

The comparison of self-esteem and psychological sex among female students of different universities

Anna Romanowska-Tolloczko, Irena Bartusiak, Agata Nowak
University School of Physical Education, Wrocław, Poland

Annotation:

The process of shaping one's self-esteem and psychological sex is to a large extent determined by the immediate social environment. The major impact is exerted by family members as well as significant others, whose opinions and judgements are deemed to be of cardinal importance. Psychological sex and self-esteem directly affect the quality of relations with other people, which, in turn, results in the feeling of satisfaction or discontentment. The aim of the undertaken research was to determine and compare the level of self-esteem and the type of psychological sex of female students at different types of universities. The data were collected by means of A. Kuczynska's Psychological Sex Inventory and L. Niebrzydowski's Self-esteem Questionnaire. The research group consisted of 320 women studying at four university schools in Wrocław. The research allows to conclude that there are significant differences in terms of a multitude of psychological sex types and the level of self-esteem among female students of different universities. It appears that the highest level of self-esteem was observed in students of University School of Physical Education. This group of subjects comprises also the largest amount of female students with male and androgynous psychological sex.

Keywords:

self-esteem, self-worth, psychological sex, female students, universities.

Романовська-Толлочко А., Бартусяк І., Новак А. Порівняння почуття власного достоїнства і психологічна стать студенток різних університетів. Процес формування свого почуття власного достоїнства і психологічної статі більшою мірою визначається безпосереднім соціальним оточенням. Визначальний вплив роблять члени родини, а також інші навколишні, чії думки й судження вважаються кардинально важливими. Психологічна стать і почуття власного достоїнства безпосередньо впливають на якість відносин з іншими людьми, які, у свою чергу, приводять до почуття задоволення або невдоволення. Ціль початого дослідження - визначити і зрівняти рівень почуття власного достоїнства та вид психологічної статі студенток різних університетів. За допомогою психологічного опитувальника А. Кузиньски та анкети визначення почуття власного достоїнства Л. Небридовські були зібрані дані. Дослідницька група складалася з 320 дівчат, які вчать у чотирьох університетських школах у Вроцлаві. Дослідження дозволяє стверджувати, що є істотні відмінності в термінах безлічі психологічних половых типів і рівня почуття власного достоїнства серед студенток різних університетів. Установлено, що найвищий рівень почуття власного достоїнства спостерігався в студенток університетської школи фізичної культури. Ця група також охоплює найбільшу кількість студенток із чоловічою і двостатевою психологічною статтю.

Романовська-Толлочко А., Бартусяк І., Новак А. Сравнение чувства собственного достоинства и психологический пол студенток различных университетов. Процесс формирования своего чувства собственного достоинства и психологического пола в большей степени определяется непосредственным социальным окружением. Определяющее влияние оказывают члены семьи, а также другие окружающие, чьи мнения и суждения считаются кардинально важными. Психологический пол и чувство собственного достоинства непосредственно воздействуют на качество отношений с другими людьми, которые, в свою очередь, приводят к чувству удовлетворения или недовольства. Цель предпринятого исследования - определить и сравнить уровень чувства собственного достоинства и вид психологического пола студенток различных университетов. С помощью психологического опросника А. Кузиньски и анкеты определения чувства собственного достоинства Л. Небридовски были собраны данные. Исследовательская группа состояла из 320 девушек, которые учатся в четырех университетских школах во Вроцлаве. Исследование позволяет утверждать, что имеются существенные отличия в терминах множества психологических половых типов и уровня чувства собственного достоинства среди студенток различных университетов. Установлено, что самый высокий уровень чувства собственного достоинства наблюдался у студенток университетской школы физической культуры. Эта группа также охватывает наибольшее количество студенток с мужским и двуполым психологическим полом.

чувство собственного достоинства, самооценка, психологический пол, студентки, университет.

