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AGE AND GENDER EFFECTS ON GLOBAL SELF-WORTH AND DOMAIN-SPECIFIC SELF-PERCEPTIONS IN YOUTH

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Abstract. Considering that self-perception of competence in the relevant domains is important for understanding of individual's behavior and achievement, the study analyzed the effects of age and gender on global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions. The cross-sectional study included 1130 participants of age range 8-23 (520 males and 610 females). The participants were tested by the equivalent forms of six subscales from 'Self-Perception Profile for Children', 'Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents' and 'Self-Perception Profile for College Students'. Subscales measured self-evaluations across domains of scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioral conduct and global self-worth. Two separate MANOVAs revealed a significant main effect for age in male subsample (Wilks' Lambda =.83, F (12, 1024)=8.35, p<.01) and in female subsample (Wilks' Lambda =.80, F (12, 1204)=11.80, p< .01). An analysis of variance showed that the effect of age in males was significant in physical appearance, behavioral conduct and global self-worth, while in females significant differences were registered in scholastic competence, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioral conduct. Pedagogical implications refer to enhancing self-concept in youth by appropriate teaching strategies and supportive learning environment. Learning experiences within physical education might be particularly beneficial for female adolescents.
Keywords: global self-worth, self-perceptions, competence, age, gender.

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Introduction

The term self-concept according to Harter (1999) refers to evaluative judgments of attributes within discrete domains such as physical appearance, cognitive competence, athletic competence, social acceptance and so forth. Since a distinction can be made between self-descriptions („what I am“) and self-evaluations („how good I am“), the attributes that children or adolescents generate are not valence-free. Harter (1985) advocated a multidimensional approach to the self-concept by explaining that specific domains of self-perception, together with a global self-worth as an independent aspect of the self-concept, provides a more thorough and more differentiated picture than approaches based on a single score of the self-concept. Namely, the individual typically evaluates the self differently in different domains, providing a profile of his/her sense of adequacy across relevant areas (Harter, 1999).

The principle of cognitive-developmental theories, which refer to the development-dependant differentiation, may, according to Harter (1990), also be applied to self-perception domains, since the number and content of self-perception domains increases with age, due to cognitive maturation and social experiences. Children of 4–7 years of age can essentially make a difference only between two self-perception domains: general competence (cognitive and physical) and social acceptance (by their mothers and peers respectively). During mid and late childhood, between 8–13 years of age, children are capable of making a difference between several specific domains of self-perception, namely, between scholastic competence, athletic competence, social acceptance and behavioral conduct, as well as a global self-worth (Harter, 1985). Further on, during adolescence, the number and content of self-perception get changed and broadened again so, according to Harter (1988), self-perception domains in adolescence include scholastic competence, athletic competence, social acceptance, physical appearance, business competence, romantic appeal, behavioral conduct, close friendship, and a global self-worth. In students the number of self-perception domains is increased by domains of creativity, intellectual abilities, relations with parents and humor (Neemann & Harter, 1986). Table 1 shows specific domains of self-perception in children, adolescents, and college students, as well as their age-dependent increased complexity within a specific domain.

Table 1: *Domains of Self-Perceptions in Children, Adolescents and College Students*

Domains of self-perceptions in children (Harter, 1985)	**Domains of self-perceptions in adolescents (Harter, 1988)**	**Domains of self-perceptions in college students (Neemann & Harter, 1986)**
Scholastic Competence	Scholastic Competence	Creativity
	Job Competence	Intellectual Ability
		Scholastic Competence
		Job Competence
Athletic Competence	Athletic Competence	Athletic Competence
Physical Appearance	Physical Appearance	Physical Appearance
Social Acceptance	Social Acceptance	Social Acceptance
	Close Friendships	Close Friendships
	Romantic Relationships	Romantic Relationships
		Parent Relationships
		Humor
Behavioral Conduct	Behavioral Conduct	Morality
Global Self-Worth	Global Self-Worth	Global Self-Worth

