



Because I Am an Athlete: Body Image, Freedom of Sexual Orientation and Society Label

Sabiha Gizem ENGİN¹, Veli Onur ÇELİK², Nur BÖLÜKBAŞ²

¹ Yozgat Bozok Üniversitesi, Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0898-8474>

² Eskişehir Teknik Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7865-6531>

² Eskişehir Teknik Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3979-2813>

To cite this article/ Atf için:

Engin, S. G., Çelik, V. O., ve Bölükbaş, N. (2024). Because I am an athlete: Body image, freedom of sexual orientation and society label. *Uluslararası Bozok Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 5(3), 103-119.

Abstract

The body phenomenon is not just a biological phenomenon, but it is also a social display area, as evidenced by the clothing worn, posture, look, accessories, and activities utilized. As a result, the shown bodies are suppressed by societal standards, and when these norms are not appropriate for the context, they are suppressed. The goal of this study is to identify the sexual orientation labels applied to individuals based on their physical appearance within the context of societal standards. This is a case study undertaken within the framework of qualitative research. Participants were given photographs of athletes and answered two questions, one multiple choice and one open-ended. The labels associated with the athletes were separated into four categories based on the answers supplied by the participants to the questions: body image, body language, dress style, and indefinable traits. Biopowers employ numerous regulators in society to order societies and set norms. Athletes' bodies and physical features, however, are tied not just to their own decisions, but also to the needs of the sport, and they should not be stigmatized or ostracized as a result of these norms.

Keywords: Social gender, Athlete, Body image, Biopower

Çünkü Ben Sporcuym: Beden İmajı, Cinsel Yönelim Özgürlüğü ve Toplum Etiketleri

Özet

Beden olgusu; sadece biyolojik bir olgu değil, aynı zamanda giyilen kıyafetler, duruş, bakış, kullanılan aksesuarlar ve eylemler ile aynı zamanda bir toplumsal sergi alanıdır. Bu sebepten dolayı da sergilenen bedenler, toplumsal normlar ile şekillenir. Eğer bu normlara uygun bir durum yok ise de baskılanır. Bu araştırmadaki amaç, sporcu bireylerin fiziksel görünüşleri üzerinden, toplumun oluşturduğu normlar dâhilinde bireylere karşı oluşturulan cinsel yönelim etiketlerinin tespitinin ortaya konmasıdır. Bu araştırma nitel araştırma kapsamında yürütülmüş bir durum çalışmasıdır. Katılımcılara sporcu fotoğrafları gösterilmiş ve biri çoktan seçmeli, biri de açık uçlu olmak üzere iki adet soru sorulmuştur. Katılımcıların sorulara verdikleri cevaplara istinaden sporculara ilişkin etiketler, beden imajı, beden dili, giyim tarzı ve tanımlanamaz özellikler olarak 4'e ayrılmıştır. Biyo-iktidarlar toplum içerisindeki çeşitli düzenleyicileri kullanarak toplumları belli bir düzene sokar ve normlar oluşturur. Fakat sporcu bireylerin bedenleri ve fiziksel görünüşleri sadece bireysel seçimleri ile alakalı değil, aynı zamanda sporun gereklilikleri ile de ilgilidir ve bu normlar altında etiketlenip, ötekileştirilmemeleri gerekmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplumsal cinsiyet, Sporcu, Beden imajı, Biyo-iktidar.

INTRODUCTION

The physical appearance of individuals, that is, their bodies, is seen as an element of reinforcement that is constantly interpreted, and the necessary features are determined by both the society and the ideological approaches to which they are exposed. The body is the most attractive instrument that people use to express their identities, and it is a form of expression through the clothing they wear, accessories they use, colour preferences, postures and activities they do. Cultures and civilizations construct the framework of this type of expression, and the bodies moulded around this framework emerge as an element that is continually regulated by societies and governments (Berkday, 2012). According to Foucault (1990), "The power makes the bodywork, it penetrates the behaviour, it is intertwined with desire and pleasure, it is necessary to catch it red-handed in this work; what needs to be done in this analysis, which is a difficult thing". Since the 18th century, the topic of sexuality and the relationship with one's body has been studied by science. This has led to the creation of specific standards which define what is considered "normal". Today, anyone who does not fit within these norms has been often labelled as "perverted" or referred to as a "patient". Butler (2016), pioneered by Foucault, demonstrated that everything linked with genders and portrayed as "natural" is a cultural creation that is generated discursively. The meaning of men and women occurs with gender inside this notion of normalcy presented by civilizations. Thus, it is subjected to a body signification as "male-masculine, female-female," and the body phenomenon, which is a social object, is generated by being affected and moulded by biological gender discourses (Butler, 2016; Sancar, 2011, pp. 182). Bauer (2010) refers to this bodily look as "substance appearance," which society forms and expects to be as it should be, whereas Butler (2016) conveys the discursive play of gender and gender norms defined for this substance appearance. These norms demand rules expressed as masculinity and femininity, and they fit sexuality into binary patterns and sustain the attitude that enforces heterosexual hegemony through these norms.

It is not only societies or cultures that create this heterosexual structure. Religious values are also constantly intertwined with these binary genders, and the phenomenon of religion regularly feeds governments. In Islam, masculinity and femininity are at the forefront, and even the holy book, the Quran, is written in a language that emphasizes only these binary genders. In that book, written about these binary genders, the book naturally points out what should be male and female (Abdelgelil et al., 2023). This process also generates stereotypes and prejudices. These boundaries lead to the emergence of homophobia/biphobia/transphobia and other phobias. Social norms are transmitted through socialization using powerful tools such as the media. Individuals thus internalize heteronormative family, education, religion, political and legal regulations. Various sexual orientations that emerge and are seen as a threat are tried to be suppressed in different ways. These repressions are accompanied by other forms of violence, stigmatization and labelling (Göregenli, 2006). This stigmatization and labels related to sexual orientation are sometimes realized only through physical appearance. However, these physical characteristics have different meanings for athletes and are shaped according to the characteristics of sports branches.