Introduction

The process of shaping one's self-esteem and psychological sex is to a large extent determined by the immediate social environment. One of the most important factors in this process is the family, which, by imposing certain expectations or codes of conduct on a child, not only instils acceptable and unacceptable gender-related patterns of behaviour, but also builds or weakens one's faith in own capabilities. Young person's sense of self-worth and the emergence of behaviours characteristic of a given sex are affected also by significant others, who are treated as role models and whose opinions and judgements are deemed to be of cardinal importance.

Self-esteem pertains to a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his/her own worth. It affects the general mood and exerts a significant impact on a wide spectrum of personal and social actions. Self-esteem consists of a number of judgements and opinions a human being holds about his/her own self, as well as own physical, psychological and social properties [6].

General self-esteem is often related with the notions of self-acceptance or self-rejection. The former refers to

self-respect as well as confidence and faith in own capabilities, which enable an individual to fulfil own potential. People who accept themselves have a positive attitude towards their own selves and maintain a positive sense of well-being. Self-rejection, on the other hand, is inherently connected with the sense of injustice, guilt, inferiority and other feelings connected with grievance and resentment towards one's own self. Overpowered by such emotions, a human being tends to understate own success and overestimate the failures. Consequently, such people frequently demean or even hate themselves. It can be concluded that self-esteem expresses approval or disapproval of one's own self and determines the extent to which an individual believes in own capabilities, success and self-worth [3].

Our self-esteem depends on our attitudes to a number of personal properties: physical (appearance, fitness, health), psychological (capabilities, knowledge, traits of character) and social (position in the group, the type and frequency of interpersonal relations). Depending on the personal experience, the level of self-esteem can be adequate or inadequate. Self-esteem is adequate when it reflects real capabilities and properties of an individual. In contrast, the inadequacy is a form of pathology and can

pertain to both overrated and underestimated level of self-esteem [6].

The level of self-esteem and the immediate environment are mutually interrelated. The external environment shapes self-esteem and, at the same time, the level of self-esteem directly affects one's relations with the surrounding world. The quality of interpersonal contacts and the feeling of self-worth are tightly connected with one's psychological sex.

Psychological sex is a system of psychological traits determining masculinity or femininity of an individual. It is shaped by common stereotypes about masculinity and femininity prevailing in a given social context. According to Sandra Bem, masculinity and femininity constitute two fundamental dimension of personality of each human being. Moreover, they are not mutually exclusive, but become apparent in different areas of life to enable people to take appropriate and effective actions [1].

Until the 1960s masculinity and femininity were perceived as polar opposites and a human being was considered either masculine or feminine. This stance was rejected by Sandra Bem, the advocate of gender schema theory, who stated that femininity and masculinity constitute two dimensions of personality. Consequently, she pointed to the existence of androgynous individuals (from Greek: *andro* – meaning man, and *gyne* – meaning woman) who have both masculine and feminine properties [2].

On the basis of her research, Sandra Bem stated that the behaviour of typically masculine and feminine individuals is more predictable as they tend to react in accordance with the gender-related stereotypes. Moreover, they strive to comply with externally imposed definitions of femininity and masculinity [1].

Highly distinctive gender-related psychological traits (i.e. high degree of femininity in women and masculinity in men) are correlated with the emergence of negative psychological consequences. High degree of femininity in women is associated with increased anxiety, neuroticism, low self-esteem and low social acceptance. Similarly, a tendency to low self-esteem, a high level of anxiety and neuroticism can be observed in males with a high degree of masculinity. Furthermore, such 'typicality' affects marriage relations, achievement motivation and the ability to solve problems [5].

Psychological androgyny pertains to the integration and complementarity of masculine and feminine dimen-

sions of personality. A large body of research confirms that androgynous individuals exhibit a high flexibility of response and a richer repertoire of behaviours. They are able to select the most effective behaviour in a given situation. Such situational adaptability derives from their ability to apply masculine and feminine behaviour patterns alternately. Androgynous individuals are characterised by high flexibility and sensitivity to the external requirements. Moreover, they are more dominant, emotional and more resistant to stress. Finally, they have a positive self-image, higher self-esteem, better health and a stronger personality [4].

