Proceeding

9th INSHS International Christmas Sport Scientific Conference, 4-6 December 2014. International Network of Sport and Health Science. Szombathely, Hungary

Competitive sport and self-concept in adolescent

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ABSTRACT

D'Anna, C., Rio, L., & Paloma, F. (2015). Competitive sport and self-concept in adolescent. *J. Hum. Sport Exerc., 9*(Proc1), pp.S425-S429. Self-esteem is the degree to which an individual values himself or herself globally. Several studies have shown that the self-esteem level is a key indicator of positive mental health and well-being. The belief that physical activity and sport are often associated with the best development of self-esteem in adolescent is a commonly held view. However in literature there aren't many studies that investigate the self-esteem level in young athletes that practice competitive sport activities. The aim of this study is to assess the self-esteem level comparing athletes who practice individual sport with athletes who play team sports. In last ten years it has become widely accepted that self-esteem is structured hierarchically and therefore on the top of all there is general self-esteem and secondly there are the various interrelated dimensions between them. The sample consisted of seventy-eight individuals, basketball athletes (M= 20, F= 14) and gymnasts (M=19, F=25). All the participants compiled the Multidimensional Self-Esteem Test (TMA, Erickson), a structural questionnaire on the specific domains (interpersonal relationship, competence, emotionality, school, family, body image). The results showed that both females and males who were physically involved in the practice of sports at competitive level (indifferently whether individual or team sport) have considerably highest level of self-esteem. This data confirms that individuals with the a higher self-esteem manage to apply themselves better in the high-level sports and, at same time, that the competition, for the all disciplines of sport, further strengthens self-esteem. **Key words**: SELF-CONCEPT, WELL-BEING, INDIVIDUAL SPORT, TEAM SPORT.

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9th INSHS International Christmas Sport Scientific Conference, 4-6 December 2014. International Network of Sport and Health Science. Szombathely, Hungary.
JOURNAL OF HUMAN SPORT & EXERCISE ISSN 1988-5202

doi:10.14198/jhse.2015.10.Proc1.35

INTRODUCTION

Among the first definitions of self-esteem, it is found that of William James (1890): "Self-esteem= Success/expectations". According to this concept, self-esteem of a person is the comparison of concrete achieved successes and the corresponding expectations. James, however, neglected in his theory the environmental conditioning, interactive inputs that occur between the individual and his environment, simply consider the Self only in the intraindividual dimension.

Even Cooley (1902) proposed a generalized concept of Self and from these early theoretical models gushed rating esteem scales of one-dimensional nature which have then proved of little use, because they consist of items too disparate and unbalanced with the result of a not suitable global score (Coopersmith 1967, 1984; Rosenberg, 1979).

Wylie (1974, 1979) criticized these modes of self-assessment in numerous scientific articles. In fact, many recent studies, from several weaknesses of the one-dimensional assessment, have tried to study and favor their research towards the analysis of self-esteem in a multidimensional way (Harter, 1983; L'Ecuyer, 1981; Marsh & Holmes, 1990; Minton, 1979; Piers, 1984).

From most of the studies the most important dimensions, that include different aspects, have been identified: interpersonal relationships, competence of environmental control, emotional, educational achievement, family life, bodily experience.

In last ten years it has become widely accepted that self-esteem is structured hierarchically and therefore on the top of all there is general self-esteem and secondly there are the various interrelated dimensions between them (Raiola, Tafuri & Gomez Paloma, 2014).

Many scholars have wondered how it generates the self-esteem concept, in particular wondering if it is an innate mechanism or develops through external sources. Cooley argued that "the self is formed mirrored in relationships with others"; this definition highlights the strong influence that others exert through their reactions to our actions. Those answers are translatable in attitudes and words that tell us what we are for others and they condition our self-image. Even Rosenberg (1965, 1979) highlights the interactionist perspective that sees in the foreground the relationship between the individual environment, arguing that the latter strongly influences the self-concept and self-esteem (Gomez Paloma, Rio, & D'Anna, 2014).
Regarding the Self at school, Bloom's studies (1976) are particularly interesting. He has deepened further the relationship of reciprocity that links the subject and the environment. Some studies have suggested that the difference between the actual self and the ideal self of a person is an important indicator of its social and emotional adaptation (Rogers, 1954). Shavelson (1976) defined seven aspects that should be considered in the definition of the self-concept and self-esteem, giving way to a series of studies that have validated the increasingly multidimensional view of self.

The theoretical model of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale used precisely the characteristics outlined by Shavelson arguing that self-esteem evolves in different environmental contexts in which adolescents and children live; they spend most of their day by acting in the following contexts: interpersonal relationships, control environment, emotional, academic achievement, family life and bodily experience. All areas affect the development of self-esteem (Altavilla, Tafuri & Raiola, 2014).

