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The Sense of Psychological Gender of Secondary School Students

Abstract

Psychological gender is one of the crucial determinants of human behaviour, significantly linked to socio-cultural changes. Its conformity or nonconformity with biological sex plays an essential role in the process of identity development and correct social adaptation of adolescents. The study aimed to determine the main types of psychological gender of adolescents in late adolescence. The research group consisted of a total of 847 secondary school students. Kuczyńska's IPP Psychological Gender Inventory was used. Research questions were asked about the main types of psychological gender in the group of respondents in general and because of the influence of sociodemographic variables such as gender, age, family structure and economic status, and type of post-primary school. The results of the study showed that the dominant psychological gender type of the adolescents surveyed is the androgynous type. Within the adopted sociodemographic variables, variables such as family economic status and type of secondary school proved to be its moderators. It was found that the androgynous type of psychological gender is statistically significantly more often characterized by adolescents from families with good and excellent financial situations and studying in general secondary schools. In addition, it was noted that boys, compared to girls, experience a more significant crisis in psychological gender identification consistent with biological sex.

Keywords: psychological gender, gender diversity, youth, school.

Introduction

Adolescence is a period of intensive changes in all spheres of development, beginning with the so-called pubertal leap, visible, among other things, in the

marked development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics (Obuchowska, 2005; Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2016; Wolański, 2012). However, the process of sexual differentiation begins much earlier. It takes place in several stages, consisting of genetic sex determination, differentiation of the gonads, development of the sexual organs (external and internal) and sexual maturation. Genetic sex is already determined at fertilization. Initially, up to week 6, the fetal gonad is bipotential, i.e. it can transform in the female or male direction. This transformation is determined by the arrangement of chromosomes in the developing zygote (female XX or male XY arrangement), resulting in the differentiation of male and female genitalia from the 8th to the 20th week (Szaras-Czapnik, Romer, 2013, pp. 140–149). Thus, the sexual differentiation of the brain during the prenatal and neonatal periods depends on the presence of testosterone in male fetuses and its absence in female fetuses. In addition, it has been noted that specific hypothalamic nuclei may play an essential role in this regard, the size of which is different between male and female and between homosexual and heterosexual individuals (Kula, Słowikowska-Hilczer, 2003a, pp. 472–475).

However, pubescent adolescents are not only experiencing changes following the pattern of biological sex but are now also dealing with psychological, social and cultural perceptions of gender. An important issue then becomes the psychological sense of gender.

Psychological gender

Psychological gender is shaped by genetic gender. It consists of gender roles, gender identification and gender psycho-orientation. It develops during the foetal and postnatal period under the influence of the hypothalamus and limbic system and the social influence on the child (family and environment) (Kula, Słowikowska-Hilczer, 2003b, pp. 7–16). The sense of gender develops gradually, usually revealing itself between the ages of two and three, while in the pre-school period, between the ages of four and six, gender identity is established (Brannon, 2002; Kula, Słowikowska-Hilczer, 2003a; Vasta, Haith, Miller, 2001).

Among the most popular concepts of gender schemas describing in different ways, the process of gender identification conditioned by socio-cultural factors are Seligman's concept of the five layers of erotic life, Sandra Bem's concept of gender identity formation and the cognitive-developmental approach.

Seligman's theory of the five layers of erotic life indicates the emergence of successive levels in the formation of human sexuality (Seligman, Walker, Rosenhan, 2003). The basis is gender identity, i.e. the awareness of being female or male. The next layer is sexual orientation, indicating the orientation of sexual desire. It is divided into heterosexual (congruence of genitals with gender iden-

tity and turning the urge to the opposite sex), homosexual (congruence of genitals with gender identity and turning the urge to the same sex) and trans-sexual (divergence of genitals with gender identity). The third level is formed by sexual preferences, which influence sexual responses. The next layer is the gender role, i.e. the public manifestation of gender identity (girl- and boy-specific behaviour, fulfilment of social and cultural tasks, engaging in specific sexual behaviours). The final level is sexual functioning related to sexual activity (Seligman et al. 2003, pp. 34–37).

Bem's concept of gender schemas, on the other hand, focuses on explaining the psychological gender construct – i.e. the process of the formation of gender-related psychological traits following the definitions of femininity and masculinity typical in a given society. Gender schemas are contained in cognitive schemas containing expectations related to the characteristics and behaviour of women and men (Brzezinska, Dąbrowska, Pełkowska, Staszczak, 2002).

