







Article

Influence of Gender Stereotypes, Type of Sport Watched and Close Environment on Adolescent Sport Practice According to Gender

Adrián Mateo-Orcajada ¹, Lucía Abenza-Cano ^{1,*}, Raquel Vaquero-Cristóbal ^{1,*},
Sonia María Martínez-Castro ², Alejandro Leiva-Arcas ¹, Ana María Gallardo-Guerrero ¹
and Antonio Sánchez-Pato ¹

¹ Faculty of Sport, Catholic University San Antonio of Murcia, 30107 Murcia, Spain; amateo5@ucam.edu (A.M.-O.); aleiva@ucam.edu (A.L.-A.); amgallardo@ucam.edu (A.M.G.-G.); apato@ucam.edu (A.S.-P.)

² Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication, Catholic University San Antonio of Murcia, 30107 Murcia, Spain; smmartinez@ucam.edu

* Correspondence: labenza@ucam.edu (L.A.-C.); rvaquero@ucam.edu (R.V.-C.); Tel.: +34-968-278-824 (R.V.-C.)

Abstract: The practice of sport by adolescents is influenced by multiple factors, which could create differences in sports participation according to gender. The objectives of this study were to determine which types of sports were most practiced by adolescent males and females; and to analyze the relationship of gender stereotypes, the type of sport observed and the personal environment, to the type of sport practiced, depending on the adolescent's gender. To this end, a total of 632 adolescents completed the questionnaire "Lifestyle in Sport with a Gender Perspective". The results showed significant differences according to gender in the type of sport practiced ($p < 0.05$), in the membership to sports clubs ($p < 0.001$), and in the participation in competitions ($p < 0.001$). It was found that family ($p < 0.005$) and friends ($p < 0.05$) were the social agents that most influenced the choice of the type of sport practiced, and that the type of sport watched live ($p < 0.005$), and in the media ($p < 0.001$), was related to gender and the type of sport practiced. In contrast, the gender stereotypes of the adolescents themselves were not related to the practice of sports. In conclusion, the environment closest to the adolescents was related to the type of sport practiced by those adolescents.

Keywords: adolescents; closest environment; gender differences; sexual stereotypes; sports



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1. Introduction

Physical activity decreases during adolescence, with older adolescents showing lower levels of physical activity than younger adolescents [1,2]. This phenomenon is particularly worrying when looking at the trend among females. In recent decades, adolescent females have been at increased risk for physical inactivity and sedentary behaviors [3] due to the fact that sports practice during adolescence has been lower in females [4–6]. Previous research on the reasons for the differences in the sports participation of adolescent males and females has yielded ambiguous and uncertain conclusions, since the results are diverse and include personal, family, environmental and motivational factors [7,8]. However, it should be noted that the gender stereotypes of adolescents seem to be one of the most influential factors on the practice of sports [9], and that the environment closest to the adolescents, consisting of fathers, mothers, families, siblings or friends [10,11] and the media, appear to be related to gender stereotypes [12,13].

The presence of gender stereotypes in sport could be due to the fact that society continually reinforces these beliefs [14,15], leading to the emergence of concepts such as male and female sport, which influence sport practice causing a decrease in practice opportunities for males and females, due to the fact that they adjust their sport participation, even if unconsciously [9]. Women have seen their sports participation limited to sports

characterized by flexibility or balance, which favor the construction of femininity, while men's sports practice has allowed them to reinforce their masculinity, due to the continuous manifestations of strength, aggressiveness and speed [6,15,16]. In mixed sports practices, the role of women is usually reduced to obeying the orders of men, who assume greater responsibility [17]. Even so, the participation of females in male sports is more socially accepted than that of males in female activities, since in the latter case the masculinity of the participants is questioned [18].

When stereotypical judgments come from the immediate environment or the media, they seem to have a greater impact on adolescents. The close environment influences adolescent behavior through gender stereotypes and behavioral preferences transmitted from the family environment [19,20]. Previous research on the transmission of stereotypes from parents to children has been conducted in the educational setting [21–24], but in the sport setting it is limited and presents inconclusive results.

Regarding media coverage, it is scarce in women's sport compared to men's sport, regardless of the sport and the success achieved [12,13], which places the media as an element to take into account in the transmission of gender stereotypes [25–27] because they favor the association of sport practice and gender [28]. However, in recent years the appearances of female sports have been gaining in importance [27,29], which could increase the likelihood that female adolescents will watch them and increase their sport practice.

