



GENDER IDENTITY IN FEMALE FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. The aim of this study was to define the relationship between gender identity, the perception of the body, depressive-ness, and aggression in female football players who represent different levels of competence (playing in the premier league *vs.* second league) and seniority in sport. **Methods.** Research was carried out on female football players (aged 16–31 years) playing in the premier league ($N = 49$) and second league ($N = 45$). Data were obtained with the use of: the Body Image Evaluation Questionnaire by Mandal, developed on the basis of Franzoi's concepts; Kuczyńska's Gender Assessment Inventory (IPP) adapted from the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* (BSRI), which diversifies individuals in terms of their gender identity in accordance to the Gender Schema Theory by Bem; the *Beck Depression Inventory*, translated by Lewicka and Czapiński; and the *Buss-Durkee Inventory*, adapted by Kosewski with comments from Stanik. To find a relationship between the mentioned variables, statistical analysis was carried out by use of ANOVA, the t test, the χ^2 test and correlation coefficients. **Results.** The obtained research results indicate that, among female football players, the following occurs: a predominance of androgynous gender identities and a deficiency of its other types, a higher level of masculinity than among non-training women, a more favorable perception of body-as-process, a higher evaluation of body-as-object, along with an increase of masculinity and a decrease in indirect aggression at higher competition levels. **Conclusions.** The application of the masculinity dimension by female football players with androgynous gender identity is probably an effective strategy for survival in conditions that are unsuitable and gender-inappropriate in typical masculine sports.

Key words: gender schema, psychological sex, football

Introduction

Gender identity with sex and gender itself are all elements constituting human sexuality. Each of the above mentioned notions are connected with a description of sex from a psychological, biological and social perspective [1]. The psychological phenomenon of gender identity has been aptly explained in the Gender Schema Theory by Sandra L. Bem. According to this theory, culture provides an individual with obligatory definitions of femininity and masculinity creating a so-called gender schema.

The gender schema is a general, mental representation of a part of knowledge about the reality responsible for classifying human experiences as feminine *vs.* masculine. An internalization of the content of gender schemata in the process of sex typing triggers our special knowledge on sex to be used not only with the aim of orientation in the world, but also in the purpose of building on its basis a concept of one's self as well as controlling one's behavior. Bem distinguished six possible gender identities mirroring the unique inclinations represented by an individual to use the dimensions of masculinity and femininity. The first four types of personalities use the gender schema for the purposes of constructing an identity and regulating one's behavior. They are *sex typed* (feminine women and masculine men – femininity predominates over masculinity in

women and masculinity predominates over femininity in men) and *cross sex typed* (masculine women and feminine men – a predominance of femininity over masculinity in men and masculinity over femininity in women, respectively). The other types of gender identity fall “outside” the standard gender schema dichotomizing the world into the feminine or masculine, transcending it in relation to *androgynous individuals* (where women and men simultaneously representing a high intensity of femininity and masculinity use both dimensions for the purpose of processing information) and those undifferentiated in terms of gender (women and men displaying the same low intensity level of femininity and masculinity) by almost ignoring gender schemata and not organizing such a cognition process around them [2, 3].

As such, culture allows people to use gender schemata with various levels of intensity in evaluating the environment and themselves, which diversifies them in terms of psychological sex. Men sustain the stereotypical division of masculine and feminine sports as a *status quo* necessary in order to obtain gender identity [4]. The hegemony of men in sport is the reason for the “rules of war” that are so frequently present in it. Therefore, women are required to adjust to conditions that are often at variance with their system of values [5]. Women participating in a traditionally masculine sport frequently have androgynous or masculine gender

identities [6, 7], and as Matteo argues [8], they tend to practice masculinized sports far more often (baseball, basketball, boxing, football). Mroczkowska [9] obtained slightly different results in competitors who trained a sport appropriate (i.e., neutral) to both genders (fencing) indicating the prevalence of androgynous (44.4%) and feminine (27.8%) over masculine and undifferentiated gender identity, while women who trained in disciplines that are inadequate in terms of their gender ("masculine" weight lifting), androgynous (53%) and masculine (23%) gender identity predominated.

