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The Role of Gender Identity in Well-Being and Psychosexual Aspects

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Supplementary Materials: Data [see [Index of Supplementary Materials](#)]



Abstract

This study underscores the impact of individuals' gender identity experiences on their well-being and psychosexuality, drawing data from a sample of 2907 adults in Greece. Utilizing the Gender Identity Scale, we collected responses to transcend the conventional "man – woman" binary. Employing Latent Class Analysis, we identified nine Gender Identity Groups based on participants' responses. The results revealed that those embracing a fluid gender identity demonstrated better well-being indicators compared to those rigidly identifying as "men" or "women". Notably, individuals associating with a "woman" gender identity displayed the lowest well-being indicators. In terms of psychosexual aspects, those with a fluid gender identity reported heightened sexual assertiveness and satisfaction, while individuals identifying solely as "men" exhibited elevated sexual anxiety. Furthermore, the gender of the sexual partner interacted with different gender identity groups. These findings suggest a potential influence of internalized societal roles and expectations linked to man and woman conceptual constructs, exerting pressure to conform to established gender norms. Limitations are also discussed.

Keywords

gender identity, sexuality, well-being, sexual partner, gender fluidity, gender norms



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Non-Technical Summary

Background

This research is based on the fact that while gender is often considered binary (male – female), in reality many people do not identify themselves as such. For example, they may experience their gender in a more fluid way (e.g. with both “male” and “female” characteristics or feel that their gender is not expressed through these concepts, but through another gender). This research explores those gender identities that lie within and outside of this binary, in line with the suggestions of contemporary literature.

Why was this study done?

This research was conducted to investigate the impact of the way people experience their gender on their well-being and psychosexual aspects (e.g. sexual anxiety, sexual satisfaction, sexual esteem, etc.). We also studied the role that the gender of the sexual partner plays in the participants' well-being.

What did the researchers do and find?

This research highlights how people's experiences with their gender identity can affect their overall well-being and sexuality. The study looked at information from 2,907 adults in Greece, using a tool called the “Gender Identity Scale” to gather responses that go beyond the traditional “man” or “woman” categories. By using a method called “Latent Class Analysis”, the researchers identified nine different identity groups based on how participants described their gender identity.

The results showed that those who identified with a more flexible or fluid gender had better well-being compared to those who strongly identified as “men” or “women”. Interestingly, people who identified as “women” had the lowest well-being scores. When it came to sexual aspects, those with a fluid gender identity reported feeling more confident and satisfied in their sexual experiences. On the other hand, those who solely identified as “men” had higher levels of sexual anxiety.

The study also found that the gender of a person's sexual partner played a role in the experiences of different gender identity groups.

What do these findings mean?

These findings suggest that societal expectations linked to traditional male and female roles might influence people's well-being and sexuality, putting pressure on them to conform to established gender norms. The study has its limitations, which are also discussed by the researchers.

Gender identity transcends the physical characteristics of sex assigned at birth, encompassing an individual's self-concept that may align with, differ from, or extend beyond societal norms (Wood & Eagly, 2015). Biological sex is linked to gender identity, which encompasses people's self-definitions of masculinity and femininity (Wood & Eagly,

2009). Along with gender roles, attitudes, expectations, and stereotypes, the overall gender identity is shaped (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Stets & Burke, 2000) within social and cultural contexts (Brannon, 2010).

Originating from a heteronormative perspective that defines gender strictly within a binary framework of men and women (Ferrari et al., 2021), there has been a shift towards a more nuanced viewpoint that, particularly in recent years, acknowledges a diverse spectrum of gender identities and experiences (Perry et al., 2019). On the one hand, societal assignment of roles based on biological sex reinforces the masculinity – femininity distinction, impacting interpersonal relationships, identity, and mental health (Rudman & Glick, 2021). Adherence to these norms may lead to negative effects, including inadequacy, psychosocial difficulties, mental health problems and behavioral deviance (Perry et al., 2019; Rovira et al., 2022; Van Houtte, 2021).

On the other hand, recognizing gender diversity is crucial. Experiences and identities challenging the “man – woman” dichotomy, like those of transgender or gender-fluid individuals, prompt science to rethink traditional notions (Diamond, 2020). Studying how individuals experience gender identity, both alongside and beyond sexual identity, is vital for promoting wellness and eradicating stigma related to gender and sexual identity (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022; Price-Feeney et al., 2020), necessitating further exploration due to gaps in understanding gender identities beyond “man – woman” and “masculinity – femininity” binaries (Pascoal et al., 2019; Scandurra et al., 2023).

Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) addresses unique stressors in stigmatized groups and is particularly relevant for studying non-binary and fluid gender identities facing rigid binary norms. The pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, coupled with a lack of understanding, validation, and acceptance, significantly contributes to chronic stress (Borgogna et al., 2019). Discrimination and interpersonal (micro)aggressions further burden their daily lives (Arijs et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, the exploration of non-binary and fluid gender identities underscores the potential in diverse gender experiences. These identities highlight the need for a more flexible understanding of gender that embraces multiple identities and challenges societal norms, fostering authentic self-expression (Kondakciu et al., 2022). New directions for future research include the still-developing studies on individuals who do not strictly identify as men or women. There is a need to create research protocols that include those with fluid or non-binary gender identities (Herrmann et al., 2024). Although minority stress negatively impacts those who do not conform to heteronormative norms, evidence indicates that individuals with fluid gender identities may experience well-being benefits (Matud et al., 2019). Consequently, research should prioritize key aspects of human existence, including well-being, sexuality, and interpersonal relationships (Fiani & Han, 2020; Johansson et al., 2022).

Finally, psychosexuality investigates the psychological dimensions of human sexuality, encompassing biological traits, emotions, thoughts, fantasies, and their influence on sexual experiences and sexual well-being (Sakaluk et al., 2020). The comprehension of psychosexuality clarifies the formation of sexual attitudes, the influence of societal factors on psychosexual experiences and behavior, and the impact of personal experiences on psychosexual well-being and the quality of romantic relationships (Bancroft, 2008; Lehmiller, 2023). Psychosexuality, linked to romantic relationships and mental well-being (Leavitt et al., 2019; Peixoto et al., 2018), coupled with partner's gender role in sexual dynamics (Thomeer et al., 2020), warrants further research (Sarno et al., 2020; Velten & Margraf, 2017).

The Present Study

Within the theoretical framework of identity intersection (Crenshaw, 1991), this research seeks to move beyond the “man – woman” dichotomy regarding individual well-being and psychosexual aspects. From this perspective, contemporary studies aim to understand diverse gender experiences and to challenge rigid gender frameworks (Robbins & McGowan, 2016). This approach examines interconnected aspects of gender identity, such as roles and norms, within a sociocultural context (Shields, 2008). Additionally, informed by Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003), this study explores the impact of heteronormativity on well-being, and psychosexuality.

There is a growing number of young people that identify themselves outside that binary framework and future research needs to focus on finding ways to foster their well-being (Diamond, 2020). To address this, we used the Gender Identity Scale (GIS, Ho & Mussap, 2019) to assess gender identities beyond traditional categories. The survey aimed to explore individuals' gender identity experiences without requiring them to classify themselves into predefined categories (e.g., woman, man, non-binary, cis, trans).

Finally, this study examines the role of the romantic partner in people's well-being, incorporating the partner's gender as a significant factor. Examining gender identities in romantic relationships must consider partners' genders, as societal norms impact dynamics and well-being (Chen et al., 2024). Pleck's (1981, 1995) Gender Role Strain Paradigm shows how societal pressures affect mental health, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach to erotic dynamics. Understanding these interactions can lead to better strategies for enhancing relationship well-being.

Research Questions (RQ)

The first step involved the creation of latent Gender Identity Groups (GIGs) based on participants' responses to the GIS. Based on the resulting gender identity groups, the following RQs were set.

1. Do participants' GIGs differ in their levels of well-being?

2. Do participants' GIGs differ in their levels of psychosexual aspects?
3. Do participants' GIGs interact with the gender of their romantic partner in terms of their well-being levels?

Method

Procedure

Initial Adaptation to Greek Language

All tools were initially translated and adapted into Greek, as they were originally in English (Behling & Law, 2000). Two bilingual graduates from a Department of Greek Translators conducted forward translation, followed by adaptation to the local cultural context. Six Greek psychologists independently evaluated the translation's psychological representation, achieving high agreement ($\kappa = .95$). Backward translation into English showed a high degree of agreement between the two English versions ($\kappa = .95$) (McHugh, 2012).

Survey Administration

The cross-sectional study collected data through an electronically and print administered questionnaire, utilizing convenience and snowball sampling techniques, which can offer a comprehensive overview of the studied condition (Bryman, 2016; Passmore & Baker, 2005). The questionnaire was posted on the Facebook platform, in groups unrelated to the topic, between October and December 2022. The study received ethical approval from the Panteion University Ethics Committee, adhering to personal data protection principles (Hellenic Data Protection Authority, www.dpa.gr). Questionnaire completion was anonymous and voluntary.

