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SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENT BASKETBALL PLAYERS: GENDER AND AGE INVOLVEMENT

SAMOZAVEST KOŠARKARJEV V ADOLESCENCI: VPLIV SPOLA IN STAROSTI

ABSTRACT

This study was intended to look for the relationship between gender and age in self-esteem in adolescent basketball players. Our study sample consisted of 95 adolescent basketball players (54 males and 41 females) from different sport secondary schools and clubs in Prague and Brno (Czech Republic). The respondents were divided into two age groups (13 to 15-year-olds in the first, 16 to 18-year-olds in the second). Self-esteem was assessed by the Physical Self Description Questionnaire (PSDQ, Marsh 1994). To analyze the interaction effects for each factor of the physical self-concept (gender and age involvement), MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance) and correlation was calculated. The significance level was chosen to be 10%. The differences in evaluation of self-esteem were revealed by age. Self-esteem was found to be more positive in younger adolescent basketball players than in older players regardless of gender (p< 0.1).

Key words: self-esteem, adolescents, basketball, gender, age

IZVLEČEK

Študija je obravnavala povezanost spola in starosti s samozavestjo pri mladih košarkarjih in košarkaricah v obdobju adolescence. V vzorec je bilo vključenih 95 igralcev (54 moških in 41 žensk) iz različnih srednjih šol in športnih klubov iz Prage in Brna (Češka). Anketiranci so bili razdeljeni v dve starostni skupini (13 do 15 letniki v prvi, 16 do 18 letniki v drugi). Stopnjo njihove samozavesti smo ocenili z vprašalnikom Physical Self Description Questionnaire (PSDQ, Marsh 1994). Za analizo učinkov interakcije vsakega dejavnika telesne samozaznave (vpliv spola in starosti) smo uporabili multivariatno analizo variance in korelacijo. Stopnja statistične značilnosti je bila 10%. Pokazalo se je, da so razlike v vrednotenju samozavesti odvisne od starosti. Ugotovili smo, da mlajši košarkarji in košarkarice izražajo višjo stopnjo samozavesti kot starejši (p <0.1).

Ključne besede: samozavest, mladostniki, košarka, spol, starost

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INTRODUCTION

Mental and moral maturity, growth, appearance and physical skills are increasingly used as reference points of our identity and emphasised in adolescence, a stormy period of transition (Tomešová, 2003). Growing conflicts of adolescents' and adults' values, a sense of identity, and changing status in society make an individual perceive not only the surrounding environment, but oneself as a part of it as well. The development of self-perception is the most intense at the stage of adolescence and it includes perception of both self-concept and self-esteem. Concern about self-esteem, Self-esteem and body as a psychological phenomenon and its importance in adolescence has been increasing over the last decade. With this, there is a shortage of studies in the Czech Republic examining team sport with regard to gender and age differences.

Self-esteem (sometimes called self-evaluation, self-worth), according to Baumeister (1990), may be defined as the positivity of the person's evaluation of self. Peart et al. (2005) adds the evaluation of self within the context of the person's experiences and the environment in which he/she lives. It is also described as a sense of self-worth. In other words, this is an emotional side of the self-system, which is created by one's self-concept. These two components (self-esteem and self-concept) can be distinguished only theoretically, because emotional experience is always connected with reflective content, which is applied by a person to his\herself. According to Macek (2003), self-esteem applies to all the characteristics the adolescent considers as important and relates them to his/her own self. Self-esteem, i.e. generalized feelings of self-worth that are not specific to a particular situation, but which apply to many activities or areas of life and predispose the subject to view new activities in particular ways (Macek & Lacinová, 2006). Self-esteem is an indicator of one's emotional side and adaption to life difficulties, has a relation to the subjective well-being and happiness and is connected to positive independence, leadership, adaptability, and stress resistance; moreover, it is linked to involvement in health care activities. A low level of self-esteem is connected to mental disorders, including depression, anxiety and phobia (Fox, 2000).

To implement our research, basketball has been chosen; specifically, because in order to compare gender differences, we had to find a team sport popular for both sexes, in order to guarantee a representative amount of respondents. Another issue is the fact that sport is usually presented as an activity bringing only very positive features; but active involvement in sport in adolescence can also have some negative features. How do adolescent basketball players cope with both their daily activities and training from basketball? Does being active in sport always encourage positive self-esteem? What about those occasions when the adolescent lives under pressure, if he/she goes through a particularly difficult period, if he/she is not satisfied about his/her appearance?

The study focused on young basketball players (both genders). Before we made our choice, a comprehensive survey (including Czech and foreign scientific sources) study was made. Few researchers, however, have investigated gender differences in self-esteem. With this in mind, this study was conducted to reveal gender differences in self-esteem and its main goal was to compare the relations between age and gender in the self-esteem of adolescents engaged in basketball. According to the reviewed scientific sources, our man hypothesis was that males will present significantly better results in self-esteem than females, regardless of age.