The aim and methodology of the research

The aim of the undertaken research was to establish and compare the level of self-esteem and the type of psychological sex in female students studying in different university schools. The research was conducted in 2009 and encompassed female students of the University School of Physical Education (later referred to as AWF), the University of Wrocław (UWr), the University of Environmental and Life Sciences (UP) and the Higher School of Philology (WSF). The research group consisted of 320 subjects (80 female students from each university).

The data were collected by means of A. Kuczyńska's Psychological Sex Inventory and L. Niebrzydowski's Self-Esteem Questionnaire, adjusted in the Faculty of Psychology in the University School of Physical Education in Wrocław.

Analysis of research results

The research reveals that the largest group (nearly a half of the subjects) exhibited traits of an androgynous psychological sex, while over $\frac{1}{3}$ reported the feminine and $\frac{1}{4}$ masculine type (fig.1).

Having compared the numerical data and the type of school the subject attend, it can be concluded that the distribution of results is not uniform in all the research groups. The University of Wrocław and the University School of Higher Education are attended mainly by androgynous women. In the meantime, feminine psychological sex prevails in students of the University of Environmental and Life Sciences and the Higher School of Philology. The masculine type is most evident among AWF female students (fig.2).

The type of psychological sex was determined on the basis of the sum of points obtained on the masculinity and femininity scale. However, the attention should be drawn

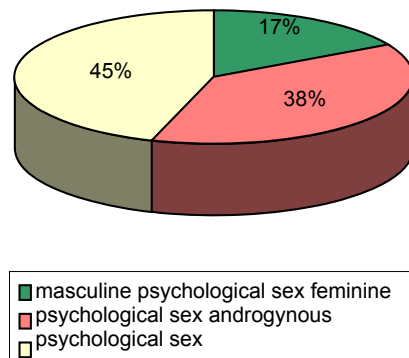


Fig. 1. Psychological sex of the sample

to the results presenting also the intensity of feminine and masculine traits in the subjects. The highest mean on the femininity scale was obtained by WSF students, while the lowest by female students attending AWF, who, at the same time, revealed the highest mean results on the masculinity scale (fig.3 and 4).

To determine the level of general self-esteem of the subjects, the intensity of positive and negative traits was presented. The comparison of these traits allowed to de-

termine the general self-esteem of the female students. The highest mean in terms of the positive traits was exhibited by AWF students and the lowest by the subjects studying at WSF (fig.5). The same trend can be seen in relation to the negative features – AWF students claim to possess the least negative characteristics, while students at WSF believe that the negative traits are dominant (Fig.6). The comparison of the positive and negative traits allowed to establish the level of self-esteem. In the light of

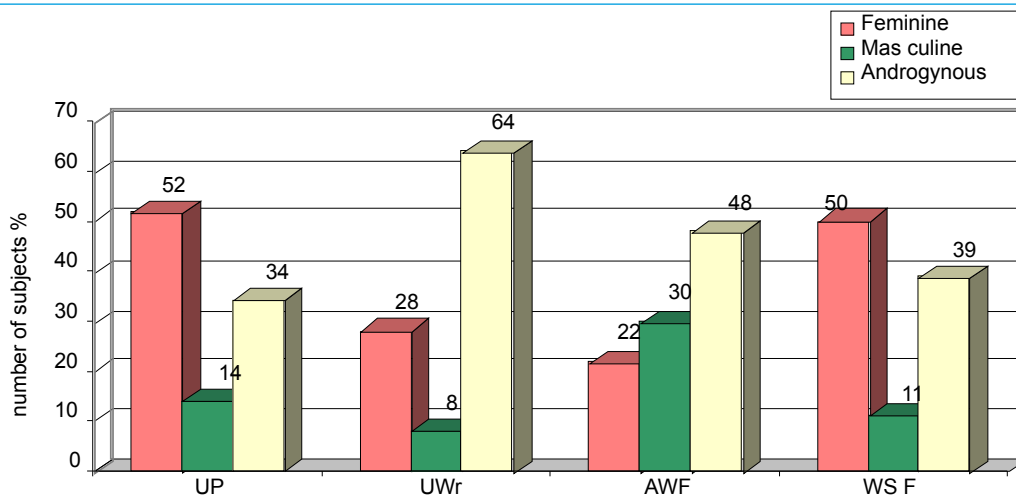


Fig. 2. Psychological sex. The type and frequency in different university schools