For three years, Guillet et al. [10] observed the withdrawal of young (aged 13–15 years) women handball players from active sport. The highest percentage of female players that remained in sports belonged to the following types of gender identity: androgynous (76%), masculine (69%) and a lower percentage of those referred to feminine (56%) and undifferentiated (50%) identity. It is worth noting that participation in a feminine sport may depend on early behaviors, such as a girl's preference of "masculine" rather than "feminine" toys (*guns vs. Barbie dolls*) and games (*football vs. jump rope*), enhanced through the clear encouragement by their family, peers and coaches [11]. It seems quite possible that women who represented increased "masculinity" as girls were considered as so-called "tomboys", who were more glad to participate in more masculine activities than in feminine ones. Bailey et al. [12] reported that girls (aged 4–9 years) from a *tomboy* group were generally more masculine (playing, interests, *gender*) than their sisters, but not more than their brothers. It appears that retaining the childhood inclinations of girls may predispose them towards a certain sport in the future and account for them taking up activities in areas that belong to "masculine" culture.

One of the masculinized reservoirs of sport is football, and it was only not that long ago that women were allowed to enter this exclusive environment. Although football is becoming an increasingly popular discipline among women, there are a number of negative opinions on this form of emancipation. This is evidenced by recent results of a Polish study on the factorial structure of male and female professional stereotypes, which indicate that being a footballer is a job reserved exclusively for men [13]. According to Starosta [14], based on a sampling of students' opinions, the sports that have adverse influence on a woman's body (identified as being concerned on the aesthetics of a woman's body or about achieving motherhood) are: bodybuilding, weight lifting and football (ranked in this order). This is why it seems vital to determine the identity of women who undertake to break the limits outlined by the stereotypes of sex and sexist bias, and above all, to answer the question: "What are the costs of doing so?"

In tests performed on female football players ($N = 31$), Pacut [15] obtained a prevalence of androgynous (65%)

and masculine (16%) gender identities. Chalabaev et al. indirectly explained the reason for such a distribution of gender identities based on an example of young female football players (M age = 13.5 years), showing that masculinity ensures a positive perceived ability in soccer [16]. In research done by Szmajke and Adamczuk [17], all of the tested female football players ($N = 17$) displayed typically masculine gender identity, a high aggression factor and low self-esteem, through which the authors then formulated a presumption that women playing football are socially "rejected" and that is what induces them to fulfill themselves within the enclave of women's football. On the other hand, the results obtained by Mroczkowska [9] indicate that this could be instead an adaptation to a typically masculine sport by means of an androgynous gender identity. However, the research in question did not take into consideration the specific nature of the sports discipline (it was not performed on women football players).

Thus it seems necessary to broaden the presented subject of research with a view towards focusing on the seniority of woman football players, the represented level of sport participation, their aggressiveness, which by simplification is the essence of the stereotype of masculinity (in being predominating, competing, success-oriented, pushing oneself forward, combative, brusque, or arrogant) and depressiveness, which, also being further simplified, appears to be connected with the stereotype of femininity, where sensitivity, mildness, reflectiveness, thoughtfulness, gentleness, and bashfulness are emphasized [18]. In some cases football is ranked among the more brutal team disciplines [19], with it being a sports environment where regulations or a referee's decisions are at times considered to be unjust and therefore hinder one's success in sport. Such decisions could be therefore perceived as consenting to a "justified" use of violence [20]. However, contrary to these findings, empirical research does not confirm a higher level of aggression in female football players than in women who do not practice any sport whatsoever [21], and it even points to a smaller amount of antisocial behavior on the field than in players [22]. This is despite the fact that the environment of football appears to create possibilities for higher social elevation and a substantial improvement in the quality of life [23], and the use of aggression might be seen as a good means at achieving them. "Pumping up" and promoting an attitude of optimal outward aggression among athletes gives them the physiological mobilization of enabling them to be more fully involved in competition [24], rather than a more destructive attitude of outright hostility, irritation and anger, which, when accompanied with sports aggression, makes it rather ineffective and useless [25].