Sports, Body and Sexual Orientation

Adrienne C. Rich (2003) proposed discussing it as a consequence of an in-depth investigation of the social construction of gender roles and sexual orientations, and she utilized the notion of "forced heterosexuality" to highlight society's hegemonic tendencies. Sport, as an institutional framework, associates the existence of male and female genders in sports with the imposition of forced heterosexuality. While women in sports institutions are categorized into heterosexual women and masculine women based on their physical appearance, women with heterosexual appearance are always at an advantage. On the other hand, this heterosexist distinction creates the need for female athletes to emphasize their femininity (Koca & Bulgu, 2005). For these reasons, these behaviours are discussed with the concept of "hegemonic femininity" (Choi, 2000; Hall, 1996). Athletes in women's sports are in such an honourable position with their feminine appearance and feminine features that female athletes who fall outside of these norms are systematically more than individuals in many positions (trainer, manager, referee, media, etc.) in sports. They receive negative feedback and are forced to look feminine. Young (1997), in his research, revealed that female athletes who take part in sports branches that are considered suitable for men are labelled as lesbian only because of their branches. Women are not the only gender marginalized in sports. At the same time, sportswomen who are outside the norms of femininity are marked as "TomBoy (Tomboy)" and "lesbian" (Kleindienst-Cachay & Heckemeyer, 2008), male athletes who are outside the norms of physical superiority and the muscular structure that men must conform to are also marginalized (Hall, 1996). The norms that are systematically internalized by societies form the basis of homophobia, which is a reaction against homosexual athletes (Krane, 1996; Krane & Romont, 1997). In the current situation, the concept of gender emerges as one of the most significant factors in choosing the sports branch, and individuals choose the branch they will be interested in within the framework of these norms (women's sports, men's sports) (Koivula, 1995; Koivula, 2001). Metheny (1965) carried out one of the first studies on gender stereotypes in sports and divided the branches in the male-dominated sports institution into three categories: "suitable for women, partially suitable for women and not suitable for women". Ian (1995), in his research on female bodybuilders, defines bodybuilding as the fear of losing their gender and self-limitation. In other words, gender norms are highly effective in participation in sports (Koca et al., 2005a). For instance, when it comes to men's sports, boxing, wrestling, football, and combat sports come to mind. The branches that come to mind when women's sports are mentioned are gymnastics, dance, aerobics and similar branches that will not change the existing naive structure of the female body (Chalabaev et al., 2013; Matteo, 1986; Riemer & Visio, 2003).

Our country's position parallels that of world literature. While gymnastics, pilates, step aerobics, volleyball, ice skating, and walking are regarded as more appropriate for women's sports, football, basketball, boxing, wrestling, and weightlifting are considered more suitable for men's sports (Koca et al., 2005b). The fundamental reason that certain branches are ascribed to specific genders is that in culture, the feminine body is classified as lovely and innocent. In contrast, the male body is coded as solid and magnificent. As a result, female athletes are continuously under pressure to maintain their weight, muscles, and body image (Menzel et al., 2011). However, conformity with these socially defined and continually

processed standards is difficult in athletics. People should be free to shape their bodies according to their interests, without limitations based on their chosen sport. For example, a woman interested in boxing should not be scared of having a robust and massive figure, and a man interested in dancing should not be marginalized because of her delicate and exquisite attitude.

The goal of this study is to discover which labels are used by society to identify athletes' sexual orientation only based on their physical appearance from the standpoint of gender norms.

METHOD

Research Pattern

This study follows the "case study" format. The case study, as defined within the framework of qualitative research designs, deals with contemporary occurrences that are difficult to grasp and evaluate. Furthermore, it is mentioned that it is a study strategy that works without leaving their native habitat or frameworks and that deals with these problems in a methodical, in-depth, and multidimensional manner (Patton, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Briefly and concisely, Merriam (2013) used the phrase "description of a case study in an understandable way as a result of a detailed examination of a structure or phenomenon with certain boundaries".

Research Participants

The participants of the study consist of:

- People who define themselves as sports consumer,
- Over eighteen years old,
- Born and grew up in Turkey,
- Finally, accept the information in the volunteer information form.

In the study, which was fulfilled with the participation of 141 individuals, 62 individuals defined themselves as female (44%), and 68 individuals described themselves as male (48%). In addition, 11 people (8%) do not have a definition regarding their assigned gender. The research participants are sports consumers who define themselves as sports watchers or participants. These individuals were reached with the convenience sampling method, and after giving detailed information about the research individually, the online form link was shared with them, and the individuals were accompanied until the study was completed against possible questions.

Data Collection Tools

The survey technique was applied in the research. Within the scope of the used survey, a total of '18' photographs of athletes were shown to the participants, including '10' with female assigned gender and '8' with male assigned gender. This research, which was carried out with photographs of athletes living in different countries of the world, dealing with various sports branches with different sexual orientations: Thomas Hitzlspeger, Martina Navratilova, Ian

Thorpe, Tom Doley, Jason Collins, Megan Rapinee, John Amaechi, Michael Sam, Gareth Thomas, Amelie Mauresma, Judith Arnt, Orlando Cruz, Diana Taurasi, Julia Rahde, Hilary Knight, Christmas Abbott, Magic Johnson, Larena Benitez, Tameka Yallap, Maria Pilar. The reason why these athletes are preferred is that top-rated and well-known athletes do not want to be included in the media in terms of the sexual orientation of each athlete with an open identity, and individual statements are not directed.

The images in the study were shown to the participants one by one, and after giving them enough time to view and evaluate them, a total of two (excluding demographic information) questions, one multiple-choice and one open-ended, were asked regarding each photograph shown. There was no direction given to the participants on the answers to the questions; no more questions were asked, merely their replies were documented, and the other photo was taken. The questions asked after each photograph shown during the research are as follows;

1. What do you think is the sexual orientation of the athlete in the photo? (*Multiple choice*)

() Heterosexual () Bisexual () Homosexual () No idea

2. What is your reason for giving this answer? (*Open-ended*)

.....

