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FEMALE BODYBUILDING AND FUNCTIONAL FITNESS ATHLETES' IMAGE AND IDENTITIES: A CASE STUDY FROM HUNGARY

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Abstract

Aim. Bodybuilding and its related categories have their aims of presenting the ideal physique that showcases muscularity, definition, symmetry, and balance. Women practicing the sport are training to showcase their physique. Meanwhile, women athletes who are engaged in Functional Fitness perform a different set of fitness and strength exercises to go beyond their capacities and limits in being the "fittest". Although having a muscular and defined physique for women training for functional fitness is not a criterion in their events and competitions, it is initially seen that most of the women doing the sport manifest muscular and defined physiques. These similarities/dissimilarities of the two disciplines make it an interesting question for research to undertake in-depth analysis of the athletes engaged in these activities, to explore their narratives, motivations, and ideals. The aim of the study is to observe and determine the similarities and dissimilarities of these women in their perceptions towards muscular and strong physique. Through participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews, the authors document the stories, ways, and means of the athletes. It was found that athletes in Bodybuilding and Functional Fitness have diverse identities especially when it comes to their identity as athletes in related disciplines while having similarities in the context of sport in Hungarian society. Achieving feats not only in competitions but also related to their victories in daily life shows that sport is always an integral part of their lives, and they appropriate it with the actual situations.

Keywords: Identities, Bodybuilding, Fitness. Body image, Gender

Introduction

The identity of athletes has been discussed in different forms of expressions such as in gender and its relation to belief systems which include "identity through the "felt sense of self" (Law, 2022). This includes how a person relates to their lifestyle and philosophies built from their experiences and decisions. Identity is well manifested in physical culture as a form of ascribing and operating one's own body which shapes athletes and non-athletes (Andrade de Araújo et al. 2018). Athletes and their identities in sport have been subject to different perspectives mostly related to gender and lifestyle (Andreasson & Johansson, 2021; Fabri, 2020; Garatt, 2015).

The athlete identity of females in bodybuilding, with its different categories, is worth investigating. The lack of previous studies on the same inquiry, that is, on the identity of female bodybuilders and functional fitness athletes, is the academic gap that this research aims to fill. This is because as far as the literature review is concerned, no such pursuit has been done in the Hungarian context, and not much can be found internationally, either. The relationship between identity and the athlete is a profound one, involving a unique and complicated lifestyle and philosophy which includes strict training, nutrition regimen, and sometimes doping (Meredith, Worthen & Baker, 2016; Kotze et al, 2020). The sport and the lifestyle part of bodybuilding invokes a „gender outlaw „as its practitioners define their shape of the female body beyond the expectations of their society (Shilling & Bunsell, 2009; Hunter, 2013). Being a „gender outlaw” was mentioned because they disregard the social expectations related to the female body (Shilling & Bunsell, 2009).

A number of studies (Probert, 2007, p.7; Bunsell, 2012 p. 54) refer to the identity of bodybuilders as heterogeneous, as athletes have different ideals on the human body and how they appropriate bodybuilding as a lifestyle based on different situations such as health and self-actualization. Meanwhile identities are also interconnected with different aspects in bodybuilding such as gender, empowerment, mental health, and wellness. The process of being and becoming a bodybuilder makes the life of the athlete entirely focused on it, and during the process, they become engaged in a unique subculture (Andreasson & Johansson, 2020). Other studies (such as S. Law, 2021, Kotzé, et. al, 2020, Probert, 2009, and Szabo, 2018) explained a multi-faceted perspective on the complexities of bodybuilding as a lifestyle and sport which includes the quest for the ideal body and aiming for self-actualisation even with all the risks involved (Fontbona, 2022).

