

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONFIDENCE AND BULLYING AMONG ATHLETES AND NON-ATHLETES ADOLESCENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*Research background and hypothesis.* Research shows that significant numbers of children at school become victims of aggression which manifests as bullying or harassment (Zaborskis, Vareikienė, 2008). Bullying at school is associated with many long-term harmful physical, mental and social consequences for all involved in this process: for aggressors, victims and those who are forced to watch bullying (Širvinskienė et al., 2008).

In Lithuania, the number of children who are bullied and children who bully is far greater than in other European countries: approximately a third of 11–15 year-old Lithuanian schoolchildren become frequent victims of bullying (Zaborskis et al., 2005). Bullying is defined as conscious threatening harassment or physical actions against a child who is unable to defend himself/herself repeatedly by one child or a group of children (Širvinskienė et al., 2008). This phenomenon involves a wide range of behaviours – from physical attacks to nicknaming and verbal abuse, from ignorance to frightening looks, from individual attacks to group actions or anonymous messages (Zaborskis, Vareikienė, 2008).

*Research aim* was to determine the relationship between self-confidence and bullying among Kaunas City athletes and non-athletes adolescents. *The object of the research* was the relationship between self-confidence and bullying of adolescents.

*Research methods.* The research was conducted from September, 2011 to December, 2011. It included schoolchildren from four schools in Kaunas city. The organization of the survey complied with the principles of respondents' informed consent and voluntary participation. Before completing the questionnaire, the respondents were fully aware of the aims of the research and performance instructions.

*Research results.* It was found that the most commonly used forms of bullying were nicknaming, spread of rumours and intimidation. Bullying usually took place in classrooms and school hallways. Most often the respondents experienced bullying from their peers; however, they often bullied their peers themselves.

*Discussion and conclusions.* The higher the level of self-confidence, the less bullying manifested in respect of both genders. Schoolchildren who did not go in for sports and demonstrated high levels of self-confidence were bullied less often. The higher the level of self-confidence of boys and girls, the less frequent bullying occurred.

**Keywords:** violence, inner psychological personality derivatives, sports, school.

## INTRODUCTION

**B**ullying is a form of emotional and psychological coercion. Research carried out in various countries shows that long-term emotional violence at school leads to negative traces in personality development and impairment of physical and mental health. It has been found that bullying can cause a variety of somatic complaints (Zaborskis, Vareikienė, 2008); also, bullying damages physical and mental health, causing many psychosocial and psychosomatic problems, may lead to future mental health problems (Širvinskienė et al., 2008). Children who are bullied experience more anxiety, are less safe, have lower self-esteem, are lonely and more prone to depression

(Širvinskienė et al., 2008); there is an increased possibility of suicidal behaviour in such children (Van der Wal et al., 2003).

It is believed that a pupil is being bullied when another pupil or a group of pupils insult him/her or play on him/her evil pranks. Nevertheless, bullying is not just this. Even repeated teasing and doing things which are in particular disliked by a pupil are considered to be bullying. However, the case where two equally strong pupils are fighting one another is not treated as bullying (Zaborskis et al., 2005).

Recently, the popularity of cyber bullying has extremely increased. Bullies publish victim's personal data online and it becomes available to everyone. Information spread in cyberspace causes a serious threat to the privacy of the victims. Information can be forwarded to thousands of recipients in a matter of seconds and this cannot be controlled. Using text messages, message attacks can be performed, when a group of children sends thousands of different kinds of unpleasant text messages to the victim's mobile phone or other electronic means of communication (Qing Li, 2006).

Since 1992, Lithuania has participated in the WHO research programme *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children* – HBSC. This research also analyses the issue of bullying. A. Zaborskis and J. Makari (2001) published data on high prevalence of bullying among Lithuanian schoolchildren. Unfortunately, there is no more detailed research on the issue of bullying in Lithuania (Zaborskis, Vareikienė, 2008).

In this research it was assumed that adolescents demonstrating high levels of self-confidence were less often bullied and less often bullied others than the respondents with lower levels of self-confidence. At the same time, there is the relationship between high levels of self-confidence and bullying of athletes adolescents – they are neither bullied nor bully others.

Thus, the aim of the research was to determine the relationship between self-confidence and bullying of athletes and non-athletes adolescents.