Research results related to the Harter's basic assumption that self-perception becomes more discriminative with age are in accordance, however, this is not true when dealing with the direction and rate of age-dependent changes in self-perception. Most research suggest that children are the mildest evaluators of specific domains of their own behavior while adolescents are the strictest ones when compared to other age categories such as college students and adults (Harter, 1999; Van Den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999; Wigfield, Eccles, Yoon, Harold, Arbreton, Freedman-Doan *et al*., 1997). In the same time, developmental changes in self-perceptions are domain-specific and not necessarily in the same direction. According to Cantin and Boivin (2004), there are no changes in self-perception in this period, however, a longitudinal study by Proctor and Choi (1994) indicates that there is an increase of global self-worth during transition from the primary school to the secondary one. Most results confirm the stance that self-perception decreases progressively during transition from the primary to secondary school (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Wigfield, Eccles, Maclver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991). However, there are re-

sults indicating that this decreasing of global self-worth at the end of primary schooling is only temporary (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). Changes of the global self-worth are not necessarily followed by the same-direction changes in domain-specific self-perceptions. Most researchers agree that self-perception decrease in academic domain is generally followed by the trend of global self-worth decrease during childhood and early adolescence, while the perception of social acceptance gradually increases (Cantin & Boivin, 2004; Granleese & Joseph, 1994). Findings of the developmental trends in terms of physical competence are not that much consistent (Weiss & Amorose, 2008).

Unlike age differences, gender differences in the domain-specific self-perceptions as well as global self-worth, show a very consistent model in most studies carried out so far. Male participants have more positive judgments of athletic competence and physical appearance, as well as global self-worth, whereas the females opt for behavioral conduct; no gender differences across all age groups are only found in self-perceptions of social acceptance (Harter, 1999; Van den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999). Research results additionally suggest that gender differently affects specific domains of self-perception at a particular age. Thus, for example, males at early childhood have more positive self-evaluations in all aspects except behavioral conduct (Granleese, Trew & Turner, 1988; Van Wersch, Trew & Turner, 1990). During adolescence, gender differences are found in athletic competence, which is in favor of the males (Van Wersch, Trew & Turner, 1990). Early adolescence is a period during which differences in gender-related self-perceptions deepen (Eccles, Wigfield, Flanagan, Miller, Reuman & Yee, 1989). Previous studies indicate that male adolescents have more positive self-perceptions when dealing with global self-worth, and especially if evaluating physical appearance and athletic competence; females in early and middle adolescence have higher scores in behavioral conduct and close friendship (Hagborg, 1993; Harter, 1985, 1988; Kling, Hyde, Showers & Buswell, 1999; Marsh, 1989). Generally speaking, self-perception of female adolescents decreases progressively during the secondary school, which is different from that of the male adolescents (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Wigfield & Eccles 1994). As far as adult participants are concerned, women are found to make more negative evaluations of physical appearance and athletic competence than men (Causgrove-Dunn & Watkinson, 1994; Lindwall & Hassmen, 2004). Harter (1999) found that the women's perception of physical appearance decreases progressively; however, this is not true of men. Women's perception of their own appearance is much more negative than that of men. In addition, self-perception of physical appearance is critical for global self-worth of women (Harter, 1999). Self-perception of physical appearance is a key determinant of a physical self and global self-worth in participants of both genders throughout the life cycle (Harter *et al*., 1997; Hayes *et al*., 1999).

Considering the importance of age and gender interconnection for global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions, the basic objectives of this

study were to determine domain-specific self-perceptions and global self-worth of participants of different age and gender.

Hypothesis. Global self-worth and self-perceptions in specific domains were not age- and gender-dependant.

Method

Participants. The cross-sectional study included 1130 participants of both genders, aged 8–23. Participants were selected from three primary schools, two secondary schools and three faculties in the Novi Sad metropolitan area, Serbia. In Serbian educational system, children enroll in primary school at the age of 6 or 7 and it lasts for eight years. Primary school is divided into two stages: lower grades (grades 1–4) and higher grades (grades 5–8). Secondary schools are divided into two main types: gymnasiums (last 4 years) and professional schools (4-year and 3-year). Secondary students in our sample were enrolled in both types of schools, while college students studied Art, Medicine or Science. The sample comprised three age subsamples: 307 children aged 8–11 years; 400 adolescents aged 14–15 years and 423 college students aged 21–23 years. The structure of the sample according to gender and age is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: *Age and Gender Structure of the Sample*

	Males		**Females**		**Total**	
	n	%	n	%	*n*	*%*
Children (8–11 yrs)	157	51.14	150	48.86	307	100.00
Adolescents (14–15 yrs)	164	41.00	236	59.00	400	100.00
College students (21–23 yrs)	199	47.04	224	52.96	423	100.00
Total	520	46.02	610	53.98	1130	100.00

Procedure. The assessment of the primary school children turned out to be an individual activity due to the need for additional explanation of instructions for particular items. The children and adolescent subsamples were assessed during the school class, in agreement with a school teacher and principal respectively, whereas college students were assessed in the previously scheduled terms in the classrooms of faculties.

