



The Effect of Sports Activities on The Self-Esteem of Socially Excluded Men

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ABSTRACT

Background. Self-esteem is one characteristic of personality, a construct of self-confidence, self-respect, and harmonious interaction with oneself (Breslin, Leavey, 2019). Research devoted to the analysis of men's self-esteem reveals that a positive self-evaluation of men requires an image of a physically active man, which the man could compare with other men who demonstrate physical strength (Conzelmann, Schmidt, 2019). A man's physical self-perception is part of the assessment of a physically healthy and strong person and an aspect that ensures his sociality (Crawford, 2017). Scientific research establishes clear links between a man's physical attractiveness (Anderson-Butcher, 2019), sociability and self-esteem (Anderson, White, 2017). Men who systematically engage in active physical activity are physically healthier and more attractive (Burrmann, 2018). They are also emotionally more stable, their emotional self-control is more focused and their self-confidence is higher (El Ghali, 2018).

Aim of the research. To reveal the effect of sports activities on the self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion.

Methods. To determine men's self-esteem changes The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was chosen, and the Data were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science), version 22.0.

Results. A study in which men experiencing social exclusion participated in independent and team sports activities for half a year revealed a positive change in their self-esteem. When analyzing the changes in men's self-esteem before and after the activities, the distance between the estimates of the Rosenberg test before the experiment and 6 months after it ended is 1 standard deviation on the z-scale of the standard normal distribution. According to Cohen's concept of effective size (1988), such a difference between standardized means can be considered as large. Despite the relatively small sample (N=30), the test met the very strict condition of statistical reliability ($p \leq 0.001$).

Conclusion. The study revealed that when socially excluded men were included in sports activities held for half a year, their self-esteem changed from 15 points (low self-esteem) to 25-30 points (high self-esteem).

Keywords: social exclusion, self-esteem, sports activities

INTRODUCTION

A person's psychological well-being and positive self-evaluation depend on how a person perceives himself, how he is evaluated by family members, colleagues, friends, acquaintances, how a person evaluates his work, activities, communication, relationships, his appearance and his physical potential (Moor et al., 2018).

Self-concept is an assessment of one's compe-

tence and various abilities, personality traits and personal characteristics that are linked directly or indirectly to available experience (Knoll et al., 2013). Various activities performed by a person help to self-assess the available abilities for the performance of those activities (Morley ir Fulton, 2020), and the performance result has a direct impact on self-confidence and positive self-evaluation.

Authors studying men's self-esteem and self-confidence (Klein, Fröhlich, & Emrich, 2017) note that there is a relationship between external, physical self-image and ability to be physically active and internal self-perception, psychological self-confidence, and decision-making ability. Luciano and Orth (2017) state that a man's physical self-perception is an important part of his self-esteem, and physical activity does not only have a health-enhancing effect, it defines comprehensive health and psychological well-being also. Lubans et al. (2016) proved that there are definite links between self-perception as a physically attractive, physically capable person and sociability, the ability to establish and maintain contact, to develop and be socially active. Men who systematically play sports or are engaged in physical activities are more emotionally stable; they cope better with internal conflicts, their emotional self-control works more purposefully and competently (Zamani Sani et al., 2016). Awick et al., (2017) notes that physical self-concept leads to more adequate self-acceptance. Young men and women who receive praise for their physical appearance are more self-confident, more active in society and engage more in socially oriented communication. The correlations of self-confidence of young boys and men with physical activity and sports were determined by Barton et al. (2011), Draper and Coalter (2013), Bum and Jeon (2016), Anderson and White (2017), Breslin and Leavey (2019). They noticed that physically active boys and men are more emotionally stable, which determines their attractiveness in communication and relationships with other people. Gill, Williams, and Reifsteck (2017) found that men and young men identified physical strength, fitness and physical health, participation in sports, sports competence, and physical attractiveness as the main criteria for self-confidence. Wipfli, Landers, Nagoshi and Ringenbach (2011), Ahmed et al. (2017) and Biddle, Ciaccioni, Thomas, and Vergeer (2019) note that young boys and men who express sports competence and athletic attractiveness feel more courageous when communicating, making decisions that represent their interests, taking initiative, and expressing their opinions.