The object of the research was the relationship between self-confidence and bullying.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The respondents were given Shostrom's personal orientation inventory (adjusted), which consisted of 22 items that could be considered five-choice: *always, very often, often, sometimes, never*

(Lester, Lloyd, 1997). The respondents had to select a single answer. Also, the questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the British City of York *Bullying Questionnaire for Students* (procedures for questionnaire adaptation are described in the article by I. Tilindienė et al. (2010), which consisted of 32 questions. Each question had from 2 to 10 answer options. The respondents could select one or more answers.

**Research sample and organization.** The survey was conducted in 2011, using randomized convenient sampling, which involved 417 adolescents (12–16 years old) who went in for sports and not (147 adolescents went in for sports and 270 did not, 219 girls and 198 boys) and who were selected from four Kaunas city schools, having agreed with the management of the relevant schools. Questionnaires were completed prior to school hours or practice, the respondents were not allowed to take the questionnaires home.

Adolescents who went in for sports were considered to be schoolchildren that at least twice a week were engaged in sports activities in sports schools or sports clubs, went in for sports for at least one year and took part in sports competitions.

**Statistical analysis.** To calculate research results, *SPSS 13.0 for Windows* computer programme was used. To estimate statistically significant differences between the groups of the respondents (bullying and self-esteem) ( $p < 0.05$ ),  $\chi^2$  (chi-squared critical value) was calculated. The strength of the relationship between bullying and self-esteem were evaluated by the Gamma coefficient.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The obtained results showed that the most commonly used forms bullying were nicknaming (59%), spread of rumours (13%) and intimidation (6%) (Figure 1). Schoolchildren were most often bullied in classrooms (41%) and school hallways (37%) (Figure 2). The respondents indicated that most often they experienced bullying from their peers (67%); however, they themselves bullied their peers (66%). The research showed that the more higher the level of self-confidence, the rarer bullying occurred in respect of both genders ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Figures 3, 4). The research suggests that the schoolchildren who did not go in for sports and demonstrated high level of self-confidence were bullied less often ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Figure 5). The higher

the level of self-confidence of both boys and girls, the less frequent bullying was observed ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Figure 6).

The research could not determine whether gender, sports and the level of self-esteem had influence on incurred and initiated bullying ( $p > 0.05$ ).

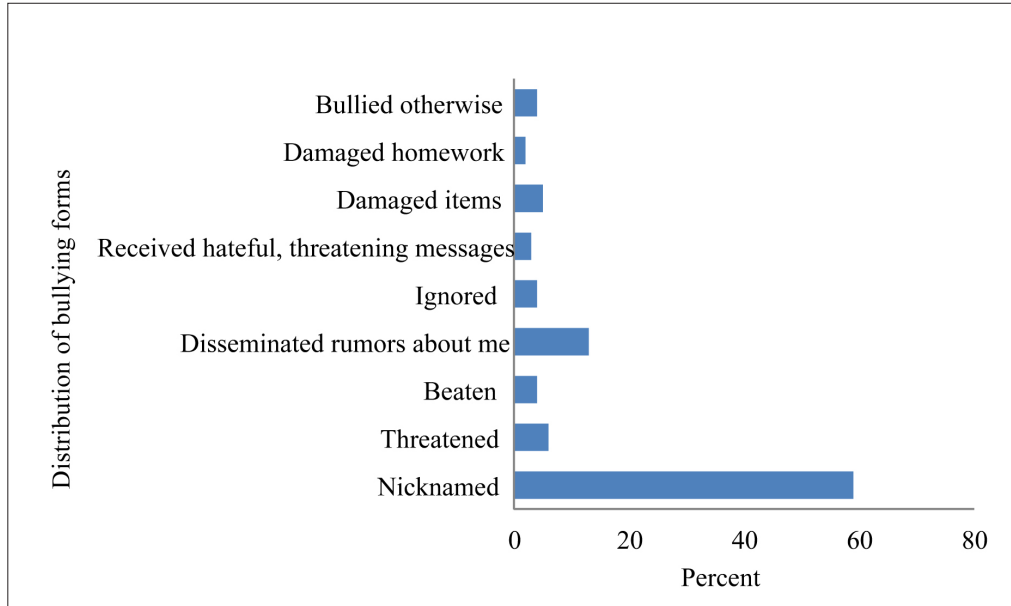


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "How are you bullied at school?"