The purpose of asking these questions in the research is to reveal the labels related to their sexual orientation in society, to make them understandable within the scope of the case study, and to describe them. Furthermore, to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, questions were asked to select the descriptive characteristics of the individuals, such as gender, age, and education level, and the question of whether they had met an individual with a different sexual orientation before was asked to determine their attitudes toward sexual orientation differences.

Analyzing of Data

Qualitative research techniques entail producing and constructing an intelligible form as a consequence of data analysis. Qualitative research entails incorporating diversity, originality, and flexibility within data processing (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

The ideas of description, categorization, and association appear in the literature as essential concepts for the researcher to understand during the analytical process (Dey, 2003). Making a thorough description of the data acquired by a researcher is what the descriptive phase entails. Making definitions implies that readers may immediately and precisely access the environment in which the data is obtained, the perspectives of the persons participating in the study, and the intricacies of the information about the research method. As soon as the data collected under specific themes in the research process passes to the interpretation stage, it means that the associating process has started (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

In the conducted research, the data collected through open-ended questions were listed and written down after completing the entire survey. First, all open-ended statements were read, the data were coded in the classification phase, and themes were created in line with these codes. The comparison and validation of the codings were calculated by four researchers using the “consensus/disagreement” formula. ($Reliability = Consensus / Consensus +$

Disagreement x 100). If the outcome of the reliability formula in the literature is at least 70%, it indicates that dependability is possible (Huberman & Miles, 2002). To guarantee dependability, those codes that did not achieve a sufficient percentage and had disputes were eliminated from the findings by consensus of the coders.

Ethical Approval

Within the scope of the research, ethics committee permission was obtained with Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee evaluation decision date 03.03.2021, ethics evaluation document number 8374.

FINDINGS

The themes, sub-themes, and codes connected to the physical pictures of the athletes are presented in this part, which covers the conclusions acquired as a consequence of the analysis of the data received from the interviews. The opinions of the participants are also included in the findings section in the form of "quoting," and all of the findings gathered reflect the personal opinions of the participants. The identity of the participants was not revealed while giving their perspectives.

Theme, Sub-Theme and Coding

The key topics that emerged from the interviews were divided into four categories: body image, body language, dress style, and indefinable traits. The sub-themes chosen under the major themes also include codes, and the themes and sub-themes are depicted in Figure 1.

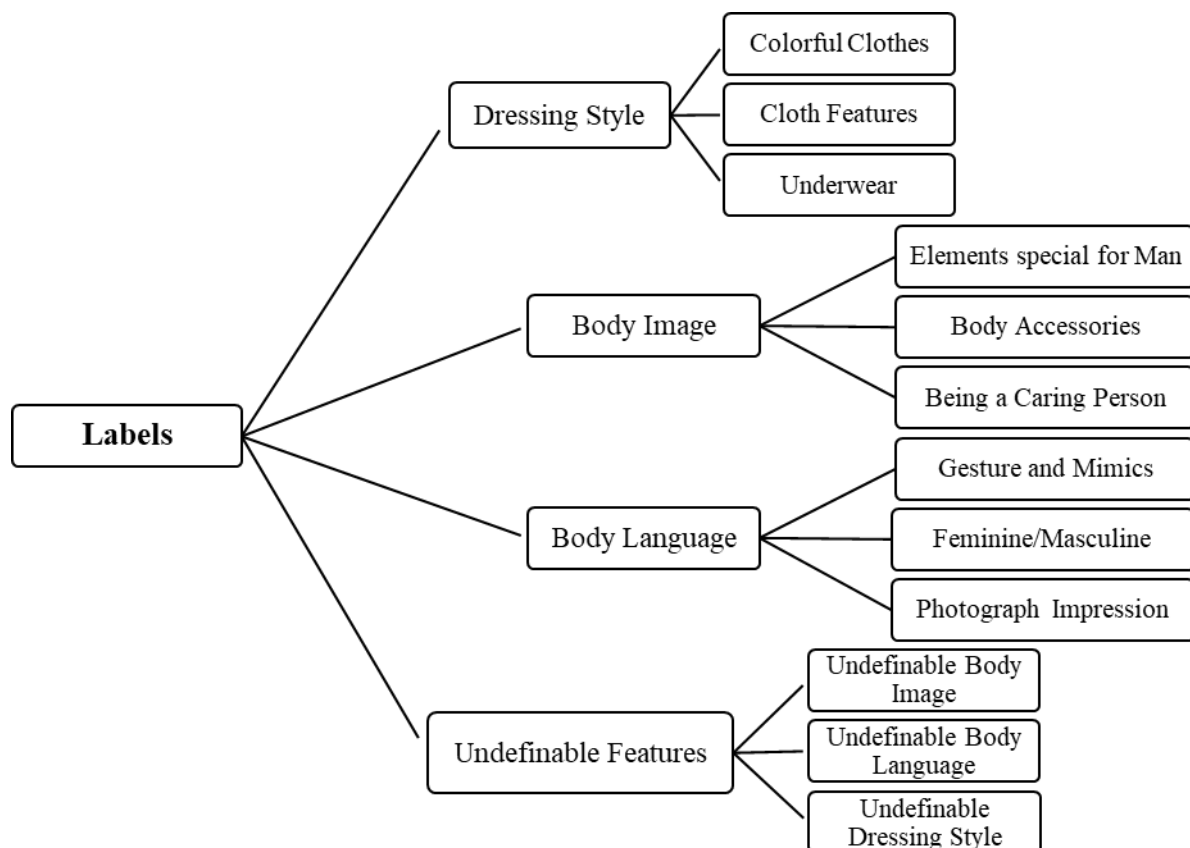


Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes

Details on the sub-themes of male-specific elements, body accessories and being well-groomed under the Body Image theme are shown in Figure 2.

