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**GENDER-ORIENTED APPROACH AS URGENT PROBLEM OF  
SPORTS PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT**

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*Abstract*

The article deals with the issues of athlete personality development in professional sports, depending on specialization. The component composition of the phenomenon of gender development of personality of an athlete and the concept of gender psychology of sports activity are considered. The results of the study made it possible to draw a conclusion about the existing laws, factors and mechanisms that make up the concept of gender development of an athlete and highlight the conditions that prevent the successful socialization of a person in sports activities. Despite numerous studies in the psychology of sports, issues related to the study of gender remain the most promising. The research interest is focused on various aspects, such as gender differences in athletes, study of sports motivation of different sexes, gender stereotypes, mental health of people involved in sports, psychological personality traits, etc. The purpose of this study is to consider the possibility of building a psychological model of an integrated gender-based approach aimed at the psychological support of sports activities. A psychological model of a gender-oriented approach (GOA) is proposed, which reveals the productivity of all subjects of sports activities in a particular area - masculinization of personality in sports, deformation of gender structure of personality in women (except feminine sports) and masculinity as an important quality of an athlete.

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**Keywords:** Gender, masculine, feminine, approach, personality, socialization.



## 1. Introduction

The study of personality of a professional from the standpoint of development of a professional culture is one of the promising areas not only from the point of view of acmeology, but also applied areas of psychology. The identity of professional is a driving force behind the changes taking place in Russian society. Sport is aimed at achieving high results and such phenomenon as the differentiation of athlete's personality in sports activity is most pronounced. Accordingly, the formation of gender characteristics in sports activity is a complex process, since on the one hand, a female masculinization as a sports-important quality leads to the achievement of high athletic performance, and on the other hand, gender deformation of personality occurs. For the first time in the national pedagogical theory and practice, a gender-oriented approach appears at the end of the XXth and the beginning of the XXIst century. A great merit belongs to the founder of the Petersburg school of psychology, B. G. Ananyev. In the beginning of the 1990s of the XXth century, T. V. Bendas, the author of the book *Gender Psychology* (Bendas, 2006) raises this issues in his works. In the psychology of sports there are several definitions that make up the categorical apparatus of the subject matter. These are sex, gender, gender identity, gender stereotypes, and gender role. So, we may talk about the process of gender socialization in sports activities. Gender socialization is manifested especially vividly in sports, because different sports are initially considered masculine and feminine at the very beginning of the child's sports. Physical culture and sports are the means of forming not only gender identity, but also the means where the process of gender identity is violated by not typical activities (from the gender point of view) of girls and boys. Gender mainstreaming requires specialist involvement to create conditions that would exacerbate stereotypes of male and female behavior in athletes (Damadaeva, 2012). However, this process can be disrupted initially in the sport of high achievements, where the masculinization of women is a necessary condition for achieving high performance. The preferred types of motor activity of young athletes are incorporated in the model of behavior. Thus, the stereotypes of feminine and masculine sports are created. It is no secret that currently sports activities are subject to commercialization. In the sport of high achievements there is no place for weak people, especially in its masculine forms. Achieving results at any cost in the sport of high achievements leads to the destruction of humane mission of sports as a social practice, where the term "human dimensionality" is used. The measure of limits of human capabilities in the field of sports is the end result of achievement. The concept of "human dimensionality" is considered as a sum of the individual capabilities of psyche, physical and mental capabilities of a person, biological rhythm, universality of communication and understanding in the framework of society and activity (Barabanova, 2016). The "human dimensionality" is distinguished within two levels: an individual and universal. Undoubtedly, the study of gender relations in general and in sport can be attributed to the individual level, since we are talking about the natural possibilities of a man. Gender psychology has a short history, although today it is one of the largest areas of psychology. As an independent scientific field of study, it was developed in the west. Although in Russia, the study of gender began much earlier, from the end of the IXth century, and particularly the study of women. Initially it was not right to divide gender psychology into the male and female. One may speak about gender dimorphism only through the comparative analysis. The cornerstone of the psychology of gender differences has become the balance between the biological and the social aspects. However, it is not a barrier for the search of the truth. However, most scholars are inclined to believe that the influence of social context determines the