Measures. Measures applied in the study were designed on the basis of a multidimensional self-concept model developed by Harter (1999). These measures assess self-evaluation of competences in specific functioning domains of participants of a particular age, as well as global self-worth (Table 1). The children version of self-perception profile (Harter, 1988) measures

self-evaluation across domains of scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioral conduct. In the adolescent version (Harter, 1985) three additional subscales are included (Job Competence, Close Friendships and Romantic Relationships), while the college student version (Neemann & Harter, 1986) has four subscales added to the adolescent version (Creativity, Intellectual Ability, Parent Relationships and Humor). All three versions also include a global self-worth subscale. Overlapping across the three versions of self-perception profile enables the comparison of the corresponding subscales scores. The six subscales were included: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct (Morality in the college student version) and Global Self-Worth. Each subscale consists of six statements (four statements in the college student version). Statements are formulated as complex, bipolar sentences; one part of a sentence describes a competent behavior of a child, and the other one describes less competent (e.g. *Some kids find it hard to make friends,* but *Other kids find it pretty easy to make friends*). Participants determine whether the first or the second part of the sentence describes them better; then they decide whether that description refers to them completely or just partially. The score on every subscale represents the arithmetic mean of the responses given to each item scored on a four-level scale, where 1 means the lowest competence in the observed domain, and 4 is the highest. Overall internal consistency reliability ranges from 0.65 to 0.92, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.74 to 0.83 for children subsample, 0.65 to 0.86 for adolescent subsample, and 0.66 to 0.92 for college students.

Data analyses. Self-perceptions of participants of different age and gender were determined using the basic methods of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, t-test), whereas differences in global self-worth and self-perceptions were calculated separately for males and females using multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) and post hoc analyses (Scheffé's test).

Results

Tables 3–5 display children, adolescents and college students self-perceptions as a function of gender. The range of the obtained mean scores was found to be higher in the female participants than in the males: in the female participants they ranged from M=2.61 (athletic competence of female adolescents) to M=3.47 (global self-worth of female children), whereas in the male participants they ranged from M=2.68 (physical appearance of college students) to M=3.29 (global self-worth of male children). Considering the age subsamples, the highest score M=3.38 was obtained in the subsample of children (global self-worth), while the lowest one was that of the college students, M =2.68 (physical appearance). The lowest self-perceptions were obtained in adolescents (five out of six self-perceptions), only physical appearance was most

negatively perceived by college students; the highest self-perceptions were reported in children (five out of six self-perceptions).

Analysis of children subsample (table 3), revealed that both males and females had the highest scores on global self-worth (M=3.29 and M=3.47, respectively) and the lowest ones for athletic competence (M=2.91 and M=2.94, respectively). Female children perceived themselves as more competent than male children; statistical difference was obtained in scholastic competence (t=-3.38; p<.01), behavioral conduct (t=-6.45; p<.01), and global self-worth (t=-2.99; p<.01).

Table 3: *Children Self-Perception as a Function of Gender*

	Males		**Females**		**Total**	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Scholastic Competence**	2.94	.55	3.16	.58	3.05	.58
Social Acceptance	3.12	.54	3.17	.57	3.15	.55
Athletic Competence	2.91	.55	2.94	.63	2.92	.59
Physical Appearance	3.17	.73	3.30	.73	3.23	.73
Behavioral Conduct**	2.97	.71	3.43	.53	3.19	.67
Global Self-Worth**	3.29	.55	3.47	.52	3.38	.54

Legend. ** indicates significance at p< .01

Within male adolescents (Table 4), the highest mean scores were obtained for global self-worth (M=3.18) and the lowest ones for behavioral conduct (M=2.85). The female adolescents had the highest score on global self-worth (M=3.14) and lowest ones for athletic competence (M=2.61), the lowest mean self-perception score within the whole sample. In comparison with their female peers, male adolescents reported significantly higher competence in athletic domain (t=4.468; p<.01) and lower competence in behavioral conduct (t=-2.904; p<.01).