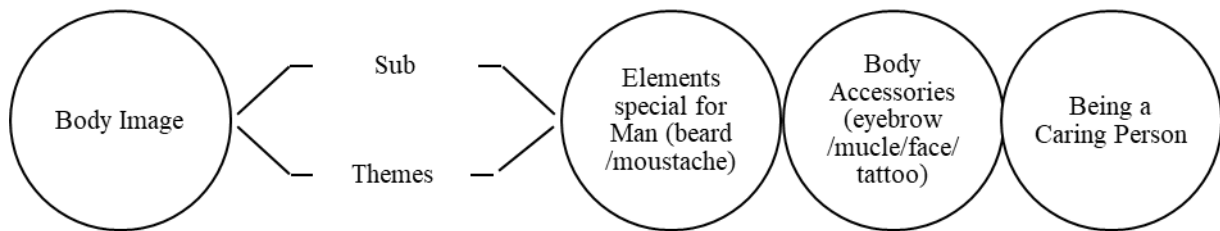


Figure 2. Body Image Sub-themes

The expressions utilized by the participants under the theme of body image are generally shaped under the sub-themes of masculine elements (beard/moustache), body accessories (hair, muscle, facial structure, and tattoo) and being well-groomed. The sentences expressed by the participants about these themes are as follows:

- *He is handsome because handsome guys are usually gay.*
- *He creates a gay perception because he is well-groomed and has no beard.*
- *Mustache cut is gay, just like Freddie Mercury.*
- *Short hair is a sign of lesbianism.*
- *Her haircut and colour are unique because lesbians are not usually that brave.*
- *His soft features and smile suggest he is gay or bisexual.*
- *He has a very tough masculine face, so I think he is straight.*
- *She has a feminine facial feature, but her body is very muscular, so she is heterosexual.*
- *Lesbian or bisexual because he has a very muscular and masculine build.*
- *I felt he was gay because of his naive stance and baby-like features.*
- *She plays soccer and has tough masculine tattoos that made me think she is a lesbian.*
- *His tattoos give a gay image.*

Participants encode and socially identify athletes based on their body image perception, beardless/beardless, moustache cut, facial appearance, tattoos, haircut, muscular proportions, and well-groomed look by rating their purely physical appearance. Individuals who took part in the study labelled the athletes of the assigned gender based on their beard, moustache, feminine tattoos, perception of beauty/handsomeness, and facial characteristics. Athletes with assigned genders are labelled according to their haircut (short/long), hair colour, tattoos they find masculine, perception of beauty/handsomeness, and facial features. Individuals who refer to these norms in their predictions regarding the sexual orientation of individuals whose physical characteristics are outside of certain social norms label athletes outside certain stereotypes as gay, lesbian or bisexual while positioning the athletes they include within the norm lines as heterosexual.

Details on the sub-themes of gestures and facial expressions, feminine/masculine images and photographic impressions, which are under the body language theme, are presented in Figure 3.

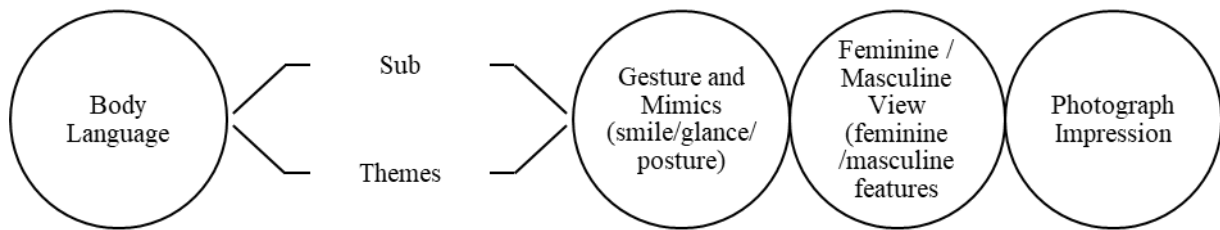


Figure 3. Body Language Sub-themes

The expressions used by the participants under the heading of body language are generally shaped under the sub-themes of gestures and mimics (smile, glance, posture), feminine/masculine image (feminine/masculine features) and photographic impression. The sentences expressed by the participants about these themes are as follows:

- *She looks sad and suppressed because of her sexual orientation.*
- *Beardless and feminine looks.*
- *It fits the very feminine heteronormative structure.*
- *She has an effeminate attitude despite her feminine appearance.*
- *She looks attractive and has a masculine style, so I thought she was a lesbian or bisexual.*
- *Her face made me feel heterosexual.*
- *I felt that he was gay or bisexual from his smile.*
- *According to the image, I feel that it is gay.*

By evaluating the images of the athletes completely in the photograph, the participants encode and socially label the individuals based on their perception of body language, their smiles, the looks in the photograph, the poses, the features they attribute to men and women, and the personal feelings they have acquired by looking at the photograph alone. Individuals in the research designate the athletes with the given gender based on the significance they ascribe to their gaze, attitudes they find feminine, emotions on their faces, and the smiling gesture. On the other hand, it labels the athletes whose assigned gender is female, based on their masculine appearances and the impressions they get from personal experiences when they look at the image. Individuals who refer to these norms in their predictions about the sexual orientation of individuals whose body language is outside certain social norms label athletes outside certain stereotypes as gay, lesbian or bisexual, while positioning the athletes they include within the norm lines as heterosexual.

Under the theme of clothing style, the clothes used by the athletes are coded according to their colours, shapes and usage purposes, and the clothing details are shown in Figure 4.

