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Analysing Gender Roles of Female Athletes Available in Different Branches of Sport

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the properties of female athletes' gender roles from the aspect of various types of sport. The research sample was composed of 185 certified female athletes who did sport in amateur and professional clubs active in South east Anatolia. A personal information form developed by the researcher in addition to the BEM Gender Roles Inventory- which was developed by BEM and which was adapted into Turkish by Kavuncu (1987)- was used in the study as the tool of data collection. Independent samples t test and one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) were used in analysing the data in parametric distributions, and Tukey HSD- the second level test- was used for significant differences found between groups as a result of ANOVA. As a result, it was found that the femininity sub-factor score average ($\bar{x}$=105.99) was below femaleness median ($\bar{x}$=116) and that the masculinity sub-factor average ($\bar{x}$=103.91) was above maleness median ($\bar{x}$=99). Femininity scores were found to be lower in athletes who were certified for 11 years or more ($p<0.05$). Masculinity scores, on the other hand, were found to be higher in athletes of combat sports than in athletes of other sports. In conclusion, the types and branches of sport and being involved in sport for longer years were found to cause female athletes to have androgynous roles and led to differences in those athletes' social gender roles.

***Key Words*:** Female, Sport, Gender Roles.

Farklı Spor Branşlardaki Kadın Sporcuların Cinsiyet Rollerinin İncelenmesi

Öz

Bu araştırma kadın sporcuların cinsiyet rolü özelliklerini çeşitli spor türleri açısından belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemi Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesinde faaliyet gösteren amatör ve profesyonel kulüplerde lisanlı olarak spor yapan 185 kadın sporcudan oluşmaktadır. Bu araştırmada, veri toplama aracı olarak BEM tarafından geliştirilen Türkçeye uyarlaması Kavuncu (1987) tarafından gerçekleştirilen "BEM Cinsiyet Rolü Envanteri" ve araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen kişisel bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın verilerinin analizinde parametrik dağılımlarda bağımsız gruplar t testi (independent sample t test) ve tek yönlü varyans analizi (ANOVA) ve ANOVA analizlerinin anlamlı bulunan gruplar arası farklılıklar için ise ikinci seviye testi olan Tukey HSD kullanılmıştır. Bulgulara göre kadınsılık alt boyut puan ($\bar{x}$=105,99) ortalaması kadınlık medyanın ($\bar{x}$=116) altında aynı şekilde, Erkeklik alt boyut puan ($\bar{x}$=103,91) ortalamasının da erkeklik meydanın ($\bar{x}$=99) üstünde olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Kadınsılık puanları lisans yılı 11 ve üzeri olanların daha düşük lisans yılı olanlardan daha düşük çıkmıştır ($p<0.05$). Erkeksilik puanları mücadele sporu yapanlarda diğer spor dallarına göre yüksek çıkmıştır. Sonuç olarak sporun türü, branşı ve sporun uzun yıllar yapılması kadınların androjen role sahip olmalarını ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinde farklılaşmalar meydana getirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın, Spor, Cinsiyet Rolü.

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Introduction

Since the early 1970s, when interest in women's rights increased, the issue of sports and gender relations has become an important agenda item. In the 1980s, the issue of gender was further explored in relation to the physical aspect of sport. In the 1990s, research on the status of female identity in sports gained importance. In addition to these processes, studies on masculinity in the field of sports began in the 2000s (Durur, 2017). Therefore, the significance of social gender in describing the experiences of male and female athletes who take part in competitive sports and in recreation sports should be emphasised.

Studies concerning social gender in sport environments show that sport strengthens social gender inequality and that it is a cultural practice which re-generates social gender order described by Connell (1987). Social order of gender represents the relations of power which provides men with a privileged position compared to women through definitions of masculinity and which was built between men and women historically. The ideological process which legalises women's sport experience in this order of social gender starts with the biological differences between men and women and with the thought of men's superiority caused by the differences. The biological differences between genders lead to the emergence of the thought of social inferiority (subsidiary) and to describing women as "the other" (Pehlivan, 2017).

