

EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC SELF-EVALUATION OF ADOLESCENT ATHLETES AND NON-ATHLETES

Ilona Tilindienė, Saulius Šukys, Saulius Kavaliauskas
Lithuanian Sports University, Kaunas, Lithuania

ABSTRACT

Background. Grigaliūnienė, Vėlavičienė, Šulga, and Keblys (2007) have revealed that meaningful relationships with teachers are influenced by positive attitudes towards them with a good emotional atmosphere in the classroom and a positive microclimate between pupils and teachers. Many scientists point out that education in sports activities positively impacts the development of adolescents' communication and collaboration with peers and adults, adequate self-evaluation and other positive personality characteristics (Kremer-Sadlik & Kim, 2007; Ream & Rumberger, 2008). Research aim was to determine the evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation of 11–15-year-old adolescent athletes and non-athletes.

Methods. The research was conducted in 2015. We questioned 209 adolescents, aged 11–15 years. In order to determine adolescents' attitudes towards school educational environment, the survey included the following scales: "Teachers' help for pupils"; "Support of classmates"; "Positive relationship between adolescents and school"; "Attitude towards socioeducational school environment"; "Loneliness at school", and "Academic self-evaluation".

Results. The survey revealed that boys' attitudes to socioeducational school environment resulted to be better than that of girls ($p < .05$) and that younger adolescents felt more help from the teachers at school than older adolescents ($p < .05$), but they also pointed out that they experienced a stronger sense of loneliness at school ($p < .05$). More positive relationship was revealed between adolescent athletes and school ($p < .05$), but adolescent non-athletes had a better attitude to socioeducational school environment.

Conclusion. It was found that although adolescent non-athletes had a better approach to socioeducational school environment, their peer reported having a better link with school.

Keywords: attitude, adolescent athletes, adolescent non-athletes, feeling at school, sports activity.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents spend the largest part of their time at school, therefore, the factors directly related to school – peers, teachers, their assessment and relationship with each other – appear to be highly important. The emotional state for adolescents at school becomes of particular significance where feeling safe and welcome their individuality can grow and fully develop. During adolescence individuals search for themselves, their identity and seek to know the surrounding environment, which must be emotionally secure, dominated by parents, peers and teachers (Rupšienė

& Kučinskienė, 2006). Grigaliūnienė et al. (2007) have revealed that meaningful relationships with teachers are influenced by the positive attitude towards them with a good emotional atmosphere in the classroom, and easily understandable classroom tasks encourage a positive microclimate between pupils and teachers. Relationships with teachers and adolescents result to be two-folded: either provide incentives and create a natural desire to learn and improve, or become the source of anxiety, tension and depressive mood (Dam & Volman, 2007; Rupšienė & Kučinskienė, 2006). Sinead

et al. (2011) suggest that adolescents discover discrepancies in the same field or object daily which could not have been noticed in an earlier age, thus, as identified by Markovienė (2001), a young person faces two problems continuously – the inner harmony and formation of harmonious relationship with an environment.

Adolescents' self-confidence and the confidence of those around them as well as an ability to find the right way for the situation that needs to be resolved impact their identity development and are related to the improvement of internal coherence and self-evaluation (Lengvinienė, 2004; Sinead et al., 2011). Bergh and Erling (2005) argue that during adolescence it is essential for adolescents to identify themselves through new relationships with peers. Being part of a group of peers is a key feature that distinguishes adolescence from other life periods. The adolescent peer group becomes the reference group enabling them to be aware of their own actions and develop social skills. Belonging to any clearly identified group, an adolescent can answer the question: "Who am I?". The inner need to communicate with their peers often becomes so strong that adolescents begin not to pay attention even to their parents (Barkauskaitė & Židonienė, 2001; Byrne, 2000; Vaičiulienė, 2004).

Many scientists point out that sports activities are characterized as a fundamental factor for the personality development. Education in sports activities affects not only individual physical skills but also cultural values, understanding and perception of behaviour standards (Bobrova & Augienė, 2009) and positively impacts the development of adolescents' communication and collaboration with peers, emotional stability, adequate self-evaluation, self-confidence, self-realization and other positive personality characteristics (Batutis & Gadeikis, 2009, Kremer-Sadlik & Kim, 2007; Ream & Rumberger, 2008; Šniras, Dumčienė, & Dumbliauskas, 2007; Weiss & Amorose, 2005). Being part of a sports group allows one to compare oneself with others, understand and assess one's successes and failures, build recognition and respect among other people and be noticed due to one's achievements (Bump, 2000; Martens, 1999).

The research results of Kremer-Sadlik and Kim (2007), Moreno and Cervello (2005), as well as Ream and Rumberger (2008) witness that adolescent athletes possess a higher perception of their competence in the field of social recognition,

and this positively influences their perceptions of themselves and the world around them.

