

# THE STRUCTURE OF SELF-ESTEEM AMONG PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN THE SELECTED ACADEMIES IN POLAND

## *Self-esteem of Physical Education students*

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### Abstract

**Introduction.** One of the elements of the self-knowledge system is self-esteem. This system is continuously organized into a certain kind of a distinctive structure of ideas and notions. The aims of this paper, is to define the sense of self-esteem among first year physical education students. **Material and methods.** The method applied in the research was a diagnostic survey accompanied by questionnaire based on Fitts's "The Tennessee Self-concept Scale", in a simplified term TSCS. The survey was conducted in Academic Year 2008/2009 among 667 respondents in eight state and non-state Polish academies. **Results.** The conducted survey indicates that there is an obvious tendency for students to have high self-esteem. Such a high level falls within the remit of the majority of aspects: moral-ethical self, family self and personal-self. Moreover, a high level of self-esteem was recognized in students' global sense of self-esteem and in self-esteem concerning personal-self. Crucially, the medium level of self-esteem concerning behaviour was declared by a considerable percentage of the respondents. The high level of global self-esteem was definitely assigned to female students whereas the medium level was noticed among male students. **Conclusion.** One of the key elements of human personality is the sense of self-esteem which influences both the level of self-acceptance and self-awareness. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to develop these skills and the psychophysical characteristics in the process of upbringing and educating.

**Key words:** self-esteem, self-realization, students, physical education

### Introduction

Scientists have only recently begun to explore the concept of self-esteem as an element of human personality. There are only a few of them who analyse the factors influencing the sense of self-esteem. Many psychologists like J. Reykowski [1], A. Brzezińska [2], M. Żebrowska [3] and others placed emphasis on such human personality elements as self-concept and self-esteem. R. Łapińska states: "Self-concept is a component of self-esteem and the nature of self-concept highly determines the state of mood and the attitude towards the surrounding world" [4]. M. Przetacznikowa [5] shares a similar opinion emphasizing the fact that self-concept and self-esteem are specific elements of human personality. She explains that this specific character is put down to the fact that there are such co-existing elements like: cognitive elements, emotional-estimating elements and action elements. She also gives consideration to the fact that these elements determine human behaviour. According to J. Reykowski, self-concept is a significant component of human personality and it influences both human behaviour and self-esteem [1].

B. Glas asserts that one of the elements of the self-knowledge system is self-esteem. This system is continuously organized into a certain kind of a distinctive structure of ideas and notions and it is a result of gaining new experience. The self-knowledge system is defined as self-image or self-concept [6]. R. Ossowski outlines that there are also other terms in literature that deal with self-knowledge, for instance: self-attitude, self-acceptance, self-awareness, self-portrait. These concepts are synonymous, but still not the same [7].

Many psychologists believe that the difference between "the real me" and "the ideal me" in self-concept determines self-esteem. T. Mądrycki posits that "the real me", in other words called present self-concept, is the result of past and present experience. "The ideal me" is rather of the wishful nature and it comprises those traits that one wants to have. "The ideal me" is a specific moral pattern and the consequence of breaking this pattern of values results in being conscience-stricken, and feeling lack of self-acceptance [8]. As B. Galas postulates, depending on the individual, those two structures of "me" can be discrepant to a greater or lesser extent, but it is crucial to say that the level of this discrepancy shows the level of self-esteem as well. The higher the level of this discrepancy, the higher the risk of low sense of self-esteem, self-assessment and self-acceptance [6].