Participants

The total sample involved 2907 Greek adults ($N = 2907$), among whom 708 (24.4%) identified as men based on their sex assigned at birth, while 2199 (75.6%) identified as women. The age range varied from 18 to 69 years, with a mean age of 34 years ($M = 34.04$, $SD = 8.7$). Regarding the gender of their current or last partner, 75.2% ($n = 2187$) of the sample reported being in a relationship with a man, 24% ($n = 697$) with a woman, and 0.8% ($n = 23$) with a non-binary individual.

Measures

Quantitative data were collected using a structured personal questionnaire. The confidence interval was set at 95%, and the margin of error at 5% (Kosar et al., 2018). For

post hoc comparisons, the Tukey test was chosen, as recommended in the international literature for cases where homoscedasticity is not violated (Pereira et al., 2015).

In some analyses (where reported), the confidence interval was set at 99%, and the margin of error at 1% to tighten the criterion for rejecting the null hypothesis (Pallant, 2013) due to the violation of Levene's test of Equality of Variances. In this case, the Welch's test was used for samples with unequal variances and heterogeneous populations (Jan & Shieh, 2014), and the Games-Howell test for non-parametric post hoc comparisons (Rusticus & Lovato, 2019). All statistical analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS v.29 and "R" for Windows with the "Mclust" and "psych" packages for the Latent Class Analysis.

Gender Identity Scale (GIS)

The GIS (Ho & Mussap, 2019) is a three-statement scale that asks participants to indicate, for each question, the extent to which they self-identify with specific gender(s) on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 11 (very much). The questions include identification with "male/man/boy" (1a), "female/woman/girl" (1b), and "other gender" (1c). Participants were required to provide values for all three questions.

The scale operates on the premise that individuals possess an intrinsic sense of gender identity, encompassing feelings of being a woman, man, girl, boy, both, or neither. Gender, as a social construct, assigns psychological and sociocultural attributes based on anatomical features, incorporating a wide array of concepts related to "man" and "woman", including social norms, stereotypes, gender expectations, roles, and their internalization (Lips, 2020).

Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF)

The participants' well-being was assessed using the MHC-SF (Keyes et al., 2008), which comprises 14 statements presented in a 6-point Likert scale. It evaluates positive mental health across four dimensions: Emotional well-being, Social well-being, Psychological well-being, and Positive Functioning (which includes Social and Psychological well-being). The MHC-SF exhibits high overall cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ($\alpha > .89$) and is a tool widely used in well-being research (Gloster et al., 2021). Each statement evaluates the frequency with which it applied to the individual within the last month (e.g., How often did you feel happy during the last month?). The rating an individual could assign to each statement ranged from zero ("never") to five ("every day"). Higher scores indicate higher levels of well-being. In the current study cronbach's alpha was .88 for Emotional well-being, .81 for Social well-being, .85 for Psychological well-being and .89 for Positive functioning.

The Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire (MSQ)

The MSQ (Snell et al., 1993) comprises 12 subscales that measure specific sexual aspects. It consists of 60 statements in which the individual is asked to respond to the extent they consider the specific statement a personal characteristic on a 5-point Likert scale. These 12 MSQ subscales are: (1) *sexual esteem*: the inherent inclination of an individual to positively assess their sexual relational capabilities; (2) *sexual preoccupation*: tendency to be preoccupied and obsessed with sex; (3) *internal sexual control*: the belief that one's sexual aspects are determined by the individual; (4) *sexual consciousness*: a person's inclination to contemplate their sexuality and attend to internal sensations pertinent to sexual arousal; (5) *sexual motivation*: the desire to engage in a sexual relationship; (6) *sexual anxiety*: the inclination for tension, anxiety, or discomfort related to one's sexuality; (7) *sexual assertiveness*: a predisposing tendency for a person to act and behave in an independent and self-reliant manner regarding their sexuality; (8) *sexual depression*: a tendency for a person to be depressed about the sexual aspects of their life; (9) *external sexual control*: the belief that human sexuality is determined by influences outside the individual's personal control, i.e. environment or chance; (10) *sexual monitoring*: the external public concern and/or reflection about others' impressions of one's sexuality; (11) *fear of sexual relationships*: reflects a person's anxiety and hesitation about sexual relationships and sexual activity and (12) *sexual satisfaction*: whether a person feels satisfaction and pleasure with their sexual relationship(s). Cronbach's alpha coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for MSQ