Therefore, the influence of gender stereotypes, the media and the close environment on adolescent sports practice is evident, but also relevant to adolescent sports practice are the sociocultural and economic factors that are dependent on each country and society [30–32]. The social context of adolescents plays a determining role, since in some countries sport is not a priority in their lives, being replaced by other activities and concerns [30]. The socioeconomic level and geographical location are relevant because countries with higher incomes favor the practice of sport by adolescents, while the geographical remoteness of sports facilities may hinder it [31]. Finally, the culture of each country is relevant, highlighting the situation in countries in which cultural elements have remained that are the origin of the differences in sports participation [33], or in countries in which women are not interested in sports because it is not considered a respectable female activity or where they suffer harassment for practicing sports activities [34].

It should be noted that in addition to the influence exerted on adolescents by cultural, economic, or social elements, their own assessment of their development possibilities and the comments made by their peers in the sports environment also condition their participation. Thus, adolescents' perception of themselves and their ability to improve in the sports environment influences their decision to practice sports, leading to changes in their involvement and commitment to sports [30]. Body image concerns and derogatory peer comments make it difficult for adolescents to practice sports, contributing to a reduction in their participation rate [32], as does the perception of competence in the development of motor tasks, with girls underestimating their abilities and practicing to a lesser extent than boys [35].

Thanks to the social efforts made in recent years (policies implemented, media coverage, etc.), there has been an increase in male and female participation in sports traditionally considered to be of the opposite gender, equalizing the practice of sports by boys and females in certain sports modalities [18,36]. This situation favors the breaking of certain stereotypes related to sports [37,38], and the emergence of the term "neutral sport", which coexists with those traditionally considered as male and female sports [39]. Few studies have used the term "neutral sport" so far [18,40], but its appearance could have a great relevance in favoring an approach to equality between boys and females in the practice of sports [37].

Despite the available scientific evidence, questions remain about the influence of gender stereotypes in sport, or the role played by the immediate environment and the media in adolescent practice. Therefore, the objectives of this study were: (a) to determine which types of sports were most practiced by adolescent males and females; and (b) to

analyze the relationship of gender stereotypes, the type of sport seen as spectators, and the personal environment on the type of sport practiced, depending on the adolescent's gender. Based on previous studies carried out on adolescents and on the changes produced in gender stereotypes in sport, the hypothesis is presented that the vast majority of sport modalities will have a similar participation of males and females, and that the closest environment and the media will have a relationship with gender stereotypes and the practice of sport by adolescents.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design

The design of this research was descriptive and transversal. The STROBE statement [41] was followed for the development of the manuscript. Before the study began, approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee (code CE071924). In addition, the parents of students participating in the research study signed the informed consent form prior to data collection, informing them of the objectives of the study, as well as the processing of the data obtained, and the confidentiality of the data.

2.2. Participants

The minimum sample size according to the equation for finite populations, with a sample size validity for a 95 percent confidence interval, was 382 students [42]. Considering that the population of compulsory secondary education (ESO) in the Region of Murcia (Spain) was 69,888 students, an initial representative sample of 2715 students, aged 12–16 years old, from nine secondary schools in the Region of Murcia, who were chosen for convenience to obtain a representative sample that was proportional to the distribution of the school-aged population. The selection of participants in these schools was made through a consecutive non-probabilistic sampling, selecting all possible subjects who had access, who wanted to participate voluntarily and who met the following inclusion criteria: (1) being an ESO student; (2) performing a minimum of 60 min a day of physical activity of moderate to vigorous intensity—this being the minimum amount established in the recommendations by the World Health Organization (2010) to be considered as an active subject, since the sporadic practice of a given sport could bias the results obtained—with sports practice obtained through the international questionnaire of physical activity, in its version for adolescents (IPAQ-A) [43] and; (3) completing the questionnaire “Sport Lifestyle with a Gender Perspective”. The final participation consisted of 632 students, of which 317 were males and 315 females (average age: 13.93 ± 1.39 years old) (Figure 1).

2.3. Instruments

Two questionnaires were used for data collection, the IPAQ-A [43], and the “Sport Lifestyle with a Gender Perspective” questionnaire [44]. The IPAQ-A is an adaptation of the IPAQ questionnaire [45] for use in adolescents. This questionnaire has been previously validated in Spanish [43], presents moderate validity and reliability ($R_s = 0.17–0.30$, $p < 0.05$), and correlates significantly with total physical activity performed ($p < 0.001$). It is composed of nine items that allow for the measurement of four domains of physical activity: (1) school-related physical activity, including that performed during physical education classes and breaks; (2) transportation; (3) household chores; and (4) leisure time. For each of these domains, the number of days and hours spent walking, moderate and vigorous activity were recorded.