Table 4: *Adolescents Self-Perception as a Function of Gender*

	Males		**Females**		**Total**	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Scholastic Competence	3.03	.64	3.02	.66	3.02	.65
Social Acceptance	3.09	.56	3.07	.63	3.08	.60
Athletic Competence**	2.94	.70	2.61	.76	2.74	.75
Physical Appearance	2.92	.75	2.81	.82	2.85	.79
Behavioral Conduct**	2.85	.60	3.03	.63	2.96	.62
Global Self-Worth	3.18	.62	3.14	.67	3.16	.65

Legend. ** indicates significance at p< .01

As it can be seen in table 5, male college students had the highest scores on global self-worth (*M*=3.12) and social acceptance (*M*=3.10), with lowest competence reported in physical appearance (*M*=2.68). Female students perceived themselves as most competent in scholastic domain (*M*=3.26), with most negative perceptions in athletic domain (*M*=2.64). Statistically significant differences between the male and female college students were obtained in scholastic competence (*t*=-4.60; *p*<.01), athletic competence (*t*=4.37; *p*< .01), morality (*t*=-2.34; *p*< .05), and global self-worth (*t*=-2.66; *p*<.01).

Table 5: *College Students Self-Perception as a Function of Gender*

	Males		**Females**		**Total**	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Scholastic Competence**	3.01	.57	3.26	.53	3.14	.56
Social Acceptance	3.10	.57	3.14	.57	3.12	.57
Athletic Competence**	2.97	.72	2.64	.83	2.80	.80
Physical Appearance	2.68	.49	2.68	.49	2.68	.49
Morality*	3.08	.55	3.22	.63	3.15	.60
Global Self-Worth**	3.12	.59	3.27	.56	3.20	.57

Legend. * indicates significance at p <.05; ** indicates significance at p<.01

Two separate MANOVAs were used to investigate age differences for global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions in male and female subsamples. The MANOVA results revealed a significant main effect for age in male subsample, Wilks' Lambda=.83, $F(12, 1024)=8.35$, $p<.01$. In female subsample, a significant main effect for age was also found, Wilks' Lambda=.80, $F(12, 1204)=11.80$, $p<.01$. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate self-perceptions as a function of age, for males and females subsamples.

Figure 1: *Male Self-Perception as a Function of Age*

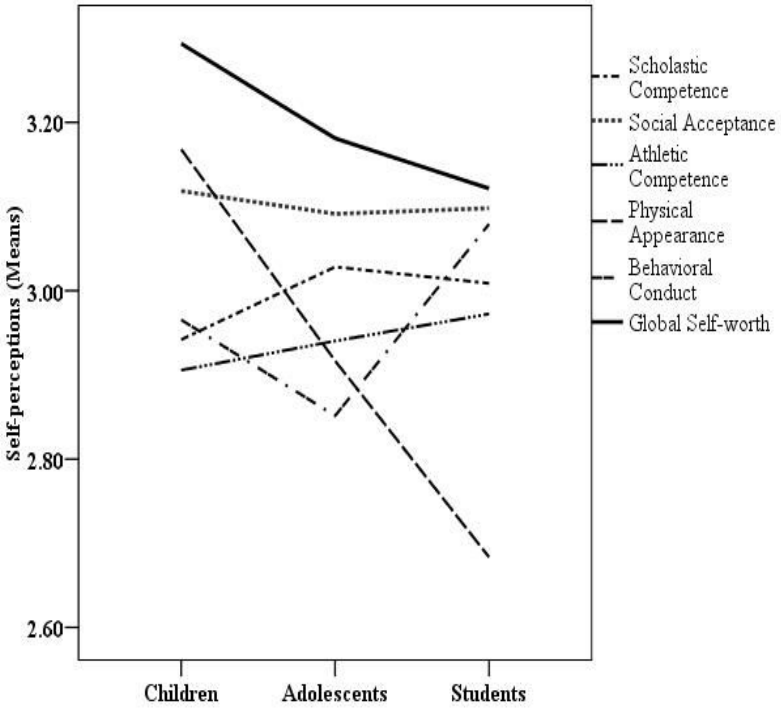
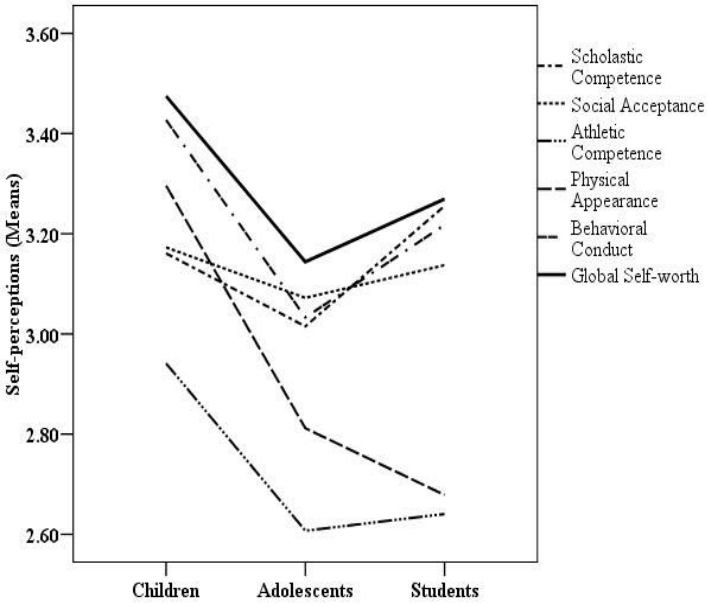