Women's social reality (the subsidiary position) in sport is closely related to the way sport activities are perceived and evaluated- which contributes to biological differences. Biological differences are normalised and transformed into social subordination as sportive activities are described with upper level sport performance, superior physical properties, ability, achievement, ambition and records and as sport practice introduces restrictions to those remaining outside those descriptions. The determining factor in this transformation is the emphasis laid on female body through sexism- which is marginalised in front of male body, the sexualisation of female sport and the assumption that male sport is the natural form of athletic experience (Wells, 1991). As one of the first studies to study appropriate and inappropriate sports for women and girls, it examined the differences between sports such as weightlifting, boxing, pole vaulting, volleyball, etc., apart from sports that involve physical contact and are more difficult. It has been determined that not all team sports are suitable for women (Riemer and Visio, 2003).

Acting in accordance with gender roles (i.e. sex typing) is the acquisition of behaviours suitable to men's and women's gender roles at differing ages. Gender is connected with social standards, attitudes, interests and clothing styles which make up the society's concept of masculinity and femininity (Salkind and Ambron, 1987). Women can sometimes have two different social gender roles. Success in the workplace generally requires masculinity and androgynous (flexible enough to

display feminine and masculine properties required by the environment) behaviours. In social situations, however, there is also an identity considered traditionally suitable (Koca and Aşçı, 2000).

The relationship between gender and the impact of sports is also clearly seen in the media. The representation of women in the media plays an important role in the construction of the ideological meaning of women in sports (Markula, 2009). Yet, this is not a problem for men because society expects men to display more manly behaviour at any case (Dökmen, 1997; Dökmen, 1999). Today, however, women can compete in such branches of sport as wrestling, weight lifting and football- which are considered to be specific to men.

Studies analysing the correlations between gender structuring and involvement in sport began to appear with the effects of such developments. The studies which set out to determine the gender roles of athletes available in various branches of sport found that participation in sport was a significant factor in gender structuring and that a great majority of athletes had androgynous (high femininity and masculinity scores) and masculine gender roles (Chalip et al., 1980; Hall et al., 1986).

The rate of female athletes participating in activities as a pastime or as a contest has increased in recent years. The increase in women who do sport at elite level in particular increased competition- which in turn caused women to participate in harsh and intense training programmes.

An examination of sources investigating the correlations between social gender roles and participation in sport shows that the studies mostly focus on the differences between athlete and non-athlete women's social gender roles but that the number of studies analysing the differences between social gender roles of athletes available in differing branches of sport was limited and that they obtained differing findings. Thus, the current study aims to compare the social gender roles of female athletes in differing branches of sport. In a study conducted by Öztürk and Koca (2017) on female athletes aged 9-17, girls emphasized fitness while talking about the effects of exercise on happiness and self-confidence and the support of family and coaches. They stated that the sports branch is adapted according to gender and that they and their families choose the branch according to gender.

Method

Research Model

This study is in relational survey model because it is directed to determining the correlations between bodily perceptions of female athletes involved in individual and team sports and gender roles. According to Karasar, survey models describe a situation which was available in the past or which is still available as it was/ it is (Karasar, 2014).

The Study Group

The study group was composed of totally 185 certified female athletes 103 (55.7%) of whom did individual sports and 82 (44.3%) of whom did team sports in south east Anatolia.

Table 1
The Participants' Personal Information

Variables		**n**	%
Gender roles	Masculine	28	15.1
	Feminine	15	8.1
	Androgynous	84	45.4
	Indescribable	58	31.4
Age classification	Between 18 and 20	111	60.0
	Between 21 and 23 and above	30	16.2
	24 and above	44	23.8
Sports year	1-4years	72	38.9
	5-8 years	63	34.1
	8-11 years	22	11.9
	11 years or more	28	15.1
Branch of Sport	Individual sports	103	55.7
	Team sports	82	44.3
Type of sport	Combat sports	57	30.8
	Other types of sports	128	69.2

While the great majority of female athletes have androgynous gender roles (45.4%), only a small portion of them (8.1%) have gender roles. Most of the athletes (60.0%) are aged between 18 and 20, have been certified for 1-4 years (38.9%) and a small number of them (30.8%) are involved in combat sports.

The Data Collection Tools

BEM Gender Roles Inventory

Personal Information Form was used to collect information on the participants and BEM Gender Roles Inventory developed by BEM and adapted into Turkish by Kavuncu (1987) was used to determine the participants' gender roles.