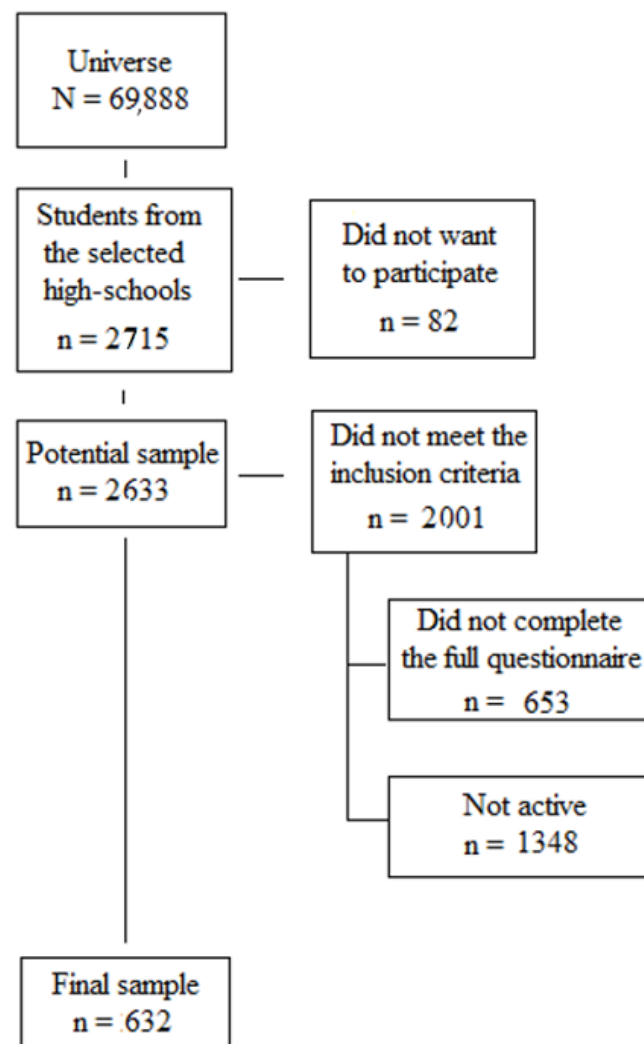


Figure 1. Sample flowchart.

The questionnaire “Sport Lifestyle with a Gender Perspective” is a semi-structured questionnaire composed of twenty questions, most of them closed, which address the thoughts and attitudes of students about physical activity and sport (physical activity practiced, activities they would like to practice, gender stereotypes, etc.) with a high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.82$) [44]. This questionnaire provides information on three different dimensions: (1) extracurricular sports; (2) motivations and influences for sports participation; and (3) perception of gender in the study of sport. All the questions in the questionnaire are closed or semi-closed, multiple-choice questions, except for the questions regarding the reasons for practicing, which has a four-point Likert scale, and the gender stereotypes in sport, which has an “agree” and “disagree” scale.

2.4. Procedure

To conduct the data collection, the students completed both questionnaires individually and anonymously. Before this, they were informed about the importance of the veracity of the answers. Student participation was entirely voluntary. First, the IPAQ-A questionnaire was completed, followed by the “Sport Lifestyle with a Gender Perspective” questionnaire. The gender of the participants was determined through a question on the questionnaire that had two response options, *male* or *female*. In order to identify the sport practiced by the adolescents, the IPAQ-A questionnaire included a semi-closed question in which the adolescents had to indicate the type of sports they mainly practiced, as well as whether or not they practiced in a club, and whether or not they competed in the sport.

The distribution in sports more practiced by men, more practiced by women, and with similar participation was carried out following the methodology from previous research [6]. The number of male and female participants in each sport modality was counted, and the existence of significant differences between males and females in each sport was analyzed. Comparisons that did not show statistically significant differences were classified as sports with similar participation, while those comparisons that were statistically significant were classified as sports more practiced by men or more practiced by women, depending on whether there were more female or male participants, regardless of whether subjects of the opposite gender also participated in these sports. In order to determine the influence of the environment close to the adolescents on their practice of sports, the “Sport Lifestyle with a Gender Perspective” questionnaire included a series of questions in which the students had to select the social agents who had been the most important in their decision to start practicing. Options included *the women in my family, the men in my family, myself, friends, school, the doctor, and others*. To determine the type of sport they watched, they were asked to indicate whether they watched sport in the media or live sport and, if so, the type of sport they watched by selecting from one to four of the following response options: *women’s sport in the media, men’s sport in the media, women’s sport live, and men’s sport live*. To understand the gender stereotypes of the adolescents, the questionnaire included 12 items with a dichotomous response between *agree* and *disagree*. To determine the final value of the gender stereotypes, the score of each item was added up, considering that in items 1, 5, 7 and 12, the answer *agree* received a score of 1, while that of *disagree* received a score of 2; while in items 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11, the answer *agree* received a score of 2, while that of *disagree* received a score of 1. Lastly, the final value of gender stereotypes was determined over 24 points [44].