Figure 2: *Female Self-Perception as a Function of Age*



The univariate results for global self-worth and perceived competence for males and females are presented in tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: *Perceived Competence and Global Self-Worth of Males with Regard to Age* (*ANOVA, Post Hoc Analyses*)

	Males			
	Mean Square	*F*(2, 517)	*p*	Scheffé's Post Hoc Analyses (*p*<.05)
Scholastic Competence	.33	0.95	.39	–
Social Acceptance	.03	.10	.90	–
Athletic Competence	0.20	.44	.64	–
Physical Appearance	10.32	24.13	**.00**	male children>adolescents> students
Behavioral Conduct	2.34	6.16	**.00**	students>adolescents
Global Self-Worth	1.31	3.83	**.00**	male children>students

Table 7: *Perceived Competence and Global Self-Worth of Females with Regard to Age (ANOVA, Post Hoc Analyses)*

	Females			
	Mean Square	$F(2, 607)$	p	Scheffé's Post Hoc Analyses ($p<.05$)
Scholastic Competence	3.37	9.45	**.00**	students>adolescents
Social Acceptance	.51	1.46	.23	-
Athletic Competence	5.78	10.15	**.00**	female children>adolescents&students
Physical Appearance	18.07	37.68	**.00**	female children>adolescents&students
Behavioral Conduct	7.19	19.65	**.00**	female children>students>adolescents
Global Self-Worth	5.02	14.18	**.00**	female children>students&adolescents

Inspection of the univariate *F* values revealed significant differences between age subsamples within male participants on physical appearance, behavioral conduct and global self-worth ($p<.01$), while no significant differences were obtained on scholastic competence, social acceptance and athletic competence. Post hoc analyses indicated that male children perceived themselves as significantly more competent than adolescents and college students on physical appearance. They also reported significantly higher global self-worth than college students, with latter perceived themselves as more competent than adolescents in behavioral conduct domain.

In females, univariate analysis revealed significant differences between age subsamples in global self-worth, as well as in self-perceptions in scholastic competence, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioral conduct ($p<.01$). No significant difference was found only in social acceptance. According to post hoc analyses, female children perceived themselves as more competent overall compared to the college students and particularly adolescents.

Discussion

Self-perception is singled out as an unavoidable factor in the analyses of behavior and achievement independently of the area of functioning. Individuals who have negative self-perceptions in behavioral domains that are important to them, more often suffer from depression or anxious disorders, and have cardiovascular disorders more often than the participants with more positive self-perceptions (Trzesniewski *et al*., 2006).

