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## THE INFLUENCE OF PRACTICING A PERFORMANCE SPORT ON SELF-IMAGE

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### Abstract

*It is known that performance sports provide the framework for different social demands that require physical and emotional adaptation, which strengthens the future adult's psyche.*

*Self-image is very important, because it influences our behaviour; thus, a good self-image feeds us with enthusiasm, energy and the necessary determination to solve everyday tasks, with the ability to take some risks in life.*

*The purpose of this paper is to highlight a possible connexion between the former or current status of the performance athlete and a better self-image compared to those who have not practiced sport at all. Starting from the above-mentioned ideas about self-image, in this paper it was used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which aims at self-image, self-esteem and self-confidence.*

*Performance sport also has an echo on the adolescent life, impacting thus positively the self-image of physical Ego and mental Ego, as revealed by the statistical processing.*

**Keywords:** *performance sports, self-image, adolescents*

**JEL classification:** *I20, I23*

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### Introduction

Self-esteem is the way in which we perceive our physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual characteristics; it is a combination of self-confidence and self-respect. Thus, self-image is the concrete expression of how a person sees or represents himself/herself; it refers to the individual perspective on one's own personality.

Man perceives, analyses and interprets himself first as a physical reality, building an image about his physical Ego, and then he perceives, analyses and interprets himself as a psychosocial reality, in terms of possibilities, abilities, skills and character traits, building an image about his mental, spiritual Ego, about his social status (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009).

Each of us possesses an internal critical voice; those who underestimate themselves have a tendency to devaluation and personal humiliation; a negative self-image decreases motivation or even annihilates it due to the lack of self-

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confidence, which then leads to avoidance behaviours.

People who have a strongly positive image are characterized by self-confidence, the ability to solve problems without hesitation, the ability to face the life obstacles which are perceived as challenges that must be overcome to reach one's goals.

Self-image is very important, because it influences our behaviour; thus, a good self-image feeds us with enthusiasm, energy and the necessary determination to solve everyday tasks, with the ability to take some risks in life.

Psychologists believe that all aspects of life – joy, success, interpersonal relationships, creativity, project achievement and even personal sex life are closely linked to the level of self-esteem.

A positive image is extremely important, because it is the source of a person's physical and mental well-being, of the feeling of being efficient, loved and able to behave with others in a positive, mature, modest and respectable manner (Kahale, 2011).

The following relevant aspects should be mentioned:

- the way in which one's capabilities are self-perceived determines how the individual evaluates reality;
- a good self-image determines the "risk of an attempt", while accepting the idea that it might be a success or a failure;
- a negative self-image leads to avoid the action, which is evaluated as being beyond one's capabilities;
- a negative self-image makes us susceptible to the negative opinions of others, which we take for granted and add to our negative opinions about us;
- all individuals can increase self-esteem, provided that they preserve a positive self-image;
- self-acceptance is the first step towards strengthening a good self-image.

In children, self-image is strongly shaped by the lived experiences, their relationships with the group of peers, their relationships with themselves and their bodies, but especially at this age a crucial role is played by the family and its love for the child. The foundations of how an individual perceives himself/herself originate in childhood, when they do not have a system of reference values, but only the parents' opinions about the actions of their children exist, parents being the first to appreciate their deeds or punish them for the wrong things. (Toma, L., B., 2015)

Thus, the balance between criticism and praise falls to the parents in the early years of a child's life, they cultivating in their children the basis of the system of values to which these ones will relate; thus, a highly permissive attitude, with exaggerated praise and no punishment makes the future "man" to have an extremely good but unrealistic opinion about self, which will be severely



“penalized” in his future relationships; on the other hand, an extremely critical attitude of parents makes the child understand that he/she is not good enough, is “not perfect”.

Specialized studies (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009) demonstrate that sport increases self-esteem; however, duration and intensity do not have a significant value on the benefits that are felt, but the rate of practicing sport in one’s free time influences the individual perception of self-image.

Starting from the above-mentioned ideas about self-image, in this paper it was used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which aims at self-image, self-esteem and self-confidence, and consists of 10 items, namely statements to which the person expresses his/her agreement/disagreement using a scale from 0 to 3 (strong agreement, agreement, disagreement, total disagreement), so the scores may vary between 0 and 30 points.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight a possible connexion between the former or current status of the performance athlete and a better self-image compared to those who have not practiced sport at all.

### **1. Research hypothesis**

Those who practiced in the past or currently practice a performance sport have a better self-image than those who have not done sport at all during their lifetime.

### **2. Research subjects**

The research was conducted on a group of 103 students (59 boys and 44 girls) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study at the Faculty of Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technology of Bucharest; of the total participants, 59 were males and 44 females, with ages between 20 and 21 years.

The research took place in the period 17-23 April 2017, benefiting from the full involvement of the subjects.

### **3. Methods**

In this study, the following research methods were used: scientific documentation, through which the theoretical background of the paper was achieved, the questionnaire method, graphical method, statistical and mathematical method.