Bem (1976, p. 54) proposed a theory of two mutually independent factors of masculinity and femininity in place of the one-dimensional and bipolar concept of gender. Thus, an individual may have one of several possible combinations of masculine and feminine traits: a type consistent with one's biological sex scores high on one and low on the other dimension (men with high scores on the masculinity scale and low scores on the femininity scale, the reverse for women), a type inconsistent with one's biological sex, the 'crossed' type – women with high scores on the masculinity scale and low scores on the femininity scale, the opposite for men, an androgynous type characterized by high scores on both dimensions and an undifferentiated type scoring low on both.

In Bem's (1976; 2000) conception, androgynous persons process information differently from gender-specific persons, especially about themselves and others. According to the author, they function more efficiently in social situations because balanced masculine and feminine traits enable them to adapt faster and function better in an increasingly complex social reality. The responsibility for balancing masculine and feminine traits in an individual lies with parents, educators and the broader socio-cultural influence during the socialization process.

The distinguished categories of people have varying levels of gender and behavioural schema submission. Gender-typical persons quickly assimilate gender-specific attributes and patterns of functioning. In contrast, gender-atypical persons are inclined to integrate models of masculinity and femininity in their behaviour, do not function in an explicit schema and distance themselves from social patterns (Miluska, 1995, pp. 19–38).

On the other hand, the cognitive-developmental approach focuses on two models of gender identity formation: stadial and information processing. The first is based on developmental continuity and invariability regardless of the child's environment. The second considers the processing of information from

the environment and its assimilation. In it, gender roles are observed, socially reinforced and considered appropriate in a given environment. According to the second model, gender identity depends on the socio-cultural context. It is determined by the accepted ways of behaviour, dress, family and professional roles of women and men (Gulczyńska, Jankowiak, 2009, p. 30–39).

Psychological gender and adolescence

The gender construct built up early is heavily revised during adolescence. Adolescents' sense of psychological gender is then influenced by bodily changes, socio-cultural transformations and the psychological conditioning associated with the acceptance of one's gender.

Adolescent psychology recognizes that certain aspects of sexual maturation can cause psychological discomfort, especially in adolescents who have not been prepared for these developmental changes. They are a source of anxiety, embarrassment and oversensitivity about the self. They can contribute to an attitude of denial about one's gender, a desire to remain gender indeterminate, or experimenting with characteristics of the opposite sex. Among adolescents, so-called binders, masking gender attributes, have recently become increasingly popular, and there is growing opposition to misgendering in favour of gender-indefinite pronouns. It has been observed that more pubertal difficulties occur in girls and manifest themselves, for example, in mental infantilism, eating disorders or the so-called Diana complex, in which a girl does not want to be a woman and imitates boys in dress and behaviour. However, these are usually temporary phenomena (Obuchowska, 2005).

Another important aspect related to adolescents' sense of psychological gender is the impact of socio-cultural factors. Shaffer (1985, p. 540) emphasizes the importance of identifying with the representatives of a given sex in a specific culture and the need to belong to one of the sexes. In Polish culture, adolescents still encounter the fact that masculinity is stereotypically identified with characteristics such as domination, rivalry, independence, strength, and ease of decision-making. At the same time, sensitivity, emotionality, caring, and ability to sacrifice are considered to be typically feminine (Miluska, 1996). In most maturing adolescents, the process of psychological identification with one's gender manifests itself in behaviour that aligns with a specific gender stereotype formed in the socialization process (Imieliński, Dulko, 1988; Strykowska, 1992). However, young people today are witnessing intensive changes in the perception of gender-specific characteristics in recent years. In modern terms, there is a move away from stereotypical thinking about femininity and masculinity, the significant role of patriarchy in the family and the strict division of duties and

occupations into so-called masculine and feminine (Karkowska, 2017). Due to cultural and civilizational changes in new societies, there is a different model of gender identity formation than before. The change in the traditional perception of the roles of women and men is influenced by feminist movements and economic change. The schematic division of gender roles is gradually loosening. Young people observe that women are increasingly well-educated, working in professions traditionally reserved for men, entering the public sphere and finding themselves ideally at home. They are fighting for their rights and the elimination of political, economic, and cultural discrimination and violent behaviour. Conversely, men take over some of the women's family responsibilities, such as sharing in domestic life and childcare. (Krause, 2020; Szyszka, 2008). Fathers take on the role of mentor and counsellor in the upbringing of both boys and girls, teaching them to combine the roles of mother and father, worker and family member. They raise children differently than they were raised themselves. They recognize the need to compromise between tradition and modernity (Karkowska, 2017). Adolescents are witnessing a dynamic change in the understanding of femininity and masculinity socially, economically and culturally.

