

More similarities than differences: women's and men's perspectives on ice-hockey reporting in Czech sports journalism

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ABSTRACT

This study explores differences in the reporting of female and male sports journalists. Based on a brief review of the literature related to gender differences in sports journalism and the stereotypes associated with the work of female sports journalists, the paper identifies a purported 'female writing style' characterized by a focus on soft news, an emotional approach to reporting and reduced interest in statistical and analytical data.

Using a quantitative content analysis, I reviewed 167 audio-visual and 50 written ice-hockey reports about Czech Extraliga produced by six sports journalists, who worked in leading Czech sports media departments. I observed the frequency with which the reporters presented statistical data, evaluated a performance, described emotions, recounted personal stories, and used original phrases. Comparing women's and men's output, it emerged that gender of the author did not have a dominant influence on the form of their reports and did not impact the use of specific language elements.

KEYWORDS

female writing style; gender stereotypes; ice-hockey; male writing style; report, sports journalism

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INTRODUCTION

The sports arena is a microcosm of society, in which men are in the foreground and women are relegated to the periphery (Creedon, 1994). Researchers (Chambers et al., 2004; Franks and O'Neill, 2016) have found that sports reporting is home to the most extensive and persistent gender differences in journalism and that the participation of women in sports journalism has always been low compared to their participation in other news departments.

Most studies from countries other than the Czech Republic find that female journalists focus more on 'soft' news while men dedicate themselves to reporting 'hard' news (e.g. Schoch, 2013a; North, 2014). It has been repeatedly suggested that female journalists tend to pay more attention to themes regarding social roles (health, family, education), which could be the reason they treat sports news in more emotional and psychological way. Similarly, it has been claimed that male reporters most often cover politics, economics, business, or sports and therefore are more comfortable than women in using more factual and analytical language in their reporting (North, 2014).

According to the professional standards of sports journalism, which have been predominantly established by men (Boyle, 2006; Gill, 2007; Schoch, 2013a), a 'correct' sports report should meet four basic criteria – it should include technical and tactical analysis, evaluate the match and individual performances, reflect the journalists' direct participation on the site of the match, and demonstrate the journalist's depth of interest in the particular sport (Schoch, 2013a).

Nonetheless, sports journalism has undergone a change in the last few decades (cf. Creedon, 1994; Boyle, 2006; Brisbane, 2021), especially in the reporting of sports news, where the traditional emphasis on facts and analysis has shifted to the emotional, relational, and psychological aspects of sport. Nowadays, sports sections in newspapers are more inclined to offer interpretation and opinion-based journalism rather than recapitulations and analyses of statistics (Billings et al., 2018). The question of the existence of distinct male and female writing style is being raised again, as the line between traditional media and the new media, which favours 'fan-focused' and 'soft' journalism, starts to blur (Billings et al., 2018).

The inspiration for this study is the research of the so-called 'female writing style' by Swiss theorist Lucie Schoch (2013a) which I present in more detail in the theoretical part of this paper. Because the question of a possible differences in the 'female' and 'male' writing style in sports journalism has only just begun to be addressed, the aim of this study is to assess the theory that there are definite male and female sports reporting style in the Czech environment. No study concerning the professional development or the work of female sports journalists has yet been published in the Czech Republic, let alone any comparison of diverse writing styles.

For purposes of my research, I decided to examine the reporting on ice-hockey, which is the second most popular sport in the Czech Republic after soccer (Tejkalová, 2019). Its popularity is evidenced by the attendance at ice-hockey games, which numbered more than two million spectators in the 2018–2019 seasons (Bagar, 2019), when the Czech Republic has only 10.7 million inhabitants. Both soccer and ice-hockey have traditionally been covered by male reporters in the Czech Republic and covering those sports is considered to be the most prestigious job among sports journalists. Female reporters first

entered the field of ice-hockey in public television at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Their number is rising very slowly and opportunities are growing for them to hold important positions, but only on public TV. The situation with soccer reporting is different. There has been no continuous journalistic work by female reporters that I could analyse. Therefore, I decided to focus my analysis on ice-hockey reporting.

Gender in sports journalism

Although the number of women engaged in sports journalism has increased over the last three decades, research confirms that men still predominate over women in the field (Franks and O'Neill, 2016; Mudrick et al., 2017). Most sports news departments are all but entirely masculine. Women as a minority face various obstacles and pressures, which are a small minority of the journalists who work for them. As a minority of sports journalists, women face various obstacles and pressures, which are imposed on them by their colleagues, their sources of information, and the consumers of media content.