The results of previous research suggest that there are age-related differences in specific domains of self-perception, as well as in the global self-worth (Cantin & Boivin, 2004; Harter, 1999; Van Den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999; Wigfield *et al*., 1997). The existing empirical findings also indicate that there is a consistent gender pattern for global self-worth and specific self-perceptions (Eccles *et al*., 1989; Granleese *et al*., 1988; Harter, 1999; Van den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999; Van Wersch *et al*., 1990). The basic aim of this study was to analyze the effects of age and gender on global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions and to determine in which domains these effects were most expressed.

Our results obtained by using descriptive statistics indicate that there is no univocal answer to the question whether males or females have more positive domain-specific self-perceptions and global self-worth. A precise answer depends on the participant's age, gender and a specific domain being in the limelight. Thus, female *children* perceived themselves as more competent than male children in scholastic domain, behavioral conduct and global self-worth; male *adolescents* reported significantly higher scores than female adolescents on athletic competence and lower on behavioral conduct. On the other hand, female *college students* had more positive self-perceptions on scholastic com-

petence, morality and global self-worth, while males had significantly higher scores on athletic competence. Considering all age- and gender-related self-perceptions obtained, the female adolescents' score on the athletic competence scale was the absolutely lowest one. Since traditional gender roles supports and highly values males' sports engagement, societal context usually favors self-evaluation of males in sport domain. Unlike female children, male children are expected to be strong, athletic and daring, so they are socialized to sport, where they can develop their athletic competencies.

Adolescence represents an especially sensitive development period in which substantial biological, emotional and social changes facing adolescents can enhance negative self-perceptions (Davis, 1997; Harter, 1999). Research has shown that one half of adolescents struggle with low self-esteem especially in early adolescence (Harter, 1990; Hirsch & DuBois, 1991). The physical self is unstable in time, which is due to biological, psychological and/or social reasons. Recent research confirms that female's self-perception in western societies decrease progressively during adolescence under the influence of socio-cultural factors, while the self-perception of males remains relatively stable (Baldwin & Hoffman, 2002; Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005; Kling *et al*., 1999).

Low scores of the female adolescents on athletic competence are important from the motivational aspect of self-evaluations. Persons who perceive themselves as athletically competent will be more persistent which will reflect their increased interest in this domain (Harter, 1999). Ample research material indicates that there are significant relations of perceived athletic competence and the level of physical activity in children and adolescents (Carrol & Loumidis, 2001; Crocker, Eklund & Kowalski, 2000; Crocker, Sabiston, Forrester, Kowalski, Kowalski & McDonough, 2003; Klint & Weiss, 1987). There is a bidirectional effect between self-perception (especially self-perception and athletic competence) and physical activity: by means of improved movement skills, physical activity may encourage self-perception of athletic competence (including physical self-concept), however, physical self-concept can affect behavior related to physical activity (Weiss & Amorosse, 2008). Due to the fact that adolescence represents a critical period for physical inactivity of females (Kemper, Twisk, Koppes, van Mechelen & Bertheke Post, 2001; Nader, Bradley, Houts, McRitchie & O'Brien, 2008), and owing to the fact that female adolescents have the lowest self-perceptions in athletic competence, engagement in physical activity is imposed as one of the possible ways of preventing such a trend (Đorđić & Tubić, 2009; Ference & Muth, 2004).

Concerning children subsample, the obtained results are not in accordance with the results of previous research. In most previous studies, male children have higher scores than female children particularly in athletic competence and physical appearance, as well as in scholastic competence and global self-worth, while female children have more positive evaluations in the behavioral conduct domain (Granleese *et al*., 1988; Harter, 1999; Van Wersch *et al*., 1990; Van Den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999). In our study, male children

did not report higher competence than female children in any single domain of self-perception, nor in global self-worth, but female children had significantly higher scores on scholastic competence, behavioral control and global self-worth. In adolescent subsample, the obtained results are congruent with the results of previous studies in terms of more positive self-perceptions of athletic competence in male adolescents and females' higher scores on behavioral conduct (Harter, 1988; Kling *et al*., 1999). Current research in the field indicates that there is a continued decrease in physical appearance and athletic competence self-perceptions in college students (Crocker & Ellsworth, 1990; Harter, 1999; Lindwal & Hassmén, 2004; Sira & Ballard, 2011). The results obtained in our study are partly consistent with these findings, since a continued decrease was found only on athletic competence. Besides, female college students had significantly higher self-evaluations of scholastic and athletic competence, morality and global self-worth in comparison to the male students. Even though the females are objectively more successful in academic achievement, according to the previous findings they are more self-critical about their own abilities (Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge, Wells & Maitino, 2009). Contrary to previous findings (Boissicat, Pansu, Bouffard & Cottin, 2012; De Almeida, Valentini, Berleze, 2009; Harter, 1985; Muldoon & Trew, 2000) our results indicate that there are noticeable gender differences in self-perception of scholastic competence in the subsample of children and college students in favor of the females.