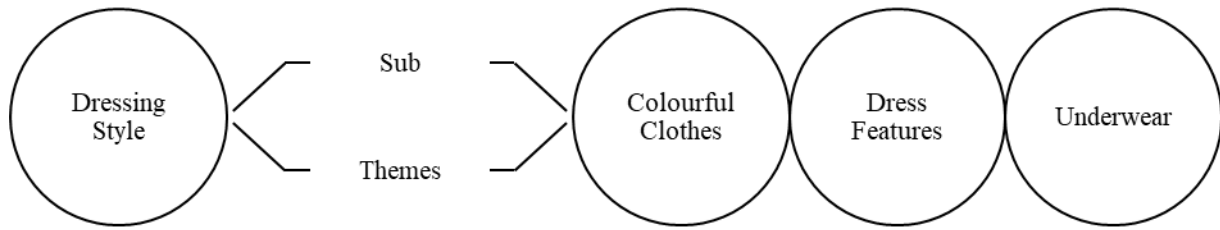


Figure 4. Dressing Style Sub-themes

The expressions used by the participants regarding the dressing style were generally coded as coloured clothes (pink, multi-coloured, feminine colours), dress features (tight/short uniforms) and underwear. The sentences expressed by the participants about this theme are as follows:

- *Her clothing, jewellery and hair reflect complete femininity.*
- *Despite her short hair and colourful dresses, she has a masculine style.*
- *I answer with very stereotypical judgments, but the choice of clothes, heels, nail polish and pose creates the impression of heterosexual.*
- *She has masculinity, but her outfit made me think otherwise, so I gave the heterosexual answer.*
- *Tight clothing and short shorts are gay.*
- *His shorts are short and narrow. It is as if they form my vision.*
- *She is not wearing underwear, it is obvious, and lesbians do not care about such things.*

Individuals who participated in the study labelled the athletes of the assigned gender based on the colours (pink, purple) they wore in their attire, the colours they chose for women, and the shorts they preferred as short or tight. Athletes with gender are branded based on their make-up, clothes, shoes, jewellery, and accessories. Individuals who refer to these norms in their predictions regarding the sexual orientation of individuals whose clothing styles are outside of certain social norms label athletes outside certain stereotypes as gay, lesbian or bisexual and position the athletes they include within the norm lines as heterosexual.

Details related to the sub-themes of indefinable body image, indefinable body language, and indefinable clothing style, which are under the theme of indefinable characteristics, are presented in Figure 5.

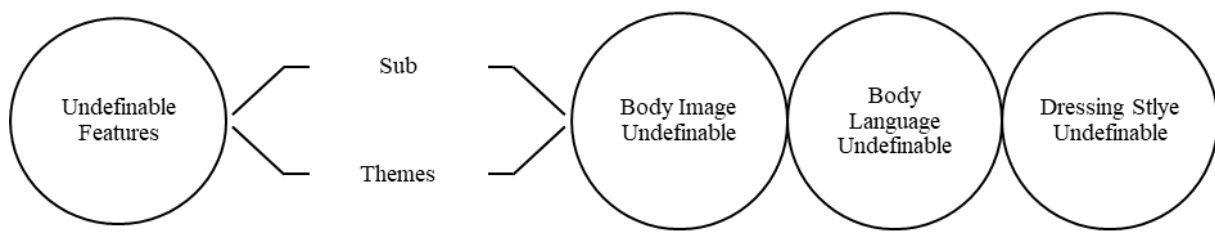


Figure 5. Undefinable Features Sub-themes

The expressions used by some of the participants regarding the sexual orientation estimations are that it is not possible to make a definition based on body image, body language and clothing style. The sentences expressed by the participants about this theme are as follows:

- *I have no idea that anyone can build a body.*
- *It is not possible to decide on orientation based on appearance.*
- *I am not interested in gender choices.*
- *I do not think people's appearance reflects their sexual orientation.*
- *Sexual orientation cannot be determined by appearance.*
- *I do not know the answer to that. It seems strange to me to guess. I do not have a specific pattern, so that I can include it there.*
- *I think that the sexual orientation of people cannot be categorized according to their appearance.*
- *I do not think that appearance determines sexual orientation.*

Some (12%) of the participants believe that athletes with the designated gender of male and athletes with the assigned gender of female cannot be classified in any form or with an external observation based on any criteria. The familiar voice of the participants, who stated that the imposed norms, including clothing styles, body language, and body images, are social perceptions and that no predictions about the sexual orientation of individuals would be correct. That expression can be used as a summary sentence of a segment that exists as a minority in society.

“I am not in favour of deciding the sexual orientation of individuals based on their appearance. That is a social prejudice.”

The findings, in the light of all the information, can be summarized as follows.

Quantitative findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the survey participants can be summarized as follows: The participation rate of women is 44%, and the participation rate of men is 48%. Additionally, 8% did not provide any gender information. The findings regarding the monthly income levels of the participants are as follows: 51% earn below the