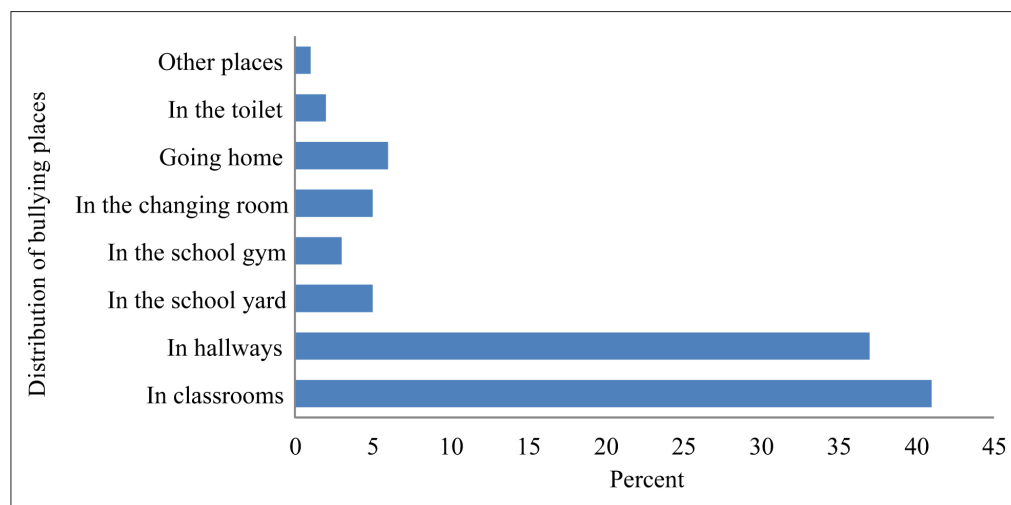


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Where were you bullied in school?"

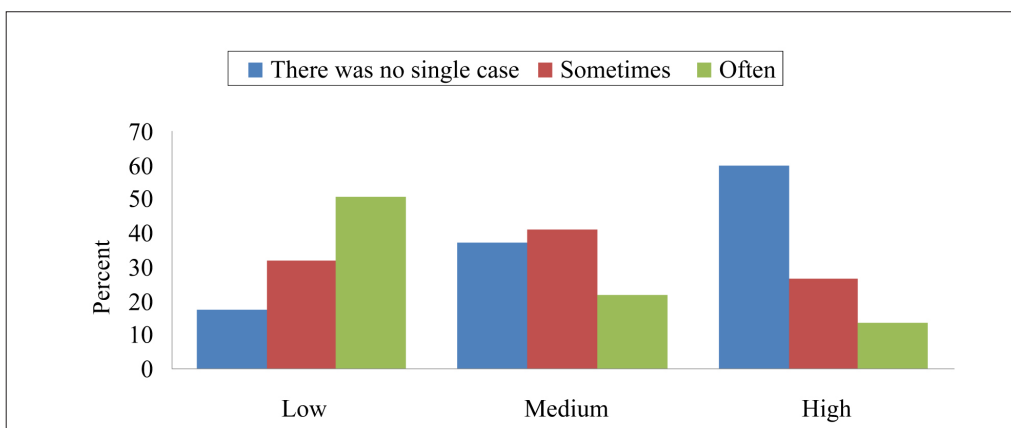
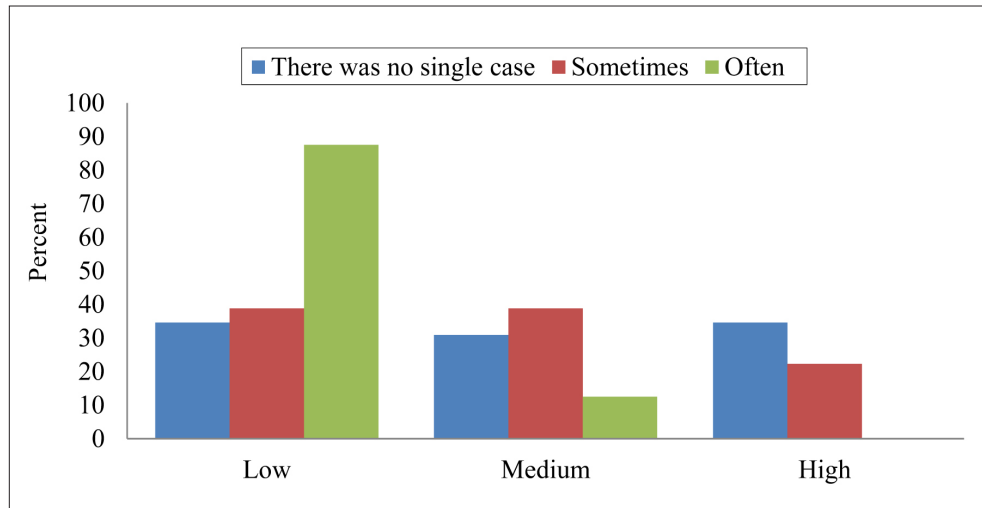