Even though radio and television broadcasting now have a greater percentage of women working in sports than they used to have (cf. Boyle, 2006; Brisbane, 2021), studies have demonstrated the disadvantages that women are confronted with, especially when it comes to credibility, stereotyping, and sexism (Etling and Young, 2007; Mastro et al., 2012; Mudrick et al., 2017). In TV sports broadcasting, female reporters are mostly relegated to reporting from the side-lines, while their male colleagues do more prominent work, such as providing commentary and game analysis (Messner et al., 2000). Despite the fact that there are some high-profile female sports broadcasters worldwide, such as Gabby Logan, Clare Balding, Sue Barker, Claudia Neumann, and Kathryn Tappen, some authors suggest that the visibility of women in radio and television sports broadcasting obscures their lack of representation on other platforms, especially the print media (e. g. Jakubowska, 2013; Franks and O'Neill, 2016).

The historically small number of women in sports newsrooms may be due to a general lack of coverage of female sports (Hardin, 2005; Hardin and Shain, 2005b; Sheffer and Schultz, 2007; O'Neill and Mulready, 2015; Franks and O'Neill, 2016). Men's sports have traditionally been given precedence over female sports on TV and in the newspapers. Hardin and Shain (2005b) suggest that sports news is more generally read and watched by men, and that men are not much interested in female sports. In addition, employers help to maintain the hegemony of male journalists in sports reporting (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) by failing to hire women for influential positions in their sports departments (as editors or editors-in-chief) and in sports organizations (as directors or managers). Thus, male superiority and female marginalisation remain common in sport and sports journalism (Hardin and Shain, 2006, p. 323).

Many studies have repeatedly shown that being a woman is a significant obstacle to success in sports media departments (Zoonen, 1994; Chambers et al., 2004; Hardin and Shain, 2006). While the number of women in newsrooms in other fields of journalism has increased, sports newsrooms (whether in the print, audio-visual or online media) still often operate as a nearly all-male team. Women who enter the sports world often encounter negative reactions from colleagues and the public (Brisbane et al., 2021, p. 3).

Research from the first decade of the new millennium has confirmed that the audiences of sports media are influenced by gender stereotypes. They consider female

sports reporters and presenters less trustworthy and knowledgeable than male reporters (Mitrook and Dorr, 2001; Toro, 2005; Etling and Young, 2007). However, a major breakthrough was reported in a research by Gayle Jansen Brisbane et al. (2021). Brisbane's study which focused on the work of journalists within National Football League in the USA was the first ever to assert significantly better acceptance by audiences of women sports broadcasters and a diminishing tendency to stereotype women. According to Brisbane (2021, p. 16–19), the American audience no longer considers female sports journalists to be less trustworthy than men. She found no fundamental difference in audience perceptions of credibility and knowledge for women and men.

The issue of female writing style

Historically, female journalists were expected to focus on women's social issues as part of their journalistic practice. The purpose of 'female journalism' was to write stories on topics that would attract female readers, while other topics, such as business, politics, foreign affairs, and sports remained the domain of men (Franks, 2013). Female journalists were presumed to be interested in creating 'soft' news and men dealt with 'hard' news, a distinction that was reflected in sports journalism as well. Women were traditionally thought to be interested in news about life stories and emotions, as opposed to the factual reporting and technical analysis that were the classical object of sports news (Schoch, 2013a). Studies agree that women are in fact more inclined to 'humanize' their reporting and add an emotional slant to their texts (Chambers et al., 2004; Boyle, 2006; Schoch, 2013a).

A significant study of the female writing style was made by Swiss theorist Lucie Schoch (2013a), who demonstrated the existence of a so-called 'female writing style' among the sports journalists working for Swiss daily newspapers. In her study, Schoch (2013a) interviewed selected female and male sports journalists and examined how women approached sports, how they selected the news to report, how they created their own material and how they treated the material they obtained from their sources (Schoch, 2013a). Part of Schoch's work was an analysis of the content of more than four thousand texts, which showed that most women's writing (with one exception) did not conform to the professional values and conventions of the 'male' writing style. According to Schoch's results, women 'have developed an approach to sports news that is characterized by an interest in soft news and psychological and human perspective which is different from the usual treatment of sports news focused on facts and technical analysis' (Schoch, 2013a, p. 719). Furthermore, women tended to accept their 'female' role in the newsroom, chose 'female' topics and 'soft' news to write about, and take an emotional approach to sports news. As a result, they are often underestimated in terms of the stories they are capable of reporting on, and their work is devalued for allegedly being more emotional than factual and inconsistent with the traditional principles of 'proper' sports journalism discussed above (Schoch, 2013a).