Self-esteem enables better self-knowledge, helps not only to assess one's own abilities, but also to behave properly in different circumstances. E. Furmańska stresses that the research conducted in 1980's proved that self-concept is no longer uniform a notion. According to E. Furmańska, general self-esteem consists of particular self-esteem elements concerning different aspects of human functioning [9]. The concept connected with self-esteem is global self-esteem which refers to an overall attitude towards one's characteristics and one's own behaviour, and it is based on the assessment of the most important human characteristic. Global self-esteem is constant and it is a key element of human personality. It is also referred to as self-esteem that influences self-presentation. Additionally, global self-esteem reveals self-acceptance, which is demonstrated by positive atti-

tude towards self. Proper self-esteem and self-acceptance results in positive attitude towards activities performed not only for self, but also for other people. Thus, the people with high self-esteem are presumed to have a high degree of empathy, resulting in positive energy [10].

T. Mądrzycki stresses the importance of self-esteem's modifying function and explains that the level of self-esteem and self-acceptance influences the motivation of an individual and the efficiency of one's actions. He states that high level of self-esteem or self-acceptance enables one to set aims and objectives that are adequate to one's possibilities, in other words, to set realistic aspirations. Highly reactive people have low self-esteem and their aspirations are inadequate, either too low or too high, however, most low reactive people are said to have realistic aspirations. There is also a relationship between self-esteem or self-acceptance and efficiency and effectiveness of the one's actions. It is believed that people with high level of self-acceptance are more persistent in their efforts in achieving goals especially, when it comes to difficult situations in contrast to those with low self-acceptance. Negative feedback of the previous actions has a lower influence on the results of one's present actions and positive feedback, on the other hand, has a higher influence on these results [8].

Self-esteem is forming throughout the entire lifecycle and depending on the level of stage of life, there are different factors that shape it. According to B. Arusztowicz, these factors can be divided into two groups: anatomical and physiological factors, as well as psychosocial ones. The anatomical and physiological factors are to do with one's physical appearance, e.g. height, built and fitness, the nervous system, the functioning of human body and the possible disturbance of that function and structure of human body resulting from some defects.

It is beyond doubt that there is an obvious relationship between those factors and the proper self-concept development and shaping [11].

In conclusion, the concept of self-esteem refers to the set one's opinions about the self, which help or hinder to take some actions. In other words, it either motivates or discourages one from undertaking any activities. Moreover, development of self-esteem takes place over long term and is a complex process, which requires in-depth analyses.

The research aims to define the structure of self-esteem among first-year physical education students.

### Material and methods

The method applied in the research involved a diagnostic survey, accompanied by a Pitts based questionnaire "The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale" in short TSCS [12]. It was developed at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s in the Unites States. It was translated into Polish by Helena Grzegółowska in 1975. The questionnaire provides not only the total score but also scales referring to various aspects and forms of self-esteem. It consists of 100 self-descriptive Likert style statements, 10 of which measure self-criticism, while 90 of them assess self-concept. There are 5 ordered response levels so the respondents have five different answers and they are required to mark only one. The numbers from 1 to 5 represent opinions about the statement mentioned above. Statements measuring different aspects of self-concept are divided equally into positive and negative characteristics which belong to eight categories in the matrix of three rows and five columns. The most important index of the whole scale, called the global positive index, indicates the overall level of the respondent's self-esteem. The global positive index consists of positive indices of rows and columns and they form global index of variation which is a measure of consistency between different areas of self-esteem.

Additionally, for the purpose of this study the level of self-esteem was designated based on the medium score of self-esteem on the scale, as well as the standard deviation. As a result of this, we have three groups: low, medium and high level of self-esteem.

### Organization of the research

The survey was conducted in Academic Year 2008/2009 on a sample of 667 first-year full time physical education students of the first level of stationary studies in eight public and non-public Polish higher education institutions: Academy of Physical Education in Poznan and Warsaw, Technical University of Radom, State School of Higher Professional Education in Kock and Raciborz, College of Physical Education and Tourism in Suprasl, Wszechnica Swietokrzyska, Pawel Wlodkowicz University College in Plock. The survey was conducted by coordinators during classes. The respondents were informed about their participation in the survey and the fact that the results of the survey would only be used to scientific analysis purposes. It appeared out that this information was important for students, and it encouraged them to participate in the survey. The survey was anonymous.

