

Modern Process of Social Adaptation and Integration of Women Athletes in Public Life

Aftimichuk Olga*

Department of Combat Sports and Gymnastics, State University of Physical Education and Sports, Moldova

***Corresponding author:** Aftimichuk Olga, Department of Combat Sports and Gymnastics, State University of Physical Education and Sports, Moldova

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 📅 April 08, 2024

Published: 📅 April 18, 2024

Citation: Aftimichuk Olga. Modern Process of Social Adaptation and Integration of Women Athletes in Public Life. Biomed J Sci & Tech Res 56(2)-2024. BJSTR.MS.ID.008816.

ABSTRACT

The feminization of sports, as an objective social phenomenon, is spreading not only in our country, but throughout the whole world. Women are mastering traditionally male sports. It is not surprising to see a woman leader in all high-ranking positions in various fields of science, culture, education, economics, politics, business, not to mention sports. Regardless of the functions performed by a woman in the social environment, she performs one of the most important missions for the human race – the childbearing/reproductive one. Women's sports and increasing physical activity can be considered as one of the factors influencing the surrounding eco-social environment on health in general and on reproductive function in particular. A comprehensive adaptive approach to the problem of a female athlete involving the entire arsenal of pedagogical, psychological, sociological and medical measures is the only correct one in achieving the highest goal of society: preserving the gene pool, harmonizing the personal and social life of a woman, and therefore a harmonious development of society.

Keywords: Women Athletes; Health; Social Adaptation

Introduction

The conditions of modern society provide women with enormous opportunities for sports self-realization. The feminization of sports, as an objective social phenomenon, is spreading not only in our country, but throughout the whole world. Women are mastering traditionally male sports. The reasons for this are: changes in the socio-economic role of women in society, the general process of feminization of all aspects of social life. Today, women do not want to concede to men in anything: it is not surprising to see a woman leader in all high-ranking positions in various fields of science, culture, education, economics, politics, business, not to mention sports. This position of a woman in society places corresponding demands on her personal qualities and, importantly, on her external and internal form. This implies a healthy lifestyle, a high level of performance, both mental and physical, strengthening, preserving and maintaining a woman's health, her spiritual and moral standards. However, it is not only the position in society that forces a woman to be active and healthy. We must not forget that regardless of the functions performed by a woman in the social environment, she performs one of the most important missions

for the human race – the childbearing/reproductive one. This classifies the female half of humanity as a certain group of people who, in addition to being aware of their expressed gender identity, understand their significance and necessity. This process contributes to the formation of a woman's social and group identity (the individual's entry into various communities and awareness of unity with the group environment: [1,2]). This way, an important factor in a woman's social viability is health, not only bodily, physical, but, importantly, mental, psychosocial well-being, determined by the adaptation and integration of the individual in the modern medium.

The Purpose of the Study

Is to identify factors of psychosocial maladaptation of female athletes in order to establish the conditions for their habilitation.

Research Results and Discussions

However, the rapid pace of technogenic transformation of the biosphere and disruption of the body's adaptation against the background of a catastrophic decline in overall health lead to ecological-generative dissonance [3]. In this case, first of all, adaptation

mechanisms that can protect reproductive function are damaged. It is known that the main feature of adaptation in sports, unlike many other areas of human activity, is the multi-stage nature of adaptation to extreme conditions: each subsequent stage of many years of improvement, each competition requires another adaptation leap from the athlete. All this predetermines special requirements for the phenogenetic characteristics of the body, and therefore women's sports and increasing physical activity can be considered as one of the factors influencing the surrounding eco-social environment on health in general and on reproductive function in particular. The mechanisms of suppression of the function of the reproductive system during high physical activity include the following processes: weight loss and energy deficiency. Poor nutrition leads to a decrease in body weight and, more importantly, the percentage of fatty tissue in the body. This, in turn, leads to a decrease in the activity of the process of extragonadal aromatization of androgens into estrogens, as a result of which feedback with the hypothalamus and/or pituitary gland is being disrupted [4,5].