This image of female sports journalists is not confined to Switzerland only. For example, Chambers et al. (2004), Hardin and Shain (2006) and Gill (2007) claim that women in the United States and the United Kingdom are traditionally perceived to take a different approach to choosing the topics about which they write and how they write about them. They are believed to focus more than men on the 'human' and emotional aspects of sports. North (2014, p. 15) believes that Australian female re-

porters are 'pigeon-holed' in jobs reporting on traditionally female story areas such as the arts, education, and health. Neveu (2000) pointed to a 'psychological' treatment of news, practical information, and an ethnographic approach preferred by female journalists in French newspapers. According to Organista et al. (2019) who examined women's sports in the perspective of male and female journalists, women working in the sports departments in Poland had never been in the position of editor in chief, so they always had to follow the norms established by men. Other studies within the East European context (e. g. Ličen and Billings, 2013; Jakubowska and Ličen, 2019) focused more on the topics related to the women's sports and the gendered representation and national identity in specific countries rather than on the female writing style, which is the main interest of my study. Thus, the issue of female writing style has not been examined thoroughly yet in this region.

Female sports journalists in the Czech Republic

There is no comprehensive study in the Czech Republic that maps the history of sports journalism. The field has always been on the periphery of journalism studies and has been discussed only by students in theses and dissertations (e.g. Lukšů, 2011; Rybář, 2017; Řanda, 2017). A few authors have mentioned sports journalism briefly while summarizing Czech journalism overall (e.g. Křivánková and Vatrál, 1989), but I have found no more than four Czech students' theses dealing with the topic of female sports journalists (Janeczek, 2016; Koreis, 2017; Ondřejková, 2017; Hrbáčková, 2020).

As in other countries (cf. Hardin and Shain, 2006; Strong and Hannis, 2007; North, 2014), Czech female journalists rarely work in the sphere of sports media, but they are seeking more and more to break into the field (Koreis, 2017; Ondřejková, 2017). For this article, I determined how many women are working in leading Czech sports newsrooms, using the membership database of the Czech Club of Sports Journalists (Klub sportovních novinářů – KSN). In February 2020, the Club's database evidenced 366 members, of whom 23 were women, which corresponds to about six percent of the KSN's membership. However, the KSN list must be approached with caution because not all active journalists are registered with the organization and not all registered members are active journalists. For comparison, I tried to ascertain the number of women working in sports media from the editors-in-chief of the nationwide media of the Czech Republic. The sports department of Czech News Agency (ČTK) has 17 employees and 30 regular external collaborators, of whom six are women. The sports department of Czech Radio consists of 33 employees, two of them women. There are five editors at *iRozhlas.cz*, but two women contribute externally. In the sports departments of Czech Television (located in Prague, Brno, and Ostrava), fourteen women work as sports reporters and presenters, both externally and internally. The *TV Seznam* channel employs one woman, while *Hospodářské noviny*, *iHNED.cz*, and *aktualne.cz* have no women in their sports newsrooms. No female sports journalists can be found on the staff of *Mladá fronta DNES* and *Lidové noviny*, including their online versions, *iDNES.cz* and *lidovky.cz*. Two women work at the regional newspaper *Deník*. According to these findings, it is clear that sport remains a male domain in the media of the Czech Republic, just as it is abroad (Hardin and Shain, 2005a; Strong and Hannis, 2007; O'Neill and Mulready, 2015).

Method, samples and hypotheses

Based on the previous international research about differences between female and male sports reporting (Chambers et al., 2004; Boyle, 2006; Schoch, 2013a; Franks and O'Neill, 2016), I developed the following hypotheses:

H1: The female writing style will be defined by its use of an emotional approach, personal stories, relatively few statistical data and few evaluative phrases in ice-hockey reporting.

H2: The male writing style will typically use a greater amount of statistical data and include evaluations of players and games in ice-hockey reporting.

To test my hypotheses, I utilized a quantitative content analysis of the data I gathered. Content analysis is considered one of the most popular and expanding techniques of quantitative research (Neuendorf, 2002). Neuendorf (2002) defines a 'quantitative' approach as an analysis that aims to determine the number of occurrences of variables in individual categories, which are then processed using statistical methods. Content analysis is structured, selective process that involves the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to certain rules (Riffe et al., 2005). A prerequisite for such analysis is assembling data that has been collected using a coding technique. A coding book provides explicit rules for the coding procedure and contains precise instructions for coding all variables examined. The findings are then entered in a record sheet (Riffe et al., 2005).

The quantitative analysis examined 217 sports reports created by four reporters (Hana Ježková, Markéta Pernická, Jakub Stařík, Petr Šašek) working in the sports department of Czech Television and two journalists (Barbora Žehanová, Robert Sára) who were employed by the newspaper *Mladá fronta DNES*. I utilized 110 audio-visual news reports from *Branky, body, vteřiny* (*Goals, Points, Seconds*) (hereinafter BBV), 57 audio-visual reports from *Hokej den poté* (*Ice-Hockey, the Day After*) (hereinafter HDP) and 50 written articles from the sports departments of *Mladá fronta DNES* (hereinafter *MF DNES*) and its online version *iDNES.cz*.

