Journal Critique of "'Your Analysis Is as Useless as Your Ovaries': Women Football Fans' Experiences on Social Media"

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In recent years, social media has become one of the most important environments for sports fans to be able to discuss topics with one another and express their opinions. But not every fan has the same positive experience in these online environments and gender often shapes how people go about engaging with others in this space. In her article published in 2024, titled "'Your analysis is as useless as your ovaries': Women football fans' experiences on social media," Doehler examines how women who support men's football experience both inclusion and exclusion within digital fan communities, especially on X. She takes a survey of one thousand six hundred and twenty four women who actively support men's football clubs in the United Kingdom. She investigates their interactions, the challenges they face in this space because of their gender, and the strategies they use in order to cope with those challenges. Doehler explains that social media plays an important role in building football conversations and creating a sense of community, but it also creates an environment where many women suffer discrimination and gender based stereotypes. In this critique I argue that although the article offers a clear and valuable examination of the difficulties many women face in online sports fandom environments, it also has limitations related to its sample design and theoretical depth that should be considered further.

Doehler's main goal is to understand how women who support men's football teams are treated online and how their gender influences these interactions. She chose to focus on X specifically because it is a space where people often share opinions and participate in current discussions. X can create a welcoming community, but it can also become a hostile environment where women are insulted or dismissed from conversation simply because of their gender. To

study these experiences, Doehler collected survey responses between March and July of 2023. Nearly half of the women reported sexist treatment as well as direct sexist abuse. These patterns reveal that sexism in this environment is not a rare occurrence and that it's a regular part of many women's online conversations surrounding sports topics.

One of the biggest strengths of the article is the use of Pope's model of men's performances of masculinity. The model breaks men into three groups based on how they treat women. Some men are genuinely supportive, others are openly sexist, and the third group acts respectful on the surface while still relying on old fashioned gender assumptions. Doehler applies this model to the stories and experiences the women have shared and explains what kinds of men they often run into online. She even suggests updating the model by replacing the third category with conditional misogyny which describes moments when a man seems supportive but still makes it clear that he is surprised a woman can make a strong football point. The article then organizes the findings into themes "1) motivations for utilizing social media; (2) the emergence of a vibrant online community; (3) encounters with gender discrimination; and (4) adaptive strategies" (Doheler 2024).

These themes make it clear that social media can be both welcoming and difficult for women who love football. Many women say they use X to feel more connected during games and to hear what other fans think. A lot of women also talk about making friends online especially when they do not have many friends in their real lives who enjoy football as much as they do. But at the same time, they describe constant moments where their knowledge is questioned or their opinions are pushed aside in online discussion. Some talk about being told to get back to doing household chores or hearing comments like "your analysis is as useless as your ovaries." Women also shared that they have received rape threats or even demands for explicit

photos. Because of this, some women change how they participate in sports conversations online. They think hard before actually posting, make their accounts private, switch to platforms that feel safer, or join women only groups where they do not have to worry about possible gender harassment. Some women even change their profile picture to where it isn't possible to tell that they are a female in order to avoid abuse. These strategies show how determined women are to stay involved in discussions but also the lengths they have to go to just to take part in football conversations.

One of the strongest aspects of the article is its relevance. As Doehler explains, research on football fans has been focused towards men and the experiences of women have received little attention, especially in the online environment. This article is easy to follow, clearly organized, and grounded in a large sample of participants. The writing helps readers understand the challenges women face even if they are not familiar with research on gender or sports communication.

Another strength is the use of theory to link individual comments to broader patterns in football culture. The statements some women reported, such as being told their opinion means nothing or that they should return to household work reflects attitudes associated with traditional forms of toxic masculinity. Comments such as "a good opinion for a girl" show the type of subtle sexism that Doehler calls conditional misogyny. These examples demonstrate how gender norms continue to shape the football culture and how men often expect to control the football conversations.

Despite its many strengths, the article also has some limitations. The study focuses entirely on the United Kingdom, which is a very unique culture and does not necessarily represent other countries. Doehler briefly acknowledges this point but could have explained

more clearly how the findings might differ in other contexts. Another limitation comes from the use of self reported survey responses. This method allows for a large sample which is a good thing, but it heavily depends on memory and personal interpretation of experiences. A combination of surveys and interviews or an analysis of actual posts would have provided more reliable details.

The article also would have benefited from a more intersectional approach. Almost all participants identified as White and the article does not explore how race, age, or sexuality may change people's experiences. Lastly, although the section on coping strategies is interesting, the author could have examined them deeper on whether or not these strategies allow women to participate equally or they really just strengthen the idea that mainstream football spaces are not really meant for females.

Overall, this article offers a meaningful analysis to understand how women experience football conversations online. It shows that women can find friendship and community but also deal with abuse, dismissal, and sexist comments. The study is very well written and supported by a large sample. At the same time, it focuses only on the United Kingdom, relies on self reporting, and limits the examination of intersectionality. Despite these critiques, the article offers valuable insight into the challenges many women often face in online sports fandom conversations and it encourages future research on how to create a more welcoming environment for all fans.

Reference

Doehler, S. (2024). ‘Your Analysis Is as Useless as Your Ovaries’: Women Football Fans’ Experiences on Social Media. *Communication & Sport*, *0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795241292718