Another negative factor associated with intense training, competitions, eating disorders (anorexia – dietary restriction as part of an inferiority complex in relation to one's appearance; and bulimia – a neuropsychic desire to constantly eat and chew: [6]) is represented by. The psychological stress, which may be one of the reasons that can cause amenorrhea (lack of menstrual bleeding: [7]). The negative impact of excessively intense physical activity on the development of the reproductive function of female athletes in the future can lead to disturbances in the neuroendocrine regulation of the reproductive system [8]. In this case, a special place in the pathogenesis of reproductive dysfunction is given to hyperandrogenism. According to many authors [9] etc, it is the increased level of androgens that causes masculinization, represented by:

- Athletic (male or intersex) morphotype, characterized by tall stature, narrowed pelvis and broad shoulders/
- Hypoplasia of the mammary gland and uterus;
- A rough voice;
- External masculine appearance.

The athletic morphotype in the subpopulation of female athletes is registered in around 66-84.7% of cases, and among highly qualified female athletes – in 70-90%. In turn, insufficiency of ovarian function causes various disorders of the menstrual cycle and infertility, as well as systemic consequences for the body, playing a significant role in the development of osteoporosis and oncological diseases of the female reproductive system [10].

All of the above mentioned often meets with a disapproving reaction associated with the possible negative consequences of professional sports: a negative impact on the female body, reproductive function, the impact of competition on the psyche, on the ability to create a normal family. That is why the issues of socialization, social

adaptation of a female athlete, the development of her normal family life, and the formation of her gender-role behaviour are especially acute today. This is especially true for female athletes who have achieved great success in their sports careers. They are the most vulnerable category of athletes, spoiled by fame, recognition and material reinforcement.

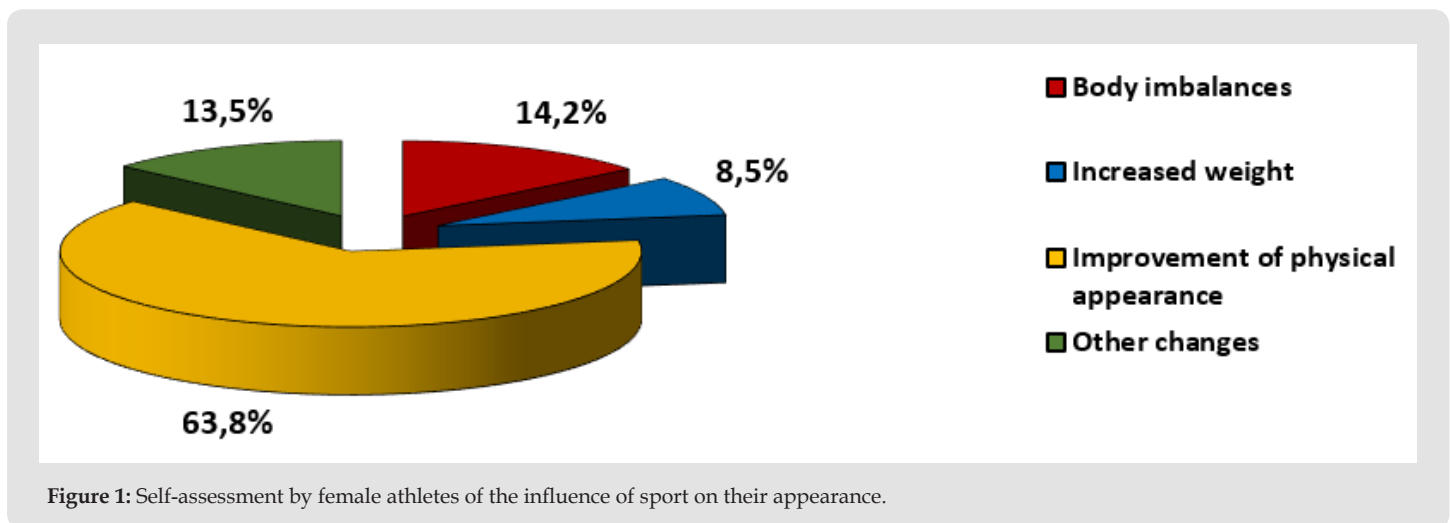
Oblivion, if we keep in mind the short memory of fans, admirers, supporters, can still be experienced. It is more difficult to endure the transition from glory to infamy, from the ranks of celestial beings to the class of mere mortals, from dazzling, healthy youth to frail old age. Not everyone is able to afford a new life, the life after fame. Someone drowns the grief and misunderstanding of others in wine, others suffer while receiving meager disability and old-age pensions. And the more a professional athlete was once favoured, the louder his name was, the bitterer his resentment, the more hopeless his subsequent path in life, when he is already forgotten and no one needs him. There is a certain pattern/conditionality in the fact that athletes who have not achieved significant results are quite successful in realizing themselves as coaches and judges. The process of social adaptation occurs smoothly for them, without any stressful deviations. Athletes who, in parallel with active participation in competitions, received an education at a university, also did not suffer any inconvenience in the social world, since they prudently took care of their future. Many of them could continue their sports careers in veteran teams, which again softened their exit from the world of sports.