The analysis of television reporting comprised the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 ice-hockey seasons. Both sports TV programmes (BBV and HDP) are broadcasted by the sports department of Czech Television. The audio-visual reports were acquired thanks to my access to Czech Television's archives and research room and were fully transcribed. To identify specific examples of audio-visual reports, I recorded the programme title (BBV or HDP), the editor's first and last name (Hana Ježková = HJ, Markéta Pernická = MP, Jakub Stařík = JS, Petr Šašek = PŠ) and the date of broadcast (e.g. BBV HJ 2015-11-13; HDP PŠ 2015-12-07).

In the part of my research dealing with written journalism, I examined articles from 2007 to 2009 as I wanted to limit my samples of written word and TV reporting to two complete seasons. I chose that time span because the female journalist Barbora Žehanová left the *MF DNES* newsroom in 2009 and since then, no other woman has worked for the newspaper's sports department or any other Czech newspaper's sports section and there were no later reports I could analyse. However, the difference in the time periods had no impact on the writing styles. The use of expressions and narrative structures was similar in both time periods.

The articles (in *MF DNES* and *iDNES.cz*) were acquired using Newton Media Search. The initials of the authors (Barbora Žehanová = BŽ, Robert Sára = RS) and

the date of publishing were recorded. I focused the main attention of my analysis on those language elements that according to previous research (Schoch, 2013a) characterise the male and female writing style. In all 217 reports and articles, I recorded the occurrence of expressions of four categories:

- 1) statistical data,
- 2) phrases evaluating the performance of players and teams,
- 3) emotional phrases and personal stories,
- 4) original expressions.

The first category included expressions related to performances of players as individuals or teams as a whole, which contained numerical information (e.g. HDP HJ 2016-10-24: 'he appeared in all fifteen games in Brno and collected eight points'; BBV MP 2015-09-29: 'fourth defeat in a row'; BBV JS 2017-01-30: 'played only 20 games for Sparta'; BBV PŠ 2016-01-06: 'scored six goals in the last four games'; BŽ 2008-09-18: 'Kladno did not lose only one of its four last matches'; RS 2009-03-24: 'he made seven saves after 36 seconds', etc.).

The second category contained expressions evaluating the performance of players and teams (e.g. BBV HJ 2017-03-09: 'Pilsen flew into the match very actively'; HDP HJ 2016-02-08: 'the defence is relatively consistent'; BBV MP 2016-01-15: 'the final period was very nervous from both sides'; HDP JS 2016-10-24: 'fearless team performance'; BBV PŠ 2015-12-06: 'he aimed exactly after a great play'; BŽ 2008-09-13: 'it wasn't an easy job'; RS 2009-03-06: 'Pardubice defended perfectly', etc.).

According to the existing literature, the use of expressions that fall into those two categories, and which frequently include facts, statistics, technical terms, and evaluation, is typical of what Gill (2007) and Schoch (2013a) call the male writing style.

On the other hand, the third category, which highlights emotions, personal stories about particular players and matters such as their health condition, is considered typical of the female treatment of news (e.g. BBV MP 2016-04-12: 'but the joy of Třinec lasted only a minute and ten seconds'; HDP MP 2015-10-14: 'a partner of tennis player Petra Kvitová'; HDP JS 2015-12-14: 'he had to refuse due to injury'; BBV PŠ 2017-04-09: 'he cheered Budějovice for the second time'; HDP PŠ 2017-01-23: 'Zohorna spent his big evening in Hradec Králové'; BŽ 2008-04-11: 'forward Radek Bělohav will have bittersweet memories'; RS 2008-03-20: 'the game offered drama, beauty and a wonderful atmosphere', etc.).

Finally, the fourth category was comprised of unconventional expressions with which the journalists tried to enrich their reports. Such expressions are traditionally considered to be the part of a stereotypically male approach to news writing. For each author, I recorded phrases that did not appear in reports of other colleagues (e.g. BBV HJ 2016-17-03: 'unpleasantly met a hockey stick'; BBV JS 2016-12-11: 'Litvínov's castle was conquered'; HDP JS 2016-11-28: 'Mr. Flawless'; HDP PŠ 2016-11-28: 'Zlín experienced not only black Friday, but also black Tuesday and black Sunday'; BŽ 2007-11-20: 'they threw down their gloves and performed a war dance'; RS 2009-03-25: 'as if the hockey players had extra weights in their skates', etc.).