Depression, as a mental illness, also plays a role in regard to sex stereotypes; in women it pertains to problems connected with the fulfillment of a social role (portraying the classic symptoms: low mood, an inabil-

ity to feel pleasure, anxiety). Whereas in men it pertains to the denial and threat to one's "masculinity" (e.g., a decreased feeling in control over one's life, the inability to work, which is sometimes concealed in self-destructive behaviors such as with the use of certain stimulants or gambling, but still attempting at salvaging one's masculinity), of who appears to fulfill the stereotype of the "strong man" that dominates in our culture [26]. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to determine the situation of female football players, whose model of experiencing this disorder may be closer to the masculine one and thus imperceptible in their own consciousness. In addition, previous research also points to the fact that women practicing sports and sustaining an injury may be more susceptible to depression than male athletes [27]. A counterpart to the characteristics of female football players' gender identity is one of their body image, as it is a personality component that undergoes unceasing social evaluation in terms of sex stereotypes and one not taken into consideration in any of the tools designed to measure psychological gender. According to Franzoi's theory, we can approach our body in two ways: by understanding the body as a collection of static elements evaluated separately (face, hands, feet) or the body as a functional whole (attractiveness, endurance, strength). Perception, in terms of *body-as-object* and *body-as-process*, is connected with sex stereotypes. Both genders assess their bodies in a more positive manner through the *body-as-process* approach rather than the *body-as-object*, and a high level of femininity induces a negative evaluation of the body as an object in women and positive evaluation in men, whereas a high level of masculinity induces a positive evaluation of *body-as-object* in women. The satisfaction received from perceiving one's *body-as-process* is interlinked with masculinity [28, 29]. This relationship consists of the fact that the more a woman is feminine the less favorably her body is evaluated by her as an object, while far more positively is such an evaluation received when a subject represents a high level of masculinity, which indicates that auto-identification with a masculine gender stereotype, when a masculine discipline is practiced, appears to be a favorable adaptational phenomenon. On the other hand, the specific character of typical masculine sport disciplines itself (football, boxing) induces the use of a masculine dimension connected with the functional evaluation of the body as a whole (*body-as-process*) that scores or loses goals or gives or receives blows in objective terms. Typical feminine sport disciplines (synchronized swimming, skating) give priority to femininity, which pertains to treating the body as an object undergoing on-going aesthetization and immeasurable evaluation, thus contributing to low self-esteem in women [30].

In such a context, women football players may undergo adaptive changes in their gender identity, in how

they perceive their bodies or experience depressiveness and, as such, come to resemble men in terms of aggressive behavior that follow in the footsteps of having certain male characteristics. The analysis found above revolves around the dilemma of: "Does sport change the identity of a female player?" *vs.* "Does sport attract individuals having a special identity?"

In order to solve this problem, this study focused on determining the level of gender, the perception of one's body, depressiveness, the aggression of female football players across different skill levels as well as seniority, and a search for a relationship between these aspects. In order to operationalize the issue set forth in this paper, the following research questions were formulated:

Does the intensity level of femininity and masculinity in all subjects differ from each other significantly?

Does the intensity level of femininity and masculinity in female football players differ significantly from each other depending on the level of competition in which they play in (premier league *vs.* second league)?

Does the intensity level of femininity and masculinity in female football players and non-training women differ from each other significantly?

Is there any relationship between the gender identity variants and type of physical activity of women (women playing football *vs.* non-training women)?

Is there any relationship between the gender identity variants and level of competition played by female football players (premier league *vs.* second league)?

Do the following issues correlate with each other: the represented level of competition (women's premier league *vs.* second league), the seniority in playing football as well as the seniority one holds in their current division, masculinity and femininity, depressiveness, general aggression and its elements and perception of one's *body as-process* and *as-object*?

