

# ATTITUDES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TOWARDS MANIFESTATIONS OF TOLERANCE

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## ABSTRACT

*Research background and hypothesis.* In academic literature construct of tolerance has not been sufficiently revealed, limits of tolerance are not clear, especially they vary in different cultures. There is a noticeable increase in the number of children from various ethnic groups in Lithuanian schools. Therefore, multidimensional knowledge of various manifestations of tolerance/intolerance is of great importance.

*Research aim* was to reveal attitudes of PE teachers and students towards manifestations of tolerance/intolerance.

*Research methods.* In our research questionnaire was applied with six groups of tolerance manifestations distinguished altogether with 36 related statements. There were six other statements according to six groups of tolerance manifestations for the potential behavior of participants. Validity of the questionnaire was examined calculating Cronbach's constant  $\alpha$ : for the first part of the questionnaire Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.87$ , and for the second –  $\alpha = 0.79$ . Values of  $\chi^2$  and Student's  $t$  criterion were calculated. The sample of the research included 243 students of IX–XII classes from regional schools, 129 students of the same age from city schools, 47 physical education teachers from city schools and 38 teachers from regional schools.

*Research results.* We found statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between positive attitudes towards tolerance among students from city schools and positive attitudes among students from regional schools. Statistically significant difference between positive attitudes towards tolerance for PE teachers from city schools and positive attitudes for those from regional schools was not found ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, there were statistically significant differences between positive attitudes towards tolerance of students from city schools and PE teachers from city schools ( $\chi^2(5) = 37.27$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), also between positive attitudes towards tolerance of students from regional schools and PE teachers from regional schools ( $\chi^2(5) = 37.27$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). We found statistically significant difference ( $t = 3.81$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) between tolerance estimators of students and PE teachers from city schools. On the other hand, relevant differences between tolerance estimators of students from city schools and from regional schools, and differences between tolerance estimators of PE teachers from city schools and from regional schools were not found ( $p > 0.05$ ).

*Discussion and conclusion:* in fact, attitudes towards intolerance, which are incident to the PE teachers from city schools and their colleagues from regional schools, did not differ, but they contrasted with students' attitudes. In cases of intolerance manifestations, students from city schools would be more passive than students from regional schools, but PE teachers from city schools would be more active than their students.

**Keywords:** tolerance, intolerance, social distance.

## INTRODUCTION

Tolerance is hailed as the one of the basic principles of liberal, democratic society. Its significance is clearly marked in “Declaration of Principles on Tolerance” proclaimed by the UNESCO. Notion of tolerance is widely and comprehensively discussed in

philosophical, psychological, sociological and ecological discourses. Because of great variety and diversity of theoretical perspectives, there is no universally accepted conception of tolerance.

A number of foreign authors substantially contributed to the examination of tolerance:

A. Tesser and D. Shaffer (1990); T. P. Hannigan (1990); M. B. Gasser (1994); M. B. Gasser and R. N. Tan (1999); W. P. Vogt (1997); B. Johnson et al. (2007); B. Gniewosz and P. Noack (2008); J. F. Dovidio et al. (2009); J. Binder et al. (2009); N. Denson (2009), and others.

In Lithuania various attitudes of tolerance were discussed by K. Stoškus (1987), V. Žemaitis (2005), R. Plečkaitis (1998), and others. The problem of tolerance, as it appears in secondary schools, was analyzed by E. Bakonis et al. (2004), A. Sprindžiūnas (2004), A. Kurienė (2007), V. Valentinavičius (2010), and others.

Secondary schools programmes and education standards (2003) emphasize that tolerance in school life is an important precondition for preparing students to live in constantly changing environment helping them to find appropriate forms of self-expression and self-realization, stimulating the formation of mature, creative and responsible individuality.

A. Dumčienė (2004), A. Sprindžiūnas (2004) and other scientists emphasize the point that individual's adequate relation with himself/herself (i. e. taking the form of authentic existence and conceding this right to other human beings) is one of the most important factors in the development of tolerance.