This part of my quantitative analysis involved counting the appearances of these elements in the work of all six journalists. Firstly, I counted the number of expressions in each category used by each journalist. For instance, Ježková used 21 statistical terms, 32 evaluative phrases, 20 expressions describing emotional aspects and personal stories

and six original phrases in her reports for BBV, a total of 79 formulations overall. I then determined the percentage of the total number of expressions used by each journalist that fell into each category, as shown in Figures 1, 3, and 5 (e.g. Ježková's phrases used in BBV broke down into 26.58% statistics, 40.51% evaluative words, 25.31% phrases regarding emotions and personal stories and 7.60% original connections).

In the case of audio-visual reports for HDP and written articles for *MF DNES* and *iDNES.cz*, I extended the analysis by categorizing reports according to select types of texts:

- 1) a game report,
- 2) a story about a player or team,
- 3) an extraordinary event,
- 4) a pre-game analysis (appeared only in the written articles).

Compared to the other types of reports, game reports contained more details and more statistics about a particular match, and used more expressions evaluating the players' and teams' performance. The purpose of pre-game articles was to review a team's past games, evaluate its performance, and give readers more information about current condition of players. In stories focusing on particular players or teams, I noticed mainly details about players' careers and additional information about specific teams. Finally, I identified texts with various extraordinary topics, such as a reduction in players' salaries, a club's moving to a new ice rink, and others. While game reports and pre-game analyses are believed to be a typically male area of sports journalism, stories about players and teams or news about extraordinary events (beyond matches themselves) are perceived to be a more female area of interest (Schoch, 2013a).

All the journalists' reports for *HDP* and articles for *MF DNES/iDNES.cz* were thoroughly examined and were classified into the pre-selected categories. The findings indicated a variety of different types of articles within the work of all six journalists.

RESULTS

Branky, body, vteřiny (Goals, Points, Seconds)

In the first part of my research, I focused on 110 ice-hockey reports aired by the news programme *Branky, body, vteřiny*. Hana Ježková produced the fewest outputs (20) in group; the most reports were created by Markéta Pernická (35). I also analysed 27 reports by Jakub Stařík and 28 by Petr Šašek.

As Figure 1 illustrates, I recorded the largest percentage use of expressions containing statistical data and emotional phrases in the work of Hana Ježková (26.58% statistics and 25.31% expressions connected to the emotions). However, the difference in the percentage of statistical expressions used by Ježková (26.58%), Stařík (25.18%) and Šašek (24.33%) was minor. The lowest frequency of statistics was ascertained in Pernická's outputs (13.10%), even though she was the author of the largest number of analysed reports. On the other hand, of the four journalists, Pernická used evaluative expressions the most (58.62%), and she also devoted the most space to original phrases (13.79%). In comparison, Ježková, Stařík and Šašek chose more neutral expressions for their reports. The results indicate that Stařík's and Šašek's use of all variables of expression was very similar.

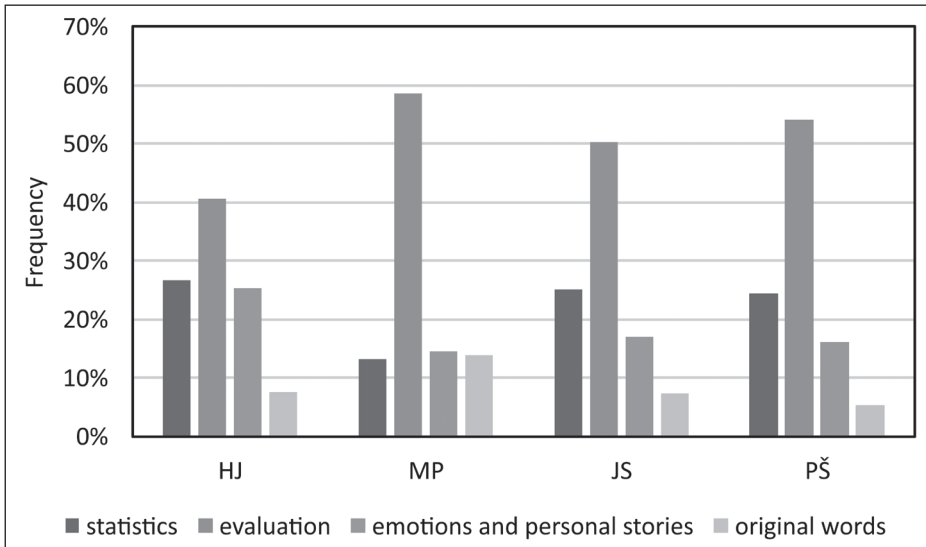


Figure 1 Frequency of use of particular kinds of expressions by selected journalists in BBV (as percent of all counted expressions used by each)

Hokej den poté (Ice-Hockey the Day After)

The second part of my research dealt with more creative and opinion-based reports created for the programme *Hokej den poté (Ice-Hockey the Day After)*. This research contained more reports made by men: Jakub Stařík (18), Petr Šašek (17), Hana Ježková (12) and Markéta Pernická (10).