The BEM Gender Role Inventory was developed so as to find what gender roles individuals had (BEM, 1974). The inventory consists of three sub-scales listed below:

1- Femininity scale

2- Masculinity scale

3- Social acceptability (like) scale

The inventory was developed in 7-pointed Likert type (1-in my opinion, it is definitely not right, 2- in my opinion, it is usually not right, 3- in my opinion, it is sometimes right, 4- in my opinion, it is occasionally right, 5- in my opinion, it is mostly right, 6- in my opinion, it is usually right, 7- in my opinion, it is always right). It is composed of 60 questions. The items of femininity scale are 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23, 24, 30, 31, 34, 36, 37, 39 and 40 whereas the items of masculinity scale are 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33 and 35. The remaining 20 items are the items of social acceptability scale. The total scores for the two scales are calculated separately (or the average sores are calculated). The median for the group's femininity and masculinity scores is taken into consideration. The femininity and masculinity scores will be calculated from the data to be collected, and the median norms suggested by Dökmen (femininity median 11 and masculinity median 104) will be the basis for the calculations (Dökmen, 1999). Accordingly,

* Those whose femininity scores are below the femininity median but whose masculinity scores are above the masculinity median are classified as masculine,
* Those whose femininity scores are above the femininity median but whose masculinity scores are below the masculinity median are classified as feminine,
* Those whose femininity scores are above the femininity median but whose masculinity scores are above the masculinity median are classified as androgynous,
* And those whose femininity scores are below the femininity median and whose masculinity scores are below the masculinity median are classified as undifferentiated (Kavuncu, 1987).

Findings

Table 2
Normality Test

Scales	N	x̄	Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Femininity scale	185	105.99	22.68	-1.323	1.745	34,00	140,00
Masculinity scale	185	103.91	23.84	-1.076	0.868	30,00	140,00

On examining the total scores received by the participants from the BEM gender roles inventory, it was found that the average score for femininity sub-scale ($\bar{x}$=105.99) was below the femininity median ($\bar{x}$=116) and the average score for masculinity sub-scale ($\bar{x}$=103.91) was above the masculinity median ($\bar{x}$=99).

The normality distribution of the data was checked through Kurtosis-Skewness test. As clear from Table 2, the skewness was found as -1.323 and the kurtosis was found as 1.745 for the data obtained from the femininity scale whereas the skewness was found as 1.076 and the kurtosis was found as 0.868 for the masculinity scale. Due to the fact that the skewness and kurtosis values were found to range between +2.0 and -2.0, the data obtained from the scales are considered to have normal distribution. Kurtosis value of ±1.0 is considered to be perfect for many psychometric purposes, but values between +2.0 and -2.0 are also acceptable in many cases (George and Mallery, 2012).

Table 3
The Correlations between Femininity Role Attitudes and Masculinity Role Attitudes

		Masculinity
Femininity	r	0.843**
	p	0.000
	N	185

**p<0.001 is statistically significant

The correlations between femininity gender role and masculinity gender role was analysed with Pearson Correlations Analysis, and the results are shown in Table 3. Accordingly, positive and strong correlations were found between femininity and masculinity roles. Femininity gender role scores increased in parallel to masculinity gender role scores.

Table 4
A Comparison of Female Athletes' Femininity and Masculinity Scores according to Sports

Gender Role	Sports variable	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Femininity	Combat sports	57	108.37	14.61	0.950	0.344
	Other sports	128	104.94	25.45		
Masculinity	Combat sports	57	108.63	20.14	1.965	0.050*
	Other sports	128	101.81	25.11		
Femininity	Individual sports	103	108.75	15.22	1.862	0.064
	Team sports	82	102.54	29.25		
Masculinity	Individual sports	103	107.79	19.33	2.511	0.013*
	Team sports	82	99.05	27.90		

*p<0.05 is statistically significant

Female athletes' attitudes of gender roles were analysed with independent samples t test, and the results are shown in Table 4. The results showed that masculinity scores differed significantly according to types of sports (t=1.965; p=.05<.05). The average scores ($\bar{x}$=108.63) of athletes who did

combat sports were found to be higher than those of athletes who did other sports ($\bar{x}$=101.81). According to the Cohen's d formula used to determine the effect size, Cohen's d = (101.81 - 108.63) ⁄ 22.76106 = 0.299635.