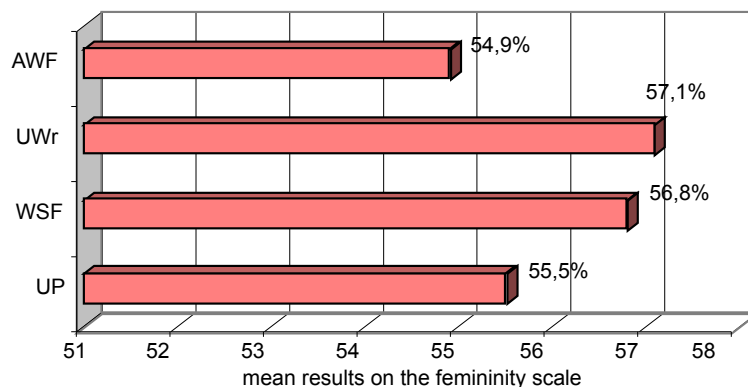


Fig.3. Psychological sex. Intensity of feminine traits

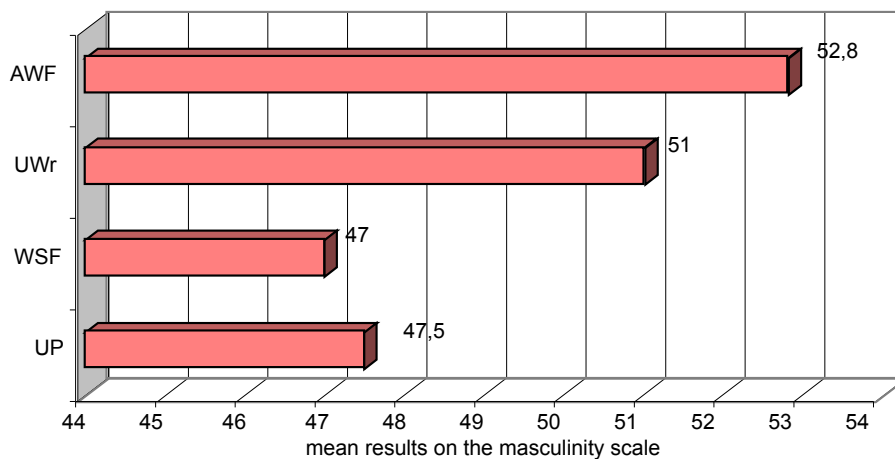


Fig.4. Psychological sex. Intensity of masculine traits

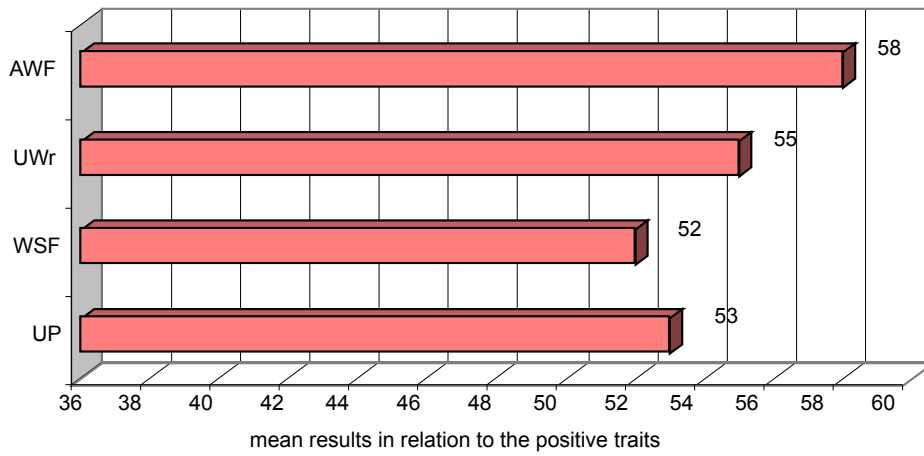


Fig.5. Self-esteem – the intensity of positive traits

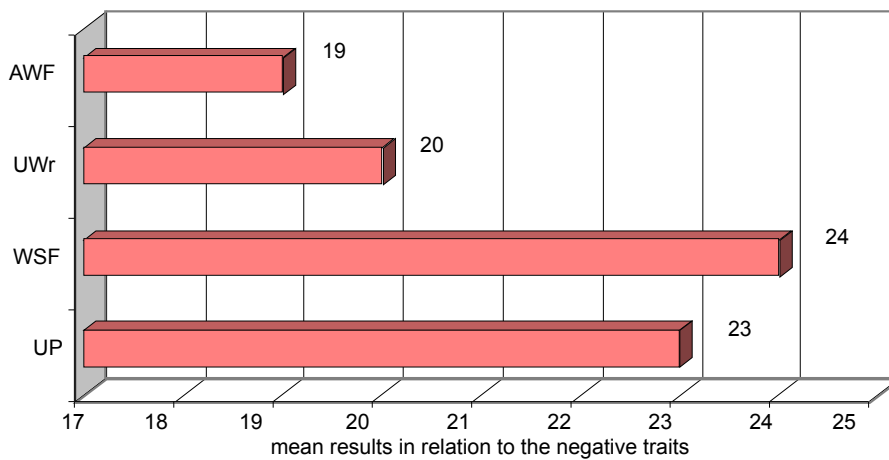


Fig.6. Self-esteem – the intensity of negative traits

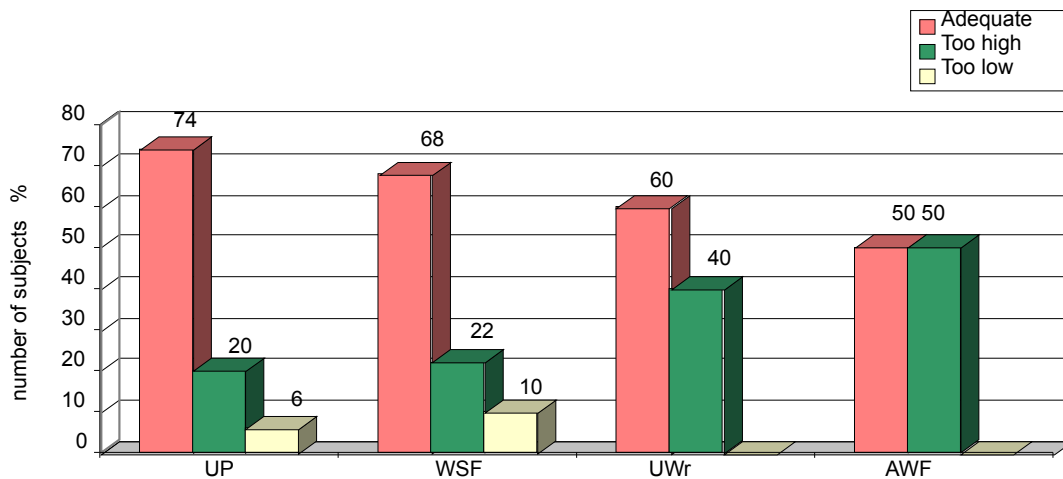


Fig.7. The level of self-esteem in different university schools

the obtained results, it can be concluded that the levels of self-esteem of female students in various universities differ significantly (fig.7).

Self-perception of UP and WSF students is more adequate than in case of UWr and AWF students. The latter two groups tend to express either adequate or too high self-esteem. None of the subjects in these two groups,

however, exhibits too low level of self-esteem.