Finally, difficulties related to the psychological sense of gender are worth referring to. Many studies indicate that crises occurring in this area affect the way an individual functions, including the appearance of disruptions and disturbances in his/her behaviour in various life situations for this reason (Bem, 2000; Brzezińska et al., 2002; Deborah, 2000; Holowka, 1982; Miluska, 1996; Strykowska, 1992). Gender dysphoria can be considered an acute form of such a crisis. Many authors have recently reported a massive, even exponential, increase in gender dysphoria among adolescents, with accompanying increased anxiety and depressive states, as well as self-destructive behaviour. (Dyachenko, Perekhov, Soldatkin, Bukhanovskaya, 2021; Fuss, Auer, Briken, 2015; Frisen, Söder, Rydelius, 2017; Jones, Robinson, Oginni, Rahman, Rimes, 2017; Li et al, 2024; Zucker, 2017). Gender dysphoria involves suffering due to incongruence between assigned biological sex and gender identity. It is treated as a severe medical condition, as described in the DSM-5 (2015) and ICD-11 (Dora, Grabski, Dobroczyński, 2021) classifications. In adolescents, it manifests as an intense desire to be a person of a different gender, often accompanied by the need to change appearance, name and pronouns to match gender identity better. Diagnosis of gender dysphoria requires meeting specific diagnostic criteria, which include a sustained period of at least six months of intense desire to be a different gender or belief that one is.

It is also important to note that another multifaceted phenomenon is transgenderism, also emerging during adolescence, encompassing a wide range of gender identities that differ from the sex assigned at birth and do not necessarily involve gender dysphoria or the need for transition. The distinction between

psychological gender, gender dysphoria and transgender is crucial in understanding the diversity of gender identities among young people. Each of these terms refers to a different aspect of the gender experience, and understanding these differences is vital to adequately supporting students with diverse gender identities.

Psychological gender issues of young people in the education system

Adolescents observing and participating in contemporary social, cultural and economic change are noticing a departure from the traditional understanding of gender roles and their attributes. Female and male roles, occupations, career paths and family roles performed by both genders are confused. There are also important implications for how young people function in today's schools. Students presenting gender diversity pose a significant challenge to the education system, not only in Poland.

The main problems related to this include, firstly, the widespread lack of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of gender diversity in schools (Blair, Deckman, 2020; DePalma, 2011; Pullen, Robichaud, Dumais-Michaud, 2015; Bartholomaeus, Riggs, Andrew, 2017; Carlile, 2019). Many teachers and school staff still lack sufficient information on the topic and access to training or educational workshops, resulting in prejudice, discrimination, and isolation of gender-diverse students (Frydrych, 2020; Meyer, Leonardi, 2017; Rands, 2009).

Other educational problems relate to the lack of support in curricula that do not consider the needs of young people in terms of gender diversity. The lack of inclusive educational content and appropriate teaching materials promotes the marginalization of these students. They often experience acts of discrimination because of, for example, the use of inappropriate pronouns (misgendering), which exacerbates their feelings of exclusion. Teachers find it challenging to teach inclusively and to build an inclusive school climate (Bartholomaeus, Riggs, 2017; Boucher, 2011; Day, Perez-Brumer, Russell, 2018; Meyer, Leonardi, 2017; Snapp, Burdge, Licona, Moody, Russell, 2015).

Another difficulty relates to inadequate school infrastructure for adapting toilets and changing rooms for gender-diverse pupils. It is not uncommon for these places to be associated with significant discomfort and even danger for them, through which they avoid using these facilities. The lack of adequate facilities is consequently associated with absenteeism from physical education or other gender-segregated classes (Calzo et al., 2014; Berg, Kokkonen, 2021; Devís-Devís, Pereira-García, López-Cañada, Pérez-Samaniego, Fuentes-Miguell, 2017; Kjaran, 2019).