Functional fitness, as defined by the International Functional Fitness Federation (IF3) "tests athletes' proficiency across a variety of movement patterns, activities, and energy systems. Athletes must show their competency in various realms, including demonstrations of their endurance, strength, bodyweight capacity, skill, mixed capacity, and power." (IF3, 2022). The discipline is related to its proprietary form which is known as CrossFit™, an exercise program

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encompassing different sets of exercises such as weightlifting, gymnastics etc. CrossFit marketed its products as the “Sport of Fitness™” (Madliger, 2015, p. 1) becoming a different subculture, which at the same time, can be related to other strength and physique building sports such as bodybuilding. Identities in CrossFit were discussed as a form of both resistance and reinforcement of norms in fitness (Knapp, 2015), as female practitioners also showcase their physiques aside from their skills which is a by-product of their training regimen (Podmore & Ogle, 2018).

We became interested in doing a comparative study on the identities of Hungarian Female Bodybuilders and Functional Fitness Athletes, primarily because of the topic’s potential, with an apparent scarcity of studies related especially on how female athletes of the two disciplines shape their identities in terms of building their bodies, and how muscularity is manifested in different areas of their life. On the topic of female bodybuilders, major studies have been done by Probert (2009), Bunsell (2012), and Hunter (2013), but in the Hungarian context, studies related to bodybuilding only focused on the aspect of exercise addiction (Szabo, 2012). To our knowledge, there are no studies on the identity of both female bodybuilders and functional fitness athletes. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the identities of Hungarian Athletes engaged in Bodybuilding and Functional fitness. Also, to observe and reflect on the similarities and dissimilarities between these women in terms of their perceptions towards muscular and strong physique.

Objectives

For the in-depth analysis and subsequent comparison, we relied on two case studies, one each from both disciplines. Within the case studies, we used three methods: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) participant observation, and (3) photovoice method. In this study we used both online and onsite data collection because of the restrictions on travel and personal visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So when it is possible to visit the participants onsite for an interview and participant observation, we maximize the time and when the restrictions of the pandemic are implemented, we do a follow-up interview. Upon the lifting of some of the restrictions on personal visits in fitness and bodybuilding centers as important locations of the study, we did the training and participant observation with the research participants: one functional fitness athlete and one bodybuilding athlete who both compete and participate in Hungarian and international competitions. The respondents were selected through an open announcement. It was our initial intention to conduct participatory action research, but due to small turnout of participants, from our open announcement and invitations, we decided to focus the study on two participants and treat them as case studies. The refusal of some participants originates from a reticence in disclosing some data mainly because of possible legal repercussions as these people are bound by contracts with different companies and promoters.

Methods

Data collection

The participants, upon their verbal and recorded consent, allowed us to do semi-structured interviews with them in their respective gyms and fitness centers. The research tool we used for the interviews in this study is derived from the questionnaire on the experience of female bodybuilders by Probert (2009) because interviews can provide more in-depth and spontaneous answers as compared to surveys. For the participatory observation, the first author of the paper trained and socialized with the athletes two to three times per week from May 2021 to May 2022. Participatory observation has been used effectively in many studies related to athletes and their identities (Bunsell, 2012; Hunter, 2013; Aspridis, 2020). We consider this time frame to provide more time to build rapport and trust with the participants as it is their first experience with taking part in this type of study. We also need to consider their professions as we cannot be physically present in some situations. Thus we did both onsite and online interviews and participant observation to access as much information as possible, especially on the various aspects of lifestyle. We had to consider the combination of on-site and online data gathering solutions because during the research period, the rules on COVID-19 restrictions changed over time. With this, online methods proved to be a good alternative when physical meetings with the participants were hindered by pandemic regulations.

The first author personally visited and trained with both participants between May 2021 to May 2022 in order to understand the regimen of the participants. We imply the importance of the details of every time and date of the interviews and observation because the participants can only accommodate us during “off-season”: when there is a luxury of time before the competition, and the athletes can still afford to interact. Our working relationship with the respondents and pre-established networks provided a stronger connection for us to know their inner situations, something that would have not been easily accessible through other methods outside participant observation. Their training regimen is specific and intense, which shows the elite level of the participants, through their focus, passion, and purpose-driven actions towards their goal of being the best in their competitions. This method of undertaking this study - utilizing participant observation - provides an opportunity to explore the feasibility of this research method in the particular discipline of sport science. The concept of participant observation provides deeper understanding and empathizing with the subject by being with, and even going through, the athlete’s regimen, juxtaposing the participant with the researcher (Haraway, 1988; Crean, 2018; Phoenix, 2010; Marshall, 2019).