12 subscales of the MSQ	Snell et al. (1993)	Current study
1. Sexual esteem	.87	.87
2. Sexual preoccupation	.94	.93
3. Internal sexual control	.80	.72
4. Sexual consciousness	.71	.73
5. Sexual motivation	.91	.87
6. Sexual anxiety	.83	.87
7. Sexual assertiveness	.77	.75
8. Sexual depression	.92	.90
9. External sexual control	.86	.88
10. Sexual monitoring	.90	.82
11. Fear of sexual relationships	.82	.77
12. Sexual satisfaction	.90	.91

Demographics

The last section included basic demographic information such as sex assigned at birth and the gender of the current or last romantic/sexual partner.

Results

Gender Identity Groups (GIGs)

The focus was on the interpretation of individual responses to all three GIS questions and subsequently on the prediction of unobservable factors (gender groups/classes). Latent Class Analysis (LCA) analyzes patterns of participants' responses and heterogeneity to group individuals into latent factors. It also allows for the assessment of the power and goodness-of-fit indices of various LCA models (Sinha et al., 2021; Weller et al., 2020).

LCA Results

For the total sample, the best model based on the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) is a 9-factor model of the EEV form (ellipsoidal – variable orientation, equal volume, and shape). The Integrated Complete-data Likelihood (ICL) criterion is also used as an alternative for determining the best model (Whittaker & Miller, 2021). In this case, the ICL criterion also identified the EEV model with 9 factors (groups). The results of the LCA are presented in the Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4. Table 5 presents the nine GIGs that emerged from the analysis, the number of people per group and the probability of a participant's inclusion in that group, based on the mean representation in man, woman and other gender.

Table 2

LCA Model With 9 Factors

Model EEV	LL	BIC	df	ICL
9 factors	-11491.39	-23337.43	65	-23630.05

Note. Model acronym explanation: Each acronym is a three-letter code, where each letter indicates how the covariance matrix is parameterized in terms of Volume, Shape and Orientation. The letters: E (Equal across all components), V (Variable across components) and I (Identity matrix – no shape or orientation, spherical).

Table 3
Results of Model Comparison Based on the BIC Criterion

Factor	LCA Model									
	EII	VII	EEI	VEI	VVI	EEE	VEE	EVE	VVE	EVV
1	-46671.45	-46671.45	-44862.53	-44862.53	-44862.53	-44862.53	-39378.78	-39378.78	-39378.78	-39378.78
2	-36083.34	N/A	-35671.00	N/A	N/A	-35123.51	N/A	N/A	-34599.93	N/A
3	-33025.06	N/A	-31616.06	N/A	N/A	-31082.52	N/A	N/A	-30959.86	N/A
4	-31618.10	N/A	-31492.08	N/A	N/A	-31114.48	N/A	N/A	-28583.28	N/A
5	-31190.56	N/A	-29203.26	N/A	N/A	-29040.41	N/A	N/A	-28286.73	N/A
6	-30789.11	N/A	-28697.99	N/A	N/A	-29894.71	N/A	N/A	-26943.20	N/A
7	-28646.40	N/A	-30784.79	N/A	N/A	-29895.62	N/A	N/A	-24942.36	N/A
8	-28419.75	N/A	-27321.15	N/A	N/A	-27714.68	N/A	N/A	-24550.85	N/A
9	-28240.79	N/A	-27352.92	N/A	N/A	-26379.33	N/A	N/A	-23337.43	N/A

Note. The best-fitting model based on the BIC criterion, is highlighted in bold.

Table 4
Results of Model Comparison Based on the ICL Criterion

Factor	LCA Model											
	EII	VII	EEI	VEI	VVI	EEE	VEE	EVE	VVE	EEV	VEV	VVV
1	-46671.45	-46671.45	-44862.53	-44862.53	-44862.53	-44862.53	-39378.78	-39378.78	-39378.78	-39378.78	-39378.78	-39378.78
2	-36141.19	N/A	-35683.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	-35137.33	N/A	N/A	-34613.20	N/A	N/A
3	-33066.61	N/A	-32724.35	N/A	N/A	N/A	-31095.54	N/A	N/A	-30968.19	N/A	N/A
4	-31713.12	N/A	-31886.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	-32047.75	N/A	N/A	-28587.49	N/A	N/A
5	-31295.43	N/A	-30799.27	N/A	N/A	N/A	-29954.73	N/A	N/A	-27947.86	N/A	N/A
6	-31484.54	N/A	-31012.58	N/A	N/A	N/A	-29929.66	N/A	N/A	-27149.79	N/A	N/A
7	-30846.85	N/A	-28956.24	N/A	N/A	N/A	-30636.93	N/A	N/A	-26804.42	N/A	N/A
8	-31052.89	N/A	-29236.67	N/A	N/A	N/A	-28328.05	N/A	N/A	-25563.13	N/A	N/A
9	-28899.40	N/A	-29400.28	N/A	N/A	N/A	-28330.08	N/A	N/A	-23630.05	N/A	N/A