majority of psychological differences. Currently, the study of gender psychology has such a wide range that it is necessary to talk about the formation of several scientific areas related to the specifics of its object. In the gender psychology of sports, it is advisable to consider sports specialization and experience of sports activity as gender characteristics of an individual. In her studies, Tsikunova, (2013) divided sports into masculine and feminine. Thus, the foundation of the academic pursuits on the role of specialization of athletes as part of the formation of the psychological gender was laid. Thus, self-reliance, integrity of feelings, and certainty of attitudes largely depend on the timeliness and completeness of the formation of psychological traits of masculinity and femininity, which determines future effectiveness of communication with people, family and team. Specialists in various fields of research were engaged in the women's issues in sports. Today, humanity is agitated by a variety of problems associated with a woman in the sports movements of the international level, considering her right to participate in competitions of various kinds of sports that were previously considered men's sports. This factor is associated with the expansion of women's Olympic program in the Olympic Games and, of course, the emancipation of women. The concept of gender is used as a synonym for the concept of sex. Performing a social gender role means not possessing the predetermined qualities defined by the society. This means compliance with certain standards, so, for example, girls are obliged to love figure skating, and boys shall love boxing and football. Gender-neutral sports, such as swimming and running, have the highest rates of participation of boys and girls (Kletsina, 2009). Another factor and significant problem that should be considered is the development of social and psychological foundations of women's sports, which is characterized by a sporty lifestyle, involving the abandonment of many of the usual joys of ordinary people for the joys of life, limited communication, extreme physical exertion, and other things that really distinguish athletes from other women (Bern, 2007). The gender-oriented approach is considered in education and involves the creation of conditions for maximum self-fulfillment and discovery of abilities of both feminine and masculine gender personalities. The study shows that it has high efficiency. Also, masculine gender personalities are characterized by a desire for rivalry and a desire to dominate, which makes the masculine gender personalities susceptible to motivating influence. Feminine gender personalities are more emotional than masculine ones, are more sociable and dependent on public opinion, and often have developed aesthetic and creative abilities (Ilyin, 2013). The application of a gender-based pedagogical approach is most relevant in working with a pronounced gender imbalance, although this approach can also be used to work with gender-homogeneous groups (for example, in economic fields). In sports activities, a gender-based approach is in high demand. Although, the implementation of a gender-based approach in education is in most cases quite a difficult task due to the heterogeneity of the gender of athletes. Such an approach in the training of athletes should, above all, include consideration of gender-related personality traits. The universal gender characteristics distinguished by the researchers in the field of gender psychology and sociology include, first of all, the following psychological and emotional characteristics of feminine and masculine gender personalities. The masculine gender personalities are distinguished by a higher aggressiveness compared to the feminine ones, tendency to independence, high speed of concentration of attention, tendency to humor and public production of their inclinations. A gender-based approach as a fundamentally new path in the psychology of sports contributes to the creation of psychologically comfortable conditions for representatives of different gender groups and an increase in the effectiveness of educational work, which would contribute