According to J. Browne-Dianis (2011), tolerance is precisely what a child needs not only for learning and survival, but also for prosperity of the individuality.

Research results of V. Valentinavičius (2010) revealed attitudes of students and teachers towards certain social groups. It was observed that they most of all distanced themselves socially from the disabled people and homosexuals. However, this research, like others mentioned above, lacks analysis of tolerance/intolerance manifestations in physical education lessons.

The "Declaration of Principles on Tolerance" emphasizes the necessity of active position against intolerance, emphasizes the duty to inculcate and cultivate respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms without reference to one's race, gender, language, nationality, religion and physical condition.

According to A. Dumčienė (2004), tolerance is a means of adaptation and self-realization, a way to live and let others live, a necessary condition for improvement in the individual and social spheres. Therefore, educational practice of PE teacher should become one of the most important activities oriented towards cultivation of tolerance.

Conception of tolerance associates with the notion of intolerance. V. Žemaitis (2005) points out that intolerance manifests as defiance of people which have different beliefs and opinions, overt or covert antagonism towards them. Intolerant persons think that only they are right, virtuous, and treat others as amoral, sinful people. Such views result from intellectual and spiritual narrowness, dogmatism and fanaticism, and, eventually, result in social confrontation.

Tolerance, being not an end in itself but the means to other goals (i. e. Truth and the Good), is a strategy for acquiring desirable things and fulfilling our material and immaterial needs without neglecting desires and needs of other people (Plečkaitis, 1998).

Social tolerance is a condition for peaceful and appropriate collaboration of different people. In democratic societies, it is a matter of great importance to grant equality of citizens in all spheres of their life without reference to their race, gender, background, belonging to one or another social stratum, etc. Social tolerance commits people to fight against all forms of discrimination and violations of human rights. Its content is equality of citizens in all spheres of social life. M. B. Gasser and R. N. Tan (1999) conceptualizes social tolerance using the notion of social distance.

Cultural tolerance is defined as individual attitude toward culture which is understood as foreign traditions and social norms (Gasser, Tan, 1999).

Specifying the object of analysis, usually such kinds of tolerance are distinguished: formal tolerance – i. e. conceding alternative, different opinion without endorsement of its content; substantive tolerance – i. e. acknowledgement and approval of views of other people.

W. P. Vogt (1997) distinguishes five levels in the construct of the individual tolerance: personal traits, views, beliefs, obligations, and practice.

According to A. Sprindžiūnas (2004), human beings are naturally intolerant towards each other; therefore it is a matter of great importance to learn tolerance during lifetime.

R. Plečkaitis (1998) distinguishes three essential conditions of tolerance. One can tolerate only those opinions and deeds which one treats adversely and negatively, which are unacceptable and unpleasant. The second condition: belief or understanding that there is an opportunity to resist what one treats negatively. Bearing or forbearance, which results from fear or helplessness, should not be treated as

tolerant position. Self-determination willingly and consciously endures what seems unacceptable but necessary condition of tolerance.

In question concerning the limits of tolerance is the main problem for examination of the phenomenon of tolerance and its specific features, but it remains a matter of controversy and professional discussion in various fields. **The aim of the research** was to reveal attitudes of PE teachers and students towards manifestations of tolerance/intolerance.

The aim of the tolerance education is to resist influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others, and help young people to develop capacities for independent judgment, critical thinking and ethical reasoning (*Declaration of Principles on Tolerance*, 2005).

**The aim of the research** was to reveal attitudes of PE teachers and students towards manifestations of tolerance/intolerance.

**Object of the research:** attitudes of PE teachers and students towards manifestations of tolerance/intolerance.

**Hypothesis:** students are more tolerant than PE teachers.

**Novelty of the research.** Academic literature concentrates on political, religious and ethnical aspects of teenagers' tolerance/intolerance; however, there is a lack of the examination of tolerance oriented toward the aspects of physical education. Novelty is due to duality: on the one hand, it is a matter of relevance to reveal what participants think and feel; on the other hand, our research discovers what participants would do in cases of tolerance/intolerance manifestations.