Does the level of general aggression in female football players significantly differ from the level of general aggression in non-training women?

Does the intensity level of perception of one's *body as-object* and *as-process* significantly differ from each other in women playing football?

Does the intensity level of perception of one's *body as-object* and *as-process* significantly differ from each other, depending on the represented level of competition in women playing football (premier league *vs.* second league)?

Material and methods

Research was carried out between January and April 2010 among randomly selected football clubs in Poland, selecting football players who train in the premier league ($N = 49$) and second league ($N = 45$) and were aged 16–31 years (mean age 20.77 years). The measurement tools for dependent variables were as follows: the Body Image Evaluation Questionnaire by

Mandal [30], which was developed on the basis of the concept of body image according to Franzoi, that focused on the satisfaction with one's own body and how it is perceived in a body-as-object (separate parts of the body) and body-as-process manner (body functioning); the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* (BSRI), adapted by Kuczyńska in her *Inventory for Psychological Gender Evaluation* (IPP) [3, 18], diversifying individuals in terms of their gender identity according to the Schema Theory by Bem; the Beck Depression Inventory, translated by Lewicka in Czapiński's work [31] as the level of depressiveness of an individual (it measures the components of depression seen as one of psychopathological dimensions manifesting itself in various disorders and is not used for diagnosing depression as a nosological unit); and the Buss-Durkee Inventory [32], which determines: the level of an aggression factor *en bloc* (understood as an unpleasant stimulus directed at another person), consisting of physical, indirect, verbal aggression and irritation, and the hostility factor (which was not analyzed in the present paper, however). The obtained results were then analyzed statistically.

Results

Repeated measures of ANOVA in a 2×2 design (level of competition: premier league *vs.* second league *vs.* femininity *vs.* masculinity) showed that all of the tested subjects obtained statistically significant higher results on the femininity scale ($x = 56.84$) than on the masculinity scale ($x = 54.25$); $F(1, 92) = 10.32, p < 0.002$, (partial) $\eta^2 = 0.10$ (Fig. 1), and did not indicate any dependence on the level of competition (premier league *vs.* second league) : $F(1, 92) = 0.04, p > 0.84$.

The femininity of female football players did not differ in a statistically significant manner from the mean values obtained among non-training women (56.84 *vs.* 56.60); $|t(93)| = 0.36, p > 0.05$ (two-sided test).

The masculinity in female football players was significantly statistically higher than the mean value obtained among non-training women (54.25 *vs.* 46.71); $t(93) = 10.21; p < 0.0005$ (right-sided test). The figures pertaining to the mean femininity and masculinity in non-training women were taken from a study on female students ($N = 327$) carried out by Korzeń [33].

Statistical analysis conducted using the χ^2 test revealed a significant relationship between the type of gender identity and practiced sport (in this case female football players *vs.* students). Among female football players a clear deficiency of female and undifferentiated gender identities occurred with a simultaneous overrepresentation of androgynous types. Within the population of female students the tendency was reversed, namely, the androgynous type was underrepresented, whereas female and undifferentiated gender identities were found to be excessive, where $\chi^2(3) = 62.23; p < 0.001$ (Tab. 1).

No relationship between the type of gender identity and the level of competition (premier league *vs.* second league) was found in the group of studied female football players for $\chi^2(3) = 1.76; p > 0.62$ (Tab. 2).

Along with the increase of masculinity in female football players, a positive perception of body-as-object increases (0.26) while indirect aggression (0.27), verbal aggression (0.30) as well as general aggression also rose (0.28). The increase of depressiveness in female football players was accompanied by a higher level of indirect aggression (0.29), irritation (0.42) and general aggression (0.25). Longer player seniority of a female football player was accompanied with lower general aggression (-0.28), physical aggression (-0.24) and indirect aggression (-0.30) levels. Female football players, who trained football for a longer period of time in their present league reveal lower general aggression (-0.24) and lower indirect aggression (-0.19) when they achieve a higher level of sports participation (Tab. 3). General aggression of female football players does not differ sig-

