

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 12–16-YEAR-OLD ATHLETES' SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-CONFIDENCE AND BULLYING

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## ABSTRACT

*Research background and hypothesis.* Previous research has proved that children engaged in sports easier integrate into the society and their psychological well-being is much higher, sports activities can help them resist to the harmful influence of their peers and prevent them from engaging into delinquent behavior. However, there still is a lack of a studies providing evidence about factors that determine the expression of compulsion. *Hypothesis:* The level of self-esteem and self-confidence of adolescent athletes influences the occurrence of bullying and the initiation of it.

*Research aim* was to disclose the relationship between the level of adolescent athletes' self-esteem, self-confidence and the occurrence of bullying.

*Research methods.* The study applied I. Shostrom's modified self-esteem scale questionnaire and the adapted Bullying Scale for Schoolchildren.

*Research results.* Results showed a weak correlation between bullying and self-esteem levels ( $\gamma = 0.24$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). We found a weak adverse relationship between initiating bullying and self-assessment levels ( $\gamma = -0.16$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), weak adverse correlation between experienced bullying and self-confidence levels ( $\gamma = -0.15$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) and a weak linear relationship between initiating bullying and self-confidence ( $\gamma = 0.20$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

*Discussion and conclusions.* Contrary to what we expected, we observed that athlete adolescents with the high levels of self-esteem suffered from bullying sometimes and often. Research findings suggest that adolescents who tend to initiate bullying demonstrated moderate and low levels of self-esteem. Most of athlete adolescents admitted that that did not initiate bullying or if they did, that was done only occasionally. It was found that adolescents with high and moderate self-confidence levels experienced bullying occasionally or not at all. Some athletes with low self-confidence levels professed that they suffered from bullying more often, and they also admitted that they often initiated bullying themselves. In our research we were unable failed to provide evidence which would prove that sports activities impacted or influenced adolescents' bullying initiatives or experiences; therefore further research is needed to determine whether self-esteem and other internal personality qualities could affect the expression of bullying among non-athlete adolescents.

**Keywords:** aggression, adolescents' self- assessment, self-confidence.

## INTRODUCTION

Peculiarities of bullying conception and its manifestation have recently received much attention from scholars in different countries (Olweous, 1993; Arora, 1996), the data on the scope of the prevalence of bullying have been compared (Dake et al., 2003) going deep into the understanding the differences in the aspect of age, gender and classmate intercourse related to bullying experience (Pellegrini, Long, 2002), ethnic reliance

and other differences (Seals, Young, 2003); bullying initiatives and their victim characteristics have been explored (Olweous, 1993). Research literature has evidence of the nature of bullying among adolescents (Due et al., 2005; Fleming, Jacobsen, 2009) as well as its relation with tobacco and alcohol consumption (Morris et al., 2006), probability suicidal behavior (Van der Wal et al., 2003), anxiety, and low self-esteem (Currie et al., 2004, cit. from Širvinskienė et al., 2008).

Thereby research has proved the dependence of self-esteem on the nature of interaction with peers (Burnett, 2006), psychological class environment (Maxwell, Chmielewski, 2007); researchers emphasize that adolescents' wellbeing at school is closely related to self-esteem (Andziulytė, Beresnevičienė, 2005). Dž. Valeckienė (2005) suggests that children's self-esteem decreases while suffering bullying, and to recover their self-esteem they take the same way engaging in bullying on more vulnerable kids than they are.

Meanwhile sport activities are evaluated positively activity while speaking about the development of self-esteem and self-confidence because children involved in such activities are able to know themselves better and they can get better feedback about their skill development while interacting with the peers and adults, especially their coach (Vainienė, Kardelis, 2008). Previous research has proved that children engaged in sports easier integrate into the society and their psychological well-being is much higher, sports activities can help them resist to the harmful influence of their peers and prevent them from engaging into delinquent behavior (Nieman, 2002).

However, there still is a lack of a studies providing evidence about factors that determine the expression of compulsion. Therefore, our *problem question* is whether the level of self-esteem and self-confidence of adolescent athletes influences the occurrence of bullying and the initiation of it.

**Hypothesis:** The level of self-esteem and self-confidence of adolescent athletes influences the occurrence of bullying and the initiation of it.

**The aim of the research** was to disclose the relationship between the level of adolescent athletes' self-esteem, self-confidence and the occurrence of bullying. **Research object** was the relationship between level of self-esteem, self-confidence and the occurrence of bullying among adolescents.