Note. The best-fitting model based on the BIC criterion, is highlighted in bold.

Table 5

The Nine GIGs, Participants per Group (n) and Percentages of the Total (%), Based on the Mean (M) Representation in Man, Woman, and Other Gender

GIG	n	%	M		
			Man	Woman	Other
1: Woman + Man + (Other)	50	1.67	6.20	8.49	2.25
2: Woman	113	14.50	1.09	10.37	1.07
3: Woman + (Man)	1787	46.71	1.43	10.68	1.00
4: Man	132	10.35	10.20	1.06	1.33
5: Other + (Woman + Man)	88	3.03	5.94	6.34	8.88
6: Woman + (Other)	89	7.32	1.00	10.47	2.52
7: Man + (Woman)	551	13.11	10.46	1.55	1.00
8: Woman + (Other + Man)	46	1.56	6.55	9.10	7.23
9: [Woman + Man] + (Other)	51	1.75	7.90	10.87	4.23
Total	2907	100	—	—	—

Note. The GIG names are based on the mean representation of each gender. The first part of each GIG name is the gender that has the most power in each group, followed by the second and the third (if any). The bolded values indicate the total sample size and its corresponding percentage.

Research Questions (RQ)

RQ1: Do Participants' GIGs Differ in Their Levels of Well-Being?

Four one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to investigate differences between the nine GIGs in terms of the four subscales of MHC-SF.

Initially, with emotional well-being as the dependent variable, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 3.99, p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons (Tukey test) revealed that the “Woman” GIG ($M = 2.61, SD = 1.13$) experienced less emotional well-being than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.14, p = .031$), as well as the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.15, p = .016$). Additionally, the “Man” GIG ($M = 2.63, SD = 1.19$) experienced less emotional well-being than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.14, p = .031$) and “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.15, p = .016$) GIGs.

Subsequently, with psychological well-being as the dependent variable, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 4.10, p < .001$. It appeared that the “Woman” GIG ($M = 2.72, SD = 0.99$) experienced lower psychological well-being than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.01, p = .002$), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.00, p = .007$), and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIGs ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.90, p = .009$).

Setting positive functioning as the dependent variable, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 3.05, p = .002$. The “Woman” GIG ($M = 2.27, SD = 0.89$) reported less positive functioning than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 2.57, SD = 0.93, p = .002$).

.026), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.92$, $p = .017$), and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.78$, $p = .015$) GIGs.

Finally, the effect of the GIGs on social well-being was not statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 1.66$, $p = .101$.

RQ2: Do Participants' GIGs Differ in Their Levels of Psychosexual Aspects?

Twelve one-way ANOVAs were conducted to investigate differences between the nine GIGs regarding all subscales of the MSQ.

Initially, in terms of attributions to an internal sexual control center, the effect of gender identity groups was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 3.64$, $p < .001$. Through post-hoc comparisons (Tukey test), it appeared that the “Woman” GIG ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.82$) believed to a lesser extent in an internal sexual control center compared to the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.75$, $p = .027$) and the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.77$, $p = .004$).

In relation to sexual motivation, the effect of gender identity groups was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 8.65$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons revealed numerous differences between the GIGs of the sample. Specifically, the “Woman” GIG ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.05$) exhibited lower sexual motivation compared to the “Woman + Man + (Other)” ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.18$, $p = .031$), the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.02$, $p < .001$), the “Man” ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.04$, $p < .001$), the “Other + (Woman + Man)” ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.11$, $p = .002$), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.98$, $p < .001$), and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.91$, $p < .001$) GIGs.