Figure 3. Percentage distribution of self-confidence level by incurred bullying and gender (female)

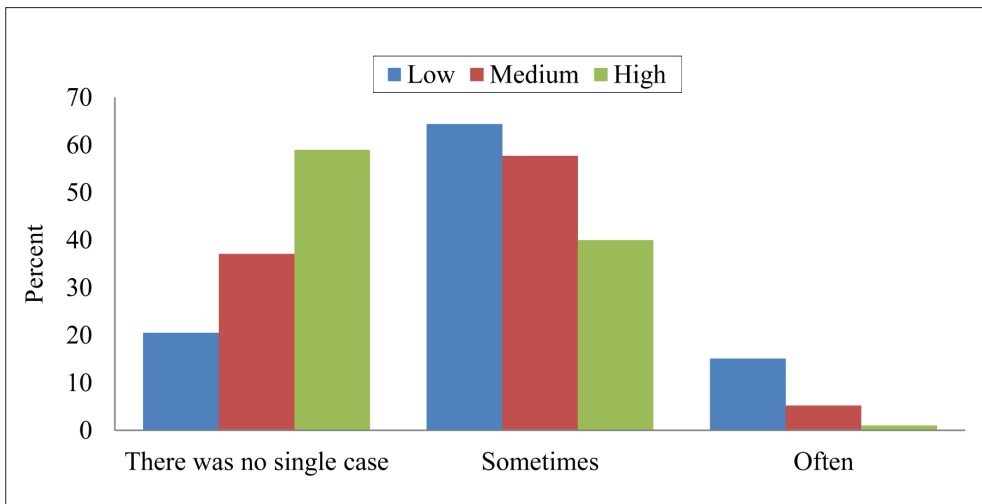
Note.  $\chi^2 (2) = 15.781$ ;  $p < 0.05$ .

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of self-confidence level by incurred bullying and gender (male)



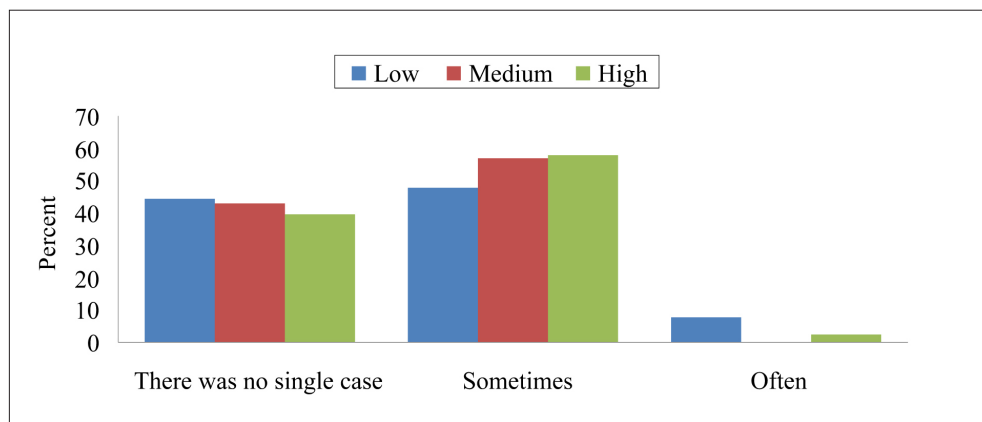
Note.  $\chi^2 (2) = 11.999$ ;  $p < 0.05$ .

