

## **Sex role among elite male and female futsal players**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the present study was to compare the sex role among elite male and female futsal players. Therefore, 125 futsal players (57 females and 68 males) were selected randomly from super league teams in Iran. They filled out the Bem sex role inventory (Bem, 1974). The data were analyzed by multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the significance level of  $p < .05$ . The results indicated no significant differences between male and female players' masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, the masculine sex role was significantly higher than the feminine sex role in both female and male players. Thus, it seems that the high masculinity is a success factor for futsal players, especially for female players.*

**Keywords:** Bem sex role inventory, femininity, futsal, masculinity, super league

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Gender role or sex role refers to the male or female social role, i.e., the way in which people show their masculinity or femininity. People are masculine or feminine to the degree that their character and behavior fit certain cultural stereotypes. Gender role is a social tag linked to social and cultural expectations while sex, as a biological characteristic, focuses on biological differences [1]. Today we know that masculinity and femininity are not intrinsic feature but depends on cultural and social factors. Difference between characteristics and traits in men and women is not the product of their biological differences but the result of socialization and cultural expectations for each gender [2]. In defining the people with masculine characteristics it is said these are the people with high strength who may even take pleasure in violence and cursing. These people hate behaving in such a way that may reveal their weakness or tenderness, like weeping, expressing love, and affection, and rely on their logic in decision making rather emotions. Masculinity and masculine role refers to physical strength, force, and the absence of tender sentiments. On the other hand, the people with feminine characteristics are those who are easily impressed by seeing the grief of others, blood, insects and cruelty, and are fascinated by fine subjects such as romance, kids, fine arts, flowers or clothes [3].

Sex role in sport is an interesting issue that the researcher has been interested in studying it. It is necessary to masculine traits to succeed in many sports. Therefore, Some sports has been classified masculine in different societies; e.g. football, wrestling, or weight lifting [4]. Female athletes may experience role conflict [5]. Andre and Holland in 1985 studied the society's perception of the men and women who are engaged in violent and non-violent sports, as well as non-athletes. They found male and female athletes had higher degrees of masculinity in comparison to non-athletes and there was no significant difference between both female and male athletes in terms of the degree of femininity [6]. Miller and Levy in 1999 found female athletes have higher self concept and masculinity than non-athletes [7]. Lantz and Schroeder in 1999 investigated the relationship between athletic and

sex identity. According to their results, athletes and non-athletes with high athletic identity considered themselves with the role of masculinity, while non-athletes with low athletic identity evaluated themselves closer to female identity [8]. Schmalz and Kerstetter in 2006 found the number of females participating in masculine sports are more than males participating in women's sports [9]. Follo in 2006 found female athletes fight with social norms that do not allow them to participate in contact sports, the territory of a man [10]. Hoiness, Weathington, and Cotrell in 2008 investigated the female athletes' perception of their athletic identity, sportsmanship, respect, and attractiveness. According to their findings, females with masculine character who engage in competitive sports found themselves less lovable as compared to other female athletes [11].

There are limited studies on sex role of football, soccer, and futsal players. Caudwell in 1999 studied the sex role in English female football players. According to the results, the female football players showed typical characteristics of a man. Caudwell believes this negative image of masculine woman in these athletes may avoid engagement of many women in athletic activities [12]. Azadi in 2008 studied sex role among Iranian female athletes in contact sports (e.g., football) and non-contact sports (e.g., volleyball). According to her findings, female football players had higher masculinity and female volleyball players had higher femininity. She concluded that contact sports, because of their violent and quarreling nature, favor inclination towards masculinity [13]. Khaleghi in 2010 compared sex role and satisfaction of gender in Iranian amateur and professional futsal and volleyball players. She did not indicate the significant difference between the feminine and masculine traits of professional players. But femininity was more than masculinity in amateur players. She found that masculinity increases with enhancing skill level. Furthermore, role conflict in female professional athletes was more than amateur players [14]. Zamani, Aghdasi, and Shojaei in 2012 compared the feminine and masculine traits among karate, volleyball, futsal, and aerobic dance athletes (45 females and 45 males). They indicated that masculinity in karate and futsal players was more than other ones [15]. Regarding the limited studies in this area, the present research was performed to investigate the sex role and gender in elite futsal players in order to clarify the role of cultural and social parameters in.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The participants in the research were 68 male futsal players and 75 female futsal players in the age range of 17-33 years who were randomly selected among members of the teams present in the Iranian futsal super league. Written informed consent was received from all participants after verbal explanation of the purpose and the time of filling out the questionnaire.