## RESEARCH METHODS

**Instrument.** The study applied I. Shostrom's modified self-esteem scale questionnaire which included 26 items (Lester, Lloyd, 1997) and the adapted *Bullying Scale for Schoolchildren* with 11 open and closed questions (United Kingdom, York) ([http://www.state.de.us/attgen/main\\_page/teachers/bullquesti.htm](http://www.state.de.us/attgen/main_page/teachers/bullquesti.htm)). Participants were told to choose one or several possible answers.

**Procedure.** The survey was carried out in 2009–2011. Using the random sampling strategy, 1036 athlete adolescents (12–16 years) from various secondary and sports schools of Lithuania were selected for the research after obtaining institutional approval from the schools. The participants no less than two times per week attended sports practice sessions at sports schools or clubs and no less than for one year they had been participating in competitions.

**Statistical analysis.** The research data were analyzed using Statistical Software Package for Windows SPSS 13.0;  $\chi^2$  was calculated to define statistically significant differences between groups. Statistical significance of differences was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Gamma coefficient was included to assess the level of the relationship between self-esteem, self-confidence and bullying.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

Self-esteem scale employed in the research was developed according to I. Shostrom's method modifying the items. Adolescents were asked to evaluate 22 items, but the final analysis included 16 qualities statistically significantly describing adolescents' self-esteem and self-confidence peculiarities.

Factor analysis revealed two factors which were significant and explained 20.14% of variance (Table). Based on these factors components of self-esteem and self-confidence were disclosed.

Contrary to what we expected, we found that adolescent athletes with high levels of self-assessment suffered from bullying sometimes or often, whereas subjects who had low self-esteem suffered from bullying sometimes or not at all (Figure 1) ( $\chi^2(2) = 8.420$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). A weak correlation was found between bullying and the level of self-esteem ( $\gamma = 0.24$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

Our findings showed that adolescents who tended to initiate bullying demonstrated medium and low levels of self-assessment although there were not many of such respondents. The majority of athlete adolescents indicated that they would never initiate bullying or they did that occasionally. Statistically significant difference in self-assessment levels between these adolescents was established (Figure 2) ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.831$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). However, we found a weak adverse correlation between initiating bullying and the level of self-assessment ( $\gamma = -0.16$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

It was established that most adolescents characterized by medium and high self-confidence levels indicated that they suffered from bullying occasionally, although those denied being bullied had little confidence in themselves. About eight percent of athlete adolescents with low levels of self-confidence stated that they suffered from bullying quite often (Figure 3) ( $\chi^2 (2) = 3.47$ ;

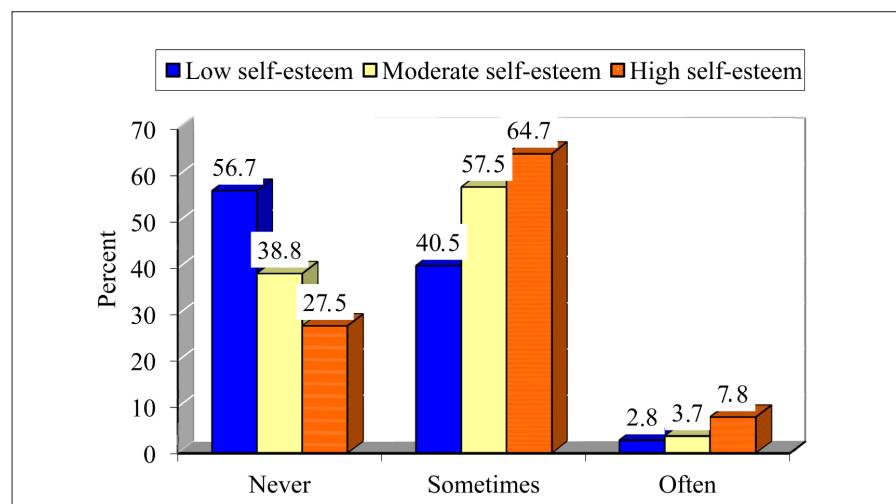
$p > 0.05$ ). We found a weak adverse correlation between being bullied and self-confidence levels ( $\gamma = -0.15$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

The study showed that adolescents characterized by both low and high levels of self-confidence admitted that they never initiated bullying. Among those who initiated bullying occasionally mostly were athletes with moderate self-confidence levels, and most adolescents with