Another problem is the harassment and discrimination of gender-diverse young people in the school environment (Bower-Brown, Zadeh, Jadvá, 2021; Collier, van Beusekom, Bos, Sandfort, 2013; Hatchel, Valido, De Pedro, Huang, Espelage, 2018; Marx, Hatchel, Mehring, Espelage, 2004; McBride, 2019; Myers, Swearer, Martin, Palacios, 2017; Wyss, 2004). Polish schools still lack adequate procedures or countermeasures aimed at counteracting such problems.

It should also be noted that the school environment often does not provide specialized support for students with gender diversity (Abreu, Kenny, Hall, Huff, 2019; Chen-Hayesa, 2001; Martino, Kassen, Omercajic, 2020). There is still a lack of psychologists in many institutions, including those adequately trained in this area. Educators often report a reluctance and lack of preparation to deal with issues of gender diversity or to intervene in cases of gender-based bullying (Leung, Kassel-Gomez, Sullivan, Murahara, Flanagan, 2022; Bler, Deckman, 2020).

The educational problems of gender-diverse youth are complex and multifaceted. They pose significant challenges. In order to effectively support such students, comprehensive educational, infrastructural and psychological measures are needed to promote inclusivity, acceptance and safety in the school environment. This need is significant because today, there is a dynamic process of changing the understanding of gender roles. It is increasingly leading to the treatment of androgynous gender as the most desirable combination of co-occurring male and female personality traits. This change finds expression and is already observable in the functioning of contemporary adolescents. This article empirically analyses the issues mentioned above and presents the research results concerning the types of students' sense of psychological gender in late adolescence.

Research Methodology

The development dynamics in the modern world require women and men in every age group to change their attitudes to traditional views of gender roles (Deborah, 2000; Hołowka, 1982). These shifts include changes in customs, forms of professional activity, transformation of the patriarchal image of the world and greater acceptance of otherness (Schmidt-Waldherr, 2001; Wejnert, 2001). The present study referred to Sandra Bem's concept of gender schemas (1974, 1976, 1981, 2000). Human psychological gender is understood "as a system of gender-related psychological traits, such as femininity or masculinity, which are shaped in the individual from early childhood through his or her participation in social life" (Kuczyńska, 1992a, p. 237).

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the distribution of psychological gender types in the adolescents studied in the total group and because of their biological sex?

2. what is the distribution of the psychological gender types of the students, given their age?
3. Are there differences in the psychological sex of the adolescents due to family structure and material situation?
4. Are there differences in the psychological gender types of adolescents attending secondary schools with different profiles?

The research was conducted using a tool for determining psychological gender type – the Inventory for the Assessment of Psychological Gender (IPP) by Alicja Kuczyńska (1992a, 1992b), based on the assumptions of Bem's (1981) Gender Schema Theory. The IPP inventory assesses psychological gender, understood as the willingness to use a particular gender dimension to both the self and the world. The IPP, therefore, measures an aspect of psychological gender, making it possible to assess the extent to which the self-concept of the individual under study is influenced by cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity (Kuczyńska, 1992a, p.27). The questionnaire consists of 35 items relating to specific personality traits, of which 15 traits are categorized as characterizing males, 15 as characterizing females, and 5 items are neutral/buffer and are not included in any of the scales. Respondents rate each trait on a five-point scale ranging from 1 – I am not at all like this to 5 – I am entirely like this. The score for each scale is the sum of the responses from the items making it up. Taken together, the scores obtained by the subject in terms of femininity and masculinity allow one of the four possible psychological gender types to be identified.

In Bem's (1976, p. 54) conception, there was originally an androgynous type (androgynous), a type consistent with biological sex (sex-typed), a type inconsistent with biological sex (cross-typed sex) and an undifferentiated type (undifferentiated). Kuczynska (1992a,b) distinguished the following psychological gender types in the IPP Inventory:

- sexually defined persons – who score high on the scale corresponding to their sex and low on the scale corresponding to the opposite sex; these are women and men
- androgynous persons – women and men who are characterized by high scores on both scales
- sexually indeterminate persons – women and men who are characterized by low scores on both scales
- cross-sexually specified persons – who score high on the scale corresponding to the opposite sex and low on the scale corresponding to their sex; these are masculine women and feminine men

The gender dimension is an essential dimension of the individual's ego. Sexually defined and cross-sexually defined persons use characteristics in their self-description that are in line with social definitions of femininity or masculinity. On the other hand, androgynous and sexually indeterminate individuals have

formed a description of themselves outside the cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity, using adjectives culturally defining femininity or masculinity to an equal degree. Hence, the results are not a measure of the intensity of femininity or masculinity but of the readiness to use a given gender dimension in one's description.