The interview questions were divided and tailored to achieve answers that fall under categories namely: the engagement of the athletes in sport, their current status, life story, competition, experiences, lifestyle, identity, and values. The athletes also consented to giving their personal photos especially those that have something to do with their career. It should be noted that the request for photos is an action deemed appropriate as this research employs Photovoice: a



method used in previous studies such as those by Probert (2009) and Bunsell (2012). This method provides another way of narrating the experiences and the ideals of an athlete and highlights the active role that the respondents play in the research (O'Malley & Munsell, 2020). For a sport that deals with body image and aesthetics, we see the PhotoVoice method as a means for the research participants to tell more about themselves and the people who had a major influence in their sport.

Basic information about the participants

The female bodybuilder participant in this study is Sara, 33 years old, based in Budapest, Hungary who is also a champion athlete in the sport. She started bodybuilding while working as a physiotherapist and physical education teacher. The functional fitness athlete, Gabi is 29 years of age from Budapest and works as an ERP IT Consultant and Functional Fitness/Crossfit Coach. Both of them have competed on national and international levels of their disciplines and were members of Hungarian National Team for Bodybuilding and Functional Fitness in their respective federations.

Results

Life story

In this part, we asked the athletes what their current status is, whether they are working full time outside of their sport or they are already doing bodybuilding and functional fitness on a professional level. Neither of them are simply engaged in bodybuilding or functional fitness as a profession. Sara and Gabi are working as full time coaches and fitness trainers in their fitness centers/gyms. Gabi still works in the corporate sector while Sara is a full time fitness trainer and former Physical Education Teacher. Both of the athletes have extensive experience in competing in bodybuilding and functional fitness competitions on different levels.

Getting familiar with the life story is an important factor in deepening the relationship with the respondent in case studies. From here, we can look not just at the life of the athletes, but also at their socio-economic background. The Hungarian sport system bears the characteristics of a post socialist sport model, in which elite athletes in Olympic sports and spectator team sports are strongly supported by the state, while non-Olympic sports are less subsidized (Doczi, 2012). The transition from a socialist to capitalist model has an impact on how athletes can make ends meet in their living. The economic consideration in the background of the athletes is of paramount importance for it sheds light on the more personal aspect of the people in the industry: not everyone treats sport as a profession but rather a way of life, a life that necessitates expenses vis-a-vis nutrition and equipment (Probert, 2009).

During our personal meeting with both participants, we first asked how they started in bodybuilding and functional fitness. We wanted to know their background and how they got engaged in bodybuilding and functional fitness. Some of their testimonials are as follows:

"Sport has always been important to me. Volleyball: 8 years old - 22 years old. Bodybuilding: 22-..."

I have one older sister and one older brother. My parents divorced when I was 11 (father had alcohol problems, spent all the money). I lived with my mother (she was a math-chemistry teacher). We were never rich, because my mother never had help, she kept us alone. I was always a competitive person, but mainly in sports.....

I started bodybuilding at university, because I wanted to earn money and not ask money from my mom. First I kept training, during that time I practiced weightlifting and used machines. ("Sara, 33, HU)

Based on the background of Sara, she mentioned that sport has been part of her life and being competitive is one of her core values. The aspect of being competitive has been a major factor in why female bodybuilders continue what they do in terms of training, nutrition and competition. Meanwhile, in the case of Gabi, her interest in Functional Fitness started randomly and to have another activity aside from studies.

"I grew up in Göd, it's a city near Budapest. My father is a software developer, my mother works as an English teacher in a primary school. I grew up with my mother, because my parents divorced when I was 8. I have a full sister and a brother, and I also have two half-sisters (from my father's later relationships).