### Characteristics of the respondents

The results indicate that among the 667 respondents the prevailing group were males (72.86%) living in cities (67.16%). Some respondents declared that their fathers' education was at the level of the vocational school 34.21%, others stated that their fathers graduated from secondary schools 31.62%, with every sixth of them being a university graduate. As far as respondents' mothers were concerned, 37.7 % of them held certificate of secondary education and every third mother was a university graduate. Interestingly, every tenth student came from rural background. The remainder of them came from urban background and working class (0.15%).

### Results

The analysis of self-esteem concerning identity indicates that women have high self-esteem in most domains, on the other hand men, have high self-esteem mostly in the domain of moral-ethical self. They perceive themselves as honest, well-mannered people who stick to the rules of the social coexistence. Moreover, more than a half of the male respondents had high self-esteem of identity in the domains of physical self, personal-self and family self, however, when compared to the female respondents, these percentages were considerably lower. These respondents had generally medium level of self-esteem in those domains. Only 22.6% of the male respondents had high self-esteem when it came to the domain of social self. None of the respondents demonstrated low self-esteem in the domain of physical self or moral-ethical self, while in the remaining domains there was a low percentage of students with low self-esteem. The statistical analysis has proved that the gender does in fact influence and differentiate the following domains of self-esteem: physical self, social self and personal-self. The correlation value (CKOR) among variables such as physical self, personal-self and social self was medium. In the remainder of the variables the correlation could be described as weak and low (Tab. 1).

Self-esteem concerning self-satisfaction is one of the elements indicating an emotional attitude towards the self. Having analysed the level of self-satisfaction, the highest score concerning the domain of personal-self was obtained by male respondents (99.1 %) and in the domain of social self it was more than a half of the male respondents (65.0%). In those two domains the female respondents had better results, when it

**Table 1.** Self-esteem of identity in relation to gender (%)

Self-esteem domains	High self-esteem		Average self-esteem		Low self-esteem		$\chi^2$	Statistical significance	$C_{kor}$
	F	M	F	M	F	M			
Physical self	88.4	75.5	11.6	24.5	-	-	14.47*	$p < 0.001$	0.21
Moral-ethical self	84.5	89.0	15.5	11.0	-	-	2.46*	$p > 0.05$	-
Personal-self	90.1	53.0	8.3	46.7	1.6	0.3	100.89	$p < 0.001$	0.51
Family self	91.0	69.5	8.3	28.2	0.7	2.2	38.47	$p < 0.001$	0.30
Social self	81.2	22.6	18.2	76.1	0.6	1.3	194.81	$p < 0.001$	0.62

df=2, \*df=1

**Table 2.** Self-esteem of self-satisfaction in relation to gender (%)

Self-esteem domains	High self-esteem		Average self-esteem		Low self-esteem		$\chi^2$	Statistical significance	$C_{kor}$
	F	M	F	M	F	M			
Physical self	32.0	32.3	64.1	66.0	3.9	1.7	2.68	$p > 0.05$	-
Moral-ethical self	36.0	34.1	54.1	59.9	9.9	6.0	3.63	$p > 0.05$	-
Personal-self	36.0	99.1	64.0	0.9	-	-	345.93*	$p < 0.001$	0.82
Family self	39.2	32.0	58.0	65.4	2.8	2.6	3.12	$p > 0.05$	-
Social self	35.3	65.0	58.0	32.0	6.7	3.0	48.13	$p < 0.001$	0.34

df=2, \*df=1

**Table 3.** Self-esteem of behaviour in relation to gender (%)

Self-esteem domains	High self-esteem		Average self-esteem		Low self-esteem		$\chi^2$	Statistical significance
	F	M	F	M	F	M		
Physical self	82.9	83.1	17.1	16.9	-	-	0.07*	$p > 0.05$
Moral-ethical self	54.7	54.9	44.7	44.6	0.6	0.5	0.06	$p > 0.05$
Personal-self	23.2	23.7	71.3	70.6	5.5	5.7	0.03	$p > 0.05$
Family self	30.4	28.2	47.5	54.9	22.1	16.9	3.52	$p > 0.05$
Social self	44.8	45.9	52.5	51.4	2.7	2.7	0.07	$p > 0.05$