Collins and Kay (2014), Schulenkorf, Sherry, and Rowe (2016), Rhodes, Janssen, Bredin, Warburton, and Bauman (2017) argue that participation in sports is generally considered a healthy social activity, not only because of physical fitness, but also as an experience, beneficial for a person's self-esteem and psychosocial adaptation through in-

terpersonal relationships in a positive environment. Physical self-concept, physical activity and sports competence of a young man is often mentioned by men as the main criteria for self-confidence (especially when it comes to young men) (Stanish et al., 2015). Wrzesińska et al. (2018) emphasize that men's participation in physical activities strengthens men's self-confidence, ensures social directivity, promotes positive decision-making and contributes to creating a socially successful life. Young people and men, evaluating themselves as persons, evaluate physical activity and physical efficiency and achievements in a sports environment and apply the same evaluation criteria to the evaluation of other men as reliable colleagues and partners (Gabriel et al., 2016). This shows that men often use the criteria of physical fitness, sportsmanship, and athleticism to assess and evaluate each other, which can determine the relationship between men in environments where men are in the majority. Male physical performance is associated with the perception of higher athletic competence and although this perception is highly subjective, it contributes to the development of a self-concept of physical attractiveness and self-confidence (Poobalan, Aucott, & Clarke, 2012). Evans et al. (2017) and Holt, Deal and Pankow (2020), who investigated the relationship between participation in sports activities and physical self-efficacy observed that the self-esteem of men who systematically exercise is significantly higher compared to men who exercise only episodically. The research was supplemented by Kim and James (2019), who state that sports activity, physical attractiveness and athleticism are of great importance for self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion for various reasons.

Sports competence for the self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion is one of the most important competences representing their interests, since their social connections, relationships and social expression are often disrupted (Evans et al., 2017). Physical activity and sports abilities that strengthen the self-confidence of men experiencing social exclusion become one of the most important attractiveness criteria. Imprisonment is one of the environments that creates social exclusion for men. Imprisoned men are separated from society and communicate in a closed male circle. Physical strength and athletic body appearance are particularly important for their self-esteem (Baumer, Meek, 2018). Karos, Williams, Meulders, and Vlaeyen (2018) state that imprisoned, isolated and socially excluded men use physical activity to sur-

vive loneliness as an alternative to the use of narcotics, psychotropic substances, and self-injurious behaviour. Young people and men addicted to alcohol, drugs and psychotropic substances is a social group that experiences social exclusion (Best et al., 2016). They establish important social contacts during sports activities and have the opportunity to talk about sensitive experiences (Whitfield, 2018). Stöver (2020) notes that the social involvement of marginalized men, talking about their health, relationship and other problems, which started during sports activities, can open up opportunities for discussion in the wider society.

The unanimous opinion of the society that stereotypically requires a man to be physically strong, socially oriented, psycho-emotionally healthy and advanced in all areas is unacceptable. This is a phenomenon that reduces barriers to social inclusion (Spruit, Assink, Van Vugt, Van der Put and Stams, 2019). Anderberg and Dahlberg (2019) emphasize the importance of public opinion about the image of a man and state that the stereotyping of society, which requires standards of male physical capacity, often not only wrongly shapes a young man's attitude towards himself, but also raises the risk of his social isolation and forms low self-worth and self-esteem. That is why men usually see physical training as the only way to overcome self-doubt, low self-worth and insufficient self-esteem (Fehsenfeld, 2015). The distinctiveness of some men, their self-awareness through creating an attractive physical appearance and increasing physical strength sometimes becomes the only example for young people who seek to secure a social position in their environment, group or community (Hargie, Somerville, Mitchell, 2017). However, it is important to note that sports and physical activity are beneficial for health, as they provide a social, meaningful and pleasant environment, encourage to engagement and participation in this and other activities that strengthen social directionality (Syrjämäki and Hietanen, 2019). Woods and Butler (2020) state that physical activity creates favourable conditions for inclusive participation, social interaction, development and strengthening of psychosocial skills and creation of social personal well-being of men experiencing exclusion.

The problem of exclusion is also relevant for Lithuanian scientists (Lisinskienė, 2016; Lisauskienė, Aleksienė, 2016; Šniras and Starkevičiūtė, 2016; Kavaliauskienė and Letukienė, 2017). However, only a few studies of men's social exclusion and the causes of this phenomenon were found

(Barkauskaitė-Lukšienė, Gudžinskienė, 2013; Katinaitė-Lodh, 2013; Tereškinas, 2018; Sakalauskas, Jarutienė, Kalpokas, Vaičiūnienė, 2020). Society's still stereotypical attitude towards men negates the problems of this social group (Tereškinas, Petkevičiūtė, Bučaitė – Vilke and Indriliūnaitė, 2016). On the basis of the conducted research, opportunities are being sought to reduce the exclusion of various social groups (Bardauskienė, Pivorienė, 2016 and Kocai, 2017), but the data presented in the research reports show that men's problems are not analyzed sufficiently (Leleikienė, 2018; Sakalauskas, Jarutienė, Kalpokas, Vaičiūnienė, 2020). Lithuanian researchers pay little attention to analyzing men's self-confidence, self-evaluation and self-esteem. Insufficient self-esteem disrupts a person's social and professional life, limits decision-making and disrupts the expression of socially acceptable behavior. A review of scientific research shows that physical activity and sports activities as an environment have a positive effect on men's mental states, behaviour, directionality of life and socially advanced decision-making.