2.5. Data Analysis

The data distribution was initially assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test. Since the variables followed a normal distribution, a statistical analysis based on parametric tests was performed. To obtain the results, a χ^2 analysis was carried out to consider: the sports modalities that were more practiced by men, by women or that had similar participation, taking into account the differences in practice between males and females; to establish the type of practice of the adolescents according to their gender; to analyze the participation rate in clubs and competitions of adolescents according to the sports modality practiced; to understand the influence of family members on the type of sports modality practiced; and to analyze the influence of gender and the type of sport practiced on the sports spectator role. In addition, a two-factor multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was carried out to determine the differences in gender stereotypes of the adolescents according to the type of sport practiced. A value of $p < 0.05$ was established to determine the statistical significance. The statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS statistical package (v.25.0; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

3. Results

3.1. Sport Practiced, Club Membership and Sport Competition of Adolescents

Table 1 shows the values of the descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis for the practice of sports by adolescents of both genders. According to the results obtained, basketball, football, indoor football, and bodybuilding were more practiced by males; musical support activities, rhythmic-expressive activities, rhythmic gymnastics, trekking, volleyball, artistic gymnastics, and swimming were more practiced by females; and the remaining activities had a similar participation between men and women.

Table 1. Sports practiced by adolescents.

| | Males (<i>n</i> = 317) | Females (<i>n</i> = 315) | χ^2, p | Classification |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Aerial acrobatics | 0 | 1 | 1.01; <i>p</i> = 0.315 | Similar participation |
| Airsoft | 1 | 0 | 0.99; <i>p</i> = 0.318 | Similar participation |
| Artistic gymnastics | 0 | 6 | 6.10; <i>p</i> = 0.014 | More females |
| Badminton | 0 | 1 | 1.01; <i>p</i> = 0.315 | Similar participation |
| Basketball | 38 | 8 | 20.90; <i>p</i> < 0.001 | More males |
| Boxing | 3 | 1 | 0.99; <i>p</i> = 0.319 | Similar participation |
| Calisthenics | 2 | 0 | 1.99; <i>p</i> = 0.158 | Similar participation |
| CrossFit | 0 | 2 | 2.02; <i>p</i> = 0.155 | Similar participation |
| Cycling | 10 | 4 | 3.62; <i>p</i> = 0.057 | Similar participation |
| Football | 77 | 5 | 72.12; <i>p</i> < 0.001 | More males |
| Gym/Body building | 22 | 7 | 8.03; <i>p</i> = 0.005 | More males |
| Handball | 2 | 2 | 0.01; <i>p</i> = 0.995 | Similar participation |
| Hiking | 16 | 32 | 4.76; <i>p</i> = 0.029 | More females |
| Hockey | 1 | 2 | 0.34; <i>p</i> = 0.559 | Similar participation |
| Horse riding | 1 | 2 | 0.34; <i>p</i> = 0.559 | Similar participation |
| Indoor football | 14 | 2 | 9.16; <i>p</i> = 0.002 | More males |
| Maintenance gymnastics | 2 | 6 | 2.05; <i>p</i> = 0.152 | Similar participation |
| Martial arts ^a | 27 | 15 | 3.59; <i>p</i> = 0.058 | Similar participation |
| Multi-sport | 18 | 10 | 2.34; <i>p</i> = 0.126 | Similar participation |
| Music support activities | 3 | 55 | 51.70; <i>p</i> < 0.001 | More females |
| Nautical sports ^b | 4 | 1 | 1.80; <i>p</i> = 0.180 | Similar participation |
| Olympic shooting | 1 | 1 | 0.01; <i>p</i> = 0.996 | Similar participation |
| Paddle | 1 | 1 | 0.01; <i>p</i> = 0.996 | Similar participation |
| Parkour | 2 | 0 | 1.99; <i>p</i> = 0.158 | Similar participation |
| Pilates | 1 | 4 | 1.83; <i>p</i> = 0.176 | Similar participation |
| Rhythmic expressive activities | 8 | 58 | 42.65; <i>p</i> < 0.001 | More females |
| Rhythmic gymnastics | 0 | 15 | 15.46; <i>p</i> < 0.001 | More females |
| Risky activities ^c | 3 | 1 | 0.99; <i>p</i> = 0.319 | Similar participation |
| Rugby | 2 | 0 | 1.99; <i>p</i> = 0.158 | Similar participation |
| Running | 20 | 13 | 1.52; <i>p</i> = 0.218 | Similar participation |
| Skating | 1 | 1 | 0.01; <i>p</i> = 0.996 | Similar participation |
| Swimming | 10 | 25 | 8.58; <i>p</i> = 0.003 | More females |
| Table tennis | 1 | 1 | 0.01; <i>p</i> = 0.996 | Similar participation |
| Tennis | 15 | 8 | 2.17; <i>p</i> = 0.141 | Similar participation |
| Track and field | 8 | 13 | 1.26; <i>p</i> = 0.261 | Similar participation |
| Traditional sports | 2 | 1 | 0.33; <i>p</i> = 0.566 | Similar participation |
| Volleyball | 0 | 11 | 11.27; <i>p</i> = 0.001 | More females |
| Water polo | 1 | 0 | 0.99; <i>p</i> = 0.318 | Similar participation |