df=2, \*df=1

came to the medium level of self-satisfaction. In the remainder of the domains the differences between men and women were hardly significant. It can be said that the lowest level of self-satisfaction was declared by a small percentage of the respondents, and in the domain of personal-self no such response was recorded. In addition, the research results have revealed a statistically significant relationship between the gender and self-esteem concerning self-satisfaction in the domain of personal-self and social self. The value of the correlation coefficient proves that the correlation between variables such as gender and personal-self is strong, on the other hand that between the gender and the social self is not. (Tab.2)

Self-esteem concerning behaviour is an indicator not only of the self but also of one's behaviour towards various dimensions of one's character. The results prove that the majority of the respondents, both male (83.1%) and female (82.9%) had high self-esteem of behaviour in the domain of physical self. This group paid attention to such factors as fitness, physical appearance, health and well-being. Medium level of behaviour self-esteem was declared by many students, especially in the domain of moral-ethical self. In this case, the discrepancy between men and women was low and the analysis indicated the lack of sta-

tistically significant relationship between behaviour self-esteem and the gender in all the domains (Tab. 3).

Global self-esteem is described as self-worth and it is a key element of human personality. Having analysed the global self-esteem, it appears that women are the prevailing group in case of high level of identity self-esteem (89.0%) and behaviour self-esteem (84.6%). Men, on the other hand, have better results in the case of medium level of self-esteem. Neither men nor women declare low level of self-esteem in separate domains. The statistics proved that global self-esteem concerning identity and self-satisfaction depends on the gender. The statistical significance of these two variables is at the highest level and the relationship between variables is low (Tab 4).

The statistical analysis has demonstrated that there is a relationship between the respondents' social background and the level of their self-esteem. The majority of the respondents with high social background declared high level of self-esteem (53.0%), however, more than a half of the respondents from working class background declared medium level of self-esteem. There were very few respondents of rural background. The statistical significance of this category is at the highest level and the relationship between the variables is low (Tab. 5).

**Table 4.** Global self-esteem in relation to gender (%)

Self-esteem domains	High self-esteem				Medium self-esteem				$\chi^2$	Statistical significance	$C_{KOR}$
	F		M		F		M				
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Self-esteem of identity	162	89.0	382	78.9	19	11.0	104	21.1	11.42	$p < 0.001$	0.18
Self-esteem of self-satisfaction	66	35.7	257	56.6	115	47.4	229	64.3	14.38	$p < 0.001$	0.20
Self-esteem of behaviour	85	47.0	230	47.3	96	53.0	256	52.7	0.01	$p > 0.05$	-

df=1

**Table 5.** The respondents' social background and their self-esteem

Social background	High self-esteem		Medium self-esteem	
	No.	%	No.	%
Working class	133	42.2	220	62.5
Intelligentsia	167	53.0	108	30.7
Rural origin	15	4.8	24	6.8
Total	315	100.0	352	100.0

 $\chi^2=34.4$   $p < 0.001$   $C_{KOR}=0.31$  df=1

The statistical analysis also revealed that there was an important relationship between the level of self-esteem and the place of residence. The respondents coming from small towns were more inclined to declare medium level of self-esteem. A moderate relationship was discovered between the variables (Tab. 6).