The next step of the analysis aimed to search for correlation between the psychological sex and the level of self-esteem. The adequate level of self-esteem was most frequently pointed to by the androgynous female students. The same type of self-esteem was also often reported by a large number of students with a feminine psychological

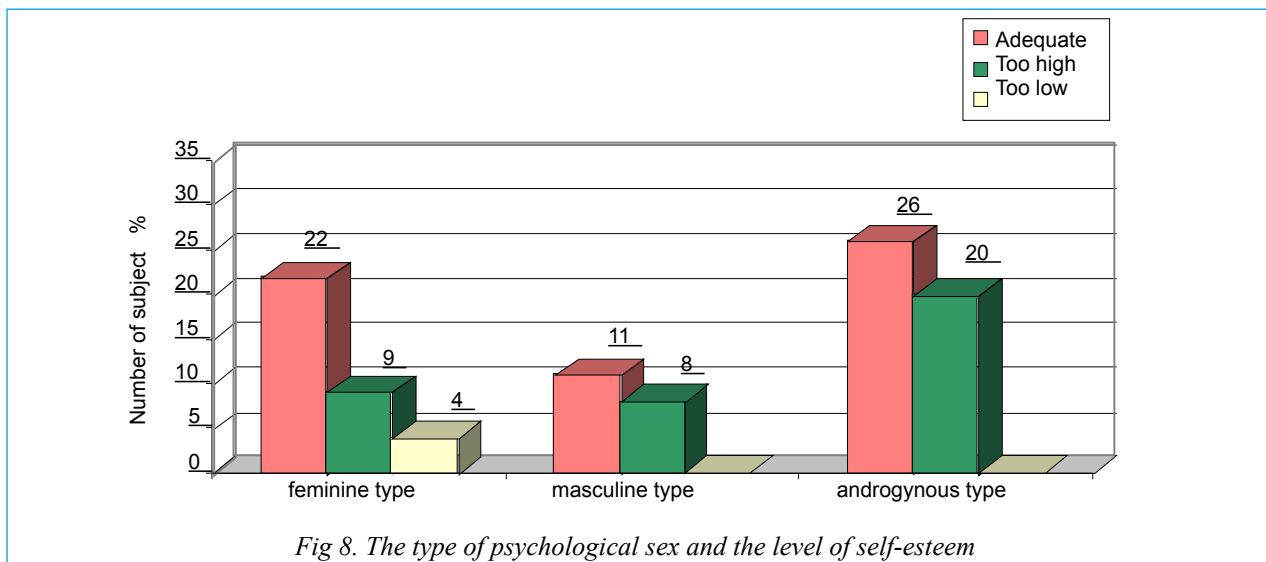


Fig 8. The type of psychological sex and the level of self-esteem

sex. Androgynous and masculine types showed inclination to adequate or too high self-esteem. Too low self-esteem was expressed only by the subjects in a group of feminine psychological sex (fig.8).

Summary and conclusions

The obtained results allow to make a number of observations pertaining to the level of self-esteem and the intensity of gender-related traits inherent in the psychological sex of female students of various universities.

Significant differences were observed in terms of the frequency of psychological sex types and the level of self-esteem. Such diversity occurred in all research groups, however, some regularity can be observed when the results are analysed in relation to the subjects' field of study. The highest self-esteem is reported by students of the University School of Higher Education. Moreover, there were no instances of too low self-esteem in this group. In this group there is the largest number of androgynous and masculine women. The group studying at the University of Wrocław is characterised by the androgynous and feminine psychological sex and adequate or too high level of self-esteem.

Women studying at the University of Environmental and Life Sciences and the Higher School of Philology, by and large, reveal the feminine psychological sex and the adequate self-esteem. Still, in this group there also subjects with too low level of self-esteem.

In terms of self-esteem, the students of these two schools have achieved the most normal distribution of the results.

Having analysed the relationship between the psychological sex and the level of self-esteem, it can be concluded that too high self-esteem is expressed by women of androgynous and masculine psychological sex, adequate level – by androgynous and feminine subjects, while too low level of self-esteem is exhibited only by students possessing feminine traits.

The conclusions derived from the research allow to formulate a number of questions: how the choice of study is determined by the possession of certain characteristics and predispositions, or to what extent studying in a given university school can shape these traits.

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anna.romanowska-tolloczko@awf.wroc.pl