When I finished secondary school, and I was graduating (2012), I didn't really know what I wanted to be as my profession. So I just chose something I thought I could make a good living from. That's how I got a business IT degree at Budapest Corvinus University. During my university studies I met crossfit, I started competing and I also decided I want to work as a crossfit coach. After university I started to work as an ERP consultant for a software developer company. After 2 years of crossfit I got a Fitness Instructor and Corrective trainer qualification, so I started to work as a coach from 2017." ("Gabi, 29, HU)

The interviews and our observations underline that bodybuilding and functional fitness are not lucrative sports as most of their participants have limited recognition and the prizes are not profitable enough to make it a full-time profession. For Sara and Gabi, they need to do dual roles as athletes and professionals to make ends meet for their training and nutrition needs. This socio-economic situation of female bodybuilders and functional fitness athletes is similar, as they use their own funds and other resources to be successful in the sport.

Entering Competitions

Bodybuilding and Functional Fitness are both competitive sports and we asked the athletes about their reasons for entering competitions. The reasons for entering bodybuilding contests can include self-esteem and empowerment, emulation, previous sports participation, and health (Baghurst et al., 2014). Based on the interview with Sara and Gabi, they mentioned their ideals about competing and what their experiences were. While for Sara, competing is an expression



of her commitment and showcasing her achievement, for Gabi it is more on testing one's limits and having a positive experience with peers. As noted in their testimonies:

"My friends suggested that I go to competitions, because they thought I had a good and muscular shape. I always have a desire to prove it." "Because I wanted to be in better shape, better feeling, I wanted to prouder myself and was curious what I could do with my body. I never wanted to be as muscular as a man bodybuilder, just push my limits as a woman." ("Sara" 33, 2021, HU)

"I want to test myself, I want a challenge. I like to see how far I have come...thus I want to compete" ("Gabi", 29, 2021, HU)

Entering competitions for both athletes has common themes, like pushing themselves and trying how far they will reach their levels. The satisfaction that athletes gained in competitions and their experiences reflect the pursuit for satisfaction and place in their communities both for bodybuilding and functional fitness (Suffolk, 2015; Podmore & Ogle, 2018). Based on their responses, the concept of self-efficacy can clearly be seen in terms of entering competitions. Events provide not only social engagement but also a "feel good" attitude as they raise self esteem and enhance connections (Coyne & Woodruff, 2020). Enjoyment in competitions shows fulfillment especially in reaching the goals of the athletes, and the feeling of fun and socialization even in a challenging environment (Ricker, 2006). Generally in different studies among female bodybuilders and functional fitness athletes the challenging yet motivating environment gives positive feelings to the athletes (Rohrig et al. 2017).

Experience

With regards to experience, we asked the athletes about their positive and ideal situations that made them engage in bodybuilding and functional fitness. This includes their most rewarding, most satisfying benefits the sport brings to different areas of their life. Another perspective on their experiences that we asked the participants was the least satisfying, hardest, most exhausting and least beneficial aspect of their sport. The balance of both the positive and negative experiences in bodybuilding and functional fitness is intentional as both aspects of their engagement provide a detailed story. Experiences are a very common aspect in finding the identity for both female bodybuilders and functional fitness athletes (Law, 2012; Daroszevska, 2018; Bunsell, 2012; Probert, 2009).

"Because I wanted to be in better form, better feeling, I wanted to make myself proud and was curious what I could do with my body. I never wanted to be as muscular as a man bodybuilder, just push my limits as a woman." ("Sara", 33, 2021, HU)

"I was really enjoying competing. The whole vibe of the event, to cheer each other on, and also it was really motivating to see other competitors who are much better than me. They motivated me to get better too." "Gabi", 29, 2021, HU)

Pushing oneself to the limits of their physical strength is a common manifestation both for both bodybuilding and functional fitness. (Rahbari, 2019; Knapp, 2015) The cases of the Hungarian bodybuilder and the functional fitness athlete in this study show a common theme in undertaking their endeavor without any support; the athletes in the study rely on their own resources to participate and compete in their disciplines. These experiences of Hungarian athletes are also discussed in the study of Szabo (2018) where there are even some factors of "exercise addiction" among the selected athletes that mention positive experiences in their training and competitions. Facing challenges such as conflicts at work due to exercise is not an issue because athletes prefer to blend sport into their civil career.