In the same way, it was also found that masculinity scores differed significantly according to branches of sport (t=2.511; p=.013<.05). Thus, the athletes who did individual sports had higher masculinity score average ($\bar{x}$=107.79) than the ones who did team sports ($\bar{x}$=99.05). According to the Cohen's d formula used to determine the effect size, Cohen'in d = (99,05 - 107,79) ⁄ 24,000614 = 0,364157.

Table 5
The Participants' Gender Roles according to Branches of Sport

	Gender roles				X^2	p
Sport branch	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated		
Individual sports	22 (78.6%)	8 (53.3%)	49 (58.3%)	24 (41.4%)	11.025	0.012*
Team sports	6 (21.4%)	7 (46.7%)	35 (41.7%)	34 (58.6%)		

The participants' gender roles differed according to their branches of sport (p<0.05). It was found that the great majority of the participants who had masculine gender roles (78.6%) were the female athletes who did individual sports and the minority of them (21.4%) were the female athletes who did team sports (Chi square=11.025, p=.012<0.05).

Tablo 6
The Participants' Gender Roles according to Types of Sports

	Gender roles				X^2	P
Type of sport	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated		
Combat sports	16 (28.1%)	4 (7.0%)	29 (50.9%)	8 (14.0%)	17.61	0.001*
Other sports	12 (9.4%)	11(8.6%)	55 (43.0%)	50 (39.1%)		

The participants' gender roles differed according to types of sports they did. Accordingly, 50.9% of the women who did combat sports were androgynous whereas a very small number of them (7.0%) had feminine gender roles. Of the female athletes who did other types of sports, 43.0% were androgynous while 39.1% had gender roles which were undifferentiated. The great majority of the athletes with feminine gender roles (73.3%) were the women who were engaged in other branches of sport and a minority of them (26.7%) were the women who were engaged in combat sports (Chi square=17.61, p<0.001).

Table 7
The Anova Test Results of the Female Athletes' Gender Role Scores according to How Long They Have Been Certified

Gender Role	Sports Year	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	f	p	Differences
Femininity	a.1-4 years	72	107.03	19.64	3.099	0.028*	d<b and c
	b.5-8 years	63	107.86	20.45			
	c.8-11 years	22	111.73	23.28			
	d.11 years or longer	28	94.64	30.63			
Masculinity	a.1-4 years	72	106.06	21.64	1.992	0.117	No differences
	b.5-8 years	63	103.84	23.61			
	c.8-11 years	22	109.00	19.21			
	d.11 years or longer	28	94.57	30.87			

*p<0,05 is statistically significant

One-way ANOVA analysis was done to examine female athletes' attitudes of femininity gender roles according to how long they had been certified. The results are shown in Table 5. The attitudes of femininity gender role were found to differ significantly according to the year when the athletes were certified ($F_{(3.181)}$=3.099; p=.028<.05). ~~Tukey HSD~~ Bonferroni test was conducted so as to check the source of difference by considering the fact that variance homogeneity was secured and the number of groups. The femininity gender role score averages of the athletes who had been certified for 11 years or longer ($\bar{x}$=94.64%) were lower than those of the athletes ~~who had been certified for 5-8 years and of the athletes~~ who had been certified for 8-11 years ($\bar{x}$=111.73). According to the results of one-way ANOVA analysis, the attitudes of masculinity gender roles did not differ significantly on the basis of how long they had been certified ($F_{(2.182)}$=1.992, p=.117>.05).

Discussion and Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the social gender roles of female athletes who did team sports, individual sports and combat sports.