Table 1. Comparison of the number of gender identity types in female football players and students obtained by means of Kuczyńska's IPP

Type of gender identity	Number of gender identity types in female football players	Number of gender identity types in female students*	Σ	χ^2
MW (masculine women)	10 (12.06)	44 (41.95)	54	62.23
FW (feminine women)	15 (32.60)	131 (113.41)	146	
A (androgynous)	64 (32.60)	82 (113.41)	146	
U (undifferentiated)	5 (16.75)	70 (58.26)	75	
Σ	94	327	421	

* Data concerning the gender identity of female students was obtained from Korzeń [33]. The values in brackets signify the expected number, the actual number can be seen above them

Table 2. Interrelationship of gender identity types obtained by means of Kuczyńska's IPP in female football players in the premiere and second leagues

Type of gender identity	Number of types of gender identity in premier league female football players	Number of types of gender identity in second league female football players	Σ	χ ²
MW (masculine women)	7 (5.21)	3 (4.78)	10	1.76
FW (feminine women)	7 (7.81)	8 (7.18)	15	
A (androgynous)	33 (33.36)	31 (30.63)	64	
U (undifferentiated)	2 (2.6)	3 (2.39)	5	
Σ	49	45	94	

The values in brackets signify the expected number, the actual number is above them

Table 3. Interrelationship of correlations for $N = 72$ (valid cases) in which variables marked with an asterisk (*) are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. Lev	-	0.60*	0.41*	-0.00	0.04	-0.02	-0.00	-0.01	-0.14	-0.19*	0.01	-0.05	-0.09
2. Sen	-	-	0.73*	-0.03	0.08	0.12	0.15	-0.05	-0.24*	-0.30	-0.17	-0.14	-0.28*
3. Sen2	-	-	-	0.01	0.14	0.14	0.09	-0.14	-0.18	-0.23	-0.22	-0.12	-0.24*
4. Proc	-	-	-	-	0.47*	0.08	0.09	-0.20	-0.07	0.12	-0.13	0.06	-0.01
5. Objec	-	-	-	-	-	0.19	0.26*	-0.21	-0.09	0.10	-0.18	-0.17	-0.12
6. F	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.26*	0.18	-0.20	-0.08	-0.08	-0.06	-0.14
7. M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.04	0.19	0.27*	0.07	0.30*	0.28*
8. Dep	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.03	0.29*	0.42*	0.16	0.25*
9. Pa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.33*	0.32*	0.57*	0.75*
10. Ia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.49*	0.48*	0.73*
11. Ir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.39*	0.70*
12. Va	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.84*
13. Ga	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Lev – level of competition, Sen – total seniority as player, Sen2 – seniority in the present league, Proc – perception of body-as-process, Objec – perception of body-as-object, F – femininity, M – masculinity, Dep – depressiveness, Pa – physical aggression, Ia – indirect aggression, Ir – irritation, Va – verbal aggression, Ga – general aggression (Sum of Pa, Ia, Ir, Va). Due to the manner of coding the level of competition (0 – premier league and 2 – second league) the correlations with it were calculated using Kendall's tau coefficient, and in the obtained values, the ± signs have been changed into their opposites

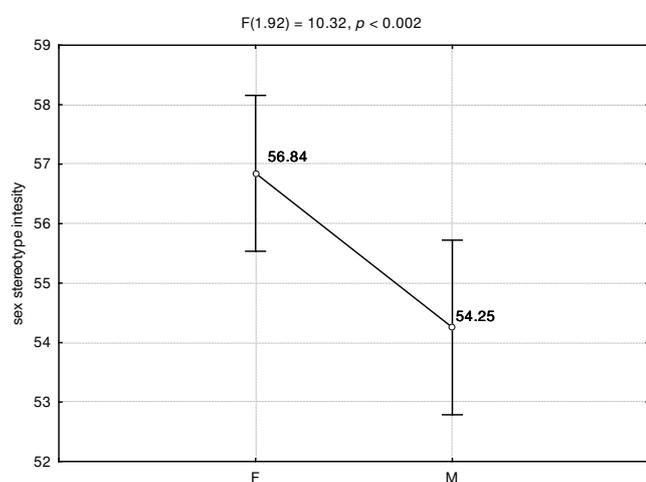


Figure 1. Mean femininity (F) and masculinity (M) measured by means of Kuczyńska's IPP in female football players