The above mentioned can apply to both male and female athletes. However, there are some features of adaptation of a female athlete in modern society. As studies show [11,12], primary socialization carried out by the family is of decisive importance for the upbringing of a girl athlete. The source of influence is the family's personal interest in their child's successful sports activities. Primary socialization contributes to the process of personality development of a girl athlete and gives it a different direction. The child forms his personal "I" through the perception of culture and communication with his family/relatives. The family functions as a link between the child and other systems around him; it helps both the perception of the world in general and the building of relationships in a school or team. In the family, the type of structure for the future behaviour, character, and integration of the girl athlete into her own life, this way, is laid down. However, the sports career of a young female athlete does not always develop successfully and is often very short-lived depending on the type of sport and early specialization, often even in older preschool age (swimming, figure skating, artistic and rhythmic gymnastics, diving). On average, the duration of a sports career is around 10.5 years [13]. Longer sports careers can be observed among athletes, skiers, sports players, and also wrestlers. Conducted sociological studies [12,14] have identified a number of reasons why female athletes leave sports early. It can be the following: injuries, age, health status, mental fatigue, sports failures, inability to withstand high sports loads, disappointment in sports activities, a desire to try oneself in another activity, including getting an education, getting married, etc.

As practice shows, it is very difficult for female athletes, who already in childhood learned the joy of great sports victories, to adapt to social life. A significant role in psychosocial maladjustment is played by the life characteristics of a female athlete in her micro-society, focused exclusively on elite sports. At the same time, a significant part of female athletes begins to engage in sports so that they could to achieve high athletic results. Sports failures in some cases are caused by psychosocial dissonance, the development of mental maladjustment, which ultimately leads to general psychophysical disorders/maladaptation [15]. There is an assumption that playing sports influences the formation of such character traits in female athletes as aggressiveness and cruelty, due to the fact that competitive activity provokes those involved in the manifestation of negative character traits. However, in the course of sociological research conducted by L.I. Lubysheva [12], 45% of the respondents denied the presence of such traits. At the same time, 5% of the female athletes surveyed claim that sports activity contributed to the development of aggressiveness in them, and 7.8% talk about the appearance of cruelty in their behaviours and also associate this with playing sports. At the same time, most women note the positive impact of sports on the formation of their character. Sports, according to the athletes, contributed to the development of communication skills, the formation of determination, concentration and discipline.

In the mentioned studies, special attention was paid to one of the character traits of female athletes – the desire for leadership, since, as practice shows, this quality has a negative impact on the strength of the family life of an athlete. The majority of respondents claim that it was sports activity that shaped their desire for leadership. At the same time, only half of the respondents wanted to be a leader in family life; the other half would not want to occupy a leading position in the family. The same leadership trend already can be observed in the families of married female athletes.

Any study of the female contingent always presupposes their self-assessment of their external and internal state. In this regard, as part of a questionnaire survey [12], the opinions of female athletes about the influence of sports on their appearance and femininity were analysed. Figure 1 shows the self-assessment of female athletes about the influence of sports on their appearance. The majority of women surveyed note the positive impact of sports on their appearance (63.8%). They say they are slimmer and look great. However, sports can also negatively affect the appearance of an athlete, as evidenced by 14.2% of respondents who claim that their weight has become higher than normal due to sports activities. This is especially true for basketball players, swimmers and speed skaters.



