

## **PREDICTING SELF-WORTH AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENT FEMALE SPORT PARTICIPANTS: THE ROLE OF FRIENDSHIP QUALITY AND PHYSICAL SELF-PERCEPTIONS**

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The purpose of this study was to examine the role of sport friendship qualities and physical self-perceptions in predicting global self-worth among young adolescent female athletes. This study was part of a larger project examining the role of friendships, physical self-perceptions, self-worth, and enjoyment in participation motivation. Self-worth is an individual's evaluation of her or his value as a person and is identified as a potential mediator between self-perceptions and social approval, and motivation (Harter, 1987, 1999). Physical appearance and athletic competence are predictors self worth among youth (Crocker, Eklund, & Kowalski, 2000; Eklund, Whitehead, & Welk, 1997; Whitehead, 1995). Peer approval and support may also contribute to self-worth perceptions in sport (Harter, 1999). One way in which peer social relationships can be studied is by looking at friendship quality (Weiss & Smith, 1999). This study tested a model that hypothesized self-worth would be predicted by physical attractiveness, physical competence perceptions, and six dimensions of sport friendship quality (self-esteem enhancement and supportiveness, loyalty and intimacy, things in common, companionship and pleasant play, conflict resolution and conflict). Two hundred and twenty-nine female team sport participants between the ages of eleven and fourteen participated in this study. Since the Sport Friendship Quality Scale (Weiss & Smith, 1999) was relatively new and had not been used with many samples, the six-factor oblique model was examined through confirmatory factor analysis (EQS: ML Robust). The CFA indicated a marginally acceptable fit to the data, CFI = 0.87, RMSEA = 0.08. Correlational analyses revealed that physical attractiveness ( $r = .72$ ) and physical competence ( $r = .41$ ) were moderately to strongly related to self-worth, while some friendship qualities were weakly related: self-esteem enhancement and supportiveness ( $r = .24$ ), companionship and pleasant play ( $r = .14$ ), conflict resolution ( $r = .26$ ), and conflict ( $r = -.19$ ). A stepwise multiple regression analysis found that only physical attractiveness and physical competence predicted self-worth, with physical attractiveness emerging as the strongest predictor,  $R^2 = .53$ ,  $F(2, 224) = 126.19$ ,  $p < .05$ . This study did not provide strong support for a relationship between friendship quality and self-worth. Future studies examining youth peer relationships in sport are needed to further explore the role of social influences on self-worth perceptions.

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