^a Martial arts is a collective term that includes judo, karate, taekwondo, etc. ^b Nautical activities is a collective term that includes sailing, surfing, canoeing, etc. ^c Risky activities is a collective term that includes bungee jumping, rafting, etc.

Regarding the differences in the type of sport practiced, club membership, and participation in competition of the adolescents according to gender, the results found are shown in Table 2. It should be noted that males showed a greater membership in sports clubs than females (73.5 to 25.0 percent vs. 54.5 to 23.5 percent, respectively, according to type of sport) and participation in competitions (70.9 to 25.0 percent vs. 54.5 to 36.4 percent, respectively, according to type of sport). Dividing the data by type of sport, it was found that the percentage of males belonging to a club ($\chi^2 = 60.41$; *p* < 0.001) or competing ($\chi^2 = 56.48$; *p* < 0.001) in sports more practiced by males was significantly higher than that of females; while in the case of sports more practiced by females, the percentage of females was significantly higher ($\chi^2 = 71.90$; *p* < 0.001 and $\chi^2 = 71.17$; *p* < 0.001, respectively). There were no differences between the genders in sports with similar participation rates.

Table 2. Differences in sports practice, sports club membership and competitive participation of adolescents depending on gender.

| | Males (<i>n</i> = 317) | Females (<i>n</i> = 315) | $\chi^2; p$ |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Sports practiced | | | |
| More males | 151 (87.3%) | 22 (12.7%) | 131.33; $p < 0.001$ |
| More females | 24 (11.6%) | 183 (88.4%) | 183.12; $p < 0.001$ |
| Similar participation | 142 (56.3%) | 110 (43.7%) | 6.43; $p = 0.011$ |
| Sports club membership | | | |
| More males | 111 (90.2%) | 12 (9.8%) | 60.41; $p < 0.001$ |
| More females | 6 (12.2%) | 43 (87.8%) | 71.90; $p < 0.001$ |
| Similar participation | 69 (60.0%) | 46 (40.0%) | 1.79; $p = 0.180$ |
| Competitive participation | | | |
| More males | 107 (89.9%) | 12 (10.1%) | 56.48; $p < 0.001$ |
| More females | 6 (12.2%) | 43 (87.8%) | 71.17; $p < 0.001$ |
| Similar participation | 66 (62.3%) | 40 (37.7%) | 0.56; $p = 0.454$ |

3.2. Gender Stereotypes in Adolescent Sport

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the gender stereotypes of adolescents and the type of sports played. No significant differences were found for the gender stereotypes of adolescents according to the type of sport practiced and gender ($F = 0.50$; $p = 0.605$); there were no differences either when analyzing only gender ($F = 3.74$; $p = 0.053$), or by type of sport ($F = 2.04$; $p = 0.130$).

Table 3. Differences in the gender stereotypes of adolescents according to their gender and the type of sport they practice.

| | Males (<i>n</i> = 317) | Females (<i>n</i> = 315) | (<i>F</i> , <i>p</i>) |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Adolescent gender stereotyping scores (Mean \pm SD) | | | |
| More males | 14.57 \pm 1.53 | 14.00 \pm 1.23 | 2.05; $p = 0.130$ |
| More females | 14.38 \pm 1.14 | 14.22 \pm 1.27 | |
| Similar participation | 14.70 \pm 1.76 | 14.47 \pm 1.25 | |
| (<i>F</i> , <i>p</i>) | 3.75; $p = 0.053$ | | 0.50; $p = 0.605$ |

3.3. Influencing Factors in Adolescent Sports Practice

Table 4 shows the results of the chi-square analysis on the main social drivers for the start of sport, according to the type of sport practiced and gender. According to these results, the family and the adolescent's own will were determinants for males and females to start practicing sports. The adolescent's own will was also relevant for males when initiated into practices with a similar participation rate between males and females. Female friends were important for females to start playing sports, while male friends were important for the males to start playing sports. Other agents, such as the school and the doctor, only significantly influenced female initiation into sports.