To analyse the athletes' self-esteem of their femininity, a preliminary study was conducted on what they consider to be indicators of femininity (Figure 2). From Figure 2 it can be observed that the concept of femininity for female athletes is associated, first of all, with friendliness and politeness (62.1%), pleasant body shape comes in second place (47.2%), sexuality takes third place (44.0%) and in fourth place – a beautiful gait (42.2%). At the same time, 66.0% of the surveyed athletes were satisfied with their femininity; a third of them believe that their femininity needs correction; and only 3.5% of respondents are convinced that they do not possess such a quality as femininity. At the same time, according to the results of correlation analysis, self-esteem of femininity is closely interconnected with the

indicator of self-esteem of one's attractiveness: 87.2% of the female athletes surveyed claim that men like them, a very small part of respondents (0.7%) answered that they rather dislike than like, 11% of respondents found it difficult to answer this question. Summarizing the above analysis of self-esteem of appearance and attractiveness, it can be affirmed that female athletes rate their femininity and attractiveness quite highly. They do not show any complexes about their height or excess weight and believe that it is sports that help them look good. They believe that they are in no way inferior to their peers in attractiveness, that men like them, and, therefore, playing sports can only contribute to the structure of their female destiny.

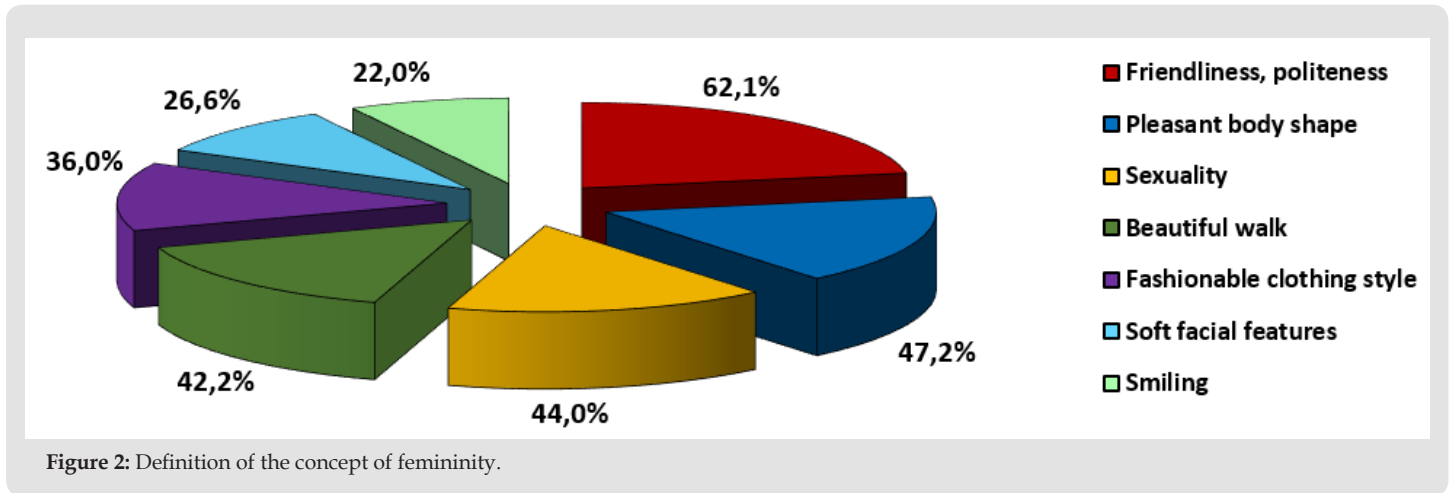


Figure 2: Definition of the concept of femininity.

Most often, problems for female athletes arise at the moment when they leave big-time sports, because the issues of readaptation and resocialization, adaptation to new living conditions become acute. The results of medical and social studies conducted with former athletes show that their personal lives and the implementation of their reproductive program are less successful than those of women who did not engage in sports. Female athletes have many health problems associated with suffering injuries, osteoporosis, which in particularly advanced cases can make a young woman disabled; they are more likely to suffer from endometriosis (invasion of the mucous membrane of the uterine body/endometrium into various tissues and organs: the muscles of the uterus, ovaries, lungs, brain, etc., which leads to pain during menstruation, menorrhagia - increased and prolonged menstrual bleeding); they have an increased incidence of pathological menopause and severe menopausal syndrome [16].

If leaving sports in men is more often associated with objective circumstances (decrease in results, lack of prospects, injuries, incompatibility with a coach or partner), then the reasons for women are

the desire to have a family, friends, profession, entertainment, that is, the emergence of other interests. This process is preceded by a so-called "transition period", which can last several years. About a third of male athletes experience some discomfort about this: on the one hand, athletes do not want to part with their usual way of life, with everyone's attention, with material incentives; on the other hand, a new field of activity either frightens them or seems less attractive, grey, and mundane compared to sports activities that are rich in emotions. The athlete finds himself in a kind of information vacuum, which can lead to isolation, irritability, and aggressiveness. This determines for most athletes the desire to remain in the field of sports, the world of which allows them to feel comfortable, and also to use the accumulated experience of a sports career in their future activities. The profession of trainer is mainly chosen (38.7% of respondents: according to [12]; see Figure 3). According to the study, 17.4% would choose the profession of a physical education instructor, 16.3% – an organizer of physical education and sports work. Only 4.6% of the surveyed athletes associate their professional interests with the profession of physical education teachers.