Table. Items featuring self-esteem and self-confidence, factor loadings

| Items                                                                                        | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| I am not afraid of difficulties, I believe I can solve all problems while achieving my goals | 0.653    |          |
| I believe I will do everything perfectly whatever I have to do                               | 0.598    |          |
| My marks do not say anything about me and my abilities                                       | 0.475    |          |
| I have enough wisdom and abilities compared to others for implementing my plans              | 0.738    |          |
| My opinion is firm enough compared to that of others                                         | 0.641    |          |
| I can easily get in to contact with any wise person                                          | 0.632    |          |
| I believe I am a wise and reliable adviser for myself                                        | 0.629    |          |
| I live my life independently on my classmates as much as possible                            | 0.501    |          |
| Lack of will is the reason I cannot achieve my goals                                         |          | 0.653    |
| I am a confident person, I believe I have control over my destiny                            | 0.580    |          |
| In complicated situations I do not expect that problems will be solved by themselves         | 0.538    |          |
| I believe that circumstances are the reason of my failures more often than I myself          |          | 0.422    |
| I often ridicule myself                                                                      |          | 0.461    |
| By peers believe that I am a totally reliable person in serious matters                      | 0.532    |          |
| I am not as respected as my peers                                                            |          | 0.725    |
| I feel worse than my other classmates                                                        |          | 0.665    |
| Factor dispersion                                                                            | 27.16%   | 13.12%   |

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of bullying experienced by athlete adolescents demonstrating different self-esteem levels



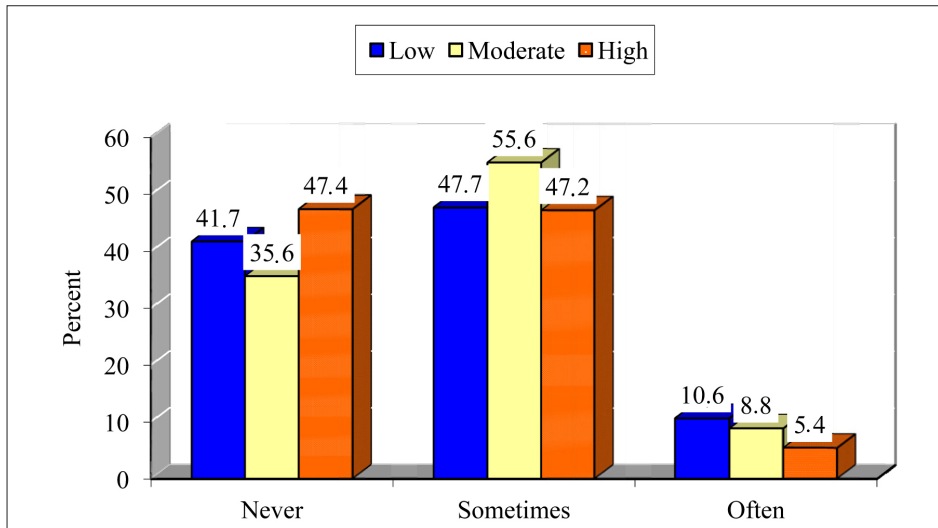


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of bullying initiated by athlete adolescents demonstrating different self-esteem levels