The participants' gender roles differed according to branches of sport they did (p<0.05). It was found, accordingly, that a great majority of the participants who had masculine gender roles were the women who did individual sports (78.6%) while a very small number of them (21.4%) were the women who did team sports (p<0.05). Koca et al (2004) found that the masculinity scores of athletes who were involved in individual sports were higher than both athletes who were involved in team sports and non-athletes. Koca and Aşçı (2000), on the other hand, found that the masculinity scores of athletes of individual sports were higher than the scores of athletes of team sports, but that there

were no differences between their femininity scores. Thus, the results obtained were similar. In another study concerning women conducted by Baştuğ (2008), the scores of the female athletes of individual sports were found to be higher than the scores of the female athletes of team sports in the sub-factors gender roles- a result in parallel to the one obtained in this current study. Several studies which have demonstrated that female athletes who do individual sports are more introvert, have more developed responsibilities, more egocentric and have more reactive personality than the ones who do team sports are available. The fact that female athlete who do individual sports have high social acceptability (social applause) might stem from the fact that they display personality traits different from the ones female athletes of team sports display. On the other hand, Wrisberg, Draper and Everett (1988) found that women who were in individual sports had lower masculinity and androgynous properties than the ones who were in team sports. Colker and Widom (1980) found no significant differences between female athletes who did individual sports and female athletes who did team sports. It was reported that the feminine role in female athletes changed into masculine role and that the androgynous property might have increased due to diminishing in feminine properties (Birrel, 1983). A study conducted with the participation of footballer girls reported that the girls consciously refused male pressure or that playing football caused them to have a different gender stance and in this way they learnt to cope with gender-related chaos while playing football (Wedgwood, 2004). It was found in a study concerning certain areas of adjustment of socio-economic level and methods of adjustment that students at high socio-economic level were more sociable than the ones at low socio-economic level in terms of social relations, enthusiastic balance, emotional state, consistence with the reality and leadership behaviours (Kurç, 1999). These are the results contradictory to the ones obtained in this current study. That the women who did individual sports had higher scores of gender role than women of other groups could be attributed to the fact that they were at higher socio-economic level- which had active roles in their self-expression and perception.

The participants' gender roles were found to differ according to types of sports they did. Accordingly, 50.9% of female athletes who did combat sports had androgynous roles while a small number of them (7.0%) had feminine gender roles. 43.0% of the athletes in other types of sports had androgynous roles whereas 39.1% had undifferentiated gender roles. A great majority of the athletes who had feminine gender roles (73.3%) were the women who were involved in other branches of sport but only a very small number of them (26.7%) were the women who were involved in combat sports ($p<0.001$).

Choi (2000) concluded that female athletes who did combat sports had higher masculinity score averages than the ones who did other types of sports in the variable of gender roles. Burke (1986), in a study conducted to find whether or not athletes' social gender roles differed according to braches of sport they did, chose the female athletes from branches of sport which were traditionally

considered appropriate (such as tennis and swimming) and which were not traditionally considered appropriate (such as basketball and football) for women.

This current study-which aimed to identify the gender roles of athletes involved in various branches of sport- found that participation in sport was a significant factor in the structuring of social gender roles and that a great majority of the athletes had androgynous (high in femininity and masculinity scores) and masculine gender roles (Chalip, Villiger and Duignan, 1980; Hall, Durborow and Progen, 1986). The finding that the majority of the athletes were androgynous in this study was supportive of the literature and was in parallel to the findings obtained in other studies.

The results obtained in this study revealed that the masculinity scores of the female athletes involved in branches of sport which were traditionally considered appropriate for women were lower than the scores of female athletes in the other group.

Female athletes' femininity gender roles differed significantly according to sports year ($p<.05$). Thus, the athletes who had been certified for 11 years or longer had average femininity gender role scores lower than the athletes who had been certified for 5-8 years and for 8-11 years. It may be said accordingly that femininity attitudes diminish in female athletes as the years of doing sport increase.

According to one-way ANOVA analysis results, masculinity gender roles do not differ significantly according to how long athletes have been certified ($p>.05$). Şöhret (2019) found no statistically significant differences between athletes' scores of gender roles according to how long they have been certified- a finding in parallel to the one obtained in this current study.

In conclusion, types and branches of sport and being involved in sport for a long time cause female athletes to have both masculine and androgynous roles and bring about changes in their social gender roles.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

Ethics review board: Gümüşhane University Ethics Committee

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Declaration of Contribution Rates of Researchers

Both authors contributed equally to all stages of the study.

Conflict Statement

The authors do not have a conflict statement regarding the research.

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