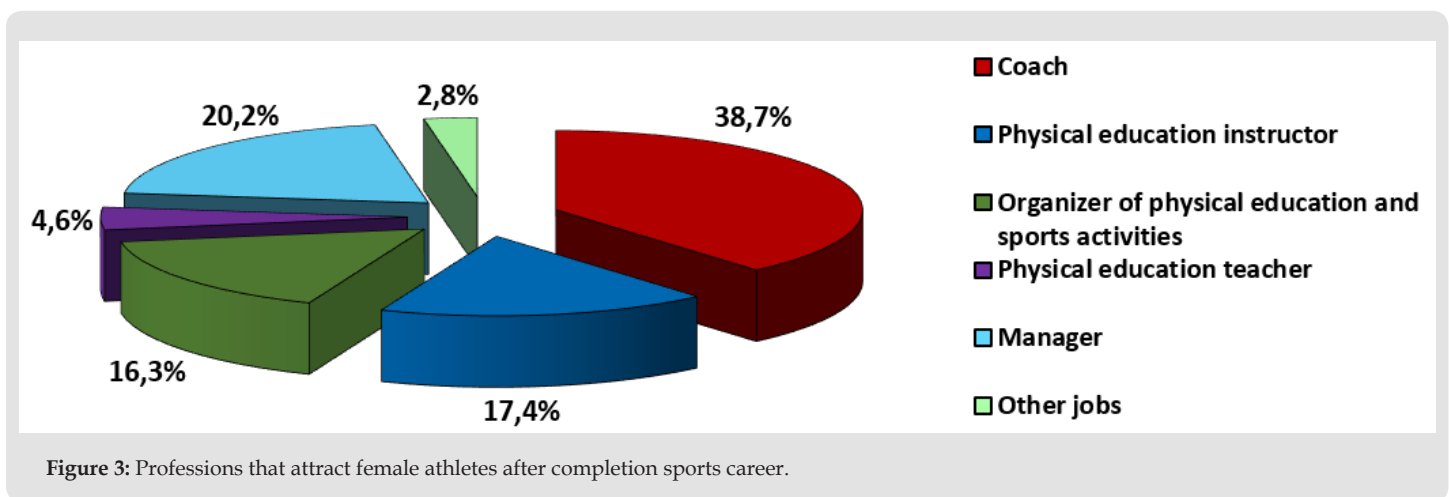


Figure 3: Professions that attract female athletes after completion sports career.

However, female athletes, in comparison with male athletes, realize themselves more successfully in professional activities, especially in modern conditions that require determination, perseverance in achieving goals, and high performance. "It is much easier for women than for men to translate the mental experiences into the physical ones" [[17], p.251]. Among women who were involved in professional sports, there are many successful managers, which is confirmed by sociological research data, where 20.2% of respondents stated that they want to become a manager (Figure 3). Today we can observe a lot of women leaders, both in sports as well in business.

Therefore, the above mentioned allows us to summarize what has been said and determine that a significant role in psychosocial maladaptation is played by the features of the life of a female athlete in her micro society, focused exclusively on elite sports, namely:

- A sharp rejuvenation of women's sports (most female athletes begin to engage in sports in childhood, before the age of 10).
- Emancipation of sports, the development by female athletes of non-traditional, new and purely "male" sports, which is associated with the general trend of feminization of society;
- The confidence of female athletes regarding the positive impact of sports on their health, appearance, attractiveness and femininity;
- Value attitudes of female athletes to sports activities, which are manifested in the awareness of its high importance for the formation of character: sociability, determination, concentration in some cases, sport can also develop negative character traits in women - aggressiveness and cruelty;
- The leading motivation of female athletes is determined by their desire to improve their health and find themselves in a new social circle.