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of incurred bullying for untrained respondents according to the level of self-confidence



Note.  $\chi^2 (2) = 34.768$ ;  $p < 0.05$ .

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of incurred bullying for athletes respondents according to the level of self-confidence



Note.  $\chi^2 (2) = 4.731$ ;  $p > 0.05$ .

## DISCUSSION

Research (Due et al., 2005) shows that among 28 European and North American countries Lithuanian boys are bullied most frequently (41.4%), and Swedish girls – the least frequently (6.3%). Such a large number of pupils involved in bullying (56.5%) have a great negative influence on learning, education and quality of life as well as well-being (Jankauskienė et al., 2008). All bullying participants are more likely to face behavioural problems: hyperactivity, communication and other disorders (Wolke et al., 2000). There is also the opposite opinion on this matter claiming that hyperactivity is not a consequence, but a reason that may lead a pupil to get involved in bullying (Nordhagen et al., 2005). Other factors are also relevant: excessive anxiety, alcohol and tobacco consumption (Peleg-Oren et al., 2012).

The most predominant form of bullying is verbal bullying (Valeckienė, 2005). The comparison of the data of the survey performed shows that verbal bullying is more frequent than bullying of physical nature. M. E. Lemstra's (2012) research results have striking similarities to previously discussed facts: the most common form of bullying is verbal, not physical, but, in addition to this, there are two more forms of bullying distinguished – social and electronic, cyber bullying (Patchin, 2011). This proves that bullying is not only relevant, but also a constantly evolving problem among pupils. Foreign experience is similar: every other pupil is a bully, who uses verbal bullying, nearly one in three – physical, and one in ten – cyber bullying (Peleg-Olen et al., 2012).

The results of the performed research show that male representatives predominate in bullying initiation in respect of self-confidence (Figures 7, 8), although boys are more likely to inform adults that they have incurred bullying than girls (Fleming et al., 2009). Boys of all ages are more likely to bully others than girls. However, other research claims that only boys of 2–12 years of age are most frequently distinguished as bullies. M. E. Lemstra (2012) identifies the masculine gender as a risk factor in terms of bullying. Other factors are as follows: difficulties and unresolved problems in the family of the pupil. In this case, Finland also has striking similarities: boys are nearly three times more likely to get involved in bullying than girls. Being bullies more often than girls, boys more often themselves become objects of bullying and aggressive victims of bullying as they mostly interact with peers and apply extreme and easy-to-observe forms of bullying – physical bullying (Nordhagen et al., 2005). Girls usually use more passive forms – verbal bullying as they try to stay unnoticed, look for opportunities to remain unobserved (Olweus, 1993). This has been confirmed by our research results as well.

The obtained results show that the most frequent places for bullying in schools are classrooms and hallways. It can be assumed that the approach of teachers of the investigated schools expresses indifference in respect of bullying among schoolchildren – teachers do not carefully observe pupils' communication and behaviour with each other during breaks and lessons. This may affect the aggressor's arrogance to start bullying in public places without fear of resistance, penalty or