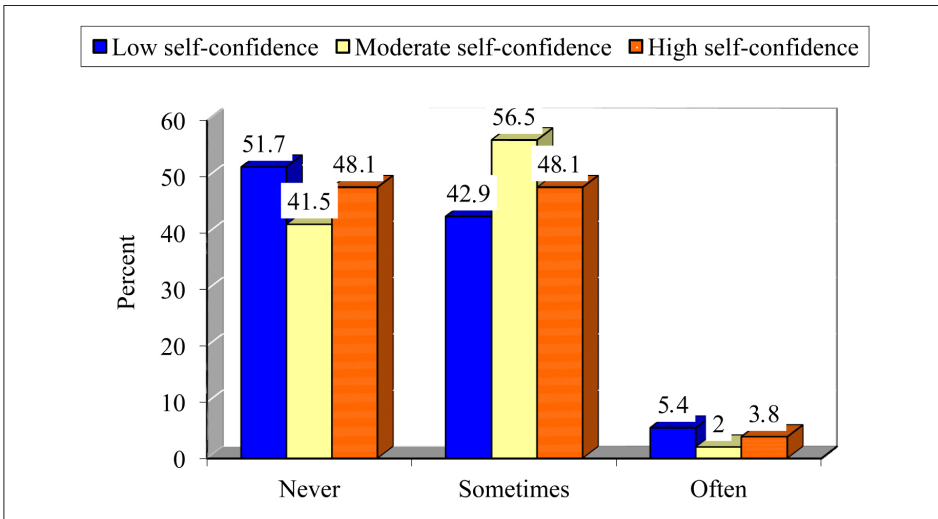
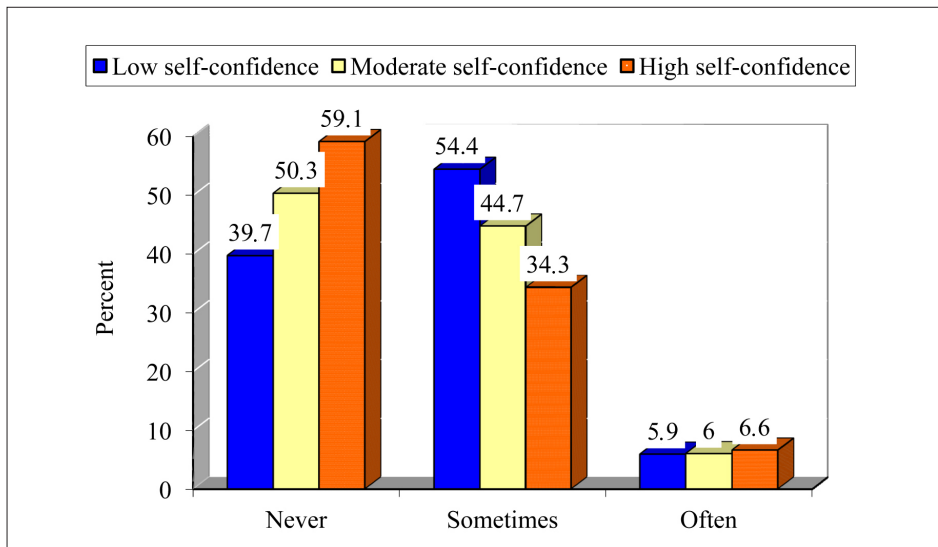


Figure 3. Percentage distribution of bullying experienced by athlete adolescents demonstrating different self-confidence levels



4 figure. Percentage distribution of bullying initiated by athlete adolescents demonstrating different self-confidence levels

low levels self-confidence confessed that they initiated bullying rather often ( $\chi^2 (2) = 4.01$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) (Figure 4). Our findings suggested a weak linear correlation between initiating bullying and self-confidence levels ( $\gamma = 0.20$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The results obtained showed that athlete adolescents characterized by high levels of self-confidence suffered from bullying occasionally or more often. These findings contradict to a lot of studies suggesting that athlete adolescents are more confident in themselves and their popularity levels among classmates are rather high (Dunn Causgrove et al., 2008), therefore appreciation gained consolidate respect for them among their peers (Bump, 2000) as well as higher social integration (Šukys, Jankauskienė, 2008); thus they experience bullying much less. For instance, J. Dunn Causgrove et al. (2008) established that athlete adolescents were ranked high in their popularity among their classmates, therefore they experienced less bullying and they demonstrated better social integration (Šukys, Jankauskienė, 2008).

Researchers have found that most adolescents initiating bullying are distinguished by moderate and low levels of self-esteem. R. Prakapas (2001) observed that pupils expressed aggression because of the fear and un-confidence towards themselves because they did not respect themselves and expecting to earn respect of others in this way.

Most of athlete adolescents stated that they did not initiate bullying or if they did, it was done occasionally. Thus, we can assume that self-confident adolescents understand the harm of bullying to victims and other children, or they are engaged in more meaningful activities than bullying. A. Pellegrini, J. D. Long (2002) established that adolescents with higher levels of self-esteem significantly more seldom tended to get involved into bullying because they knew other ways to earn respect from other people.

In our research we were unable failed to provide evidence which would prove that sports activities impacted or influenced adolescents' bullying initiatives or experiences. Research carried out by R. Jankauskienė et al. (2008) showed that involvement in sports activities had no effect on bullying behavior; however, more victims of bullying were found among non-athlete adolescents than athletes.

