

BODY IMAGE AND EATING ATTITUDES AMONG ATHLETES IN VARIOUS SPORTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Sport, which we know, consists in an aware act of moving the body – to run faster, jump higher, or to react more efficiently than a competitor. As broad is the world of sport, as more or less desired are the same various anthropomorphic characteristics in specific activities. Therefore, it is almost impossible to see the gymnasts, which heights are more than 200 cm, and the volleyball player shorter than 170 cm on the Olympic Games podium. Those body parameters are not the only criteria responsible for achieving success in sport, however, they present in a quite illustrative manner the variety of body features in a wide range of sport disciplines. Comparing the bodies of female and male athletes representing specific sports emphasises the body differences not only because of the height and body mass, but also the enlargement of some body parts. The clue connected with the variety of sports and athletes' bodies was one of the bases to articulate the research question, whether the athletes – so different from each other – perceive their body variously. Or perhaps, their attitudes towards the body, despite different sports origin, bear some similarity, because of the common love and passion for sport, and years of practice. One of the questions was, whether the attitudes towards the body may be grouped in some essential for each discipline section (such as individual, contact, endurance, strength or combat sports). The main question, that appears in that dissertation, may be formulated as follows: is it possible to notice some dependencies between perceiving the body, and behaviours maintained towards it, complying the specifics of performed sport.

AIM

The aim of the research is the comparison of the body image and eating attitudes in various sport disciplines and the analyses of the interdependence between the variables. The hypothesis and research questions have been articulated to outline the relationship between athletes among different sport disciplines, their biological parameters (gender, age, height, body mass) and sport variables, towards the body image and eating attitudes.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

702 athletes participated the research, including 350 women and 352 men. Research groups consisted of sports, such as: volleyball (n=58), football (n=36), track & field [medium races] (n=44), track & field [throws] (n=38), track & field [jumps] (n=46), combined track and field events (n=24), basketball (n=53), swimming (n=38), field hockey (n=31), combat sports [sumo, judo, wrestling] (n=80), strength sports [Olympic weightlifting, powerlifting] (n=45), canoeing and rowing (n= 110), speed skating (n=31). Analysed sport variables concerned: level of sport competition, years of sport practice (4-20 years), training duration (80-120 min), number of trainings in a week (4-12) and additionally applied sport criteria, which classified sport disciplines (individual/nonindividual sports, contact/noncontact sports, outfit of the athletes: well-fitting/loose-fitting, competition through the fight/next to/ separately). Additional collected data were: age (17-34 years, M=20,61, SD=3,78), declarative body mass (42-145kg, M=70,36, SD=16,45), body height (150-210cm, M=176,28, SD=10,54).

The used method was the diagnostic survey, survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three variables: Body Appreciation Scale (Rasmus & Rasmus, 2017; T. L. Tyłka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015b), Embodied Image Scale (Abbott & Barber, 2010) and Eating Attitude Test (Garner i wsp., 1982; Rogoza i wsp., 2016).

RESULTS

One of the first significant difference in body image underlines, that higher appreciation of the body and satisfaction in body appearance was noticed among men ($p<0,01$). A significant differentiation in the functional aspect of the body was observed between female basketball players, who scored the lowest values, and the athletes (medium races in track & field, Olympic weight lifting, powerlifting, sprint races in track & field, throws and jump events in track & field, rowing and canoeing), who scored significantly higher ($p<0,01$). Another significant difference among women concerned satisfaction in the aesthetic dimension of the body, the lowest values appeared among female athletes in field hockey, and the highest among female sprint racers in track and field. Those results are interpreted in terms of participation in “male” sport disciplines, because of which satisfaction in functional and aesthetic dimension of the body is higher in sports that are culturally valued as more “feminine”. This argumentation may be confirmed by another analysis, in which higher satisfaction in functional and aesthetic dimension of the body was noticed in disciplines without physical contact ($p<0,01$), in which female athletes performed in well-fitted outfits ($p<0,01$) and competed next to each other, or

separately ($p < 0,01$). However, the axis of body functions was higher in individual sports ($p < 0,01$). Likewise, body appreciation was significantly higher for women competing next to each other, than through fight ($p < 0,01$). What's interesting, among men, significantly higher body appreciation appeared in non-individual sports ($p < 0,05$). Male athletes scored higher in contact sports ($p < 0,05$), as well as in baggy outfits ($p < 0,01$), in eating attitudes. What's worth emphasizing, the higher are scores in eating attitude, the higher is the risk of disordered eating. Athletes in the age below 18 years (both men and women) characterised in more risky food behaviours ($p > 0,05$). Female and male athletes, who desired to lose from 1 kg, to gain up to 1 kg were noticed as more body appreciating.

Exploratory analyses allowed distinguishing one main concentration, and a few minor ones. Isolated concentration, which concerned 12 sport disciplines (4 females and 8 males) pointed to the strongest connection between the functional and aesthetic dimension of the body, then to the body appreciation, and the most distant connection included eating attitudes. In the group of separated intercorrelations, the majority of the research sports occurred (both male and female).

Strong and significant correlations occurred between sport disciplines and the connection between body image and functional & aesthetic dimensions of the body. One of the most interesting results in correlation shows, that higher values in body appreciation co-existed with lower values of eating attitudes – that relation was noticed only among female athletes.

Other results are analysed and discussed in the main part of the dissertation.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Among researched athletes, the proven tendency showed that males appreciate their body, together with a more positive attitude toward their appearance and more positive attitudes toward food and eating behaviours. Only in functional body perception, there were no significant gender differences.
2. The role of cultural gender may be the factor, that moderates the satisfaction in functional and aesthetic body dimension. Female athletes in sports defined as more “feminine” (where the competition takes place separately, without physical contact, with the well-fitted outfit), appreciated functional and aesthetical aspect of the body more, while female participation in “male” sports (team) was connected with more

negative attitudes. The contrary results were noticed in men's body appreciation, which were higher in non-individual sports, classified, as "male" sports.

3. Some of the relations were convergent for men and women – body appreciation difference, both for men and women, were similar when concerned through weight discrepancy index. Also, the number of trainings per week inducted positive attitudes towards the functional body dimension.
4. In scores on eating attitudes, the greatest risk behaviours were noticed for athletes below the age of 18. That age was also linked with lower functional body satisfaction for women.
5. Significant differences in the intensification of research variables concerned eating attitudes among men, wherein among women there were more significant relationships between variables, and also they were more diversified.
6. The comparable intensification of body image and eating attitudes, as well as the relation between variables, were observed parallelly among male and female athletes.
1. The correlation between body image and eating attitudes pointed that, only among women, higher body appreciation was linked with a lower risk of eating disorders, what may be concerned in terms of the beneficial influence of sport.

Key words: body image, physical activity, athletes, body appreciation, eating attitudes