minimum wage, 23% earn between "3,000 - 5,000 TL", and 26% earn more than "5,000 TL". The findings regarding the education levels of the participants are as follows: 5% are secondary school graduates, 22% are high school graduates, 59% are undergraduate graduates, and 14% have postgraduate education.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although it is founded on individual preferences and subjective values about their bodies, it is an object unaffected by contemporary norms and acceptances (Çakmak, 2020). Nothing that is not visual in our age has a semantic counterpart. Therefore, the idea of meaning arises with visibility and cannot exist apart from it (Ellul, 1998; Şişman, 2016; Vattimo & Rovatti, 2012). Ellul (1998) asserts a significant interaction between the gaze and the body. When others look at you, they call to mind the reality waiting in their thoughts, which creates the bodily image they perceive in front of this reality. According to Sartre (2011), it derives from the fact that the gaze has a social regulating effect on individuals and is always formed according to the minister's expectations. In their research with models, Güzel and Ümit (2018) discovered that the bodies studied always succumb to the desire to meet the ministers' demands, and they feel obligated to shape their bodies according to the wishes and desires of the ministers. Otherwise, the fear of being marginalized emerges. Religion, local culture, and social norms were all major forces influencing the body in old communities (Çubuklu, 2004; Gelis, 2007; Le Breton, 2011; Pellegrin, 2007). Deleuze and Guattari revealed that due to the ideal body coding created by societies, individuals internalized the necessity of changing their constantly controlled bodies to reach these ideal norms (Thornton, 2019). It can be said that these ideal norms, which were also mentioned in our research, are long blond hair, a slender and elegant body for women, a muscular body, and a stern face with a beard for men. Athletes' bodies, outside of social norms, are one of the most prone to marginalization. Studies are showing that the othering behaviour that emerges as a result of body image in society is an action that comes from the past and continues today (Abell & Richards, 1996; Holt, 2006; Laitinen et al., 2001; Rahkonen & Takala, 1998; Snooks & Hall, 2002). Many of the studies carried out reveal that athletes are placed in a valuable position in society with a fit body they have achieved, but here, too, different characteristics and norms expected from men and women continue to exist (Carrington, 1986; Laitinen et al., 2001; McLaren & Kuh, 2004; Sapaaj, 2013; Snooks & Hall, 2002; Spreitzer, 1994). Some studies reveal the unhappiness of individuals who cannot meet the ideal presentation criteria shaped by society within the framework of their norms (Barlett et al., 2008; Clark & Tiggeman, 2006; Eraslan & Aydoğan, 2016; Jones et al., 2004; Pich et al., 2015; Voelker et al., 2015). However, one of our research goals is that athletes' bodies (women/men) vary greatly depending on the activity and cannot please society by deviating from the standards, which may negatively impact the athletes' performances or athletic life. In bodybuilding research, muscular tone and huge physical indicators, which are branch prerequisites, are associated with existing masculine standards, causing the exclusion of female athletes from society (Grogan & Richards, 2002; Karaçam, 2015; Pope et al., 1997).

Other activities carried out over the physical characteristics of individuals who are outside of these norms established in the societies create psychological pressure on people and include

discourses such as "you are like a man" for a short-haired woman or "Are you gay?" for a man who does ballet. However, they also spread homophobic attitudes to people.

Therefore, these physical norms, which are deemed appropriate regarding genders, appear as norms that also give rise to homophobia. LGBTIQ+ individuals, who are defined as not conforming to these physical norms, are exposed to homophobia/marginalization through their appearance and behaviour (Sadiç & Beydağ, 2018). In this context, regardless of their sexual orientation, they can be shaped as if they belong to a specific group, and as a result, the likelihood of athletes being exposed to homophobic attitudes in society increases. Male individuals in society have a homophobic attitude, and the rate of exposure to homophobia is much higher than that of females. In addition to the fact that female individuals are more inclusive in this regard, it has been revealed that homosexual women do not encounter homophobic attitudes and discourses as much as men (Anderssen, 2002; Çırakoğlu, 2006; Güney et al., 2004; Herek, 1988; Lock & Kleis, 1995; Sakallı, 2002; Sakallı, 2006; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001; Şah, 2012). Similar results we obtained in parallel with these studies support our research, and individuals who define themselves as male both label the external appearance of the athletes more easily and display more homophobic attitudes towards male athletes.

Moreover, in parallel with our research findings, studies in the regarded literature show an inverse relationship between education level and active use of social norms. In short, as the education level of individuals increases, their conformity to social norms and their efforts to seek social norms decrease (Jenkins et al., 2009; Lewis & Taylor, 2001; Shackelford & Besser, 2007).

One of the causes for the research participants' stereotypes and biases surrounding sexual orientation is the fact that they had never met an LGBTIQ+ person. Participants who are acquainted with people of various sexual orientations (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, among other things) create more positive and moderate material than those who are not acquainted (Anderssen, 2002; Çırakoğlu, 2006; Güney et al., 2004). In our research, 14.8% of the participants stated that they had met an LGBTIQ+ individual in their social life, and almost all of the 12% who said that it is not possible to be defined by appearance indicated that they had met an individual with a different sexual orientation and avoided labelling. This analysis supported the literature.

As a consequence, it is incorrect to associate homophobic attitudes and discourses with athletes who are outside of societal standards and who are unable to satisfy particular physical norms due to the needs of the sports branch in which they are engaged. Some physical looks imposed by society are consistent with demands that cannot be satisfied, particularly for athletes, and they undermine sports life as a professional enterprise and construct walls in front of potential triumphs. The best recent example is National Gymnast Tutya YILMAZ, who represented Turkey at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The athlete, who quit sports shortly after the Olympic Games, expressed his reaction to his exclusion, mainly because of his very muscular appearance and inability to fulfil his existence fully in society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research shows that the social relationships of people of diverse sexual orientations play a significant impact in changing unfavourable views and actions against these people (Anderssen, 2002; Çırakoğlu, 2006; Güney et al., 2004; Sakallı, 2002; Sakallı & Uğurlu, 2001; Şah, 2012). In this context, increasing the level of familiarity with the society of individuals with different sexual orientations, establishing positive social relationships, and minimizing othering will play a significant role in the destruction of the heteronormative structure, and it will become more inclusive for everyone outside the current norms, particularly athletes.

One of the most crucial tasks to meet equality in today's democratic society is introducing specific adjustments and diverse viewpoints on social perception. In this regard, providing training, informing about the promotions of sports branches, presenting prospective instances beyond the appropriate social standards, and isolating players from this other dimension would be suitable for future success. Furthermore, further study on certain groups may yield more thorough results by making the branches more precise.