Health and Risks

We asked the athletes whether they found their disciplines healthy or risky. How far bodybuilding and functional fitness can change both the mental and the physical capabilities of a person. With the discipline in nutrition and training needed for both disciplines, we asked if the sport they are doing is healthy and if they had bad experiences and days when the risks associated with bodybuilding and functional fitness came to the surface. Any sport has risks, and different studies, especially in bodybuilding, discussed the impacts of strict nutrition and training regimen on athletes' health, including the "open secret" of using anabolic steroids and other performance enhancing substances (Probert & Lehman, 2009; Bunsell, 2012; Kotze et al. 2020). These implications on health and risks are also reflected on by Sara and Gabi:

"- Bodybuilding is not unhealthy, but if you want to compete and do a half year competition diet, that's unhealthy. And if you take hard steroids and do it without a competent person. If you just go to the gym like a bodybuilder, for example 5 times a week and live a healthy life, with high quality foods, without parties, alcohol, and lots of sugar, that can be healthy." ("Sara", 33, 2021, HU)

"Most people think lifting heavy weights is unhealthy. The truth is every sport has risks, if you don't work appropriately, you can injure yourself....."

.....I think functional fitness is healthy if you do it the right way. You have to be aware of your fitness level, and choose the right exercises (scaling) and appropriate weights. If you are not sure, you should workout under coach supervision. FF strengthens the core muscles, so you can prevent pain in connection with the weak core." ("Gabi", 29, 2021, HU)

The perspectives on health and risks for both respondents show that they still consider doing bodybuilding and functional fitness as a healthy regimen connected to their previous statements on "feel good" attitude and at the satisfaction they get from exercise. Different studies about female bodybuilding and fitness show a positive result in their experience, especially with regards to the satisfaction of having achieved better aesthetics and confidence because of the ideology of health through training for fitness (Madlinger, 2015; Suffolk, 2015).

Lifestyle



Bodybuilding as a lifestyle has been discussed as a unique subculture and way of life. The processes related to nutrition and training have been integrated in the life of the athlete and the sport changes different perspectives on discipline and self-sacrifice (Fontbona, 2021). The lifestyle shaped through bodybuilding becomes the priority and the center of everything as noted by Sara and Gabi:

"(in my spare time) I'm (with my) fiancée and meet friends. But I don't get enough free time. I usually work from 7:30-20:00. I have more workplaces. And on the weekend I usually work 3-4 hours. It's hard to do less. [...] I have never been rich or I have never had a rich partner who can support me with money." ("Sara", 33, 2021, HU)

"It's hard to find the balance, because this sport consumes a lot of time. My family thinks I should spend less time in the gym, but still they support me.....I made a lot of friends with crossfit, they support me for sure." ("Gabi", 29, 2021, HU)

The consumption of time and space for the sake of sport as a lifestyle and the gray area between the sport and personal life are overlapping and thus the sport is integrated into the daily life among athletes. The situation presented by the subjects shows the relationship between bodybuilding and functional fitness as a lifestyle that overlaps with other aspects of their life. In the study of Greaf (2016) she mentioned that in order to make bodybuilding a form of art, athletes should not only perform it but to live on its ideals. This is also in congruence with the belief system in functional fitness that the community and the socialization among the athletes show some shades of being "cult" due to its common belief system within the group (Dawson, 2017).

Identity and values

In this part, athletes shared their views and definitions of bodybuilding and functional fitness. This includes their perceptions of how non-athletes see them and the commonalities of the two disciplines. Their philosophical views about the sport is the highlight of the series of answers they shared with us especially on their definition of bodybuilding or functional fitness. This provides a deeper insight, not only into the reason why they made it to be a lifestyle but also into the belief system in physical culture underlying their praxis.