Finally, a recent meta-analysis (Ekeland et al., 2005) examined whether exercise interventions improved global self-esteem among children and young people aged 3-20 years. The results showed that in eight triales available for meta-analysis and testing an excercise alone-intervention versus a no-intervention control, there was a small to moderate effect in favour of the intervention group ES= 0.49).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of this study is to assess the self-esteem level comparing athletes who practice individual sport with athletes who play team sports.

The sample consisted of seventy-eight individuals, basketball athletes (M= 20, F= 14) and gymnasts (M=19, F=25). All the subjects in both spots were recruited from the same urban area; participants were of middle-class socioeconomic status. The socio-cultural level of the adolescents was examined medium-high. All of them are high school students and they were attending school regularly; nobody attends technical or profession courses. All parents gave their written informed consent. Self-esteem was evaluated using the Italian version of the Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS, Bracken, 1992) called TMA (Erickson, 2003). It is a structural questionnaire on the specific domains (interpersonal relationship, competence, emotionality, school, family, body image).

The TMA measures global self-concept and six specific domains of self-concept: interpersonal relationship, competence, emotionality, school, family, body image. Each domain consists of 25 items. Each item is scored from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Negatively worded items are reverse scored. The raw global score and domain scores are calculated as sums of all items or of domain-specific items. The global and domain scores are then standardized (IQ metric) using the standard score conversions available in the user manual. A higher score indicates a more positive self-concept. The TMA analyses the self-concept in youth between the ages of 9 and 19 years.

The test provides a total score, as well as standard scores (mean = 100; standard deviation = 15) for each of six domain-specific scales.

In each of the six TMA subscales there are 25 items; thus each scale contributes equally to the total scale. The MSCS is based on a more comprehensive context-dependent, multidimensional model of social emotional adjustment and assessment.

RESULTS

The results showed that both females and males who were physically involved in the practice of sports at competitive level (indifferently whether individual or team sport) have considerably highest level of self-esteem.

All the results of the study have been computerized and inserted into an Excel worksheet.

Table 1. Descriptive statistic of study participants (N=78)

MALES	Team sport	N=20						
	Interpersonal relationship	Competence	Emotionality	School	Family	Body image	Total score	Standard score
Mean	78.7	74.6	73.8	74.3	86.4	72.65	460.45	101.1
Median	76.5	73.5	72.5	74.5	86.5	71.5	455.5	100
SD	7.7	7.1	9.5	7.5	9.8	8.9	39.5	10.7
Minimum	60	63	54	63	73	59	409	87
Maximum	93	90	93	87	99	96	547	125
MALES	Individual sport	N=19						
	Interpersonal relationship	Competence	Emotionality	School	Family	Body image	Total score	Standard score
Mean	74.2	73.4	70.9	76	86.8	68.7	450.3	98.2
Median	76	75	71	76	90	71	444	97
SD	7.6	10.0	12.2	9.5	10.2	12.7	50.6	13.3
Minimum	58	52	52	60	60	47	368	77
Maximum	84	90	92	96	100	92	542	123
FEMALES	Team sport	N=14						
	Interpersonal relationship	Competence	Emotionality	School	Family	Body image	Total score	Standard score
Mean	76.7	73.8	74.2	72.9	83.9	72.2	453.9	99.2
Median	75	71	73.5	71	81.5	70	433.5	93.5
SD	7.7	6.9	8.5	7.4	10.4	10.4	41.8	11.4
Minimum	60	63	56	63	73	59	409	87
Maximum	91	90	93	87	99	96	547	125
FEMALES	Team sport	N=25						
	Interpersonal relationship	Competence	Emotionality	School	Family	Body image	Total score	Standard score
Mean	77.9	76.2	73.7	78.9	87.0	72.4	466.3	102.8
Median	75	74	74	77	89	72	456	100
SD	7.7	9.4	10.9	11.6	10.4	13.1	55.3	15.0
Minimum	66	61	56	53	59	48	369	77
Maximum	93	94	93	100	100	98	563	130

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data confirmed that individuals with the a higher self-esteem manage to apply themselves better in the high-level sports and, at same time, that the competition, for the all disciplines of sport, further strengthened self-esteem.

The results of the analysis were all very positive and this happenend in both genders in a very similar way, in fact there were no significant differences between males and females.

In general it was clear that kids who play sports at a competitive level had a level of self-esteem mainly high and this leads to two major considerations:

- Young people who have high self-esteem are more susceptible to sports activities of a competitive level and are more competitive and ready to train with effort and determination;
- Those who practice sport at a competitive level reinforces self-esteem, due to constant reinforcements, that sports results have on all dimensions of self-esteem.

In conclusion, those who pursue the competitive activity, probably is the one who, success after success, maintains high motivation and self-esteem. For the future, it is expected a comparison with sedentary adolescents and an analysis with a larger sample (Raiola, Giugno, Scassillo & Di Tore, 2013).

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