REFERENCES

- Abdelgelil, M. F. M., Bidin, S. N. B. B. S., Omar, N. B., Razali, M. A. T. B. M., & Ismail, F. Z. B. (2023). Rhetorical meanings of conjunction, disjunction, masculinizing and feminizing in Mutawatir Qira'at of the Holy Quran. *Synesis*, 15(1), 235-242.
- Abell, S. C., & Richards, M. H. (1996). The relationship between body shape satisfaction and self-esteem: An investigation of gender and class differences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 25(5), 691-703.
- Anderssen, N. (2002). Does contact with lesbians and gays lead to friendlier attitudes? A two year longitudinal study. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 12(2), 124-136.
- Barlett, C. P., Vowels, C. L., & Saucier, D. A. (2008). Meta-analyses of the effects of media images on men's body-image concerns. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 27(3), 279-310.
- Bauer, N. (2010). Simone 6 De Beauvoir: The second sex. In B. Mann & M. Ferrari (Ed.), "On ne naît pas femme: on le devient" *The Life of a Sentence*. Oxford University Press.
- Berktaş, F. (2012). *Tarihin cinsiyeti*. (4th ed.). Metis Yayınları.
- Butler, J. (2016). *Cinsiyet belası: Feminizm ve kimliğin altüst edilmesi*. (Trans. B. Ertür). Metis Yayınları.
- Çakmak M. N. (2020). *Spor aracılığıyla bedenin göstergelişmesi: Eskişehir'de body-fitness yapanlara yönelik sosyolojik bir saha araştırması* (Kayt No. 639107) [Doctoral dissertation, Anadolu University]. YOK Thesis Center.
- Carrington, B. (1986). Social mobility, ethnicity and sport. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 7(1), 3-18.
- Chalabaev, A., Sarrazin, P., Fontayne, P., Boiché, J., & Clément-Guillot, C. (2013). The influence of sex stereotypes and gender roles on participation and performance in

- sport and exercise: Review and future directions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14(2), 136-144.
- Choi, P. Y. L. (2000). *Femininity and the physically active woman*. Routledge.
- Clark, L., & Tiggemann, M. (2006). Appearance culture in nine-to 12-year-old girls: Media and peer influences on body dissatisfaction. *Social Development*, 15(4), 628-643.
- Çırakoğlu, O. C. (2006). Perception of homosexuality among Turkish University students: The role of labels, gender, and prior contact. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 146(3), 293-305.
- Çubuklu, Y. (2004). Yemek: Haute Cuisine'den Fast-Food'a. In S. Kılıç (Ed.), *Toplumsalın sınırında beden* (s. 141-150). Kanat Kitap.
- Dey, I. (2003). *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists*. Routledge.
- Ellul, P. (1998). *Who am I? A study in cultural identity*. [Bachelor's thesis, University of Malta]. <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/78945>
- Eraslan, M., & Aydoğan, H. (2016). Vücut geliştirme ve fitness merkezinde spor yapan bireylerin beden bölgelerinden hoşnut olma düzeylerinin yaş ve cinsiyet değişkenlerine göre incelenmesi. *CBÜ Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 11(2), 50-57.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the history of sexuality*. Vintage Books.
- Gelis, J. (2007). Beden, kilise, kutsal. In J. J. Courtine & G. Vigarello (Ed.), *Bedenin tarihi: Rönesanstan Aydınlanmaya*. (Trans. S. Özen.). Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Göregenli M. (2006, Mayıs 16). Ayrımcılık İdeolojisi Olarak Homofobi. Kaos GL. <https://kaosgl.org/haber/ayrimcilik-ideolojisi-olarak-homofobi>
- Grogan, S., & Richards, H. (2002). Body image: Focus groups with boys and men. *Men and Masculinities*, 4(3), 219-232.
- Güney, N., Kargı, E., & Çorbacı, A. (2004). Üniversite öğrencilerinin eşcinsellik konusundaki görüşlerinin incelenmesi. *Turkish Journal of HIV/AIDS*, 7(4), 131-137.
- Güzel, E., & Ümit, E. Ç. (2018). Filtreli güzellik: Güzellik hegemonyasının gözde mekânı instagram, güzellik kraliçeleri ve süper modeller. *Sosyologça*, 8, 15-16.
- Hall, M. A. (1996). *Feminism and sporting bodies: Essays on theory and practice*. Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Herek, G. M. (1988). Heterosexual's attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Correlates and gender differences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 25(4), 451-477.
- Holt, R. (2006). The amateur body and the middle-class man: Work, health and style in Victorian Britain. *Sport in History*, 26(3), 352-369.
- Huberman, A. M., & Miles, M. B. (2002). *The qualitative researcher's companion*. Sage Publications.
- Ian, M. (1995). How do you wear your body? Bodybuilding and the sublimity of drag. In M. Dorenkamp & R. Henke (Eds.), *Negotiating lesbian and gay subjects* (pp. 71-92). Routledge.

- Jenkins M, Lambert, E. G, Baker D. N. (2009). The attitudes of black and white college students toward gays and lesbians. *Journal of Black Studies*, 39(4), 589-613.
- Jones, D. C., Vigfusdottir, T. H., & Lee, Y. (2004). Body image and the appearance culture among adolescent girls and boys: An examination of friend conversations, peer criticism, appearance magazines, and the internalization of appearance ideals. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 19(3), 323-339.
- Karaçam M. (2015). *Vücut geliştirme alanında erkeklik kimliğinin inşasında besin desteği kullanımının yeri* (Kayıt no. 383190) [Master's thesis, Hacettepe University]. YOK Thesis Center.
- Kleindienst-Cachay, C., & Heckemeyer, K. (2008). Women in male domains of sport. *International Journal of Eastern Sports & Physical Education*, 6(1), 14-37.
- Koca, C., & Bulgu, N. (2005). Spor ve toplumsal cinsiyet: Genel bir bakış. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 103, 163-184.
- Koca, C., Aşçı, F. H., & Demirhan, G. (2005a). Attitudes toward physical education and class preferences of Turkish adolescents in terms of school gender composition. *Adolescence*, 40(158), 365-375.
- Koca, C., Hülya Aşçı, F. & Kirazcı, S. (2005b). Gender role orientation of athletes and nonathletes in a patriarchal society: a study in Turkey. *Sex Roles*, 52, 217-225. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-1296-2>
- Koivula, N. (1995) Ratings of gender appropriateness of sports participation: Effects of gender-based schematic processing. *Sex Roles*, 33, 543-557. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01544679>
- Koivula, N. (2001). Perceives characteristics of sports categorized as gender-neutral, feminine and masculine. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 24(4), 377-394.
- Krane, V. (1996). Lesbians in sport: Towards acknowledgment, understanding and theory. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18(3), 237-246. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.18.3.237>
- Krane, V., & Romont, L. (1997). Female athletes' motives and experiences during the Gay Games. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 2, 123-138.
- Laitinen, J., Power, C., & Järvelin, M. R. (2001). Family social class, maternal body mass index, childhood body mass index, and age at menarche as predictors of adult obesity. *The American journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 74(3), 287-294.
- Le Breton, D. (2011). The body and touch in nursing care. *Soins; La Revue de Reference Infirmiere*, 756, 34-37.
- Lewis, G. B., & Taylor, H. E. (2001). Public opinion toward gay and lesbian teachers: Insights for all public employees. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 21(2), 133-151.
- Lock, J., & Kleis, B. (1995). Origins of homophobia in males: Psychosexual vulnerabilities and defense development. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 52(4), 425-436.
- Matteo, S. (1986). The effect of sex and gender-schematic processing on sport participation. *Sex Roles*, 15, 417-432.
- McLaren, L., & Kuh, D. (2004). Women's body dissatisfaction, social class, and social mobility. *Social Science & Medicine*, 58(9), 1575-1584.