to improving the quality of educational activities in general and the formation of a harmoniously developed athlete personality. Athletes with different personality traits can achieve significant results in the sport they choose. Artamonova and Shevchenko, (2009) identify three general volitional indicators for all sports, relying on F. Genova: dedication, discipline, self-confidence. Currently, there are studies that compare the personality characteristics of male and female athletes. The motivational sphere of the personality of athletes in various sports disciplines (athletics, basketball) is mainly studied; the mechanisms and types of coping behavior and attitudes regarding sports are examined. For example, it is determined that women use the coping approach - self-criticism, and men, after experiencing stress, apply the avoiding strategies. The large-scale study of gender differentiation of the representatives of different sports with the consideration of a gender factor and the forms of interaction of athletes in the competitive struggle is up-to-date. Psychologists have noticed that girls have a serious perception of sport activities at the earlier stage of their development. It is more important for them to build up relationship with the coach, rather than with the group. Sports activities do not interfere with the development in the educational and scientific fields. In turn, men respect the coach, but teammates are still in priority for them. They need more time to choose a specific activity, this process of choosing a sports activity is more difficult for men. The conditions for the development of a men and women determine those internal and external permanent factors that influence the course of personality development, shaping the dynamics and determining the final results in sports (Bagadirova, 2014). Sport of higher achievements requires significant physical and mental input, as a result of which there is a risk of disruption of the female reproductive system. Thus, the sport of higher achievements can create certain difficulties for women athletes in the implementation of the most important social role of creating a family and having children. It is important to note that there is an artificial restriction of the development of sports for women. This is evidenced by the fact that women are engaged in the male programs that are not adapted for the female body and psyche. The existence of a conflict between the gender and sports roles, the problem of adequate gender identification of female athletes involved in the conventionally male sports, indicates an insufficient psychological work with athletes. Accordingly, purposeful and productive management of factors of a successful socialization is possible, which can be achieved within the framework of the developed psychological model and with the development of psychological conditions for this.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Despite numerous studies in the psychology of sports, issues related to the study of gender remain the most promising. The results of the study show that sports activities disrupt the process of gender socialization, especially in its masculine forms. The formation of psychological characteristics of an athlete's personality is also influenced by the duration of sports activities and sports specialization. The self-esteem of athletes, especially those engaged in gender-specific sports also suffers. The period of playing sports has a time limited duration, and only that person can be considered successful, who managed to find his or her place in profession and family. It is possible to manage the factors of successful socialization of an athlete when studying the conditions, mechanisms and factors determining the development of an athlete's personality. The curriculum in the psychology of physical culture has already included the results of research in gender psychology. However, it is the direction towards gender-based support of sports

activities that would contribute to the development of their new consciousness, namely attitudes towards equal relations between male and female in all spheres of life, making the process of gender disorientation equal.

### **3. Research Questions**

The research interest is focused on various aspects, such as gender differences in athletes (Mandrikov, 2013), study of sports motivation of different sexes (Maskaeva, 2014), gender stereotypes (Lidokova, 2015), mental health of people involved in sports (Samoilov & Aleshicheva, 2016), psychological personality traits (Rechkalov, 2017), etc. However, despite such elaboration of the problem, at the moment there are gaps in the gender psychology of sports, giving rise to a number of contradictions such as:

- new requirements of society to the professionally significant aspects of sports activities and their low knowledge;
- the need for effective diagnostic work in the psychology of sports and a small number of methods for their implementation;
- the lack of an individual approach to the psychological support of sports activities and the importance of its implementation for the successful socialization of athletes.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to consider the possibility of building a psychological model of an integrated gender-based approach aimed at the psychological support of sports activities.