Similarly to the analysis of the reports aired on BBV, I paid attention to the appearance of the same expressive elements in four categories. I extended the research by counting the kinds of reports produced by each journalist (game reports, stories about a player or team, and extraordinary reports).

The most game reports were created by Stařík (13), followed by Ježková (6) and Šašek (4). Pernická authored just one game report. As summarized in Figure 2, the category of stories about a player or team was dominated by Šašek (12) and Pernická (9). Ježková and Stařík were the authors of five and three such stories, respectively. Reports about an extraordinary event were uncommon, and Pernická did not create even one. Figure 2 indicates that Stařík's and Pernická's work conform to the theory that men focus on game reports while women prefer player or team stories. Stařík's output was heavily biased toward game reports while Pernická's reports were predominantly dedicated to stories. However, the genre classification of Šašek's work led him more in the direction of what has been perceived as the 'female' writing style, while Ježková's work was rather balanced between genres in both main categories.

Although Šašek focused primarily on stories about players or teams, he covered them with an accent on facts and statistical data. Such expressions were 54.32% of the total counted expressions he used. On the contrary, as Figure 3 shows, Šašek's output included the lowest frequency of evaluative words (27.16%) and the second lowest frequency of emotional expressions (13.59%). Pernická's work was

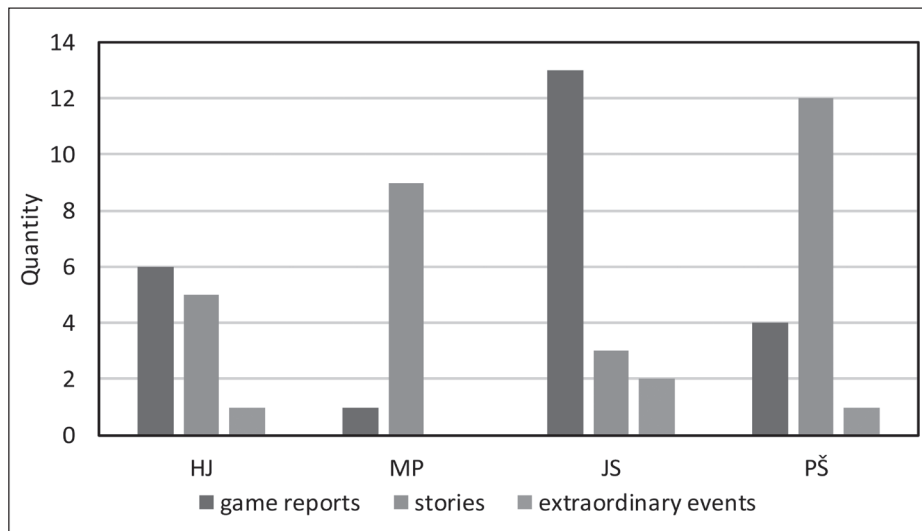


Figure 2 Genre of reports produced by selected female and male journalists in HDP

dominated by the category of phrases describing emotions and personal stories (37.81%). The highest frequency of expressions in her work concerned detailed information about players and their careers, including their health conditions. She also often used a narrative element. The second highest occurrence of statistics was in Ježková’s reports (44.26%), who also frequently applied evaluative phrases (34.42%). The women did not use any original phrases in their work. Stařík (7.46%) and Šašek (4.93%) were most represented in that category.

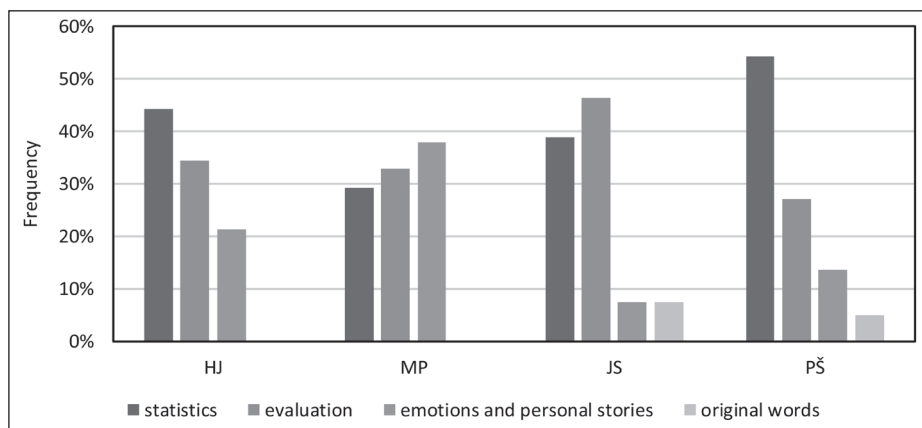


Figure 3 Frequency of use of particular kinds of expressions by selected journalists in HDP (as percent of all counted expressions used by each)

MF DNES, iDNES.cz

The sample of written articles about the Czech Extraliga consisted of 26 reports by Barbora Žehanová and 24 texts by Robert Sára. These articles were divided into four categories: a game report, a story about a player or team, a story about an extraordinary event, and a pre-game analysis. As in the case of the audio-visual reports, I were interested in the appearance of statistics, evaluative words, descriptions of emotions and personal stories, and unusual phrases.