Bem sex role inventory (BSRI) [16] was used to collect information. This self-report questionnaire measures feminine, masculine, and androgynous traits of individuals as mutually exclusive dimensions. The BSRI consists of 60 items: 20 questions of each feminine (such as sympathetic and tender), masculine (such as ambitious and independent), and neutral gender items (such as helpful and moody). Each question is rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (never or almost true) to 7 (always or almost true). For the masculinity score, items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 55, and 58 were added and divided by 20. For the femininity score, items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41, 44, 47, 50, 53, 56, and 59 were added and divided by 20. Validity of the BSRI has been reported relatively good. Reliability scores of the inventory, reported in the 1978 published manual, range from good to extremely high (.75 to .94) [17]. The femininity and masculinity scores of female and male players were analyzed by multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the significance level of  $p < .05$ . Using the Bonferroni method of adjusting type I error for multiple comparisons, each ANOVA was tested at the .025 level.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of sex role variable (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation) for female and male futsal players. According to table and figure 1, the mean of masculinity was higher than femininity in futsal players.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of sex role variable**

variable	Statistic	M( $\pm$ SD)	
		female	male
Sex role	masculinity	5.146 $\pm$ .59	5.216 $\pm$ .48
	femininity	4.933 $\pm$ .55	4.859 $\pm$ .43

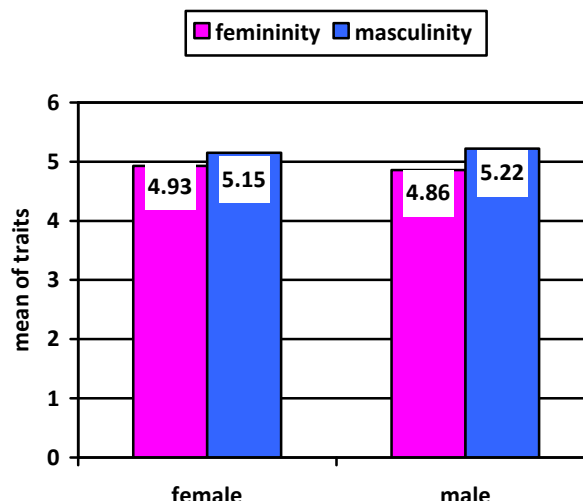


Figure 1. Mean of masculine and feminine traits in elite futsal players.

Results of the multivariate analysis of variance to compare sex role (masculinity and femininity) in female and male futsal players indicated no significant effect ( $L=0.988$ ,  $F_{(2, 140)}=854$ ,  $p=.428$ ). The one-way analysis of variance to compare each masculine and feminine trait between male and female players showed no significant differences (for masculinity  $p=.443$ ,  $F_{(1, 141)}=.593$ , and for femininity  $p=.382$ ,  $F_{(1, 141)}=.77$ ). Further, a comparison within each female and male elite futsal players shows in both groups the masculine sex role stands significantly higher than the feminine sex role ( $p=.0001$ ,  $t_{(67)}=5.575$  for men, and  $p=.017$ ,  $t_{(74)}=2.437$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to compare sex role (both masculinity and femininity) among elite female and male futsal players. According to the results, there were no significant differences between female and male futsal players' sex role (both masculine and feminine traits) ( $p>.05$ ). Comparing masculinity and femininity within each female and male elite futsal players showed the mean of masculine sex role was significantly higher than the mean of feminine sex role in both females (femininity=4.933, masculinity=5.146) and males (femininity=4.859, masculinity=5.216). More masculinity in female players may be attributed to features such as the need for greater physical fitness and high aggressiveness in this sport. These findings are consistent with Hoiness et al. [11]. They concluded that the female athletes engaged in competitive sports develop masculine characteristics. Our results also were consistent with Andre and Holland [6], Azadi [13], Caudwell [12], Khaleghi [14], Marsh and Jackson [18], Miller and Levy [7], and Zamani [15] who indicated more masculinity in contact and violent sports having high levels of skill. However, our results were not consistent with Folo [10] who found women keep feminine characteristics even when they engage in violent and contact sports. In many countries, masculinity and sportsmanship are interwoven to the extent that it is said a woman cannot be an athlete without being aggressive [3]. In fact, it seems that there has been an attempt from long ago to instill this cliché of football and soccer as a masculine sport into minds and persuade female football players that they are engaged in a masculine activity, and this indoctrinated belief remarkably tempt to adopt masculine characteristics.

## CONCLUSION

According to results, though Iranian female and male fustal players had greater masculinity rather femininity, there was no significant difference between sex role of two sexes. It is not clear yet if the environment in futsal and social and cultural conditions increase masculinity or the athletes with high masculinity select futsal and improve to high level. Since the high masculinity in female players does not accord with religious and social norms of Iran, it is recommended that related organizations such as education and sport ministry take policies to encourage radical changes in the existing climate to keep femininity and decline masculinity in female futsal players without reduction of success level in competitions.

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