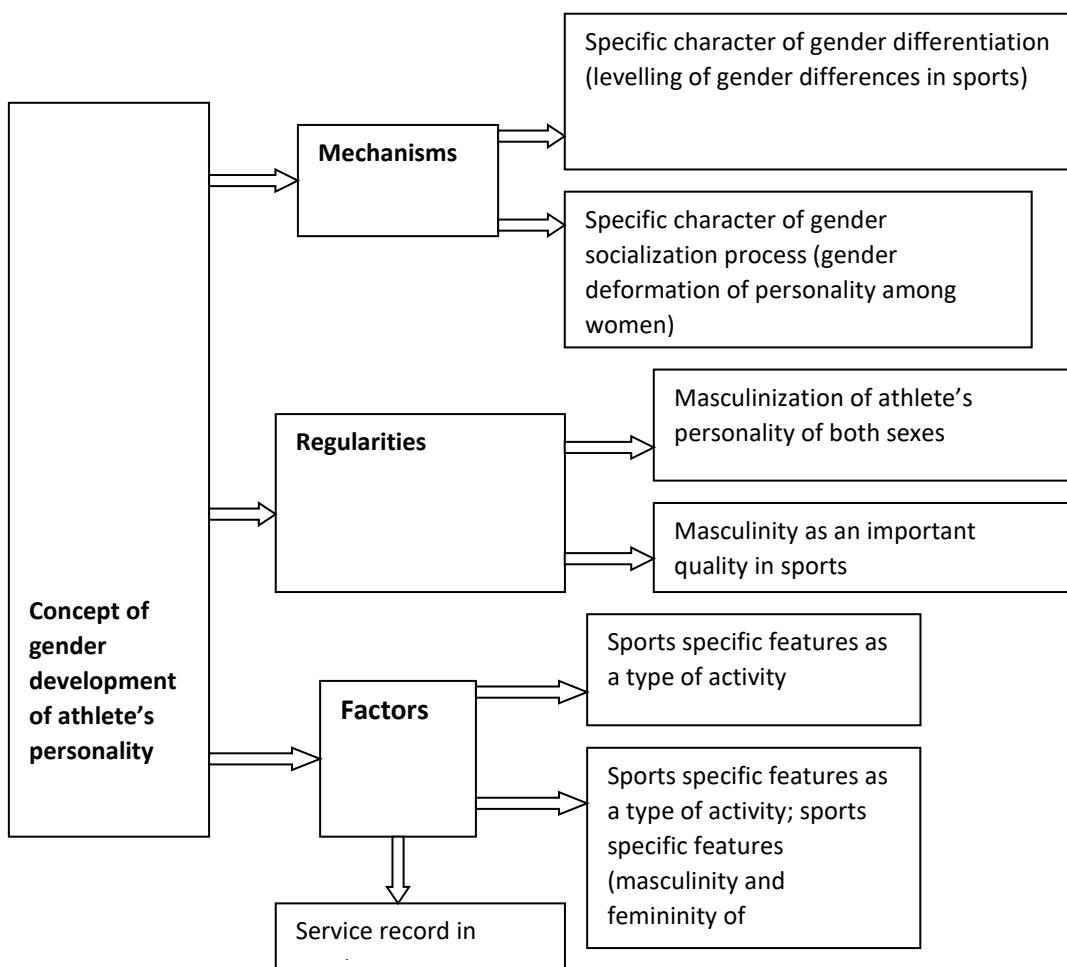
### **5. Research Methods**

To determine the properties of the nervous system and temperament, the following diagnostic methods were used: properties of the nervous system (J. Strelau), properties of temperament (E. Brengelman - L. Brengelman), methods for diagnosing personality (R. Ketell), psychological gender (S. Bem and A. Pease - B. Pease), methods of studying gender identity, gender role and social adaptation of athletes of different sexes, depending on the types of sports. The methods of correlation and statistical analysis of data processing were used.

### **6. Findings**

According to the results of the study, during which 162 female athletes and 183 male athletes took part, the control group consisted of 157 girls and 129 boys (mostly students). Their age ranged from 25 to 30 years. It was established that the peculiarities of the nervous system and the temperament of people involved in sports at the 95% confidence level are characterized by the strength of the excitation processes ( $t = 2.16$ ). It would be worth mentioning that the correlation analysis of athletes involved in feminine sports is characterized by greater dispersion of data. Male athletes involved in feminine sports at the level of confidence ( $t = 2.62$ ) are more energized, women are very active and fast, unlike people who are not

involved in sports. In addition, the male athletes are characterized by greater strength of the inhibition processes. The nervous processes of the female athletes are more inert. The development of personal characteristics of athletes of both sexes at the 92% level of confidence is characterized by a tendency to dominance, self-sufficiency and self-confidence regardless of their gender. The data obtained makes it possible to talk about the same set of psychological qualities of people involved in sports. Thus, at the 99% level of confidence, sports activities contribute to the unification of personality characteristics, which goes against the process of gender differentiation of the personality of ordinary men and women. In order to determine what is the cause of such a unification of the personality and whether sportsmen initially come to sports with such a set of personal characteristics or their personal characteristics are influenced by long-term sports activities a study was conducted. Our 99% confidence level study convincingly proved that the decrease in the number of psychological differences between men and women occurs because of the increase in the experience of sports activities (and it does not affect typological differences, which is quite natural) and is associated with sports experience, non biological age of athletes. The study of the influence of the experience of sports activities on the personal characteristics of athletes proved ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) that long-term sports activities contribute to the deformation of gender differentiation of athletes. Two methods were used to study the psychological gender of athletes: S. Bem and A. Pease - B. Pease. At the 99% confidence level, the significant indicators were found consisting in confirming the masculinization hypothesis of both men and women in the process of playing sports, in contrast to men and women who are not involved in sports activities ( $p \leq 0.01$ ). Thus, the theory of masculinization in sports of not only women, but also men was confirmed. The analysis of the factors of gender identification of athletes differed somewhat in the samples of men and women involved in sports. In case of male athletes and men who are not involved in sports ( $t = 2.17$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) they identified themselves according to their gender role, however, in case of female athletes they experienced difficulties. The study showed that long-term sports activities for women lead to the assimilation of the undifferentiated gender role and its deformation. When studying the gender socialization of men and women in sports activities, the following data was obtained: the most favorable gender socialization is inherent in men, and the least favorable for women in sports activities ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). A study of personal satisfaction in women and men involved in sports activities showed that the integral indicator of social success depends on the gender characteristics of an individual, namely on the satisfaction with their gender role ( $p \leq 0.01$ ). Thus, it was confirmed that long-term sports activities lay their imprint on the gender structure of an individual. The most vulnerable in this regard are female athletes.