Also, the “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.02$) had less sexual motivation than the “Man + (Woman)” GIG ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.98$, $p < .001$). The “Woman + (Other)” GIG ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.05$) also had less sexual motivation than the “Man + (Woman)” GIG ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.98$, $p = .046$). The “Man + (Woman)” GIG ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.98$) had greater sexual motivation than the “Woman + (Other + Man)” GIG ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.02$, $p = .006$). Finally, the “Woman + (Other + Man)” GIG ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.02$) showed less sexual motivation than the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIG ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.91$, $p = .037$).

In terms of sexual assertiveness, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 5.62$, $p < .001$. Specifically, the “Woman” GIG ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.93$) had lower sexual assertiveness than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.89$, $p < .001$), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.91$, $p < .001$) and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIGs ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.76$, $p < .001$). Also, the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIG had higher sexual assertiveness than the “Man” GIG ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.80$, $p = .013$).

With sexual satisfaction as the dependent variable, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, $F(8, 2898) = 4.86$, $p < .001$. Here, the GIG “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.16$) showed higher sexual satisfaction than the GIG “Man” ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.18$, $p = .014$). Moreover, the GIG “[Woman + Man] + Other” ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.27$) reported higher

sexual satisfaction than the “Woman” ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.14, p = .024$) and “Man” GIG ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.18, p = .014$).

Regarding the remaining MSQ subscales, the confidence interval was set at 99%, and the margin of error at 1% due to the violation of Levene's test of Equality of Variances. Welch's test was employed, along with the Games-Howell test for non-parametric post hoc comparisons.

The effect of the GIGs on sexual esteem was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 270.26) = 7.08, p < .001$. The “Woman” GIG ($M = 2.91, SD = 0.96$) had lower sexual self-esteem than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.49, SD = 0.91, p < .001$), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 3.43, SD = 0.97, p < .001$), and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIGs ($M = 3.72, SD = 0.97, p < .001$).

The effect of the GIGs on sexual preoccupation was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 270.22) = 23.38, p < .001$. The “Woman” GIG ($M = 1.83, SD = 0.95$) had less sexual preoccupation than the “Man” ($M = 2.72, SD = 1.26, p < .001$), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 2.64, SD = 1.09, p < .001$), and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIGs ($M = 2.50, SD = 1.01, p = .005$). Also, the “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 2.04, SD = 0.96$) exhibited lower sexual preoccupation than both the “Man” ($M = 2.72, SD = 1.26, p < .001$) and the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 2.64, SD = 1.09, p < .001$). Furthermore, it appeared that the “Man” GIG exhibited higher sexual preoccupation than the “Woman + (Other + Man)” GIG ($M = 1.97, SD = 0.82, p < .001$). Finally, the “Man + (Woman)” GIG had higher sexual preoccupation than the “Woman + (Other + Man)” GIG ($p < .001$).

Continuing with sexual consciousness as the dependent variable, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 268.54) = 5.65, p < .001$. The “Woman” GIG ($M = 3.30, SD = 0.84$) had a lower degree of sexual consciousness compared to the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.73, p < .001$) and the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 3.78, SD = 0.71, p < .001$).

As for the sexual anxiety, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 268.60) = 11.80, p < .001$. The “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 1.97, SD = 0.96$) showed less sexual anxiety than the “Man” ($M = 2.56, SD = 1.16, p < .001$) and the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 2.29, SD = 1.11, p < .001$). Also, the “Man” GIG showed higher sexual anxiety than the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIG ($M = 1.93, SD = 1.04, p = .015$).

Regarding sexual depression, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 269.03) = 5.45, p < .001$. The “Man” GIG ($M = 2.57, SD = 1.33$) showed higher sexual depression than the “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 2.06, SD = 1.10, p < .001$).

The effect of the GIGs on external sexual control was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 268.54) = 15.74, p < .001$. The “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 1.89, SD = 0.90$) showed lower rates of belief in an external sexual control center than the “Man” ($M = 2.49, SD = 1.15, p < .001$), the “Man + (Woman)” ($M = 2.28, SD = 1.05, p < .001$), and the “Other + (Woman + Man)” GIGs ($M = 2.40, SD = 1.00, p < .001$).

Then, with sexual monitoring as the dependent variable, the effect of the GIGs was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 267.98) = 8.06, p < .001$. The “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 1.80, SD = 0.83$) reported a lower degree of sexual monitoring than the “Man” ($M = 2.22, SD = 0.93, p < .001$) and the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 2.06, SD = 0.97, p < .001$).