As can be observed in Table 5, females watched significantly more sports involving female athletes through the media ($\chi^2 = 5.1$; $p = 0.024$), while males watched significantly more sports involving male athletes through both the media ($\chi^2 = 27.7$; $p < 0.001$), and live ($\chi^2 = 35.3$; $p < 0.001$). Distributing the athletes according to the type of sport they practiced, it was found that "male" athletes watched significantly more sports practiced by men in the media ($\chi^2 = 32.4$; $p < 0.001$) and live ($\chi^2 = 41.0$; $p < 0.001$). No differences were found between the types of sport practiced in the display of female athletes' competitions.

Table 4. Main social drivers for the starting of sports practice according to type of sport practice and gender.

| | Males (<i>n</i> = 317) | Females (<i>n</i> = 315) | (χ^2 , <i>p</i>) |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Family females | | | |
| More males | 49 (89.1%) | 6 (10.9%) | 51.02; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| More females | 10 (12.6%) | 69 (87.4%) | 58.82; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| Similar participation | 47 (52.2%) | 43 (47.8%) | 1.45; <i>p</i> = 0.229 |
| Family males | | | |
| More males | 30 (90.9%) | 3 (9.1%) | 8.82; <i>p</i> = 0.003 |
| More females | 3 (33.3%) | 6 (66.7%) | 8.01; <i>p</i> = 0.005 |
| Similar participation | 29 (67.4%) | 14 (32.6%) | 1.33; <i>p</i> = 0.248 |
| Myself | | | |
| More males | 27 (87.1%) | 4 (12.9%) | 24.80; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| More females | 2 (4.8%) | 40 (95.2%) | 48.40; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| Similar participation | 31 (60.8%) | 20 (39.2%) | 5.33; <i>p</i> = 0.021 |
| Friends' female | | | |
| More males | 1 (16.7%) | 5 (83.3%) | 1.07; <i>p</i> = 0.301 |
| More females | 2 (4.8%) | 40 (95.2%) | 183.12; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| Similar participation | 1 (8.3%) | 11 (91.7%) | 6.42; <i>p</i> = 0.010 |
| Friends' male | | | |
| More males | 30 (96.8%) | 1 (3.2%) | 131.33; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| More females | 3 (75.0%) | 1 (25.0%) | 2.78; <i>p</i> = 0.095 |
| Similar participation | 14 (93.3%) | 1 (6.7%) | 6.43; <i>p</i> = 0.011 |
| School | | | |
| More males | 2 (66.7%) | 1 (33.3%) | 1.34; <i>p</i> = 0.247 |
| More females | 0 (0.0%) | 6 (100.0%) | 5.76; <i>p</i> = 0.016 |
| Similar participation | 4 (57.1%) | 3 (42.9%) | 2.05; <i>p</i> = 0.152 |
| Doctor | | | |
| More males | 1 (50.0%) | 1 (50.0%) | 0.64; <i>p</i> = 0.423 |
| More females | 0 (0.0%) | 6 (100.0%) | 183.11; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| Similar participation | 3 (42.9%) | 4 (57.1%) | 1.76; <i>p</i> = 0.185 |

Table 5. Relation between the adolescents' sports practice according to the sport watched.

| | Yes | No | (χ^2 , <i>p</i>) |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Sport watched: Sport in the media practiced by female athletes | | | |
| Male | 50 (15.8%) | 267 (84.2%) | 5.1; <i>p</i> = 0.024 |
| Female | 72 (22.9%) | 243 (77.1%) | |
| More males | 39 (22.5%) | 134 (77.4%) | 1.8; <i>p</i> = 0.404 |
| More females | 40 (19.0%) | 170 (81.0%) | |
| Similar participation | 44 (17.3%) | 210 (82.7%) | |
| Sport watched: Sport in the media practiced by male athletes | | | |
| Male | 144 (45.4%) | 173 (54.6%) | 27.7; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| Female | 80 (25.4%) | 235 (74.6%) | |
| More males | 87 (50.3%) | 86 (49.7%) | 32.4; <i>p</i> < 0.001 |
| More females | 47 (22.4%) | 163 (77.6%) | |
| Similar participation | 91 (35.8%) | 163 (64.2%) | |

Table 5. Cont.