**Relevance of the research.** Rapidly changing social environment, pervasive ideas of multiculturalism actually, influence the appearance of cultural tolerance. Results of V. Valentinavičius (2010) research show that, in respect of tolerance, current situation is quite problematic. During physical education lessons specific interactions and collaboration take place, therefore, the attitudes revealed towards tolerance/intolerance manifestations can contribute to the science of education. In their everyday work educators could rest on the insights offered by our research.

## RESEARCH METHODS

On the grounds of the analysis of philosophical, psychological and pedagogical literature, also with the reference to the recommendations of M. B. Gasser (1994), M. B. Gasser and R. N. Tan

(1999) for constructing the scales of social-cultural distance, a two-part questionnaire was composed and applied in the research.

The first part of the questionnaire was internally oriented ("What do I think and how do I feel?"), and the second part was externally oriented ("What will I do in this environment?").

In the first part of tolerance construct, with the reference to the commonly-used methodology of social attitudes research (Binder et al., 2009), six groups of tolerance manifestations were distinguished. They referred to the tolerance/attitudes of students/teachers towards other students: with different appearance (clothing, hairstyle); with different sexual orientation; from other ethnic groups; with drugs and alcohol addiction; disability; different opinions from those prevailing in the community. In the first part of the questionnaire there were 36 statements, and participants could convey their attitudes towards them choosing one of three alternatives: Positive, Neutral, and Negative. Participants were asked about their attitudes towards the presence of the representatives of the aforementioned groups in physical education lessons.

In the second part six statements were introduced according to six groups of tolerance manifestations, and responses to them had to reveal potential behaviors of participants in given situations (five-point Likert scale). For example, such statement as "If I saw intolerant behavior towards the disabled, I would object". Answer variants: Always; Maybe yes; I don't know; Maybe no; Never (in data processing these answers were given values 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The closer is the estimator to value 1, the more active is negative reaction to the manifestation of intolerance; the closer is the estimator to the maximum value of 5, the slighter is the reaction. The medium value 4 shows that participant does not know how he/she would behave.

The validity of the questionnaire was tested by calculating Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha$ : for the first part of the questionnaire Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.87$ ; for the second – Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.79$ .

SPSS 12 software package was used to calculate the means of  $\chi^2$  and Student's  $t$  criterion.

The sample of the research consisted of four groups: 243 students of IX–XII classes from regional schools, 129 students of the same age from city schools, 47 physical education teachers (aged  $36.5 \pm 13.8$ ) from city schools and 38 teachers (aged  $47.2 \pm 10.5$ ) from regional schools. The research was

carried out applying the questionnaire survey with the permission of school authorities. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the questionnaire survey (the first part of the questionnaire) are presented in Figure 1 (students' attitudes) and Figure 2 (teachers' attitudes).

There was statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2(5) = 20.82$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) between positive attitudes towards tolerance of students from city schools and attitudes of students from regional schools.

There was no statistically significant difference between positive attitudes of PE teachers from city schools and attitudes of teachers from regional schools ( $\chi^2(5) = 8.03$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). However, there were statistically significant differences between positive attitudes towards tolerance of students from city schools and attitudes of PE teachers from city schools ( $\chi^2(5) = 37.27$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), also between positive attitudes towards tolerance of students

from regional schools and attitudes of PE teachers from regional schools ( $\chi^2(5) = 37.27$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Data acquired through questioning revealed students' (Figure 3) and teachers' (Figure 4) expected reactions to the manifestation of intolerance.

There was statistically significant difference ( $t = 3.81$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) between tolerance estimators of students and PE teachers from city schools. Significant differences between tolerance estimators of students from city schools and from regional schools, and differences between tolerance estimators of PE teachers from city schools and from regional schools, were not found ( $p > 0.05$ ).