This, in turn, puts forward a number of provisions providing for the improvement of the system of sports competitions, softening the conditions of wrestling, it is necessary to develop special rules for competitions, humanize women's sports, protect women, taking into account the special biosocial role that she plays in society. At the same time, the task of sports medicine doctors is to ensure that, within the framework of the slogan "Sports achievements!" to be on the side of the girl not as a mechanism for setting records, but as a woman – a future mother; since health should always and everywhere occupy a prevailing position [18]. Here it is also necessary to take into account conflicts that arise between the trainer and the sports doctor. In this case, only a clear understanding of the doctor about the possible negative consequences of adaptation disorders and his stable professional and public position on protecting the health and the woman's fulfillment of her main sociobiological role will make it possible to defeat common sense and save the female athlete for motherhood.

Conclusion

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that a comprehensive adaptive approach to the problem of a female athlete involving the entire arsenal of pedagogical, psychological, sociological and medical measures is the only correct one in achieving the highest goal of society: preserving the gene pool, harmonizing the personal and social life of a woman, and therefore a harmonious development of society.

References

1. Kamenskaya EN (2006) Social psychology: Lecture notes / Textbook. (2nd Edn.), Rostov n/D: Phoenix.
2. Nemov RS, Altunina IR (2008) Social psychology: Textbook. St. Petersburg: Peter.
3. Serov VN, Prilepskaya VN, Ovsyannikova TV (2017) Gynecological endocrinology (6th Edn.), Moscow: MEDpress-inform.
4. Artifaksov SB (1996) Andrological aspects of infertile marriage. In: Obstetrics and Gynecology, Russia 2: 46-88.
5. Serov VN (2016) Guide to outpatient care in obstetrics and gynecology. In: V.N. Serova, G.T. Sukhikh, V.N. Prilepsky, V.E. Radzinsky (Eds.), Moscow: GEOTAR-Media.
6. Vitkin J (1997) Woman and stress. St. Petersburg: PiterPress.
7. Chernuha GE, Ilyina, LM, Ivanov IA (2018) Abnormal uterine bleeding: making a diagnosis and choosing treatment. Gynecology, Russia 20(4): 4.
8. Absatarova YuS, Evseeva YuS, Andreeva EN (2023) Neuroendocrine features of the pathogenesis of polycystic ovary syndrome (literature review). In: Problems of Endocrinology, Russia 69(5): 107-114.
9. Unanian AL, Arakelov S, Polonskaia LS, Guriev TD, Kossovich IuM, et al (2014) Hyperandrogenism: The pathogenesis, diagnosis, and therapy (a clinical lecture). In: Russian Bulletin of Obstetrician-Gynecologist 14(2): 101-106.
10. Podzolkova NM, Glazkova OL (2014) Symptom, syndrome, diagnosis. Differential diagnosis in gynecology (3rd Edn.), corrected. and additional Moscow: GEOTAR-Media.
11. Piloyan RA (1984) Motivation for sports activities. Moscow: Physical culture and sport.
12. Lubysheva LI (2000) Woman and sport: social aspect. In: Theory and practice of physical culture, Russia 6: 13-15.
13. Tsizdoveva MA (2018) Sports career and problems of social adaptation of athletes after completion of their career. In: Scientific notes of the University named after PF Lesgaft, Russia 3: 145-149.
14. Stambulova NB (1999) Psychology of a sports career. St. Petersburg: Career Center.
15. Pshenichnikova MG (2000;2002) The phenomenon of stress. In: Emotional stress and its role in pathology. Pathological physiology and experimental therapy, Russia N 2,3,4; N 1,2,3.
16. Broso P, Subrizi R (1996) Gynecologic problems in female athletes, Minerva Ginecologica 48(3): 99-106.
17. Simmel G (1996) Women's culture. Favorites: In 2 vols. Moscow: Lawyer.
18. Chernysheva EN (2023) Adaptation of the female body after completion of a sports career to the effects of power loads. Scientific notes of the University named after PF Lesgaft, Russia 7(221): 359-363.

ISSN: 2574-1241

DOI: 10.26717/BJSTR.2024.56.008816

Aftimichuk Olga. Biomed J Sci & Tech Res



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License

Submission Link: <https://biomedres.us/submit-manuscript.php>



Assets of Publishing with us

- Global archiving of articles
- Immediate, unrestricted online access
- Rigorous Peer Review Process
- Authors Retain Copyrights
- Unique DOI for all articles

<https://biomedres.us/>