| | Yes | No | (χ^2 , p) |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Sport watched: Live sports practiced by female athletes | | | |
| Male | 42 (13.2%) | 275 (86.8%) | 0.365; $p = 0.546$ |
| Female | 47 (14.9%) | 268 (85.1%) | |
| More males | 31 (17.9%) | 142 (82.1%) | 2.9; $p = 0.231$ |
| More females | 28 (13.3%) | 182 (86.7%) | |
| Similar participation | 31 (12.2%) | 223 (87.8%) | |
| Sport watched: Live sports practiced by male athletes | | | |
| Male | 115 (36.3%) | 202 (63.7%) | 35.3; $p < 0.001$ |
| Female | 49 (15.6%) | 266 (84.4%) | |
| More males | 72 (41.6%) | 101 (58.4%) | 41.0; $p < 0.001$ |
| More females | 27 (12.9%) | 183 (87.1%) | |
| Similar participation | 65 (25.6%) | 189 (74.4%) | |

4. Discussion

The principal aim of the research was to determine which types of sports were most practiced by adolescent males and females. It should be noted that males preferred to practice strength and team sports such as bodybuilding, basketball, football, or indoor football, while females participated more in individual activities such as musical support activities, rhythmic-expressive activities, rhythmic gymnastics, hiking, artistic gymnastics, or swimming. These results coincide with those found in previous research, where it was stated that males preferred to practice team sports, where collaboration-opposition, aggressiveness, risk, and strength were implicit in the sport itself, while females preferred to practice individual sports or those that included body expression or aesthetics [6,15,16].

Furthermore, the results obtained in the present research show that there is still a greater presence of women and men in certain sports, which could be due to the fact that the practice of sports traditionally considered of the opposite gender distances participants from femininity and masculinity, and from crossing traditional gender boundaries by which their appearance and image may be affected in front of their peers [18]. It should be noted that the gender gap in sports participation seems to be narrowing, but as long as sports are considered masculine and feminine and are associated with certain physical abilities, they will continue to be present.

Despite this, an important result of this research was that the number of sports that had similar participation rates of boys and girls continued to increase. The results showed that only 11 activities (28.95%) of the 38 practiced by the adolescents surveyed were more practiced by males or females. These results are in line with those shown in previous studies, which reported an increase in sports labeled as neutral [39] and allows for the acceptance of the first part of the hypothesis that indicated that the great majority of sports modalities would have a similar participation between males and females. This could be due to the breakdown of certain gender stereotypes that is occurring in the sporting arena [37,38], promoted by political, educational and sports actions used to promote real equality in sport. It would be essential to know whether this rupture of stereotypes occurs from the earliest stages of life, since previous research shows the presence of gender stereotypes at these ages [18,46], providing useful information for implementing actions to address gender equality with schoolchildren.

Sports clubs and inclusion in competitions may be useful elements to support youth participation, but their influence on the development of adolescents who play sport is unclear, as previous research shows both benefits and detriments that make it difficult to draw conclusions [8,47,48]. The results of this research show that the participation in sports clubs and competitions is high in sports more practiced by males and with a similar participation between males and females, while in sports more practiced by females the percentage of players who were part of a club and competed was much lower in men and

women. These differences could be due to the fact that sports more practiced by females have less visibility in the media [12,13] and that males and females prefer to compete in more well-known sports. The fact that participation in sports clubs is reduced to sports more practiced by males could be a serious problem affecting females' sports participation, as it is still difficult for them to practice in this type of sport, thus, the gender gap in sports would continue to be maintained.

Another objective of this research was to analyze the relationship of gender stereotypes, the type of sport seen as spectators and the personal environment, on the type of sport practiced, depending on the adolescent's gender. An important finding was that the gender stereotypes of adolescents did not show differences according to gender, the type of sport practiced, or the combination of both factors. This evidence could corroborate the argument that certain stereotypes that are traditionally associated with sports are being broken, and that the adolescents of today are more open-minded than previous generations [37,38]. This leads to the consideration of the practice of sport as an area in which males and females practice equally, although, as indicated by Ross and Shinew [49], certain stereotypes are still present that require more time and equality policies that allow new generations to understand sport as an area of equal practice.

Adolescence is a crucial time in which the immediate environment plays a fundamental role in the transmission of certain stereotypes associated with gender [10,19,20,23]. The results of this research followed the line of previous research, as family seemed to be associated with the type of practice performed by adolescents, while male friends were important for boys to be initiated in sports practice, and female friends were important for girls to be initiated into sports practice. These results allow for the acceptance of the hypothesis that the close environment has a relationship with gender stereotypes and adolescent practice and are consistent with those previously found by Fitzgerald et al. [50] and Prado et al. [51], who valued the importance the close environment could have on the sports practice of adolescents. It would be interesting to establish the significance of this relationship in future research, since it is not known whether adolescents begin to practice sports driven by their friends, or whether they meet them once they are practicing this type of sport, so that their motivation towards practicing sports would be prior to those friendships. This would allow us to determine the importance of friends during adolescence in the practice of sports, or if, on the contrary, the inclination towards a type of sport arises at an earlier age when other factors are more decisive.