According to the groups of tolerance manifestations, means of students' estimators and their standard deviations are displayed in Figure 5, and means of teacher's estimators and their standard deviations – in Figure 6.

There was no conventional structure of the multidimensional construct of tolerance. Therefore, mean estimators of tolerance were calculated. They are displayed in Table.

Figure 1. Distribution of students' positive attitudes (%)

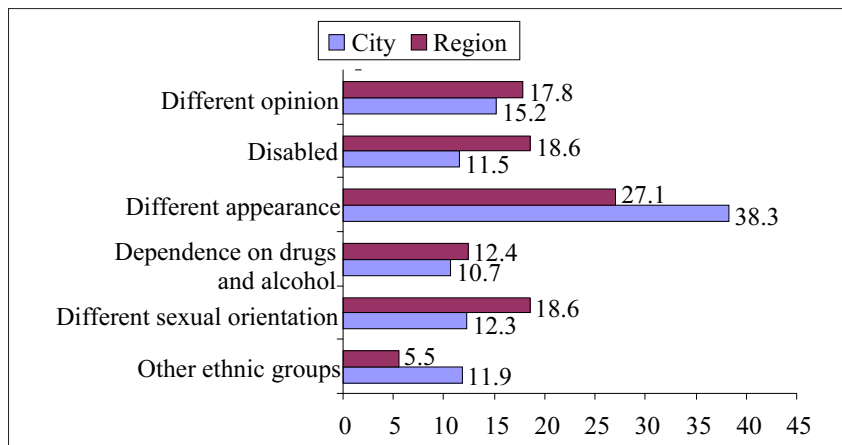
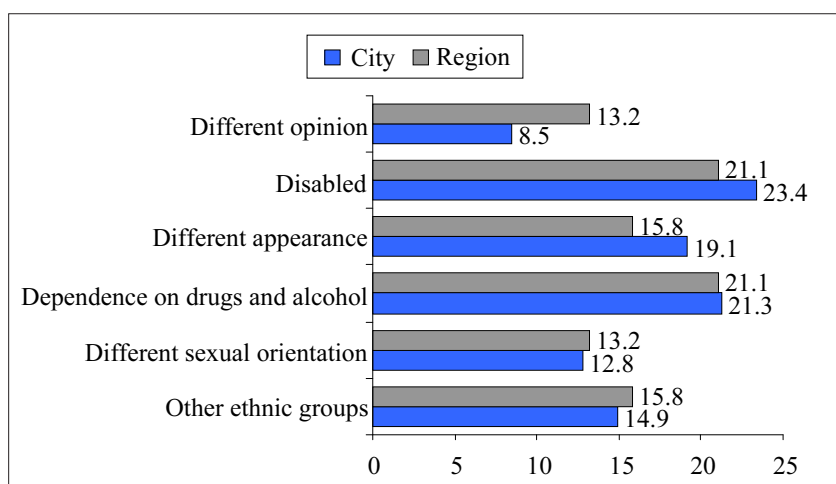


Figure 2. Distribution of teachers' positive attitudes (%)



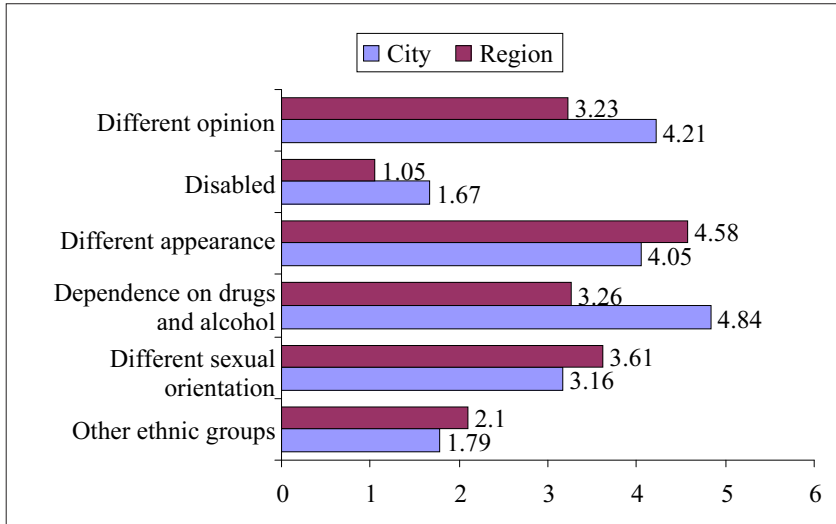


Figure 3. Distribution of the estimators of students' expected reactions to the manifestation of intolerance