Finally, the effect of the GIGs on fear of sexual relationships was statistically significant, Welch $F(8, 269) = 5.96, p < .001$. The “Woman + (Man)” GIG ($M = 2.11, SD = 0.91$) reported being less afraid of sexual relationships than the “Man” ($M = 2.45, SD = 0.96, p = .004$) and the “Man + (Woman)” GIGs ($M = 2.28, SD = 1.09, p = .022$).

RQ3: Do Participants' GIGs Interact With the Gender of Their Romantic Partner in Terms of Their Well-Being Levels?

Four two-way ANOVAs were conducted to investigate whether there is an interaction between the nine GIGs and the gender of the partner (man, woman) with respect to the four subscales of MHC-SF. We excluded 23 participants who reported current or past sexual/romantic involvement with a non-binary person due to low participation in this category.

There was an interaction of GIGs and partner's gender on psychological well-being, $F(8, 2866) = 2.62, p = .007$. Specifically, an effect of GIGs was found to be significant when the partner's gender was man, $F(8, 2178) = 3.96, p < .001$. Through post hoc analyses (Tukey test) it appeared that the “Woman” GIG ($n = 109$) ($M = 2.68, SD = 0.98$) had lower social well-being than the “Woman + (Man)” ($n = 1733$) ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.01, p < .001$) and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIGs ($n = 43$) ($M = 3.37, SD = 0.83, p = .005$). Moreover, the effect of GIGs was significant when the partner's gender was woman, $F(8, 688) = 2.66, p = .007$. The “Man” GIG ($n = 113$) ($M = 2.78, SD = 1.09$) reported lower psychological well-being than the “Man + (Woman)” GIG ($n = 469$) ($M = 3.14, SD = 0.98, p = .018$).

Also, partner's gender had an effect on the “Man + (Woman)” GIG, $F(1, 537) = 6.08, p = .014$. Individuals with this GIG who were in a relationship with a woman ($n = 469$) ($M = 3.14, SD = 0.98$) reported higher psychological well-being than individuals with the same GIG but in a relationship with a man ($n = 70$) ($M = 2.83, SD = 1.12$).

An interaction was also observed for positive functioning, $F(8, 2866) = 2.51, p = .010$. Again, the effect of the GIGs was significant in the case where the partner's gender was man, $F(8, 2178) = 2.89, p = .003$. The “Woman” GIG ($M = 2.25, SD = 0.89$) had lower positive functioning than the “Woman + (Man)” ($M = 2.58, SD = 0.93, p = .009$) and the “[Woman + Man] + Other” GIGs ($M = 2.85, SD = 0.75, p = .009$). In addition, the effect of the GIGs was significant when the partner's gender was woman, $F(8, 688) = 2.56, p = .009$. However, post hoc comparisons did not show any statistically significant difference between the GIGs, except for the “Man” GIG ($M = 2.33, SD = 1.00$) reporting lower positive functioning than the “Man + (Woman)” GIG ($M = 2.63, SD = 0.91, p = .050$); however, it fell within the threshold of statistical significance.

Furthermore, partner's gender had an effect on the "Man + (Woman)" GIG, $F(1, 537) = 5.27, p = .022$. Individuals with this GIG who were in a relationship with a woman ($M = 2.63, SD = 0.91$) reported higher positive functioning than individuals with the same GIG who were in a relationship with a man ($M = 2.36, SD = 1.00$).

In terms of social well-being, the interaction was statistically significant, $F(8, 2866) = 2.02, p = .040$. The only statistically significant result was the effect of GIGs when the partner's gender was woman, $F(8, 688) = 2.15, p = .029$. However, there was a violation of Levene's test of Equality of Variances ($p = .028$). Finally, the results showed no interaction between the GIGs and their partner's gender on emotional well-being, $F(8, 2866) = 1.81, p = .071$.

Discussion

Our study aimed to expand understanding in underexplored areas by moving beyond the conventional "man – woman" binary. Utilizing LCA, we identified nine distinct Gender Identity Groups (GIGs) based on participants' self-perception in terms of man and woman characteristics, as well as characteristics of another gender.

Notably, individuals exclusively aligning with either masculine or feminine characteristics exhibited the lowest well-being indicators. This might be attributed to internalizing societal roles and expectations associated with "man" and "woman", (Bojanowska & Zalewska, 2016; Gerdes & Levant, 2018). This internalization of roles and expectations, stemming from social constructs of gender, pressures them to conform to these imperatives, subjecting them to undue stress (Kachel et al., 2016). Particularly noteworthy was the consistently lower well-being scores of the "Woman" GIG, reflecting the challenges women in Greece face, possibly surpassing those encountered by men. In Greece, the socio-cultural conditions appear to systematically favor men over women, perpetuating inequalities and consequently impacting their mental health (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022; UN Women, 2017). Conversely, those embracing elements of both genders or, additionally, elements of another gender demonstrated the highest well-being indicators, in line with recent research findings (Matud et al., 2019). This suggests that a more fluid gender identity provides greater freedom from societal imperatives related to masculinity and femininity, positively influencing both interpersonal relationships and broader social engagement.