During adolescence competence is associated with the adolescents' sense of self-esteem. Moreno and Cervello (2005) as well as Šertvytienė and Laskienė (2008) indicate that the prevailing difference exists between adolescent athletes' and non-athletes' social competence and perception in a social recognition sphere. Adolescent athletes are self-confident, they are able to adequately express positive and negative feelings verbally and this positively affects their perception of themselves and the world around them. These characteristics could be attributed to adolescent non-athletes less. Kaffemanas and Gerulaitis (2001) indicate that adolescents who fail to follow the rules and regulations raised by their peers or other groups are more likely not to be included and be isolated from other adolescents.

Baron and Parker (2000) claim that adolescents belonging to a group are more likely to feel satisfied with life and themselves, constructively respond to the difficulties and problems as well as develop more successful interpersonal relationship with others.

Research object was Evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation of 11–15-year-old adolescents.

Research aim was to determine the evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation of 11–15-year-old adolescent athletes and non-athletes.

METHODS

The research was conducted in 2015. The school administration consent was received for the survey, the survey time was agreed with the teachers and social pedagogues. Totally 209 adolescents aged 11–15 years, learning in Kaunas city schools were surveyed in the research. The sample included 101 female and 108 male pupils, 105 respondents were 11–12 years old and 104 respondents were 13–15 years old, 99 athletes and 110 non-athletes. Adolescents' sports activities were determined by asking them questions about how many times a week an adolescent was engaged in sport (at a sports school, sports club or sports groups) and how many times a year they took part in sports competitions. The respondents who replied that were engaged in sports three or more times a week and participated in three or more sports competitions a year, were

Table 1. Internal coherence indices of questionnaires

Title of Questionnaire	Cronbach's α Coefficient	Number of Scale Statements
Teachers' Help for Pupils	.655	6
Support of Classmates	.659	6
Positive Relationship Between Adolescents and School	.786	18
Attitude Towards Socioeducational School Environment	.886	15
Loneliness at School	.900	5
Academic Self-Evaluation	.855	5

included into the athletes' group and the rest - to non-athletes' group.

In order to determine the attitude of the 11–15-year-old adolescent athletes and non-athletes to educational school environment, the questionnaire survey was performed. The study design was cross-sectional with self-reported questionnaires. For the analysis of the teacher's help for the pupils (that is, how much the teacher helped the pupils when they felt sad, how much the teacher helped the pupils to achieve their potential goals, how honest the teacher was with the pupils, and so on), the subjects were given a questionnaire comprised of 6 statements (Harter, 1985). For the analysis of classmates' support at school (that is, how much teenagers felt popular, liked, included and listened to by their peers), the respondents were given a questionnaire of 6 statements (Harter, 1985). In order to discover how much adolescents felt belonging and psychologically included into the school the questionnaire of 18 questions "The Positive Relationship Between Children and School" was used (Goodenow, 1993). In order to determine the adolescents' attitudes to school environment, including teachers, homework, marks and learning, the 15-question questionnaire was used. The examination of the adolescents' sense of loneliness and the ability to socially integrate at school was performed using "The Loneliness at School Questionnaire" (Kocheenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001), which consisted of 5 questions. To measure how positive the adolescents' self-evaluation was in accordance with their academic skills "The Academic Self-Evaluation Questionnaire" was used (McCoach, 2002), which consisted of 5 questions.

The study found that the internal coherence of questions of all the questionnaires used in the research after the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficients was sufficient or very good and ranged from .655 to .900 (Table 1).

The research data was analysed and calculated using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 17.0. The arithmetic means and response percentage frequencies of the survey data were calculated. The study data were compared using the Mann-Whitney U test, and the percentage frequencies were often compared using χ^2 (chi-square) test. The difference was considered statistically significant when the error probability value was $p \leq .05$. The internal reliability of questionnaires was determined by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

RESULTS

The survey revealed that the 11–15-year-old boys' attitudes to socioeducational school environment resulted to be better than that of girls. However, it is interesting to note that the significant differences for girls and boys were determined in the evaluation of teachers' help for pupils, where girls appreciated this assistance more ($p < .05$) (Table 2).

It was found that younger adolescents felt more help from the teachers at school than older adolescents ($p < .05$), but they also pointed out that they experienced a stronger sense of loneliness at school than older adolescents ($p < .05$) (Table 3).

A more positive relationship was revealed between adolescent athletes and school ($p < .05$), but adolescent non-athletes had a better attitude to socioeducational school environment (Table 4).