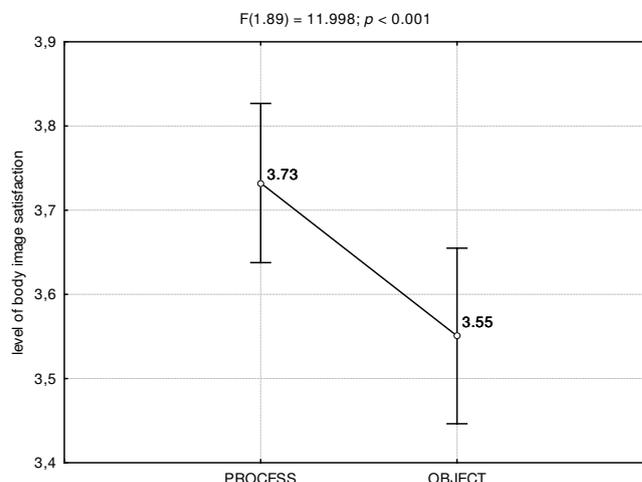


Figure 2. The perception of body image as an object and as a process by female football players

nificantly from aggression in the general population (the results used in the comparison by Stanik et al. [32]); (40 vs. 37.43) $|t(90)| = 1.77, p > 0.05$.

Repeated measures ANOVA in a 2×2 design (level of competition: premier league vs. second league vs. body image satisfaction: body-as-process vs. body-as-object, respectively) found that all of the female football players perceive the image of their body-as-process (strength, stamina) in a more favorable manner than in terms of body-as-object (face, figure); $F(1.89) = 11.998, p < 0.001$; (partial) $\eta^2 = 0.12$, and did not indicate any dependence on the level of competition (premier league vs. second league) : $F(1.89) = 0.18, p > 0.67$ (Fig. 2).

Discussion

Football, as a sports discipline that is stereotypically connected with the world of masculine values, prefers an androgynous type of gender identity among female football players. As the results of this study indicated, this was not linked to the level of competition and thereby strengthens the hypothesis of sport attracting and selecting more androgynous individuals. More importantly, the high intensity of masculinity (higher than in non-training women), which in combination with a simultaneously high level of femininity (similar to female players and a control group not practicing any sport), seems to fulfill an adjustment function to the conditions in which predominantly fitness categories prevail and therefore there is a risk of incurring high psychological costs. Mroczkowska [34], obtained similar results in her study, namely, that women fencers and women judoka, having higher intensity of masculinity, represent lower levels of fear and neuroticism and have better emotional balance. Gilenstam et al. [35], in their qualitative study, put emphasis on the socially constructed non-availability of typical masculine sports, based on the example of difficulties in the development of women's ice hockey in Sweden – a country famous for its egalitarianism.

Therefore, androgyny may be the type of gender identity that allows females to retain their femininity and effectively function in a stereotypically masculinized environment. Such a way of thinking is supported by research conducted outside of sports, indicating that women of an androgynous identity more easily force through their ideas, they accept their negative feelings, respect themselves, satisfy their need for safety, trust themselves better, more easily adjust to changing conditions and are convinced of the possibility of realizing their intended goals, which as a whole, establishes a high level of their self-actualization [36]. According to Terelak and Kluczyńska [37], androgynous women who were the victims of violence on the part of their partners cope much better with a traumatizing situation than individuals of different gender identities. Research on the relationship between temperament and gender