The influence of sports and physical activity on men's self-worth, self-confidence and self-esteem is based on research and it can be said that this activity is one of the most attractive for men and attracts men with various experiences in solving various personal problems. Men experiencing social exclusion, seeking a purposeful, socially acceptable life choose sports activities as a means of overcoming painful or sensitive life experiences, therefore sports should be evaluated as an environment creating positive personal life experience (Crawford, 2017). Since sports and physical activity create positive life experiences for men, strengthen self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, sports and physical activity should be used as one of the most important and effective means of self-help and purposeful socialization suitable for men.

Research aimed at assessing the causes and consequences of men's lack of self-confidence is needed in the search for ways, methods and tools that can help strengthen men's confidence, self-worth, self-esteem, as the most important psycho-emotional construct of a person that provides an opportunity for personal and social success. Therefore, this study adds to the sparse body of research conducted so far on men.

Aim of the study. To reveal the effect of sports activities on the self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion.

Research object. Self-esteem of socially excluded men.

Research hypothesis. The self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion will increase when they participate in sports activities for half a year.

METHODS

Methods used to collect research data. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Appendix 1) was used to test the assumptions made regarding the possible insufficient self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion. The Lithuanian version of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used in the study, and this scale was adapted by Professor Bukšnytė in 1996 (Bukšnytė, 1996). The Rosenberg self-esteem scale consists of 10 statements related to a person's self-evaluation, e.g.: "In general, I am satisfied with myself," "I feel that I have many good qualities." This scale has four response options: "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Answers are scored from 1 point to 4 points. The research participant must evaluate each statement by choosing one of the answer options. The obtained research results are summed up, and a higher amount corresponds to a higher level of self-esteem.

Research progress, research participants. The study participants were selected using purposive sampling, where the individuals involved in the study are selected by the decision of the researcher (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). There were two essential criteria for this targeted selection: 1. Men experiencing segregation due to isolation, serving longer or shorter prison sentences, were selected. 2. Men had to participate in sports activities for half a year. In total, 30 male prisoners (30 men) participated in the study, all of them participated in team sports activities

once a week (basketball, volleyball, football) and independent sports activities at least once a week (exercise using simulators, cross country) for half a year. An instructor was assigned to observe the male athletes, who met with the researcher once a week. During these meetings, attendance at sports activities of research participants, concerns and problems that arose during the activities were discussed and timely solutions were modeled. The instructors recorded the research participants' physical activities, behavioral expressions, socially attractive and unacceptable decisions in the observation book. While observing the sports activities, their dynamics, and the relationships of the participants, the instructors noted facts, episodes, and events that could offer important information for the study.

Method for research data processing. Data were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 22.0. A correlational analysis of the data was performed, the differences and significance of the obtained research results were determined, and the impact estimate was calculated.

RESULTS

A study aimed at evaluating the change in self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion during participation in sports activities showed that six months of systematic team and independent sports had a positive influence on the changes in men's self-esteem.

Analyzing the self-esteem changes of the group of men (N=30) who agreed to participate in the study based on sports activities before and after the activities (Rosenberg scale was applied), it can be seen that regular sports activities improved the self-esteem of the men who participated in the experiment. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Male self-esteem scores before and after participating in sports activities

	Self-esteem total score according to Rosenberg (N=30)														
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Before physical activities	60 %	15 %	10 %	10 %	5 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
After half a year of physical activities	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	20 %	10 %	10 %	5 %	5 %	40 (7%)	4 (0%)	3 (0%)	2 (3%)	1 (0%)

The data presented in the figure show that more than half (60%) of the study participants had low self-esteem (15 points), another 40% of men had insufficient self-esteem between 16 and 19 self-esteem points, which means that these men were not capable of making self-representative decisions. When men are included in sports activities lasting half a year, 50% of men have already demonstrated sufficient self-esteem (20-24 points), which is enough to make socially responsible decisions. For another 50 percent of the study participants self-esteem increased from 25 to 30 points (high self-esteem), which shows that the inclusion of men in sports activities increases their self-esteem and ensures their

self-representation.

Other statistical data show that the use of sports activities for half a year models positive changes in the self-esteem of men with problematic behavior. One such statistic is the distance between the Rosenberg test estimates before the experiment and 6 months after it ended. The research revealed that the standard normal distribution on the z-scale is 1 standard deviation according to J. Cohen's effective size concept (1988). Such a difference between the standardized means can be considered as large. The changes in men's self-esteem are based on the results of the t-test and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. t-test results for equality of group means

Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of group means						The difference in means	
F	Sig	t	Df	Sig. (2tailed)	Comparison groups	N	Group averages		
9,274	0,003	-	6,214	58	0,000	Before the activities	30	-1,02	-1,01
						After the activities	30	-0,01	

The data presented in the table substantiate the changes in men's self-esteem. As expected at the beginning of the study with such a large distance between the group means, the test meets the very strict condition of statistical reliability despite the relatively small sample $p \leq 0.001$.