- Menzel, J. E., Krawczyk, R., & Thompson, J. K. (2011). Attitudinal assessment of body image for adolescents and adults. In T. F. Cash & L. Smolak (Eds.), *Body image: A handbook of science, practice, and prevention* (pp. 154–169). The Guilford Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (2013). *Nitel araştırma desen ve uygulama için bir rehber* (Trans. S. Turan). Nobel Yayıncılık.
- Metheny, E. (1965). *Connotations of movement in sport and dance: A collection of speeches about sport and dance as significant forms of human behavior*. Wm. C. Brown
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications.
- Pellegrin, N. (2007). Sıradan insanların bedeni, bedeninin sıradan kullanımı. In J. J. Courtine ve G. Vigarello (Ed.), *Bedenin tarihi: Rönesanstan aydınlanmaya*. (Trans. S. Özen). Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Pich, J., Bibiloni, M. D. M., Pons, A., & Tur, J. A. (2015). Weight self-regulation process in adolescence: The relationship between control weight attitudes, behaviors, and body weight status. *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 2(14), 12-17.
- Pope Jr, H. G., Gruber, A. J., Choi, P., Olivardia, R., & Phillips, K. A. (1997). Muscle dysmorphia: An under recognized form of body dysmorphic disorder. *Psychosomatics*, 38(6), 548-557.
- Rahkonen, O., & Takala, P. (1998). Social class differences in health and functional disability among older men and women. *International Journal of Health Services*, 28(3), 511-524.
- Rich, A. C. (2003). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Journal of Women's History* 15(3), 11-48.
- Riemer, B. A., & Visio, M. E. (2003). Gender typing of sports: An investigation of Metheny's classification. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 74(2), 193-204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2003.10609081>
- Sadıç, E., & Beydağ, K. D. (2018). Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin lezbiyen ve geylere yönelik tutumları ve etkileyen faktörler. *Hemşirelik Bilimi Dergisi*, 1(2), 5-13.
- Şah, U. (2012) Eşcinselliğe, biseksüelliğe ve transseksüelliğe ilişkin tanımlamaların homofobi ve LGBT bireylerle tanışıklık düzeyi ile ilişkisi. *Psikoloji Çalışmaları*, 32(2), 23-48.
- Sakallı, N. & Uğurlu, O. (2001). Effects of social contact with homosexuals on heterosexual Turkish university students attitudes towards homosexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 42(1), 53-62.
- Sakallı, N. (2002). The relationship between sexism and attitudes toward homosexuality in a sample of Turkish college students. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 42(3), 53-64.
- Sakallı, N. (2006). Eşcinsellere ilişkin tutumlar: Türkiye'de yapılan görgül çalışmalar. *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları*, 53–69. <https://hdl.handle.net/11511/76558>
- Sancar, S. (2011). *Erkeklik: İmkânsız iktidar - Ailede, piyasada ve sokakta erkekler*. Metis Yayınları.
- Sartre, J. P. (2011). *Varlık ve hiçlik: Fenomenolojik ontoloji denemesi* (Trans. T. Ilgaz & G. Çankaya Eksen). İthaki Yayınları.
- Shackelford, T. K., & Besser, A. (2007). Predicting Attitudes toward Homosexuality: Insights from Personality Psychology. *Individual Differences Research*, 5(2), 106-114.

- Şişman, N. (2016). *Emanetten mülke: Kadın, beden, siyaset*. İz Yayınları.
- Snooks, M. K., & Hall, S. K. (2002). Relationship of body size, body image, and self-esteem in African American, European American, and Mexican American middle-class women. *Health Care for Women International*, 23(5), 460-466.
- Spaaij, R. (2013). Changing people's lives for the better? Social mobility through sport-based intervention programmes: opportunities and constraints. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 10(1), 53-73.
- Spreitzer, E. (1994). Does participation in interscholastic athletics affect adult development? A longitudinal analysis of an 18-24 age cohort. *Youth & Society*, 25(3), 368-387.
- Thornton, E. (2019). Deleuze and Guattari's Absent Analysis of Patriarchy. *Hypatia*, 34(2), 348-368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12468>
- Vattimo, G., & Rovatti, P. A. (2012). *What is weak thought?* Sunny Press.
- Voelker, D. K., Reel, J. J., & Greenleaf, C. (2015). Weight status and body image perceptions in adolescents: Current perspectives. *Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics*, 6, 149.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2013). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. (9th ed.). Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Young, K. (1997). Women, sport and physicality: Preliminary findings from a Canadian study. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 32(3), 297-305.