It should be noted that other social agents, such as the school or the doctor, had almost no influence on the decision to start practicing a particular sport, except in the case of the practice of females, although the sample was very small. The different barriers and motivations of adolescents to practice sports according to gender could be the origin of the lack of influence of the school environment. Males present a higher motivation for sports practice, driven by competition and fun, while females report more barriers to practice [52,53]. The educational setting generates a sports environment characterized by competition and continuous evaluation, intensifying females' fear of being unsuitable for sports practice [54]. Many questions remain, and the lack of influence of schools on the initiation of sports practice during adolescence is one of them, since the benefits of physical activity on health [55] should be more than enough motivation to implement sports programs involving schoolchildren.

An important finding of the present research was that adolescents claimed that participating in the most practiced sports activities according to their gender was also their own initiative. No previous studies have analyzed the adolescents' own initiative to practice one type of sport. Based on these results, it is important to continue working at an early age on education and awareness programs on equality for access to and practice of sports, and it is essential to know beforehand whether adolescents who have been influenced at an early age by their close environment to practice sports are more sensitive to adopting certain stereotypes, thoughts or behaviors that come from the media or other environments. However, it should not be overlooked that the masculine or feminine historical roots of some

sports lead adolescents to play them because, by their nature, they are more masculine or feminine, and regardless of whether they are played by males or females, they attract more attention and have a higher participation rate of a particular gender [6,15,16]. To this end, the authors propose that future research should try to determine whether gender stereotypes related to adolescents' sports are modified in relation to the most influential social agents during their first years of sports practice, or on the contrary, are maintained because they have historically been considered as sports suitable for a certain gender, since programs to raise awareness and promote equality in sports should be duly oriented to the characteristics of adolescents.

Previous research shows the existing differences in the diffusion of male and female sports in the media, favoring the maintenance of certain gender stereotypes in relation to sports [12,13]. The results obtained in this research show that boys watched more sports practiced by men through the media and live, while girls watched more sports practiced by women only through the media. No significant differences were found in the live attendance of sports events practiced by females, nor in the viewing of female sports competitions as a function of the type of sport practiced. These results partially reject the hypothesis posed about the influence of the media on sports practice and could suggest that the issue is not the rejection of adolescent males to watch sports practiced by females, but possibly that they do not find the sports they like as easily in the media [56,57]. In fact, previous studies have already pointed out the absence of female sports role models in the media [58]. The results of Martín-Guart et al. [59] show that men's soccer has acquired special relevance in television content in recent decades, becoming one of the most watched and practiced sports in the world [6,12], which leads to the consideration that an increase in television and media content related to female sport could generate significant increases in sports practice in adolescent females, with this being a very interesting line of research for future investigations.

With regard to the limitations of this study, it should be noted that the veracity of the answers provided by the adolescents is not known. Secondly, there could be other variables that influenced the topic of this work, such as practice motivations or the availability of centers and clubs to practice in a nearby environment. Thirdly, the sample belongs to a specific part of Spain, so the generalization of the results should be made with caution due to the different customs and cultures present in different parts of the world. Fourth, although the IPAQ-A has been previously validated and has adequate validity and reliability, the results should be taken with caution because it is concerned with older adolescents, aged 15 to 17 years, with whom the results show a high correlation with the practice of moderate and vigorous physical activity. Future research should analyze the weight in the decision to begin a certain sport practice of the social agents and the individuals themselves. In addition, the reasons for the existence of preferences for sports practice among males and females seem to be very broad. Thus, further research is needed to address this issue in a comprehensive manner, trying to consider all the elements that can influence the practice of adolescents. Lastly, research should be carried out on whether an increased availability of different sports practiced by women increases their visibility and promotes equality in sport.

5. Conclusions

Despite the limitations, the present research shows that sports with a similar participation between males and females have continued to gain relevance over the years and make up the vast majority of the sports modalities included in the research. Membership in sports clubs and the participation in competitions were found to be similar in the sports most practiced by males and those with similar participation rates, regardless of the gender of the adolescents, confirming that the gender gap in sports is narrowing. Gender stereotypes did not seem to be a determining factor in sports practice. Furthermore, it should be noted that the environment closest to the adolescents, consisting of family and friends, was related to the sports practiced by the adolescents. There were also differences according to gender

in the type of sports they watched as spectators, but in most cases no differences were found according to the type of sport practiced. In short, sports participation is increasingly similar between adolescent males and females, which increases the possibilities of practice and leads to greater equity in the practice of sports by males and females.

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