The tool's reliability in Kuczyńska's (1992b) study was $\alpha = 0.7834$ for the Masculinity scale and $\alpha = 0.7856$ for the Femininity scale, which are satisfactory values. In the updated psychometric characteristics of the IPP Inventory, these values were above $\alpha = 0.8$, which confirms its research utility (Błajet 2019; Korzeń 2005).

The research cooperated with the Psychological and Pedagogical Clinic No. 3 in Radom 2023. The Microsoft Teams platform was used for the research to share the questionnaire and collect data from secondary school students whose principals agreed to join the research. Participation was voluntary – any post-primary school from Radom and Radom County could join directly. Pupils were often allowed to complete the questionnaire during parenting lessons or outside school hours. Each student answered the questionnaire independently, using a smartphone, tablet, or computer connected to the Internet, whether school-owned or private. The average time to complete the questionnaire was 9min 22sec.

A total of 850 people from Radom and Radom County took part in the survey. Due to the completeness of the questionnaires, data from 847 respondents, of whom 63% were girls ($N=537$) and 37% boys ($N=310$), were qualified for further study analysis. The age of the students ranged from 15–19 years, with the most significant number of students aged 16 (31.2%) and 17 (29.9%) years, followed by 15 years (23%), with the most minor proportion of respondents being the oldest students aged 18 (13.2%) and 19 (2.7%) years. The average age of the students surveyed was 16 years. In the survey, the most significant number of respondents, i.e. 64%, attended a general school, 30% attended a technical school, and 6% attended a vocational school. The students were mostly city (53%) and rural (39%) residents, with the fewest indicating a small town (8%). The vast majority of respondents came from entire families (79%), followed by students indicating family structures such as divorced (8%) or single-parent families (7.6%), patchwork families (approx. 4%) and adoptive (approx. 1%) or foster (approx. 1%) families. The material situation of the family was most often assessed by the respondents as good (50%) and average (24.5%) or very good (22.5%). Only 2% of students described the situation as bad or very bad.

Analysis of results

The following describes the results obtained in the group of respondents as a whole and then in the groups of respondents distinguished by variables such

as biological sex, age, family structure and economic status, and type of secondary school.

The data presented in Figure 1 indicate that the psychological gender types androgynous (34%) and "female-female" (24%) predominate in the entire group of students, followed by the type "sexually undefined" (more than 20% of respondents). The most minor representative types are 'feminine men' (6%) and 'masculine women' (7%). Only 8% of respondents identify with the 'masculine men' type.

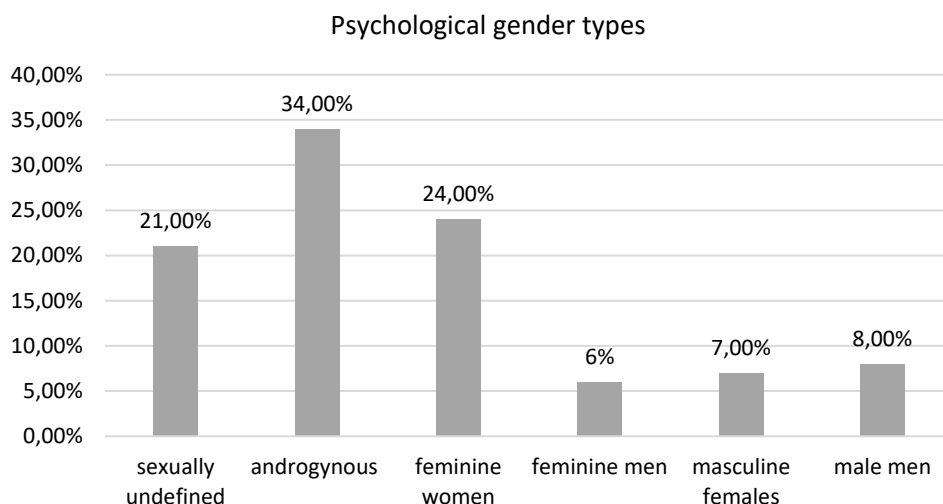


Chart 1

Psychological gender types in the entire group of adolescents surveyed

Source: own study

The results show that more than 50% of the students surveyed are characterized by psychological gender types known as androgynous and sexually indeterminate. The adolescents identify themselves with traits typical of both sexes simultaneously (34%) or remain neutral (21%). The sense of psychological gender in line with biological sex was significantly higher among girls (24% identified themselves as "female females") than boys (8% were "male males").