Some athletes with low levels of self-confidence admitted that they suffered from bullying often, but they also confessed that they often initiated bullying themselves. This research once again has confirmed the assumption proposed in research literature (Nixon, 1997; Stephens, 2001) that athletes tend to transfer their aggression developed in sports activities into the daily life. On the basis of this finding we can reasonably hypothesize that persons involved in sports activities could be more aggressive outside their sports activities as well.

## CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Contrary to what we expected, we observed that athlete adolescents with the high levels of self-esteem suffered from bullying sometimes and often. Research findings suggest that adolescents who tend to initiate bullying demonstrated moderate and low levels of self-esteem. Most of athlete adolescents admitted that that did not initiate bullying or if they did, that was done only occasionally. It was found that adolescents with high and moderate self-confidence levels experienced bullying occasionally or not at all. Some athletes with low self-confidence levels professed that they suffered from bullying more often, and they also admitted that they often initiated bullying themselves. In our research we were unable failed to provide evidence which would prove that sports activities impacted or influenced adolescents' bullying initiatives or experiences; therefore further research is needed to determine whether self-esteem and other internal personality qualities could affect the expression of bullying among non-athlete adolescents.

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# SAVĖS VERTINIMO, PASITIKĖJIMO SAVIMI IR PATYČIŲ SĄSAJOS TARP 12–16 METŲ SPORTININKŲ

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## SANTRAUKA

*Tyrimo pagrindimas ir hipotezė.* Tyrimais įrodyta savęs vertinimo priklausomybė nuo bendravimo pobūdžio su bendraamžiais, klasės psichologinės aplinkos. Teigiama, kad kęsdamas patyčias vaikas pradeda žemai save vertinti, norėdamas susigrąžinti savęs vertinimą, jis tyčiojasi iš silpnesnių nei jis pats. Tyrimai rodo, kad fiziškai aktyvūs vaikai lengviau integruojasi į visuomenę ir geriau psichologiškai jaučiasi, sportinė veikla gali padėti paaugliams atsispirti žalingai bendraamžių įtakai bei stabdyti išitraukimą į nusikalstamą veiklą. Deja, prievartos raišką lemiančių veiksnių analizės tyrimų vis dar trūksta. *Hipotezė* – sportuojančių paauglių savęs vertinimo bei pasitikėjimo savimi lygmuo turi įtakos patyčių patyrimui ir jų inicijavimui.

*Tikslas* – nustatyti sportuojančių paauglių patyčių, savęs vertinimo ir pasitikėjimo savimi sąsajas.

*Metodai.* Tiriamesiems buvo pateikta I. Shostrom savęs vertinimo anketa ir adaptuota Patyčių anketa.

*Rezultatai.* Tarp patiriamų patyčių ir savęs vertinimo lygmens nustatyta silpna priklausomybė ( $\gamma = 0,23$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ), tarp inicijuojamų patyčių bei savęs vertinimo lygmens – atvirkštinė silpna priklausomybė ( $\gamma = -0,17$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ), tarp patiriamų patyčių bei pasitikėjimo savimi lygmens – atvirkštinė silpna priklausomybė ( $\gamma = -0,15$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ), tarp inicijuojamų patyčių ir pasitikėjimo savimi lygmens – tiesinė silpna priklausomybė ( $\gamma = 0,19$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ).

*Aptarimas ir išvados.* Aukšto savęs vertinimo sportuojantys paaugliai patyčias patiria kartais ir dažnai. Pastebėta, kad paaugliai, linkę tyčiotis iš kitų, yra vidutinio ir žemo savęs vertinimo. Daugiausia aukšto ir vidutinio pasitikėjimo savimi paauglių patyčias patiria kartais arba jų nepatiria. Dalis nepasitikinčių savimi sportininkų teigia, kad iš jų dažnai tyčiojamosi, jie pripažįsta ir patys dažnai inicijuojantys patyčias. Tyrimo metu nepavyko nustatyti, kad savęs vertinimo bei pasitikėjimo lygis turi įtakos patiriamoms bei inicijuojamoms patyčioms, todėl verta tęsti tyrimus norint patikrinti, ar savęs vertinimas bei kiti vidiniai asmenybės dariniai turės įtakos patyčių raiškai nesportuojančių paauglių populiacijoje.

**Raktažodžiai:** agresija, paauglių savimonė, pasitikėjimas savimi.

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