skills among students, enabling them to critically analyze visual imagery and understand its role in shaping media narratives. By examining representations of disability in media photographs, educators empower students to deconstruct visual stereotypes and recognize the complexities of disability representation. Our photo analysis highlights gender dynamics in media portrayals of disabled athletes. By exploring themes such as infantilization and trivialization of women, educators can facilitate dialogue on gender equality and disability rights, encouraging students to challenge stereotypes and advocate for inclusive representation in media imagery.

Through qualitative analysis of content and visual imagery, educators gain tools to facilitate critical media literacy among students. By deconstructing media narratives on disability, educators can empower students to recognize biases, challenge stereotypes, and engage in informed discussions on representation and inclusivity. Our qualitative analysis underscores the importance of cultural context in shaping media representations of disability. By exploring themes such as normalization, equality, and gender dynamics, educators can foster discussions on cultural sensitivity and diversity, encouraging students to consider the intersectionality of identities in media portrayal.

Conclusion

The present work gives a first insight into the difference in treatment of the Paralympic Games between two countries with two different cultures. Indeed, these games are presented as a major event in the dissemination of information and images on disability. It should be noted that this representation is not without ambiguity since sport is a means of social excellence, but at the same time a tool for the rehabilitation and integration of people. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of articles and images sometimes shows similar results for both countries, such as the difference in treatment between the "able-bodied" and the disabled, or the nationalization of sports results in the newspapers covering the Paralympic Games, as well as when it comes to the concealment of impairments, but there are also contradictory results between the two countries, for example in the speeches, where the Paralympic Games in France appear closer to an educational sport that follows the ideal of personal development and social participation, whereas, in Tunisia, the speeches suggest a competitive sport that draws its fame from surpassing others and human progress. Differences in treatment between men and women with disabilities, which is seen in France but not in Tunisia, can be explained by what some politicians call the "instrumentalization policy" practiced in Tunisia, by building an image of modernity to distance itself from the other Maghreb countries (Laroussi, 2009).

In conclusion, a specific limitation of this study is the reduced number of articles and photos analyzed. An interesting perspective opened up for this work would be to extend the corpus and thus see if the results found in Tunisia would be similar or not in Algeria and Morocco. We could then compare our results with the results of other studies on Asia (Yoon & Wilson, 2019) and Europe (Solves et *al.*, 2019), which would allow us to detect similarities and differences regarding the social acceptance of disabled sportsmen and women by the written media.

This study offers crucial educational insights into the portrayal of the Paralympic Games in media across distinct cultural contexts. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of articles and images from France and Tunisia, educators gain a deeper understanding of how societal norms influence media representations of disability in sports. By fostering critical analysis skills, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and identifying avenues for future research, this study equips educators with valuable tools to facilitate meaningful discussions on media literacy and societal attitudes towards disability. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of recognizing and challenging biases in media narratives to promote inclusivity and empathy in society.

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