Psychosexual aspects mirrored this pattern across GIGs. Purely masculine gender experiences correlated with increased sexual anxiety, relationship fear, and judgment concerns, indicative of stereotypical masculine traits (Clarke et al., 2015; Sweeney, 2014). Recent studies have also shown that individuals who experience their gender as purely "man or woman", exhibited lower sexual self-esteem, possibly due to efforts to conform to societal gender norms in the sexual domain (Good & Sanchez, 2010; Levant & Richmond, 2016; Sanchez et al., 2012). Contrastingly, a more fluid gender identity correla-

ted with heightened sexual assertiveness and satisfaction, facilitating assertiveness and adaptability (Martin et al., 2017), potentially enhancing relational fulfillment and overall sexual satisfaction.

Concerning Gender Identity Groups (GIGs) and the partner's gender, the findings revealed distinct patterns influenced by societal expectations and stereotypes linked to traditional gender roles. Individuals identifying as "women" and being in relationships with men might experience heightened pressure to conform, potentially resulting in lower psychological well-being. Conversely, individuals identifying as "men" and being in relationships with women may face similar challenges impacting their psychological well-being. This pattern is consistent with Pleck's (1981, 1995) Paradigm. In addition, recent research has indicated a similar trend, demonstrating that conformity to traditional gender norms negatively affects the dynamics of romantic relationships, in terms of satisfaction and functionality (Bareket et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2024).

Another explanation is that those embracing both genders, or a fluid identity may benefit from a broader perspective, fostering open communication and supportive environments (Gamble & Gamble, 2020). This adaptability may create a supportive environment, positively impacting psychological well-being. In contrast, those who experience their gender identity in a traditional way may face challenges due to rigid gender expectations, potentially leading to limited communication and higher stress levels, impacting psychological well-being (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009; Wong et al., 2017).

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study adds to the current body of literature, it is important to acknowledge some notable limitations. Primarily, concerning the sample size, although it was substantial, there was an uneven distribution of participation between men and women, a commonly observed phenomenon in psychological and social research (Becker, 2022; Smith, 2008). Regarding the sampling approach, data collection employed convenience and snowball sampling techniques, both acknowledged as non-probabilistic methods frequently used in social research (Etikan et al., 2016; Johnson, 2014). However, securing generalizability to the broader population is uncertain (Jager et al., 2017).

Additionally, participants were tasked with responding to self-report scales, a method inherently susceptible to insincere, socially desirable, or mechanical responses (Hunter, 2012). Another limitation is the lack of qualitative data, which is crucial for understanding the nuances of societal roles and expectations in gender concepts. Future research would benefit from including interviews with couples to explore these dynamics in detail. For example, it would be important to explore how communication styles and gender role negotiation shape well-being in diverse gender identity contexts. Lastly, it is essential to note that the correlational nature of this study restricts the establishment of causal relationships between the variables under investigation (Rahman, 2016). Future

research could employ experimental designs to establish causal relationships between the variables under investigation.

Practical Implications

The findings of this research offer valuable applications for psychotherapy, benefiting both individuals and couples. Beyond well-being, the results highlight significant psychosexual aspects like sexual assertiveness, anxiety, fear, and satisfaction, which can be key therapeutic targets. Addressing these areas can enhance relationship quality and individual mental health. These insights can guide the development of tailored and effective therapeutic interventions, improving psychotherapy outcomes.

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Ethics Statement: The survey received approval from the Ethics committee of Panteion University and fully adhered to principles of personal data protection [Hellenic Data Protection Authority (www.dpa.gr)]. The completion of the questionnaires was anonymous and voluntary. No digital data were collected that could lead to the physical or digital identification of the participants in this research. We randomly assigned a unique case number for each participant.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are openly available (see [Kassaras, 2023](#)).

Supplementary Materials

For this article, data is freely available (see [Kassaras, 2023](#)).

Index of Supplementary Materials

Kassaras, I. (2023). *Gender identity, well-being and psychosexuality* [Data]. OSF. <https://osf.io/v24ar>

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