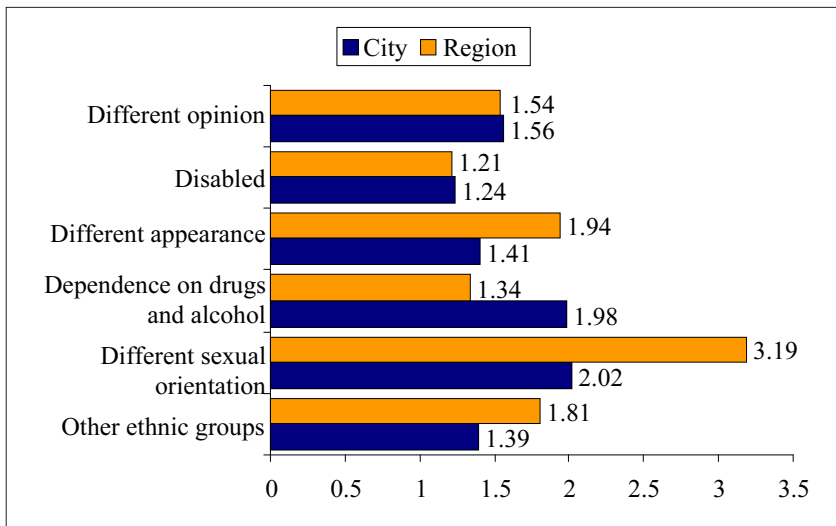


Figure 4. Distribution of the estimators of teachers' expected reactions to the manifestation of intolerance

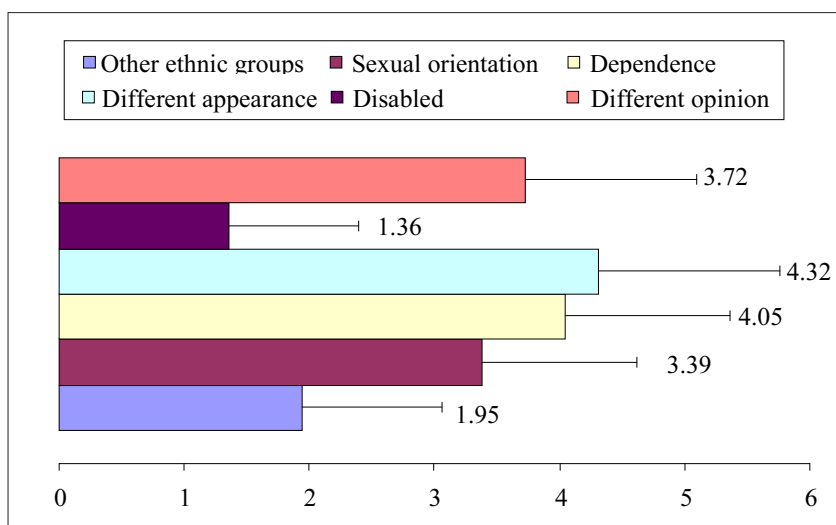


Figure 5. Mean estimators of students' tolerance according to the groups of tolerance manifestations

Figure 6. Mean estimators of teachers' tolerance according to the groups of tolerance manifestations

