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Self-esteem and perception of stress in adults who practice and do not practice sports

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Abstract

Introduction: In adulthood, the stages of personality formation and definition continue. This represents the age of full assertion and achievement of individuality, both professionally and in terms of self-devaluation. Also, during this period, physical effort becomes an important factor in maintaining and balancing all body functions.

The *aim* of the paper consists of a comparative analysis of the personality of adults who practice sports activities and of those who do not practice sports activities.

Methods: in order to achieve the proposed objectives, two questionnaires were used to identify the level of stress and self-esteem in people involved in research, who practice sports and who do not practice sports.

Results: We found that people who practice sports activities have a high self-esteem, compared to those who do not practice sports activities. Also, concerning the same subjects, the level of stress is higher in people who do not practice a sport, compared to those who practice a sport.

Conclusions: We consider that this study is useful for all people who want to practice sports, to realize the physical and mental benefits.

Key words: *sports, self-esteem, stress*

Rezumat

Introducere: În perioada adultă se continuă etapele de formare și definire a personalității. Aceasta reprezintă vârsta deplinei afirmări și realizări a individualității, atât pe plan profesional, cât și al autodevalorizării. Tot în această perioadă, efortul fizic devine factor de întreținere și echilibrare a tuturor funcțiilor organismului.

Scopul lucrării constă în analizarea comparativă a personalității adulților care practică activități sportive și care nu practică activități sportive.

Metode: În vederea realizării obiectivelor propuse s-au folosit două chestionare care să identifice nivelul stresului și a stimei de sine la persoanele implicate în cercetare, care practică activități sportive și care nu practică activități sportive.

Rezultatele: Am constatat că persoanele care practică activități sportive au o stimă de sine ridicată, față de cele care nu practică activități sportive. Tot în cadrul acelorași subiecți, nivelul stresului este mai crescut la persoanele care nu practică o activitate sportivă, comparativ cu cei care practică o activitate sportivă.

Concluzii: considerăm că acest studiu este util tuturor persoanelor care doresc să practice o activitate sportivă, pentru a-si da seama de beneficiile fizice și psihice.

Cuvinte cheie: *sport, stima de sine, stres*

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Introduction

Sports activity is a complex of actions that have as a common goal the fulfillment of sports objectives. The sports activity consists of: sports training courses, sports competitions, official competitions, galas, events and sports performances as well as other sports activities.

Self-esteem is the evaluative component of the self and refers to the actual experience, emotions that the person experiences when he/she refers to his/her own person. It is an assessment we make of ourselves and it can take different forms (global or multidimensional, state or disposition, personal or collective) [1].

A person will have a high self-esteem insofar as his/her successes are equal to or superior to aspirations. Conversely, if aspirations outweigh successes, self-esteem will be low. At the same time, if an individual does not know success in a field that is not very important to him/her, self-esteem will not suffer [2].

Therefore, the consequences of high or low self-esteem come from the way people relate to everyday events. Research shows that individuals with a high level of self-esteem are more satisfied with their lives, have a low level of anxiety or depression and are characterized by a positive affectivity. In opposition, those with low self-esteem are depressed, anxious, pessimistic about their future, they feel incompetent, and rather fail because of a vicious circle that leads to self-fulfilling prophecies. Any gesture or factor that could destroy the balance between the individual and the environment, be it a factor of physical origin (trauma, cold, etc.), chemical (poison, various chemicals, etc.) infectious or psychological (emotion) is called a stressor. Some life circumstances are not as stressful for everyone. Each person reacts differently to one and the same stimulus even in identical conditions of repetition, due to the uniqueness of the subjective construction.

Life experience shows that, in most cases, stress occurs due to the fact that the diversity of human motivations and goals cannot be fully achieved at the same time, at the same optimal level. The stress reaction is installed gradually when the individual is subjected for a longer time to conditions of mental

tension, when the professional, material, marital situation is reached, for example.

Under these conditions the individual can recover if the stressful situation has been removed, but sometimes there may be residual reactions (self-image damage) or an increased vulnerability to a certain category of stressors. If the stress agent reacts for a longer period of time, the general adaptation syndrome appears, a syndrome that characterizes the reactivity of biological organisms to stress [3].

The stressful situation refers to the harmful conditions that threaten the body, the pressures, the constraints, the deprivations to which the individual is subjected.

Daily stress is generated by stressors of low intensity but of prolonged duration or with increased frequency of occurrence.

The level of intensity of mental stress does not always depend on the intensity of the stressor, but on the subjective manner in which it is perceived and lived. The changes characteristic of today's society have led to the emergence of a wide range of sources of stress [4].

Research objectives and hypotheses

The general objective pursued in this study is the comparative analysis of the personality of adults who practice sports activities and of those who do not practice sports activities.

In this study, I started from the following hypotheses:

1. There are significant differences in self-esteem between adults who practice sports and those who do not.
2. There are significant differences in the perception of stress between adults who practice sports and those who do not.

Material and methods

In this study we enrolled 60 subjects, women and men, aged between 30 and 50 years, from urban areas.

The subjects were divided into two groups: the control group (30 subjects, who do not practice sports activities) and the experimental group (30 subjects who practice sports activities). As methods for assessing and measuring self-

esteem, I used two psychometric questionnaire techniques:

1. The Rosenberg scale of self-esteem
2. Cohen-Williamson Questionnaire (measures stress level)

The Rosenberg scale of self-esteem assesses the self-esteem of the individual. It contains 10 items that refer to the general attitude of the person towards him/herself. The scale of answers is: "total agreement" (1 point), "agreement" (2 points), "disagreement" (3 points); and "total disagreement" (4 points). The inverted items (which are given in reverse) are: 1, 3, 7 and 10.