Title of Questionnaire	Gender		U	p
	Girls	Boys		
	Mean sum	Mean sum		
Teachers' Help for Pupils	18.94	18.04	4055.5	.052
Support of Classmates	15.45	15.84	4439.5	.358
Positive Relationship Between Adolescents and School	63.39	61.64	4304.5	.210
Attitude Towards Socioeducational School Environment	33.29	37.40	3990.5	.041
Loneliness at School	13.11	13.18	4487.5	.401
Academic Self-Evaluation	27.19	26.71	4713.0	.823

Table 2. Evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation with respect to gender

Title of Questionnaire	Age group		U	p
	11–12 years	13–15 years		
	Mean sum	Mean sum		
Teachers' Help for Pupils	19.03	17.93	3910.0	.024
Support of Classmates	15.68	15.62	4757.0	.910
Positive Relationship Between Adolescents and School	63.67	61.32	4147.5	.099
Attitude Towards Socioeducational School Environment	34.23	36.53	4264.0	.176
Loneliness at School	13.49	12.79	4006.0	.033
Academic Self-Evaluation	27.79	26.08	4158.5	.105

Table 3. Evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation with respect to age

Title of Questionnaire	Athletes	Non-athletes	U	p
	Mean sum	Mean sum		
Teachers' Help for Pupils	18.86	18.12	4234.0	.152
Support of Classmates	15.77	15.53	4514.5	.469
Positive Relationship Between Adolescents and School	64.68	60.42	3697.0	.005
Attitude Towards Socioeducational School Environment	33.95	36.73	4049.0	.051
Loneliness at School	13.30	13.00	4243.0	.136
Academic Self-Evaluation	27.44	26.47	4320.5	.226

Table 4. Evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation with respect to sports

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that boys had a more positive attitude towards school (attitude to teachers, homework, marks and learning) than

girls did. However, in Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham's (2004) study, the opposite tendency was determined: adolescent girls appreciated both the learning process and its achievements as well as the school concept itself more. Similarly, other

studies have seen the same tendency, e.g. Byrne (2000), Bergh and Erling (2005) draw attention to the adolescent girls' greater interest and interest in school learning process. Berenson, Crawford and Cohen's (2005) research suggests that adolescent boys gently respond to the expressed criticism, which directly associates their relationship with others with detachment and avoiding of others. Brettschneider, Kleine, and Klimek (2003) also found that adolescent boys tended to be more irritable, anxious and felt more constrained from their environment than their peer girls. This, perhaps, may be explained by the fact that the studied adolescent girls receive more support from teachers than adolescent boys.

It was found that younger adolescents felt more support from the teachers at school than older adolescents; similar results were also obtained from Moreno and Cervello (2005) and Spring, Rosen, and Matheson's (2002) studies, who recognized that as an adolescent was becoming older, school and school teachers became less meaningful, so mutual relationship tended to weaken. It was determined that younger respondents experienced a stronger sense of loneliness at school than older adolescents. Dam and Volman (2007) indicate that younger adolescents have a few friends from classmates, but during the period of adolescence their peers comprising the major part of their life and becoming a priority the friendship factor become very significant. This friendship capital delays the feeling of loneliness, allows to feel constantly among others and together with others.

It should be emphasized that adolescent athletes feel more belonging and psychologically included in school than their peer adolescent non-athletes. It reflects Folts' (2011) statement that adolescent athletes are bolder than non-athletes, it is likely that they receive a subject teacher's support and

response to the challenges during lessons or in task challenges more often. Moreover, adolescent athletes are able to come into contact with the known or unknown persons easier and quicker as compared with adolescent non-athletes. In addition, adolescent athletes get into contact with other adolescents and succeed among them better, they possess a more friendly attitude and initiative to mobilize everybody (Bobrova & Augienė, 2009; Šertvytienė & Laskienė, 2008).

Despite the interesting findings regarding the evaluation of educational school environment and academic self-evaluation of 11–15-year-old adolescent athletes and non-athletes, there were several limitations in the present study. First, the study employed a relatively small sample size, which might account for some of the non-significant findings. The second limitation of the study – results were not compared between athletes and non-athletes in the aspect of gender.

CONCLUSION

It was found that girls felt more teachers' help at school than boys, however, boys evaluated school environment more positively. It was revealed that younger adolescents received more help from teachers at school than older adolescents, however, they experienced a sense of loneliness at school stronger than older adolescents. It turned out that although adolescent non-athletes had a better approach to socioeducational school environment, their peer athletes reported having a better link with school.

The perspective of the study can be a larger sample testing, with special attention paid to the sport factor, in order to ascertain whether the sport factor affects adolescent feelings will school.

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Corresponding author **Iłona Tilindienė**

Lithuanian Sports University

Sporto str. 6, LT-44221 Kaunas

Lithuania

Tel. +37061436770, +370302657

Email ilona.tilindiene@lsu.lt