**Table 6.** The respondents' place of residence and their self-esteem

Social background	High self-esteem		Medium self-esteem	
	No.	%	No.	%
City up to 50.000	67	21.3	154	43.8
City 50.000-100.000	51	16.2	48	13.6
City more than 100.000	96	30.5	32	9.1
Country	101	32.0	118	33.5
Total	315	100.0	352	100.0

 $\chi^2=68.4$   $p < 0.001$   $C_{KOR}=0.42$  df=1

Statistical analysis of individual self-esteem domains in the social background category shows that this variable differentiates statistically only identity self-esteem. The respondents of intelligentsia background are more likely to have high self-esteem, while those of rural background tend to have medium levels of self-esteem. As far as the remaining variable are concerned, there are no statistically significant relationships (Tab. 7).

**Table 7.** Global self-esteem in relation to the respondents' social background

Self-esteem domains	High self-esteem						Medium self-esteem						$\chi^2$	$C_{KOR}$
	Working class		Intelligentsia		Rural origin		Working class		Intelligentsia		Rural origin			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Self-esteem of identity	291	53.4	238	43.7	16	2.9	62	50.8	37	30.3	23	18.9	36.58*	0.42
Self-esteem of self-satisfaction	182	56.3	126	39.0	15	4.7	171	49.7	149	43.3	24	7.0	3.70**	-
Self-esteem of behaviour	176	55.8	120	38.1	19	6.1	177	50.3	155	44.0	20	8.7	2.44**	-

\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p > 0.05$  df=2

## Discussion

Self-esteem is one of the key elements determining the quality of human life. Self-esteem, acceptance and our values highly influence the way we perceive the world and our interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem is a factor that helps us to make decisions and decides about our successes or failures [10].

Self-esteem plays a key role in our life. It enables us to assess ourselves, and influences our behaviour. The way we see ourselves determines the effectiveness of our actions, the reaction to such actions and the nature of relationships with other people. Having assessed our abilities, we can predict our chances in various situations and circumstances [13].

In this context, the respondents' self-esteem seems to be positive. The majority of the physical education students demonstrated high levels of self-esteem. Having considered the various domains of self-esteem, it can be said that identity self-esteem in the domains of physical self, moral-ethical self and family self was at the lowest level. These opinions were proved in the previous results of the analysis [14]. As far as the behaviour self-esteem is concerned, in most domains it is at the medium level, and it is also confirmed in Mazur's research results [15]. Analysing self-esteem concerning self-satisfaction, it can be maintained that high level of this self-esteem is in the domains of moral-ethical self, personal-self and family self. The remainder of the domains have demonstrated medium levels. A similar conclusion was drawn by Oblacińska [16]. However Duda's survey demonstrated quite the opposite results [17]. He maintains that a high level of self-satisfaction occurs only in social self. Global self-esteem is a significant element of human personality. It helps to achieve various goals and influences human behaviour. A person with high self-esteem actively participates in the social life and has a high sense of self-worth which helps the one to have high regard for their abilities. A significant number of the respondents had high levels of global self-esteem in all the analysed domains. Klaus obtained similar results as well [18]. Suprynowicz and Urban [19] indicate that secondary school students have high global self-esteem only in physical self and low in family self. Niebrzydowski [20] examined the relationship between the global self-esteem and the gender. He admits that self-esteem is forming throughout the entire life, it is a constant value and a crucial component

of human personality. Self-esteem occurs mainly among females in all the analysed categories. The results mentioned above coincide with this survey results since the majority of female physical education students demonstrated highest levels of global self-esteem in the analysed categories. On the other hand, male students dominated in this respect in the area of average self-assessment.

### Conclusions

The survey has indicated that there is a clear tendency for students to have high self-esteem. Such a high level falls within the remit of the majority of aspects: moral-ethical self, family self and personal-self. Moreover, high level of self-esteem was recognized in students' general sense of self-esteem and in self-esteem concerning personal identity. Crucially, the medium level of self-esteem concerning behaviour was declared by a considerable percentage of the respondents. The high level of global self-esteem was definitely assigned to female students, whereas the medium level was noticed among male students. One of the key elements of human personality is the sense of self-esteem that influences both, the level of self-acceptance and self-identity. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to develop these skills and psychophysical characteristics in the process of upbringing and educating.

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