also shows that male and androgenic women are characterized by a lower level of fear and a higher level of anger, activity and sociability than women with female and undifferentiated gender identity [38]. Breaking from the rigid perception of the simplified categories of the world, namely masculinity vs. femininity, where having a high limit of both masculinity and femininity appears to be a strategy enabling the regulation of one's behavior and to perceive oneself irrespective of a situation (women practicing football despite the lack of approval from their environment). Possessing masculine attributes by androgynous female football players may be connected with their higher self-esteem, which has found to be common as proved in the theoretical analysis by Lachowicz-Tabaczek [39] predominantly in the case of men. It is, however, partially inconsistent with the results obtained by Szmajke and Adamczuk [17], pointing to the possibility of an occurrence of high masculinity with low femininity (masculine women) and low self-esteem in female football players. It is also worth mentioning that androgyny constitutes a psychological quality *per se*, releasing thought from rigid generalizations and increasing the level of tolerance and openness, and, what is more, enabling the use of a broader range of behaviors that can flexibly adjust in a given situation. Claiming that female football players, however, may belong to a group of individuals who do not pay attention to sexuality (who do not follow the gender schema) has not been confirmed in the results of this study, where an undifferentiated type of gender identity was clearly underrepresented.

In this study, the obtained results proved that the higher level of female players, the lower the level of indirect aggression, and the longer the total seniority of one being a player, the lower general aggression (in addition, it was also found to be lower when player seniority was also longer in the current league they played in) and its primary components were physical and indirect aggression. Such consoling results that signify the role of sport as one of mitigating aggression, at the higher level, have been confirmed in a study carried out by Turosz and Storto [40] among female football players (playing in the national team vs. premier league) and by Szmajke and Gorajczyk [41], who tested women basketball players. A high level of masculinity in female football players correlates positively with indirect, verbal and general aggression, but in spite of this fact, female football players participating in the present study were not more aggressive (general aggression) than women who do not practice any sport.

The variables that pertain to depressiveness in female football players increased with indirect aggression (stamping one's feet, throwing objects, gossip, malicious jokes), irritation (irritability, touchiness, grumpiness, boorishness) and general aggression, which supposedly may confirm the use of the gentlest (stereotypically proper for women) variant of a masculine strategy to

cope with a difficult situation. “Putting on” such behavioral masks may protect the image of a fit female player who was put at risk at a time of crisis in a typically masculine sport.

The results comply with Franzoi’s theory [28], namely that all female football players perceive their body image as-process (strength, agility, stamina) in a more favorable manner than as-object (face, figure, lips), and the increase of masculinity in gender identity is accompanied by a more positive perception of the body-as-object seems to be especially interesting. Participation in a masculine sport discipline and the possession of gender identity with elevated masculinity (as androgynous or masculine woman) may incline one to perceive one’s body as a well-functioning whole orientated towards goal achievement in a sports reality which objectively evaluates fitness competence [30] and guarantees more contentment with the body undergoing very severe social evaluation. In this case, one may refer to the therapeutic function of masculinity in women who successfully fulfill themselves by taking advantage of it in a stereotypically masculine domain and, at the same time, protect themselves from the negative effects of self-objectification [42].

Conclusion

The application of the masculinity dimension by female football players with androgynous gender identity is probably an effective strategy for survival in harsh social conditions and in gender-inappropriate, typical masculine sports. The concurrence of the content that constitutes the stereotype of masculinity with fitness competence may be responsible for being effective in various activities and a reduction of its psychological costs. High masculinity conditions favorable perception of individual body parts (body-as-object) in female football players thus contributing to their increase in self-esteem. A professional sport (football in this case) does not trigger an intensification of aggression in females. On the contrary, just the opposite was found, where some of its signs are in fact curbed.

Female football does not deprive players of their femininity, but it does protect a high level of femininity with masculinity. It seems possible that androgynous female football players are predisposed towards playing the roles which are assigned to women both by society (maternity) as well as men (playing sport professionally), and the ability to eliminate the conflict that occurs between these two roles would thus account for their overrepresentation in one of the most masculinized sports.

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