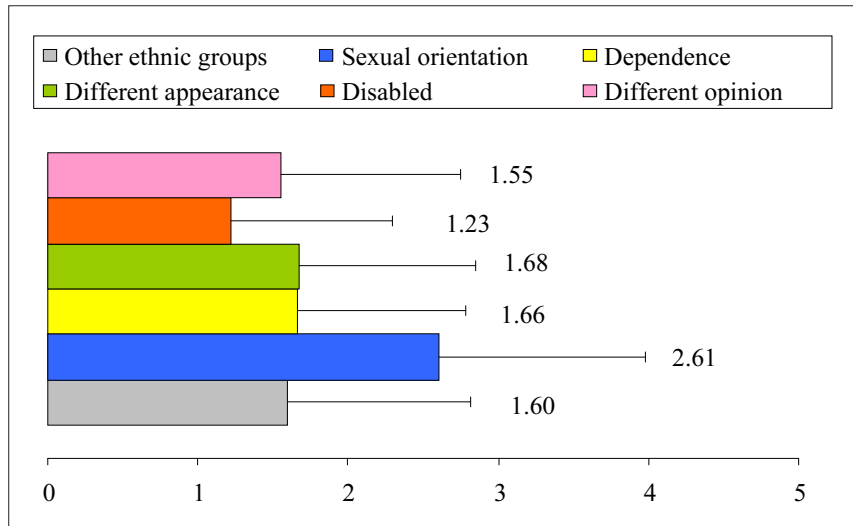


Table. Mean estimators of tolerance and SD

Location of school	Students	Teachers
City	3.29 ± 1.32	1.6 ± 0.33
Region	2.97 ± 1.23	1.84 ± 0.72

## DISCUSSION

Students from city and regional schools are least tolerant towards representatives from other ethnic groups in physical education lessons (11.9 and 5.5%, respectively). They are most of all tolerant towards students with different appearance (38.3 and 27.1%). Differences between attitudes of students from city and regional schools can be explained by differences of their psychological-emotional environment. According to other researchers (Gniewosz, Noack, 2008), environment affects the formation of tolerance among students significantly.

PE teachers, both from city schools and regional schools, are most of all tolerant towards disabled students (25.9 and 22.2%, respectively). They are significantly less tolerant towards persons with other sexual orientation (only 11% of them are positively minded). Teachers' attitudes presuppose influence of the psychological-emotional environment to the treatment of tolerance/intolerance manifestations. However, acquired results should be assessed with discretion because teachers, being stressed and lacking support of colleagues, tend to exaggerate and inadequately judge their students (Beaudoin, 2011).

Few students and PE teachers have positive attitudes towards persons with other sexual orientation, and this generalization does not contradict to the results of aforementioned research (Valentinavičius, 2010).

Differences of observed attitudes can be partly explained in terms of social categorization theory, according to which, in the process of classification, the group, into which individual subsumes himself/herself, is understood as indiscrete, and, on the other hand, differences of external group are exaggerated. As T. P. Hanningan (1990) suggests, there are important factors which influence the way we evaluate other people, i. e. our authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, openness to new experience and tolerance for uncertainties.

According to M. B. Gasser and R. N. Tan (1999), disposition to act in the face of intolerance manifestations is a relevant characteristics to the assessment of tolerance. As the data of the questionnaire survey shows, students from city and regional schools strongly tend to react against intolerance towards the disabled and representatives of other ethnic groups. Very rarely would they react against intolerance towards persons with different

appearance and dependence on drugs and alcohol. Although these are conditional estimators, in case of the students from city schools, there is a weaker tendency to actively resist manifestations of intolerance compared to the tendency of students from regional schools (estimators are  $3.29 \pm 1.32$  and  $2.97$ , respectively). However, the difference between estimators is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). PE teachers from city and regional schools tend to react more strongly (estimators are  $1.6 \pm 0.33$  and  $1.84 \pm 0.72$ , respectively; the less estimator, the more negative reaction against intolerance manifestations). Dispersion of students is significantly larger than the one in case of teachers. Some authors (Tesser, Shaffer, 1990) criticize the application of scales in the assessment of social distance; on the other hand, they concede that acquired results reflect the presence of social distance between groups.