The analysis of psychological gender types by biological sex showed some differences between girls and boys. In the group of schoolgirls, more than a third obtained a psychological gender type defined as "feminine female" (38%), as well as androgynous (33%). The smallest number of respondents identified the type as "sexually indeterminate" (16%) and "masculine female" (approx. 12%). In the group of boys, on the other hand, more than one-third obtained the psychological gender type androgynous (35%) and almost one-third the type "not

sexually specified" (27%). The smallest number of pupils (21%) identify the type "masculine male" and "feminine male" (16%).

A comparison of the results in the girls' and boys' groups shows a more outstanding correspondence between biological and psychological sex in the girls' group (almost 40% of respondents) than in the boys' group (20% of respondents). However, in both groups, more than a third of the students are of the androgynous type, so analysis with Pearson's chi-square test did not show that the variable of biological sex significantly differentiated the adolescents ($p=n.i.$; $\chi^2 = 369.068$; $df = 5$; Kramer's $V = 0.66$).

Further analysis of the sense of psychological gender by age shows some variation between students 15 to 19 years of age. In the group of the youngest students, 15-year-olds, the most representative type (about 30% each of the population) was "female females" and "sexually indeterminate."

In comparison, the least representative type (about 6%) was "male females". Among 16-year-old respondents, the dominant psychological gender type is the 'androgynous' type (almost 40%), followed closely by the 'sexually indeterminate' type (23%). The 'feminine male' gender type occurred in the smallest percentage (around 5%). The 17- and 18-year-old students were most characterized by the "androgynous" psychological gender type (more than 30%) and the "feminine women" type (about 27%), to the smallest extent by the "feminine men" type (about 5%) in the 17-year-old group and "masculine women" (6%) in the 18-year-old group. In the oldest group, the vast majority of 19-year-olds (48%) obtained the androgynous psychological gender type, but this is the smallest group of the population ($N=23$).

The results concerning types of psychological gender in particular age groups showed that the dominant type is the androgynous type. Thus, Pearson's chi-square test analysis did not show that the age variable significantly differentiates adolescents ($p=n.i.$; $\chi^2 = 32.1$; $df = 20$; Kramer's $V = 0.097$). It is noteworthy, however, that the psychological gender type "sexually indeterminate" and "androgynous" is more pronounced in the groups of younger students, while the tendency to identify with biological sex increases in the group of older respondents and concerns the type "choice female".

Data on the distribution of psychological gender due to family structure also indicated some variation in the sense of psychological gender of the young people surveyed. It is worth noting, however, that most of them came from complete families ($N=672$). This group of respondents was, to the greatest extent, characterized by the 'androgynous' psychological gender type (33%), as well as the 'feminine female' (25%) and 'sexually indeterminate' (21%) types.

Analysis of the data obtained makes it possible to note that family structure does not differentiate the respondents' sense of psychological gender ($p=n.i.$; $\chi^2 = 37.55$; $df = 25$; Kramer's $V = 0.094$). Some subtle correlation ($p = 0.051$) was

noted within the 'feminine male' type, which characterized more than 30% of respondents raised by a single parent. The dominance of the "androgynous" type leads one to reflect that the presence or absence of a parent of a particular gender does not differentiate the psychological sex of adolescents. If it does, it is more conducive to identification in line with biological sex in girls ("female females").

The following variable analyzed was the material status of the family. In the group of students assessing it as good and very good (more than 70%) in total), the "androgynous" psychological gender type was the most representative, followed by the "feminine women" type. Respondents describing it as average (more than 20%) obtained significant variation in their sense of psychological gender. Almost 30% obtained the 'feminine female' type, while about a quarter of the respondents were of the 'androgynous' or 'undefined' type. On the other hand, among the students who described their material situation as bad and very bad, the psychological gender type "sexually indeterminate" definitely dominates (a total of almost 80% of respondents). The size of these groups does not allow legitimate conclusions to be drawn.

Pearson's chi-square test analysis of the family material situation variable showed that it differentiated the respondents at a statistically significant level ($p < 0.000$; $\chi^2 = 48, 25$; $df = 20$; Kramer's $V = 0.119$). The 'androgynous' psychological gender type was characterized to a significantly greater extent by pupils from families with good material status. In contrast, the 'masculine male' type became apparent in families with poor material status.