METHODS

Participants

Our study sample consisted of 98 adolescent basketball players, but three responses were rejected because the questionnaires were unfinished; 95 respondents, 54 males and 41 females, remained. The mean age of the players is 15.5. Since gender and age were a focus of this study, the adolescents were divided into two age groups. The first age group (13-15 years old) consisted of 23 males with a mean age of 14.3, and 17 females with a mean age of 14.2. The second age group (16-18 years old) consisted of 31 males with a mean age of 16.8 and 24 females with a mean age of 16.6. The players (include both genders), who had been training for more than four years (86%), have accomplished the following: champions in the Czech Republic, the best players in the basketball championships in the Czech Republic, representative players of extra league, the winners of schools basketball matches, etc; the respondents were essentially playing at the same level.

Instruments

The Physical Self Description Questionnaire (PSDQ) was chosen for our current investigation (Marsh et al., 1994). It consists of nine factors or scales specific to physical self-concept: physical activity (PA), appearance (AP), body fat (BF), coordination (CO), endurance (EN), flexibility (FL), health (HE), sport competence (SP), and strength (ST), as well as two scales: physical self (GP) and self esteem (SE). Each scale includes six or eight items; each item is presented as a declarative statement to which subjects may respond using a six-point true-false scale.

The Questionnaire was standardized in Australia, by the SELF-Concept Research Centre, and validated in adolescents in a number of studies in Australia and European countries in the (http://self.uws.edu.au/Conferences/2006/Abstracts.pdf). The questionnaire was adopted for use in the Czech Republic. The original English-language questionnaires (RFL-A and PSDQ) were professionally translated into Czech. These questionnaires were then translated back into English by another translator. Both tests (Czech version and English ones) were then compared line-by-line to look for inadequacies from the original version; only a few were found needing to be corrected.

The simple Introductory Questionnaire for Anamnestic data of 20 items (composed by Medišauskaite & Kopřivová) was compiled in order to describe our research sample.

The statistical methods used in our study are MANOVA and correlation; the significance level was chosen to be 10%.

Procedure

To ensure uniformity in the administration of the questionnaire, the same set of directions were followed. The questioning was always organized by the same researcher. The procedure, including explanation of instructions, took 25-30 minutes.

One limitation of the study could be its small amount of respondents. We applied to seven secondary schools and clubs in Brno and Prague (Czech Republic), but only a few of them gave us permission to carry out questioning.

RESULTS

The MANOVA results of our current study revealed statistically significant difference (Wilks' Lambda =0.89, F= 11.76, p<0.1) between *self-esteem* (e.g. "Overall, I am not good," "Most things I do, I do well," **"**Overall, I have a lot to be proud of") and *age*. Self-esteem is evaluated more positive by younger adolescent basketball players than by older ones regardless of gender (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1: MANOVA result – domain self-esteem and interaction between the variables

EFFECT	DF	SS	AS	F	p
Gender	1	23.92	23.92	2.22	0.13
Age-group	1	51.92	51.92	4.82	0.03
Gender*Age group	1	4.46	4.467	0.41	0.52
Error	86	924.93	10.75		
Total	93	1003.92			

Legend: DF – degrees of freedom; SE – self esteem; SS - squares' sum; AS – average of squares; F – Fisher test; p – probability
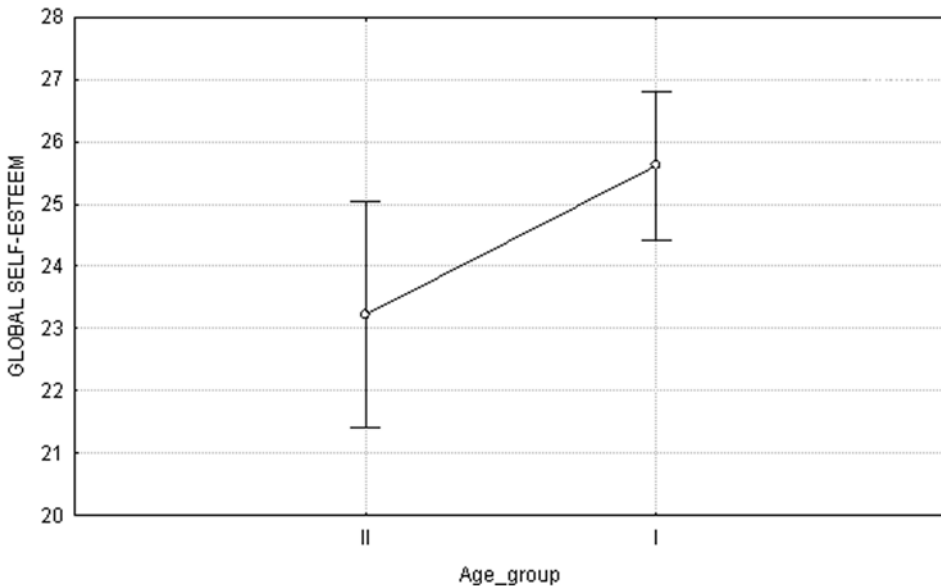