The partial inconsistency between our findings and the previous ones could be explained by characteristics of participant subsamples, as well as inter-cultural differences (Chen, Zappulla, Coco, Schneider, Kasper, De Oliveira *et al*., 2004). Culture might be seen as a *mental program* (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), which refers to individual's patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting, acquired mostly in early childhood, and shared by the members of the same society. Culture affects individuals' cognition, behavior, self-perceptions and how they perceive others (Kastanakis & Voyer, 2014; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Layers of culture includes national, regional, gender, generational, social class and other levels, because individuals belong to different groups and categories at the same time, resume different roles and responsibilities (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). According to Hofstede's 6-D Model (Hofstede, 2011), Serbian culture is quite opposite to typical Western cultures. Serbia scores high on power distance and uncertainty dimensions, average on long term orientation, and low on individualism, indulgence and masculinity. It means that people in Serbia generally expect and accept a hierarchical order in institutions and organizations, tend to avoid uncertainty and unknown situations, and have no clear preference for normative or more pragmatic approach. In addition, Serbia is considered a collectivistic society, where people's self-images is more defined in terms of „We" instead of „I". On the contrary, individualism is typical for Western cultures and remarkably affects socialization, behaviors and perceptions of

individuals. Scores on Indulgence and Masculinity place Serbian society into group of restrained and relatively feminine societies. It means that in Serbian culture children are raised with more emphasis on desires and impulses control, which is in contrast to indulgent Western cultures. More feminine orientation denotes societies where caring for others and quality of life are more important than competition and achievement, whit latter defining most of Western societies.

The results of two separate MANOVAs, employed to investigate age differences for global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions in males and females, revealed a significant main effect for age in both genders. In *males,* the differences were most prominent on physical appearance, behavioral conduct and global self-worth, while in *females* significant differences between age subsamples were obtained on global self-worth, scholastic competence, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioral conduct. Post-hoc analyses revealed that *female* children perceived themselves as more competent overall compared to the college students and particularly adolescents, while in *male* subsample no such clear age-dependent self-perception profile could be identified. Only the self-perception of social acceptance showed no significant differences between the male and female participants of different age. These results are in accordance with previous research (e.g. Van Den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999).

The self-evaluation of physical appearance shows a consistent declining trend in males, starting from the age of children, through adolescents, to college students, which is in accordance with previous studies (Harter, 1999; Van Den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999; Wigfield *et al*., 1991, 1994). In females, children had significantly higher scores on physical appearance in relation to adolescents and college students, but no significant difference was found between adolescents and college students. In contrast to the results of meta-analysis carried out on 428 studies, in which the males are found to have significantly higher self-perceptions of physical appearance than females in all ages, especially in adolescence (Gentile *et al*., 2009), our research does not reveal significant gender differences in any age subsample. This is probably due to the fact that the predominant western cultural models which assume extremely high standards of female appearance are not so much embedded in the culture to which our participants belong. The research of Lazarević et al. (2008), which was done with a similar sample, also found that there were no gender-related differences in terms of self-perception of physical appearance in early adolescence.

Concerning behavior conduct and global self-worth within female subsample, adolescents appeared to be less competent than children and college students. This is in accordance with previous findings which suggest that adolescents are the strictest ones when compared to other age groups in self-perceived competencies (Harter, 1999; Van Den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999; Wigfield *et al*., 1997). Somewhat different results were obtained in male sub-

sample; adolescents had the lowest competence on behavioral conduct and college students had the lowest score on global self-worth.

In relation to age, male children had most positive self-perception profile within male subsample, and female children had most positive profile within females. In comparison to adolescents and adults, children are unrealistically positive in self-evaluations (Harter, 1999), which can be explained by "lack of ability to engage in social comparison, to construct a discrepancy between real and ideal self-images and to recognize both positive and negative self-attributes" (Harter, 1999, p. 17).