A comparison of data on the psychological gender of pupils attending different types of post-primary schools showed further intervening variation in results.

Students in general secondary schools were characterized in the highest proportion by the androgynous psychological gender type (35%) and the "female-female" type (approximately 29%). The smallest number of respondents was of the 'masculine' (4%) or 'feminine' (5%) male type. Among technician respondents, the dominant psychological gender type is the androgynous type (32%), followed closely by the 'sexually indeterminate' type (25%). In the smallest percentage (5%), the 'male-female' gender type occurred. In the group of pupils from vocational schools (which was by far the smallest in number), a similar trend to that of the technical students was observed: the highest percentage was characterized by the sexually indeterminate (45%) and androgynous (30%) psychological gender type. Similarly, the male-female gender type also occurred in the smallest percentage (7%).

Pearson's chi-square test analysis showed that this variable significantly differentiated the adolescents ($p < 0.000$; $\chi^2 = 35.5$; $df = 10$; Kramer's $V = 0.145$). A comparison by school type showed that the psychological gender types 'female-female' and 'female male' were predominant in comprehensive schools.

In contrast, male-male males were predominant in technical and trade schools. This relationship is probably due to the biological sex type of students choosing a specific type of school.

Discussion of results

This article focuses on the emergence of psychological gender types characterizing contemporary adolescents in late adolescence. The analysis of the obtained data allows verification of the research questions posed.

Concerning the question about the distribution of psychological gender types in the surveyed adolescents in the total group and concerning their biological sex, the occurrence of the "androgynous" type was found in the vast majority, including both girls and boys. This result may reflect the social transformation or unification of female and male roles and the effect of the so-called gender-neutral upbringing implemented (Ulrich, Becker, Scharf, 2022). It is also important to note the trend, which is growing at a breakneck pace, of presenting an 'asexual' gender image on the Internet and the dangerous 'fashion' of promoting 'gender choice' or even encouraging young people to make gender transitions on various types of social media (Hutchinson, Midgen, Spiliadis, 2020; Littman, 2018, 2019; Zucker, 2019). This trend may significantly contribute to the rise of the androdynamic type of psychological gender in adolescents. However, our research observed a much stronger tendency to identify the psychological gender type with the biological gender type ("female females") in girls than boys. It is probably more difficult for boys today to identify with masculinity, as the concept has been changing dynamically over the years. The new socio-cultural male role model encompasses both feminine and masculine characteristics and behaviours, being in a partnership, caring for children, disclosing feelings, and taking care of one's own body and physical appearance while rejecting the androcentrism, aggressiveness and misogyny characteristic of the previous 'traditional' male role model (Skoczylas, 2011).

In turn, in response to the question about the psychological gender distribution of students due to their age, it was noted that its primary type is also the "androgynous" type, with initially, in the group of the youngest students (15- and 16-year-olds), the type "sexually unspecified", is clearly outlined, and the tendency to identify consistent with biological sex increases with age and affects girls ("women"). Although the statistical significance of these observations has not been confirmed, it is worth noting that they are in line with data indicating that adolescence is associated with gender dysphoria, which disappears with age in approximately 80–90% of adolescents (Mayer, McHugh, 2016; Ott, Corliss, Wypij, Rosario, Austin, 2011). Difficulties with gender identification in

adolescents are therefore worth considering, among other things, as a transitional developmental phenomenon.

The next question asked whether a different distribution of psychological gender types characterized adolescents from families with different family structures and material situations. Interestingly, the family structure variable did not differ statistically significantly between the young people studied. The 'androgynous' type predominated in each of the groups that emerged. On the other hand, the family material status variable showed that the tendency towards the androgynous type was statistically significantly associated with a higher level of family well-being. In contrast, a more vital identification of boys with the "masculine male" type was observed in families with a poor material situation. In the literature, the available reports focus more on parents' reactions related to their child's gender diversity (Abreu, Rosenkrantz, Ryser-Oatman, Rostosky, Riggle, 2019; de Bres, 2022; Ferfolja, Ullman, 2021; Schlehofer, Cortez-Regan, 2022). There is a lack of research on the relationship between family structure and children's psychological gender. This issue is an essential field for further analysis in Polish conditions.