The questionnaire required standard instructions, so as the subjects could learn quickly, efficiently and in a non-differentiated way the tasks they had to solve during testing; it should be mentioned that no time limit was imposed to the subjects when performing the test.

According to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a score of up to 15 points signifies a low self-image, a lack of self-confidence and a poorly defined identity; after applying this test, the scores achieved by the investigated subjects fell within the following groups:



- 0-5 points – a strongly negative self-image
- 6-10 points – a negative self-image
- 11-15 points – a moderately negative self-image
- 16-20 points – a moderately positive self-image
- 21-25 points – a positive self-image
- 26-30 points – a strongly positive self-image

In addition to applying the Rosenberg scale, the subjects had to answer a question, namely whether they practiced/practice or not a performance sport (which one?).

#### 4. Results

Most participants in the research have a positive self-image (44.7%) or a strongly positive self-image (20.4%). The percentage is significantly higher among those who practiced in the past or currently practice a performance sport (77.8% of them have a positive or strongly positive self-image compared to 58.2% of those who currently do not practice and did not practice in the past any sport).

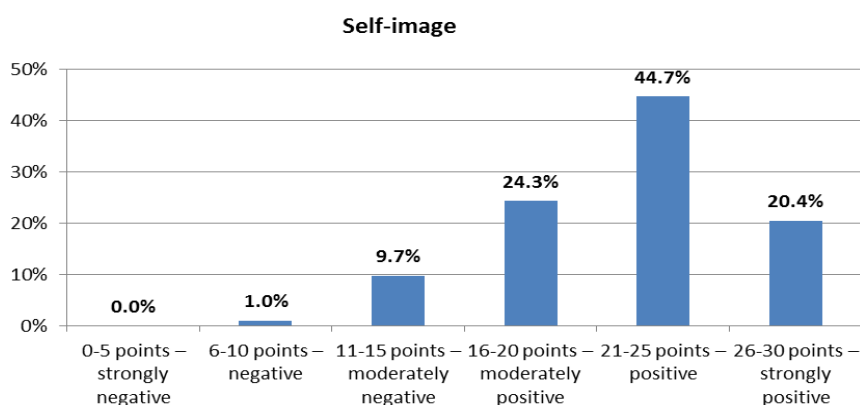


Figure 1. The percentage for self- image

Table 1. Average score for Self- image

Points	Self-image	Practicing a performance sport					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
0 – 5	strongly negative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
6 – 10	negative	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	1	1.0%
11 – 15	moderately negative	2	5.6%	8	11.9%	10	9.7%



16 – 20	moderately positive	6	16.7%	19	28.4%	25	24.3%
21 – 25	positive	15	41.7%	31	46.3%	46	44.7%
26 – 30	strongly positive	13	36.1%	8	11.9%	21	20.4%
Total		36	100.0%	67	100.0%	103	100.0%
Average score		23.17		20.64		21.52	

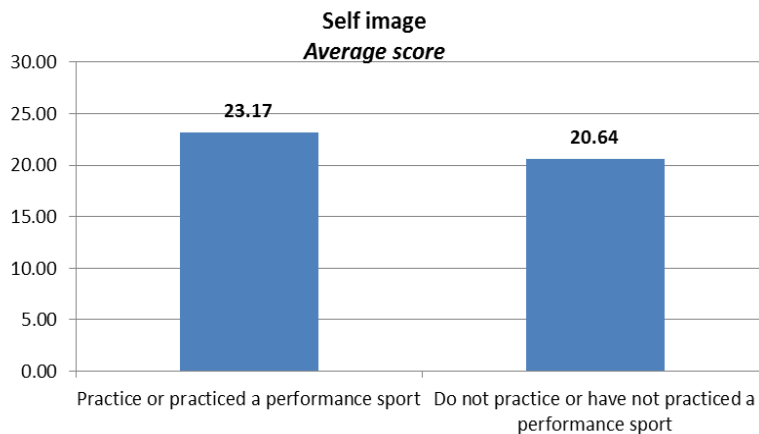
By applying the Chi-squared test to the six image categories and the two categories regarding the practice of a performance sport, it has been obtained a value less than 0.05, which indicates the link between practicing a performance sport and self-image.

**Table 2. Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.661 <sup>a</sup>	4	.047
Likelihood Ratio	9.753	4	.045
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.663	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	103		

a. 3 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5.  
The minimum expected count is .35.

The average score obtained by those who practiced or practice a performance sport is significantly higher than the average score of those who do not practice or did not practice any sport (23.17 compared to 20.64). This statistical difference is demonstrated by the application of independent t-test (calculated  $t$  - value = -2.955,  $p < 0.005$ ).



**Figure 2. Average score for Self image**



**Table 3. Independent samples Test**

		Independent Samples Test								
		Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Interval of the	
								Lower	Upper	
PUNCTAJ	Equal variances assumed	.019	.890	-2.955	101	.004	-2.52488	.85436	-4.21969	-.83006
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.930	69.963	.005	-2.52488	.86188	-4.24385	-.80590

### 5. Conclusions

Performance sport also has an echo on the adolescent life, impacting thus positively the self-image of physical Ego and mental Ego, as revealed by the statistical processing.

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