I observed a difference in the journalists' choice of type of article. As Figure 4 indicates, Sára produced 14 game reports, three pre-game analyses, four stories about a player or team and three articles about extraordinary event, out of a total of 24 texts he authored. Žehanová wrote five game reports, four pre-game articles, 12 player or team stories and five reports on extraordinary events, out of a total of 26 texts.

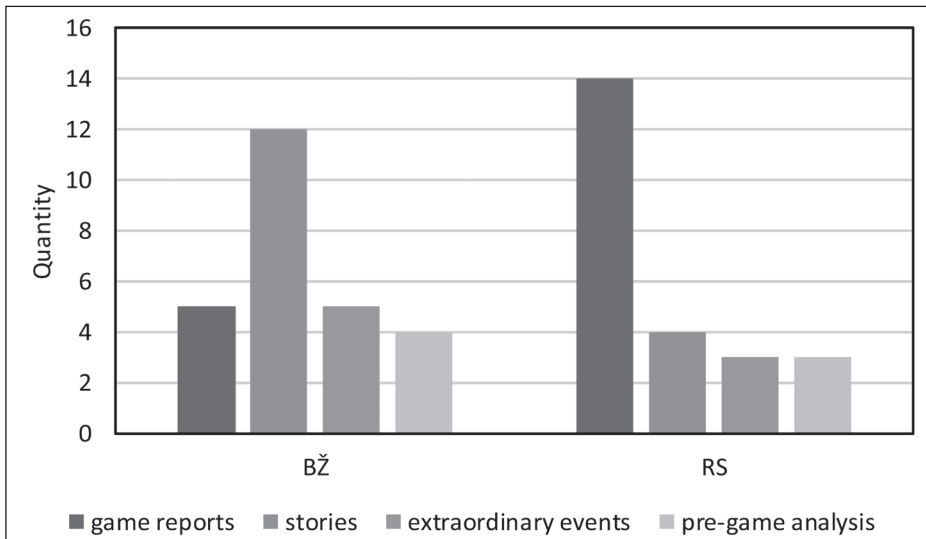


Figure 4 Genre of reports produced by selected female and male journalists in MF DNES/iDNES.cz

Even though their choice of article types differed markedly, Žehanová's and Sára's writing styles were very similar in terms of their use of language expressions contained in the four pre-selected categories (see Figure 5). A high frequency of evaluative phrases was typical of their reports. The second most represented category of expressions in their work was that connected to emotions, especially descriptions of a game's atmosphere, players' behaviour, personal information about particular players, and their health condition. However, Žehanová used more statistical data (BŽ = 23.95%, RS = 21%), whereas Sára engaged more in emotional phrases (RS = 34.5%, BŽ = 31.14%).