**Figure 01.** GOA model

The study revealed that as a result of sports activities for women, there is a deformation of the gender role and gender identity. An important factor influencing the violation of these indicators is sports specialization. It is also proved that in the process of long-term sports activities a certain psychological portrait of athletes is formed, which is characterized by the deformation of personal characteristics, such as gender differentiation. This study confirmed the need to divide sports into feminine and masculine, since the formation of gender characteristics of an individual determines the specificity of sports activities. The specificity of the formation of gender characteristics of a person in sports makes it possible to suggest that it is necessary to manage this process for further psychocorrectional work aimed at non-distinguishing processes of gender deformation, which consists of a gender-based approach to psychological support of sports activities and made up the concept of gender development of athlete's personality: - masculinization of personality in sports, which influences the achievement of high results in professional sports (regularities); - gender unification of athlete's psychological personality (mechanisms); - division of sports on masculine and feminine and the duration of sports activities (conditions). This concept is presented in Fig. 1 and represents a gender-based approach to the psychological support of sports activities (GOA).

## 7. Conclusion

A review of the literature has shown that gender psychology, which arose at the turn of the last century, remains the most sought-after field of study, both in its fundamental and applied aspects. The development of the gender characteristics of an athlete's personality occurs under the influence of sports activities, which makes it possible to consider sport as the most important institution of the secondary gender socialization of an individual. Sport provides conditions under which the gender norms and the concept of masculinity and femininity have been revised. Sport has become a powerful tool for empowering women to fully realize their potential in society by creating an enabling environment for gender equality.

The strategic goals should be aimed to support the innovative program of sustainable development of sports to empower women, promote and encourage social movement around sports to ensure gender equality, moral and social equality in the formation of personality, as well as psychological concepts of activity and personality, social and cultural theories of personality development that determine social environment as the main source of personal development.

In the course of this study the following was found out:

- factors that influence the formation of gender characteristics of the personality of athletes, the processes of gender differentiation and socialization include the following: the specifics of sports activities, sports specialization (“femininity” or “masculinity”), sports experience;
- psychological aspects of sports activities differ in athletes of different sexes and depend on the gender characteristics of their personality, which, in turn, have a significant impact on the social adaptation of athletes to the conditions outside of sports;
- in the mass consciousness there are clearly manifested gender stereotypes related to the personality and activities of athletes, associated with the perception of sports as, above all, the scope of male self-fulfillment;
- psychological masculinity, which is formed in the majority of sports women in the process of playing sports can be overcome by means of psychocorrection methods;
- the process of psychological support for athletes should be complemented by a gender-based approach based on empirical data on the role of gender and gender in sports.

Thus, the importance of a gender-based approach to psychological support in sports lies in shaping the specifics of its psychological aspects (sports motivation, sports-important personality traits, sports performance and job satisfaction) of male and female athletes (taking into account the variables of sports experience and sports), and psychological sex - in the field of enhancing the competitive performance of athletes of both sexes, depending on the level of their psychological masculinity (with the exception of representatives of “feminine” sports specializations), which has a positive significance for social adaptation to living conditions for the male athletes and ambivalent significance (positive-negative) for the female athletes.

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