Figure 1: Means of partial least squares (self-esteem in relation to age)

DISCUSSION

The research on self-esteem development during the adolescent transition portrays a very inconsistent picture. Some studies report a rise in self-esteem during adolescence (e.g. Moreno &

Cervello, 2005; Robins et al., 2002); others report no changes, or declines (Robins et al., 2004). Some of these inconsistencies may be due to gender differences that are believed to emerge at this age, specifically the tendency of boys to have higher self-esteem than girls (Robins et al., 2002). The hypothesis of our study has not been confirmed. We anticipated that adolescent males would be more likely to demonstrate better results in self-esteem than females regardless of age, and that would support some previous results presented by Trew et al. in 1999 and others in which males had more positive score on self-esteem than females. Moreover, Klomsten (2004) revealed that both age and gender were significantly related to self-esteem in adolescents. Males scored significantly higher in self-esteem than females (students were engaged in out of school activities and different kinds of sports, Norwegian population). In our study, the results revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.1$) between self-esteem and age, but not in gender. Self-esteem was found to be more positive in younger adolescent basketball players than in older players; this conclusion does not support the previous study of Blatný (2001) or Kling et al. (1999) considering gender, where studies provided evidence that males score higher on measures of self-esteem than females, but the difference is small (non-athletic secondary school students), or of Alasker and Olweus (1992) where self-esteem also varies according to gender in adolescents (non-athletes), and the previous study of Laskiene et al. (2007) where male adolescents both engaged in sports and not engaged in sports scored higher in self-esteem than their female counterparts did. Interestingly, Harter and Monsour (1992) reported that self-esteem is stable during adolescence and increases slightly over the period.

We suppose the outcome in our studied group of athletes (with age decreasing self-esteem) could be related to adolescence itself, the period of transition, which complicates our discussion and distances us from some concrete considerations. As Macek emphasizes (2003), the transition period involves not only biological, cognitive, but also psycho-social development. Our obtained outcome could also be explained by that fact that younger adolescents are probably not as focused on being very good player as older ones are. The requirements to achieve better results are increasing with age, of course, so self-esteem might have a tendency to decrease in a result of not being or feeling 'perfect' or not meeting requirements, regardless of gender. Basketball is more likely to be seen as a masculine sport, which in theory could 'equalize' both gender's sport values and reachable competences.

A major role of self-esteem might be played by some social factors like relations with family, friends, and coach. We had an opportunity to observe the relationship between a team player and coach. Each time conducting the questioning, the coach of the team helped me with organization and instructions. Even during that short time, it was possible to anticipate the quality of the athlete-coach relationship. Moreover, our introductory questionnaire included a question concerning good (bad) terms with the coach; only some answers demonstrated a negative answer. Coaches are frequently in touch with adolescents. They lead athletes towards achievement, not only in specialization specific sport, but also in their wellbeing.

However, it is difficult to make some similar conclusions or reasoning without further investigation. Most of our feelings about ourselves are built into us in childhood, and if we grew up in a safe environment with positive relationships with peers, teachers, coaches and role models, then it is likely we will feel reasonably good about ourselves regardless of gender. The role of those factors was not a focus of our current study, but we know how important the social environment and child's (adolescent's) interplay are. In fact, self-esteem is the mainspring that slates every person for success or failure as a human being.

CONCLUSION

Our main hypothesis has not been confirmed. The results revealed statistically significant difference (p< 0.1) between self-esteem and age. Self-esteem was found to be more positive in younger adolescents engaged in basketball than in older players regardless of gender.

An actual, profound understanding of a sporting personality is a foundation of coaches' awareness of personality engaged in sport, and his satisfactory work leading that person in terms of development performance. The development of sport performance might be understood in the context of the development of the entire personality, not only focussed on a narrow sport specialization. Mechanical muscular exercise can increase efficacy, but will not affect a person's psychological side, which is not less important. The psychological dimension of one's self-concept is generally one of the most important for achieving top sport results. We would recommend to coaches an individual approach to each person regarding adolescent factors, his/her typical and peculiar mental features, with the knowledge of his/her individual physical characteristics, which are continuously integrated into sport activities. We would also recomend ccombining physical training with mental training. Coaches should pay attention to the psychological health of their team players. Some games for self-knowledge might be included. Some elements of psycho-motricity would be an appropriate option too. Finally, we would recommend eliminating possible psychological problem if it occurs; for instance if adolescent is not satisfied with his/her body, or demonstrates evident low self-esteem we should help the adolescent to cope with instead of ignoring his/her problem.

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