A similar reflection applies to the variable of economic status. Studies by other authors show that parents' material well-being, as well as their higher level of education, political affiliation, being a member of the middle class and being Caucasian, is related to a more positive attitude towards the search for gender identity and their child's rejection of traditional gender roles (Antill, Cunningham, Cotton, 2003; Neary, 2019; Pinho, Gaunt, 2021).

The final research question was related to whether there are differences in the psychological gender types of adolescents attending secondary schools with different profiles. The variable of post-primary school type made it possible to observe that the psychological gender types "female-female females" and "female males" are statistically significantly more often characterized by students in general secondary schools. In contrast, "male-male males" are characterized by students in technical and trade schools. These results can probably be primarily explained by the biological sex of the pupils choosing a particular type of school.

The above results allow two important conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, they indicate that the adolescents surveyed identify with the androgynous type of psychological gender in the highest percentage. Secondly, more significant agreement in identification with biological sex is found in girls, while boys strongly indicate an androgynous or sexually indeterminate type of psychological sex.

The presented research results require further verification, especially in the national population of adolescents of both sexes. Other variables related to the psychological characteristics of adolescents (e.g. personality traits, quality of life) should also be controlled. It would also be interesting to capture the dynamics of psychological gender development and to conduct a comparative

analysis of the data obtained with the results of adolescents of both genders in early adolescence, i.e. between the ages of 10/12 and 15.

Conclusions

Adolescence is a particular time that brings with it a crisis of identity formation involving several dimensions, including gender identification. Using the category of psychological gender (not always consistent with biological sex) allows a different perspective on the role of the socio-cultural environment, which becomes an essential context for developing specific human characteristics (Miluska, 1996). The result of the dominance of androgyny in adolescents in late adolescence obtained in the presented research may, therefore, refer to a specific normative developmental tendency of adolescence, according to which a young person seeks several answers to questions concerning his/her IAM. On the other hand, this result may reflect changes in the perception of gender and the associated social and cultural roles and indicate an increasing trend, particularly under the influence of the Internet, towards developing an androgynous psychological gender.

Given the importance of this topic for young people today, it is worth formulating some general indications to include in the education system, aimed at young people but also their teachers and parents :

- the need to provide knowledge on psychological gender, gender identity, gender role, sexual orientation, gender diversity, transsexuality, gender dysphoria, as well as the distinction between these constructs and their significance in adolescence
- raise awareness of changing gender characteristics due to ongoing socio-cultural and economic transformations
- counteract stereotypical perceptions of gender attributes
- the role of mass media and the Internet in constructing gender images
- the role of cultural influences on gender

This study helps to fill a gap in the psychological gender of young people in Poland, opens up further avenues of research and, importantly, points to the urgent need to develop inclusive pedagogy because of the dynamic growth of gender-diverse young people.

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Poczucie płci psychologicznej uczniów szkół ponadpodstawowych

Streszczenie

Płeć psychologiczna jest jednym z ważnych determinantów ludzkiego postępowania, związanym w istotny sposób z przemianami społeczno-kulturowymi. Jej zgodność, bądź nie, z płcią biologiczną odgrywa istotną rolę w procesie rozwoju tożsamości oraz prawidłowej adaptacji społecznej dorastających. Celem przeprowadzonych badań było określenie współczesnych typów płci psychologicznej młodzieży w późnej fazie adolescencji. Grupę badawczą stanowiło łącznie 847 uczniów szkół ponadpodstawowych. Zastosowano Inwentarz Płci Psychologicznej IPP Kuczyńskiej. Postawiono pytania badawcze dotyczące głównych typów płci psychologicznej w grupie respondentów ogółem oraz z uwagi na oddziaływanie zmiennych socjodemograficznych, takich jak: płeć, wiek, struktura i status ekonomiczny rodziny oraz typ szkoły ponadpodstawowej. Wyniki badań wykazały, iż dominującym typem płci psychologicznej badanej młodzieży jest typ androgyniczny. W ramach przyjętych zmiennych socjodemograficznych jej moderatorem okazały się zmienne, takie jak status ekonomiczny rodziny oraz typ szkoły ponadpodstawowej. Ponadto zauważono, że chłopcy w porównaniu z dziewczętami doświadczają większego kryzysu w identyfikacji płci psychologicznej zgodnej z płcią biologiczną.

Słowa kluczowe: płeć psychologiczna, różnorodność płciowa, młodzież, szkoła.