The 10 items refer to:

- the value of one's own person,
- outstanding qualities,
- achievements,
- attitudes,
- self-satisfaction,
- self-respect,
- impressions and well-being

After obtaining the total score (added) the subject is in a group according to the average.

The minimum rating that can be obtained is 10 and reflects low self-esteem. These people are characterized by the tendency to avoid difficult situations, not taking risks, resistance to change, procrastination of the decision-making act due to the minimum confidence in success.

The maximum rating is 40 and reflects a high self-esteem. These people are characterized by self-confidence, emotional balance and responsibility.

The Cohen-Williamson questionnaire explores the subjective feeling of stress felt by each of the subjects, i.e. how stress is assessed.

Subjects are invited to answer 14 questions based on what happened during the past month. They mark with an "x" the appropriate box, answering as spontaneously as possible and choosing between the following options: A) never; B) almost never; C) sometimes; D) quite often; E) often.

The 14 items emphasize:

- disturbance caused by an unpleasant event,
- the difficulty of controlling the important things in life,
- the existence of feelings of nervousness or stress,
- adaptability to change,
- taking on problems,

- mastery in critical situations,
- irritability,
- self-control in critical situations.

The scale of answers is:

- A = never
- B = almost never
- C = sometimes
- D = quite often
- E = often

Rating of answers:

- for items: 1,2,3,8,11,12,14. A = 1 point, B = 2 points, C = 3 points, D = 4 points, E = 5 points
- for items 4,5,6,7,9,10,13. A = 5 points, B = 4 points, C = 3 points, D = 2 points, E = 1 point.

The total of the points in the marked boxes is calculated. If the score is less than 25, the subject is at a low stress level. Instead, a score higher than 50 is evidence of a high level of stress. Subjects were chosen on a voluntary basis and were informed that the results were confidential. They were presented with instructions for completion and were told that there was no time limit.

Results

The results of our groups in terms of self-esteem are presented in Table I.

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	SD	t test	P
Self esteem	Adults who practice sports activities	30	35,75	0,81	2,121	0,05
	Adults who do not practice sports activities	30	29,25	2,57		

Table I. Results for the groups in terms of self-esteem

We found that the value of the t test = 2.121, at $p < 0.05$, which means the result is statistically significant. So, the hypothesis of the paper was confirmed in favor of the group of adults who practice sports, which means that they have a higher level of self-esteem than adults who do not practice them.

Table II shows the value of the t test = 2.121, at $p < 0.05$, which means the result is statistically

significant. So, the hypothesis of the paper was confirmed in favor of the group of adults who do not practice sports, which means that they have a higher level of perception of stress than adults who do not practice them.

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	SD	t test	P
Perception of stress	Adults who practice sports activities	30	46,65	1,88	-2,093	0,05
	Adults who do not practice sports activities	30	55,25	2,34		

Table II. Results for the groups regarding the perception of stress

Discussions

Practicing sports involves physical and mental abilities and skills such as: good physical condition (speed, strength, skill, endurance), sensory analyzers (sight, hearing), speed of mental reaction and motor reaction, self-control, calm, technical skills, motor skills, etc.

Sports activities involve: sports competitions, competitions that mean involvement in a certain time, respecting some rules. Achieving sports performance in competitive conditions, i.e. comparison with others, naturally increases the sense of self-worthiness, which leads to a positive attitude towards oneself and pride in oneself [5].

Competitions attract spectators, i.e. audience, public. When the recognition of individual performance is done in public, the feeling of self-worthiness is further accentuated.

Participation in sports activities means competitions to obtain a title or a sports performance, i.e. a form of psychosocial interaction consisting of rivalry or competition between several people to achieve a goal. In order to win, competitors have to make an effort to prove their ability, to check and self-verify their potential. This increases the level of their need for performance.

In sports activities, sponsorships stimulate performance. That is why the high need for affiliation: the attraction to society and to entourage, the public image of people in society,

group, along with the high need for exhibition, to expose themselves to others, are advantages in practicing sports activities.

In the study "Effects of Early Sport Participation on Self-Esteem Happiness", the authors examined the relationship between self-esteem and happiness, in subjects who practiced sports before going to college. The Spearman rank correlation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed that of the 514 college students surveyed, those who participated in sports before college reported higher self-esteem and happiness than the non-athlete participants. Data were collected using survey questionnaires that included the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, Life Scale Satisfaction (SWLS) and demographic questions. This study found that having a sporty life in youth and adolescence improved the physical and mental well-being of individuals who reach adulthood [6].

Many of us do not realize the importance of exercising or physical exercises in general, for several reasons: focusing on other aspects of life, such as education, work, family problems, financial problems, etc. But all these elements make us forget one essential thing: the human body is created specially to move, and the lack of exercising has major negative effects, both physically and mentally.

Conclusions

I believe that this study achieved its objectives and highlighted the differences between adults who practice sports and those who do not practice sports, in terms of self-esteem, and perception of stress.

The resulting data show that there are differences in favor of adults who practice sports, in terms of self-esteem, even if all adults in the study have self-esteem at a medium to high level. There are also differences in terms of stress, which is higher in people who do not practice sports.

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