Athlete identity has been extensively discussed and studied especially in physique and fitness sports and tried to answer the questions what it takes for one to become a bodybuilder or functional fitness athlete (Probert; 2009, Bunsell, 2012, Aspridis, 2014, Fontbona, 2021). Identity shapes the ideological systems of an athlete as they try to define the sport based on their experiences, decisions, and influences (Schrijnder et. al, 2020; Podmore, 2018; Madlinger, 2015). The subjects explained how their sport provided identity for them as follows:

"I think I'm tougher in life. I win a lot with bodybuilding. I can appreciate things and I can live more easily. The concept of the problem has been reevaluated in me." ("Sara", 33, 2021, HU)

"(Functional Fitness) is special, because it improves you in many ways. You have to be good at weightlifting, powerlifting, gymnastics, bodyweight movements, running, swimming, cycling, rowing etc. It's really hard to find a balance, and be above average in all of them. Most other sports don't require so many different skills at the same time....."

".....I can't really imagine my life without [Functional Fitness] it. If I would stop competing, I would continue to train for my own health and enjoyment." (Gabi, 29, 2021, HU)

Citing the testimonial of the respondents, it can be clearly seen how they connect their identity and values to their dedication to the sport and shaping their bodies. The ideologue of the body and its representations can be known and understood by the individual even at unconscious level (Scott, 2011). Feeling and connecting the body through bodybuilding and functional fitness as manifested by the experiences and ideals of the subjects reveals how the sport they engage in has become an integral component of their identity. That the discipline of training, nutrition, and the subculture that they try to move and live in is intertwined in their value systems because they try to live on it and aspire to be good at their sport (Madlinger, 2015; Rousell et al. 2010; Hockin-Boyers et al. 2020).

Spending the whole year of weekly training and communication with Sara and Gabi for this research, builds a strong connection for the main author, because being an outsider researcher in bodybuilding and fitness implies the importance of building trust and connection especially for case studies (Naake, 2011; Hayfield & Huxley, 2015; Liamputtong, 2008). During the participatory observation period, we experienced that our respondents were accommodating because they knew well the purpose of the study and did not see it as an intrusion in their training and personal life. Training with the participants a few times a week made it possible for the first author of the study to feel the pain and soreness which is very common in any exercise. Pushing him in his limits let him understand the tolerance and feelings towards body manipulation that can lead to self-gratification even on extreme levels (Bunsell; 2012, Fontbona, 2021).

Photovoice

Part of the methods of the study is the "Photovoice" method where participants are asked for three photos that best describes their life as female bodybuilder and functional fitness athlete. There are three kinds of photos we requested of them. First is their favorite photo of themselves related or non-related to their chosen sport and why it is significant, second is the photo of their favorite athlete and why it is also significant to them and third is the photo of themselves during their competitions. One of the excerpts of the photovoice section are as follows:

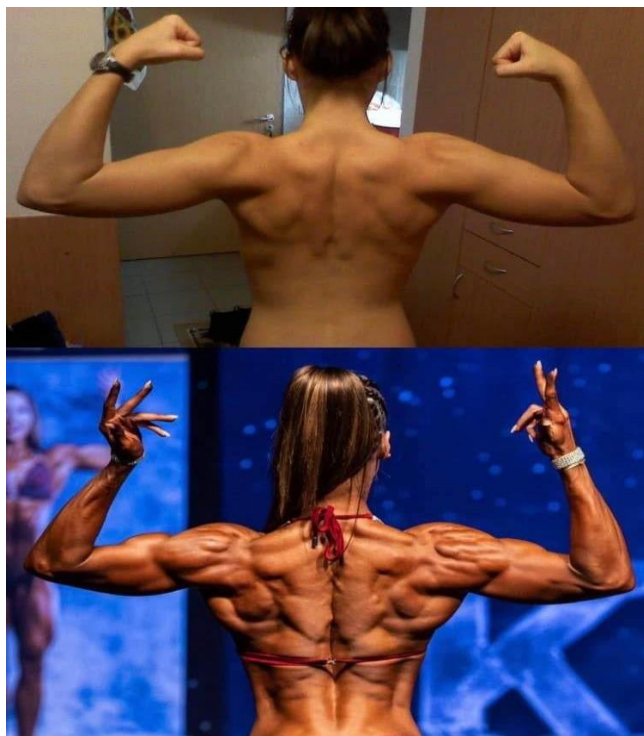


Fig. 1 Photovoice entry 1

"I chose this photo because on the bottom part, I was a world champion.. I will go to competition, I would like to go to a more muscular category, women's physique" ("Sara", 33, HU)



Fig.2 Photovoice entry no. 2

.....I represented Hungary as an individual athlete [for the] first time in Functional Fitness Worlds. It makes me proud I can get this far. (Gabi, 29, 2021, HU)



Discussion

The paper comprises two case studies, focusing on the lifestyle and identity of a Hungarian Female Bodybuilder and a Female Functional Fitness Athlete, both residing and training in Hungary. Although we attempted to design this study as a participatory action research, we had to encounter great limitations. It must be remembered that due to constraints on participants due to COVID-19, we had limited contacts with other athletes who could have added to the sample of our study, which could possibly enrich the narratives related to the lifestyle and identity of athletes engaged in bodybuilding and functional fitness. Thus, the researchers transformed the method more into a case study because the two athletes who finally agreed to participate in the study could provide more in-depth information during a more thorough, lengthier investigation based on various methods. Although there have been studies related to female bodybuilders in different locations (Probert; 2009, Bunsell, 2012, Aspridis, 2014, Fontbona, 2021), and similarly, Functional Fitness has been studied extensively in different locations (Madlinger, 2015; Rousell et al. 2010; Hockin-Boyers et al. 2020), the Hungarian context has not been studied yet, and the close collaboration that the case study approach allowed also made it possible to shed light on the minor details of the athletes' way of life..

The life story of the athletes in this study specializing in bodybuilding and fitness are shaped mostly in their interest to have a healthier body which has made them engage in their sport. Self-efficacy has been discussed in existing literature as one of the primary reasons why a person tries to develop herself. The struggles by the athletes, especially with their training regimen is a very common situation of female athletes, particularly those engaged in strength and physique sports. The process of shaping and strengthening the body provides a concept of identity that they undergo in this lifestyle. This embodiment of shaping and strengthening the body even with all the restrictions and sacrifices has been documented in different studies (Bunsell, 2012; Fontbona, 2021). The ideologue of identity and values in bodybuilding and functional fitness shows the juxtaposition of normal life and the sport life and seeing the disciplines as connected with the athlete (Probert; 2009, Bunsell, 2012, Aspridis, 2014, Fontbona, 2021). It is important to note that the participants see their sport even with the extremities and suppression as a healthy practice, and that risks are a common part of any sport, so bodybuilding and functional fitness are not exceptional in this regard.

The background of the participants and how they got engaged in bodybuilding or functional fitness is very important to reflect on, because the psycho-social and socio-economic situation of female athletes, especially in less popular individual sports in Hungary implies self-reliance and self-sustainability initiated by the athletes, which is different from state subsidized Olympic sports in Hungary (Doczi, 2012).

Conclusion

The paper presented a case study on the identities of a female bodybuilder and a functional fitness athlete in Hungary and posits that both of the athletes in this study see their sport as a positive endeavor even with all the risks and difficulties. The two case studies allowed for an initial understanding of their lifestyle, philosophies, and ideals about their sport, and the use of participant observation enriched our data, gave more voice to the athletes to ensure a better understanding of the two sport disciplines. Achieving feats both in competitions and daily victories shows that sport is always an integral part of the athletes' lives, with them eventually appropriating it with the actual situations. Given the limitations of this study, more respondents would prove substantial in exploring the identities of female bodybuilders and functional fitness athletes of varying national backgrounds.

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