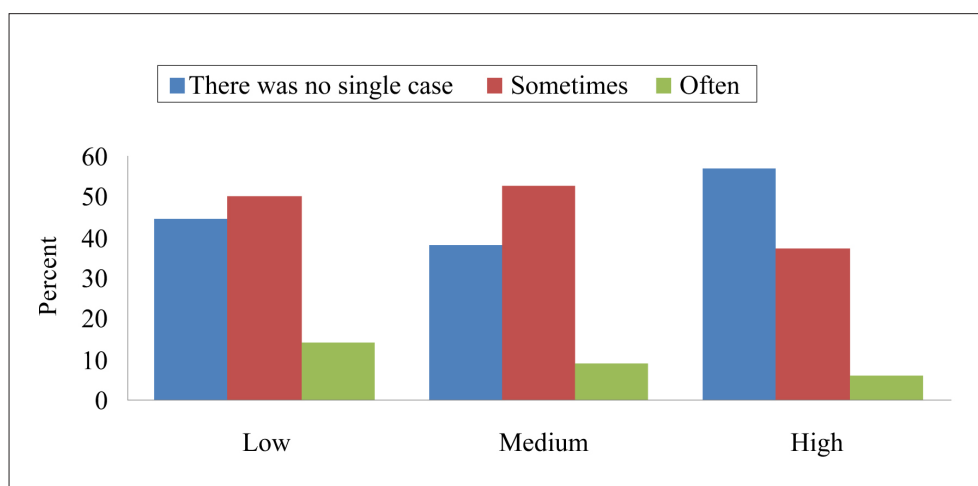


Figure 7. Percentage distribution of self-confidence levels by initiating bullying and gender (male)

Note.  $\chi^2(2) = 3.219$ ;  $p > 0.05$ .

Figure 8. Percentage distribution of self-assessment level by initiating bullying and gender (male)



Note.  $\chi^2(2) = 1.753$ ;  $p > 0.05$ .

disciplinary sanctions. To prove this assumption, it is necessary to carry out additional research. F. Bayraktar (2012) confirmed the importance of the approach of school teachers and their influence on bullying; according to the researcher, this is one of the factors that have the greatest importance in shaping psychological climate at school and influencing the frequency of bullying. Returning to the discussion of the most common places of bullying, other authors (Valeckienė, 2005) express the opposite position – they assert that aggressors avoid public places where they can be easily seen, receive a negative reaction or forced to take responsibility for their actions. They indicate that bullies choose remote places that are least visible to adults. Bullies often prefer the adjacent, more remote areas that belong to school outdoor territories; they avoid indoor educational institution spaces (Lemstra et al., 2012).

The results show that those who are bullied often become bullies themselves. Such cases are aggressive victims of bullying. J. Gilligan (Gilligan, 2002), R. Povilaitis and J. Valiukevičiūtė (2006) indicate that those pupils most frequently use the same methods of bullying that they are experiencing themselves. Since these adolescents have suffered a lot of humiliation in childhood from parents, peers, they are highly susceptible to shame. Thus, in case of any threat to survive the same most humiliating feeling, or feeling the vengeance of past grievances, they express their anger on the most innocent and unrelated children. D. Wolke (2000) argues that the distribution of roles and positions in the phenomenon of bullying is very uneven. Only 4.3% of respondents are bullies-aggressors, 10% – aggressive victims of bullying, the remaining majority – passive victims. The results of the research performed in Lithuania

(Jankauskienė et al., 2008) indicate that there are more aggressors (16.3%) than victims (12.7%).

The results showed that the adolescents that go in for sports and show high levels of self-confidence are bullied less often, as it is claimed in foreign research (Seehra et al., 2011). Schoolchildren very often demonstrate aggression out of fear and lack of self-confidence because they do not respect themselves and thereby hope to earn it. Aggressiveness reduces inner fears and adolescents use it for increasing self-realization and self-esteem (Christie-Mizell, 2003). Also, there is some other research that represents the opposite opinion – aggressors had high self-esteem; however, it should be noted that the results of such research had been influenced by bullies' high level of depressive symptoms and other psychological issues. A number of risk factors that may influence becoming a victim of bullying were also indicated (Jankauskienė et al., 2008). It included low self-esteem as well as form, gender (male respondents more often became victims of bullying), tobacco and alcohol consumption, mockery of child's appearance by his/her parents, etc.

The research data show that the increase in the level of self-confidence leads to less frequent bullying in respect of both genders. R. Povilaitis and J. Valiukevičiūtė (2006) have found that adolescents having higher levels of self-esteem are less frequently involved in bullying – they know other ways that help to act positively and to foster their self-esteem. Children who feel valued and loved do not have to prove this to themselves or to others, so it is much less likely that they will engage/get engaged in bullying.

Our research data failed to show that sports activities had any impact on bullying and being bullied. The research performed by R. Jankauskienė

et al. (2008) also showed that participation in sports activities had no influence on the involvement in the phenomenon of bullying; however, more victims of bullying were among those respondents that did not go in for sports than among those who did. The greater part of bullies-aggressors was found among those adolescents that were not engaged in sports activities than those who were.

## CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

It was found that the most commonly used forms of bullying were nicknaming, spread of rumours and intimidation. Bullying usually takes place in school classrooms and hallways. Most often the respondents experienced bullying from

their peers; however, they themselves often bully their peers. The higher the level of self-confidence, the rarer the bullying in respect of both genders was observed. Schoolchildren who do not go in for sports and show high level of self-confidence are bullied less often. The higher the level of self-confidence of both boys and girls, the less frequent bullying occurs.

Thus, the first assumption suggesting that adolescents with high self-esteem and self-confidence level are less likely to experience bullying and to become bullies themselves than the respondents with low self-esteem was confirmed partially. The second assumption that adolescents' engagement in sports activities and their levels of self-confidence and self-esteem are related to bullying was not confirmed.

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## KAUNO MIESTO SPORTUOJANČIŲ IR NESPORTUOJANČIŲ PAAUGLIŲ PASITIKĖJIMO SAVIMI IR PATYČIŲ SĄSAJA

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### SANTRAUKA

*Tyrimo pagrindimas ir hipotezė.* Nemaža dalis vaikų mokyklose tampa agresijos, pasireiškiančios patyčiomis arba priekabiavimu, aukomis (Zaborskis, Vareikienė, 2008). Patyčios mokykloje susijusios su daugeliu ilgalaikių žalingų fizinių, psichinių ir socialinių veiksnių visiems jose dalyvaujantiems: ir skriaudėjams, ir aukoms, ir stebintiems patyčias (cit. iš Širvinskienė ir kt., 2008). Patyčias patiriančių ir iš kitų besityčiojančių moksleivių dažnis Lietuvos mokyklose yra didesnis nei kitose Europos šalyse: dažnų patyčių aukomis Lietuvoje tampa vidutiniškai kas trečias 11–15 metų moksleivis (Zaborskis ir kt., 2005). Patyčios apibrėžiamos kaip sąmoningas vieno vaiko ar grupės nuolat kartojamas gąsdinantis priekabiavimas ar fiziniai veiksmai prieš vaiką, kuris nepajėgus apsiginti (cit. iš Širvinskienė ir kt., 2008). Šis reiškinys apima platų elgesio spektrą – nuo fizinių išpuolių iki pravardžių, žodinių užgauliojimų, nuo ignoravimo iki gąsdinamų žvilgsnių, nuo individualių išpuolių iki grupinių veiksmų ar anonimių žinučių (Zaborskis, Vareikienė, 2008).

*Tikslas* – nustatyti Kauno miesto sportuojančių ir nespportuojančių paauglių pasitikėjimo savimi ir patyčių sąsają. Tyrimo objektas – paauglių pasitikėjimo savimi ir patyčių sąsaja.

*Metodai.* Tyrimas atliktas 2011 m. rugsėjo–gruodžio mėn. Apklausti keturių Kauno miesto mokyklų moksleiviai. Apklausa atlikta po pamokų, susitarus su mokyklos vadovybe ir mokytojais. Buvo tirti keturi šimtai septyniolika, 12–16 m. paauglių. Iš jų 219 merginų ir 198 vaikinai. Moksleiviai pildydami anketas vidutiniškai užtrukdavo 20–25 minutes. Organizuojant apklausą buvo laikomasi tiriamųjų informavimo ir savanoriškumo principų. Prieš vykdant apklausą, tiriamieji buvo išsamiai supažindinti su jos tikslais, atlikimo instrukcijomis.

*Rezultatai.* Dažniausiai naudojamos patyčių formos yra pravardžiavimas, paskalų skleidimas bei gąsdinimas. Dažniausiai yra tyčiojama mokyklų klasėse bei koridoriuose. Dažniausiai respondentai patiria savo bendraamžių patyčias, tačiau iš bendraamžių ir patys tyčiojasi.

*Aptarimas ir išvados.* Augant pasitikėjimo savimi lygiui, patiriamos patyčios abiejų lyčių atžvilgiu retėja. Iš nespportuojančiųjų ir didelio pasitikėjimo savimi paauglių tyčiojama rečiau. Kuo merginų ir vaikinų pasitikėjimo savimi lygis aukštesnis, tuo patiriamos patyčios retesnės.

**Raktažodžiai:** smurtas, vidiniai psichologiniai asmenybės dariniai, sportas, mokykla.

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