Summarizing the results of the study, it should be said that the changes in the self-esteem of the group of men experiencing social exclusion (N=30) after half a year of participation in sports activities are evident. By evaluating the self-esteem of these men before sports activities and half a year after the activities ended, it can be seen that regular sports activities improved the self-esteem of these men. The changes in men's self-esteem are based on the research data presented in the tables and the monitoring of self-esteem changes carried out for half a year.

DISCUSSION

The main focus of the study was on observing the change in self-esteem of men experiencing social exclusion and evaluating the changes in self-esteem after their participation in sports activities for half a year. In order to discuss the changes in the self-esteem of the men who participated in the study it is first necessary to discuss the factors that led to the social exclusion (Grace, Richardson ir Carroll, 2018) and low self-esteem of these men (Hall, 2018). Research participants experienced social exclusion due to their inability to meet the social norms existing in society related to the standards of economic well-being. This was also mentioned in the research of Von Soest, Wagner, Hansen and Gerstorf, (2018) and Levidow, Papaioannou, (2018), which studied men who did not have a proper education, could not get a well-paid job and could not take care of their own and their family's economic and material well-being. These self-esteem influencing circumstances were noticed by Böhnisch, (2018), Anderberg and Dahlberg, (2019), Becker,

(2020). Some research participants that experienced exclusion due to society's standards of imagining a good life (Leopold, 2018) claim that society's standards have a negative impact on the self-esteem of men who do not meet those standards. Some of the study participants experienced discrimination due to inappropriate, socially unacceptable behaviour and even due to the standards of healthy body perception, as is stated by Tangcharoensathien, Mills, Das, Patcharanarumol, Buntan, Johns, (2018). The study found that men's low self-esteem was shaped by job loss, which led to risky behaviour and incarceration (Brown, Sacco ir Medlin, 2018). In their research, they also present the consequences of job loss, exclusion, and isolation. The research of Arditti and Parkman (2011) and Baumer and Meek (2018) proved that men's social isolation and low self-esteem are also observed due to society's stereotypical attitude towards men. Analysing the experiences of the men who participated in the study, the influence of societal stereotyping on men's self-confidence is also observed, which forms the denial of the need for help and obstacles to timely help for men. Woodhall-Melnik, Dunn, Svenson, Patterson, and Matheson (2018), identify the psycho-emotional discomfort experienced by men due to the collapse of significant relationships and addictions. The men in the study experienced low self-esteem for the same reasons. Korhonen and Siitonen (2018) and Blakemore (2018) also mention the lack of social skills and the lack of respect felt by men from the environment. The research participants also named these experiences and said that it contributed to their social isolation and low self-esteem. After assessing the reasons for men's lack of self-esteem, it is important to discuss the possibilities of increasing men's self-esteem, and what would be the most suitable environment that strengthens their confidence, self-worth and self-esteem. Researchers (Klein, Fröhlich, Emrich, 2017) have shown that there are clear connections between men's self-perception as physically attractive, physically capable, able to establish contact, maintain it, develop and be socially active. Men who systematically play sports, engage in physical activities are more emotionally stable, better deal with internal conflicts, and their self-esteem is sufficient to make appropriate decisions that represent their interests (Morley, Fulton, 2020).

The results of the study show that the influence of sports and physical activity on men's self-esteem is unquestionable. The self-esteem of men who engaged in physical activities for half a year improved from 15 points (low self-esteem) to 25 points (high

self-esteem). Both this study and previous studies conducted by researchers (Biddle, Ciaccioni, Thomas and Vergeer, 2019) that revealed the importance of sports activities for men's self-confidence and self-esteem prove that sports activities are a reliable tool for increasing men's self-esteem. Research (Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016; Collins & Kay, 2017) supports the statement that men with high self-esteem solve various personal problems more easily and the growth of self-esteem promotes the growth of the personality capable of initiating significant changes. The dynamics of men's involvement in sports activities made it possible to observe the closeness of their relationships, the perspective of opening up and talking about their pressing concerns. Similar conclusions were made by Wrzesińska, Lipert, Urzędowicz, and Pawlicki, (2018), stating that the relationship between individuals experiencing exclusion is an opportunity to analyze sensitive experiences and, based on this analysis, to better evaluate themselves and make socially positive decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

A study found that engaging socially excluded men in half-a-year sports activities led to a positive change in their self-esteem. The self-esteem of all 30 men who participated in the study changed from 15 points (low self-esteem) to 25 points (high self-esteem). Therefore, it can be said that sports activities are one of the appropriate forms of increasing self-esteem for men experiencing social exclusion.

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