Considering limitations of this study, there should be noted that this is a cross-sectional study which requires confirmation by longitudinal monitoring of the changes in self-perceptions from preschool age onwards. In this manner, particular social and societal influences would be more homogenous within a sample, which was impossible to control in this research. It is also necessary to note that self-perception is influenced by mechanisms of social support which were not controlled in this research. Notwithstanding the above limitations, the obtained results have indicated that global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions are age and gender-dependant, so the main hypothesis could not be accepted.

Pedagogical implications refer to enhancing self-concept in youth by appropriate teaching strategies and supportive learning environment. Teachers should be aware of developmental aspects of youth's self-concept. In children, self-evaluations are overly positive and might serve as motivational factors and emotional buffers while mastering different developmentally appropriate tasks (Harter, 1999). Being optimistic in self-appraisals, make children persistent in their mastery attempts. On the other hand, adolescents and young adults become more accurate and critical in self-perceptions. As for adolescents, they become preoccupied with the discrepancy between their real selves and the ideal selves; they are able to make social comparisons and to internalize critical opinions of others (including teachers). Individual's self-concept is vulnerable in this developmental stage, which implies that teaching styles should protect students' self-worth. Learning experiences within physical education might be particularly beneficial for female adolescents, since their perceptions of athlete competence are, generally, quite negative. Physical education teachers' feedback should be supportive, they should develop mastery motivational climate which boosts female adolescents' physical self.

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AGE AND GENDER EFFECTS ON GLOBAL SELF-WORTH AND DOMAIN-SPECIFIC SELF-PERCEPTIONS IN YOUTH

Abstract

Considering that self-perception of competence in the relevant domains is important for understanding of individual's behaviour and achievement, the study analysed the effects of age and gender on global self-worth and domain-specific self-perceptions. The cross-sectional study included 1130 participants of age range 8–23 (520 males and 610 females). The participants were tested by the equivalent forms of six subscales from the *Self-Perception Profile for Children*, the *Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents* and the *Self-Perception Profile for College Students*. The subscales measured self-evaluations across domains of scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioural conduct and global self-worth. Two separate MANOVAs revealed a significant main effect for age in the male subsample (Wilks' Lambda=.83, $F(12, 1024)=8.35$, $p<.01$) and in female subsample (Wilks' Lambda=.80, $F(12, 1204)=11.80$, $p<.01$). The analysis of variance showed that the effect of age in males was significant in physical appearance, behavioural conduct and global self-worth, while in females significant differences were registered in scholastic competence, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioural conduct. The pedagogical implications refer to enhancing self-concept in youth by appropriate teaching strategies and supportive learning environment. Learning experiences within physical education might be particularly beneficial for female adolescents.

Keywords: global self-worth, self-perceptions, competence, age, gender.

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ЭФФЕКТЫ ВОЗРАСТА И ПОЛА НА ОБЩИЕ И СПЕЦИФИЧЕСКИЕ САМООЦЕНКИ

Резюме

Поскольку самооценка компетентности в релевантных областях важна для понимания поведения и постижений учащихся, основной целью данного исследования является выявление возможных различий самооценок в зависимости от возраста и пола. В исследовании участвовало 1130 испытуемых различных возрастов, из этого числа 520 мужского и 610 женского пола. Были применены эквивалентные формы шести субшкал из трех инструментов, *Self-Perception Profile for Children*, *Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents* і *Self-Perception Profile for College Students*. При помощи субшкал измерялись самооценки школьной компетентности, социальной приемлемости, спортивной компетентности, внешнего вида, контроля поведения, а также общая самооценка. Девушки подросткового возраста оценивают себя менее компетентными по сравнению с остальными субкорпусами, причем результат на субшкале спортивной компетентности наиболее низкий из всех анализированных показателей самооценки. Результаты, полученные при помощи MANOVE указывают на статистически значимую вазимозависимость пола и возраста при самооценке общей и специфических сфер. Педагогические импликации связываются с потребностью поощрения сельф-концепта девушек подросткового возраста, как наиболее ранимой группы, при помощи определенных стратегий обучения и создания благоприятного окружения для учебной деятельности, причем особо полезным может быть опыт обучения физкультуре.

Ключевые слова: общая самооценка, самооценки, компетентность, возраст, пол.