According to J. Browne-Dianis (2011), it is quite problematic to cultivate tolerance in school, as teachers sometimes judge their students

inadequately. However, N. Denson (2009) points out that purposefully organized education and sufficient information on cultural variety positively affects social attitudes and interaction among social groups.

## CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

There is statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the attitudes of students from city schools towards various manifestations of tolerance and the attitudes which are typical of students from regional schools. Attitudes towards intolerance, which are incident to the PE teachers from city schools and their colleagues from regional schools, do not differ, but they contrast with students' attitudes. In cases of intolerance manifestations, students from city schools are more passive than students from regional schools, but PE teachers from city schools are more active than their students.

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# KŪNO KULTŪROS MOKYTOJŲ IR MOKINIŲ POŽIŪRIAI Į TOLERANCIJOS APRAIŠKAS

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## SANTRAUKA

*Tyrimo pagrindimas ir hipotezė.* Mokslinėje literatūroje nėra atskleistas tolerancijos konstruktas, neapibrėžtos tolerancijos ribos, juolab jos įvairuoja skirtingose kultūrose. Lietuvos mokyklose gausėja įvairių etninių grupių migrantų vaikų, tad tolerancijai ugdyti vertingos žinios įvairiais jos apraiškos būdais.

*Tikslas* – išsiaiškinti tolerancijos apraiškas per kūno kultūros pamokas.

*Metodai.* Duomenims surinkti naudota anketa, kurioje išskirtos šešios tolerancijos apraiškų grupės ir jas galimai atskleisiantys 36 teiginiai. Papildomai pateiktos šešių tolerancijos apraiškų grupių teiginiai galimai atskleisiantys tiriamojo elgesį duotojoje situacijoje. Anketos patikimumas tikrintas paskaičiuojant Kronbacho  $\alpha$  koeficientą: pirmos klausimyno dalies Kronbacho  $\alpha = 0,87$ , antros –  $0,79$ . Skaičiuotos  $\chi^2$  kvadrato ir Stjudento  $t$  kriterijaus reikšmės, naudotas SPSS 12 programų paketas.

Buvo apklausti 243 miesto mokyklų ir 129 rajono mokyklų IX–XII klasių mokiniai bei 47 miesto ir 38 rajono mokyklų kūno kultūros mokytojai.

*Rezultatai.* Tarp miesto ir rajono mokyklų mokinių pozityvaus požiūrio į toleranciją nustatytas statistiškai patikimas skirtumas ( $p < 0,05$ ). Tarp miesto ir rajono mokyklų kūno kultūros mokytojų pozityvaus požiūrio į toleranciją reikšmingo skirtumo nenustatyta ( $p > 0,05$ ). Tačiau nustatytas statistiškai reikšmingas pozityvaus požiūrio į toleranciją skirtumas ir tarp miesto mokyklų mokinių bei kūno kultūros mokytojų ( $\chi^2(5) = 37,27$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ), ir tarp rajono mokyklų mokinių bei kūno kultūros mokytojų ( $\chi^2(5) = 37,27$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). Statistiškai reikšmingas skirtumas ( $t = 3,81$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ) aptiktas tarp miesto mokyklų mokinių ir kūno kultūros mokytojų tolerancijos įverčių, o tarp miesto ir rajono mokinių bei tarp miesto ir rajono kūno kultūros mokytojų tolerancijos įverčių reikšmingo skirtumo nenustatyta ( $p > 0,05$ ).

*Aptarimas ir išvados.* Miesto ir rajono mokyklų kūno kultūros mokytojų požiūris į netolerancijos apraiškas iš esmės nesiskiria, tačiau skiriasi nuo mokinių. Miesto mokyklų mokiniai netolerancijos pasireiškimo atvejais būtų pasyvesni nei rajono mokyklų mokiniai, kūno kultūros mokytojai aktyvesni už mokinius.

**Raktažodžiai:** tolerancija, netolerancija, socialinė atskirtis.

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