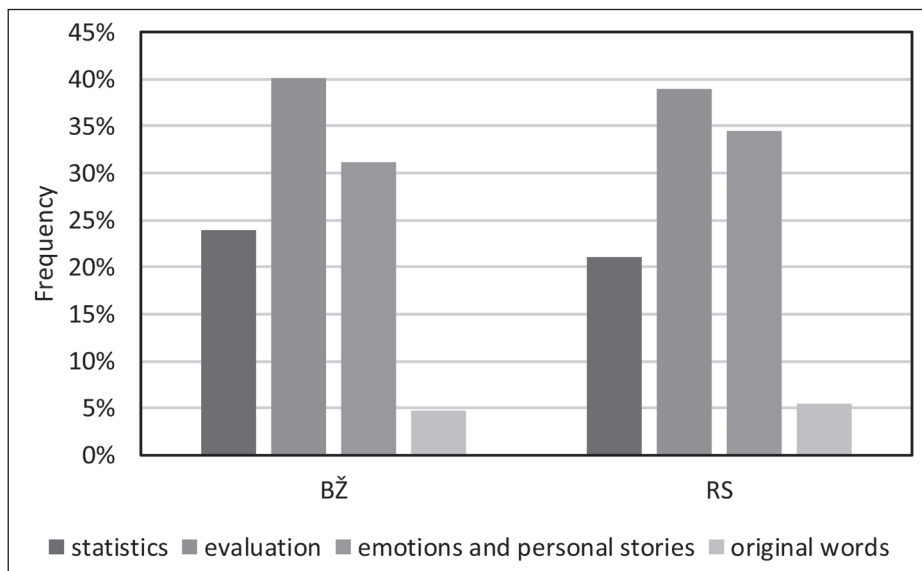


Figure 5 Frequency of use of particular kinds of expressions by selected journalists in MF DNES/ iDNES.cz (as percent of all counted expressions used by each)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of my analysis of sports reports and articles was to reveal differences – if any – between the female and male writing style in the case of Czech sports journalism, particularly in one of the most masculine domains, ice-hockey reporting. In my literature review (Chambers et al., 2004; Hardin and Shain, 2005a, 2006; Schoch, 2013a), I repeatedly encountered the claim that female sports journalists deal more often than men with soft news comprised of narrative expressions and phrases related to emotions, while using less statistical data and analytical approaches (Schoch, 2013a).

However, my results showed us that the use of statistical data is not the exclusive domain of men, as well as women do not focus primarily on descriptions of emotions and personal stories. In the audio-visual programmes *Goals, Points, Seconds (BBV)* and *Hockey the day After (HDP)*, I noticed a similar tendency by Ježková, Stařík and Šašek to include statistical data, and Pernická's reports typically included phrases related to performance evaluation. This research did not prove unequivocally that the female reporters chose significantly more emotional elements and focused more on personal stories or the health condition of players. For instance, in the case of Stařík's and Šašek's work for BBV, the men's frequency of use of emotional phrases was even higher than that of one woman, Pernická. If I compare the results of my analysis of the pieces of news in BBV and the more creative, opinion-based reports in HDP, it is evident that each journalist's usage of statistics, expressions and narrative components differed also according to the genre of their final work, not simply according to their personality.

Analysis of written texts for *MF DNES* and *iDNES.cz* produced results opposite to my hypotheses. Despite the fact that Žehanová and Sára wrote their articles in a similar way, Žehanová's work contained a larger incidence of statistical data and performance evaluation, while Sára's articles had a higher frequency of emotional phrases and original expressions. The difference in the frequency with which the expressions appeared was not high, and we cannot speak about any specific 'male' or 'female' writing style in this case.

In addition, the journalists' choices regarding the types of reports and articles to write did not confirm that women solely adopt stories, whereas men prefer to deal exclusively with game reports and pre-game analysis. This was the case only for *MF DNES* and *iDNES.cz* reporting. In the TV news, my research shows that Ježková created more game reports than Šašek, and moreover, Šašek was the author of the largest number of player and team stories of all the TV reporters. However, this study did not examine the possible influence of editors who might decide which journalists would cover which topic.

In summary, my data did not persuasively support either of my two hypotheses. I did not find that the female sports journalists brought primarily 'emotional' and 'human' angles to their stories, while avoiding statistics and evaluative expressions, which traditionally are attributed to men's journalistic work (Schoch, 2013a). The results suggested that the use of specific phrases describing a game's atmosphere, emotions, or personal information about a player was not strictly limited to reporting by women, while technical analysis, facts, and figures were not solely characteristics of men's journalistic output. On the basis of my findings, I suggest that to the extent they exist, the so-called 'female' and 'male' writing style is not as distinct in the Czech sports media as previous foreign studies have found it to be in other countries (cf. Schoch, 2013a; Franks and O'Neill, 2016).

In recent years, journalism has become more opinion-based and narrative than strictly factual and analytical. Even though we can still find topics which seem to be dominated more by men than women, and vice versa, my data did not confirm that sports journalists write their stories in a specific 'male' or 'female' way. It is my belief that the individual style of a journalist has greater influence on his or her reports and use of language than his or her gender.

Taking into account the results of this paper and the fact that female and male sports writing may not differ as much as heretofore believed, stereotyping of women and underestimating their proficiency within sports journalism may cease. Although sports journalism used to be dominated by men, the number of female journalists in practice, especially in TV broadcasting, is rising, and women play an increasingly important role in the co-determination and standardization of the norms of sports journalism. The 'female' writing style and 'feminine' topics seem to be something that has been forced into being by the circumstances of their employment rather than the innate qualities of female journalists. Because this study focused on the prestigious career of sports journalism in the Czech Republic, which was and still is dominated by men, my finding that there is no specific male or female style of reporting is important. It indicates that the work of journalists is most influenced by their own personality, and that therefore women as a class should not be limited to covering feminine sports stories in a female writing style.

Still, this study is the first of its kind and we need to wait for further research in other regions and sports that will either support or disprove that my results indicate a trend. For future research in this field of study, I recommend that the available data be enriched by interviewing editors and journalists who could explain how they prepare their articles and reports, how they choose specific phrases or elements to use and deal with external factors that may affect their work (e.g. time pressures, colleagues, editors, and sources of information).

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