

## **SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AGE STUDENTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES**

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### **Abstract**

Social development during adolescence is considered one of the greatest challenges in today's education. Physical education classes, where intense emotional situations take place and individuals' characters are tested, are the proper places for the development of students' social and emotional skills. Physical education is a major force in helping children and youth socialize with others successfully and provides opportunities to learn positive social skills. The main aim of this study was to analyse and compare the peculiarities of social skills among senior high school age students in physical education classes. The research was carried out during 2014/2015 academic years. According to the earlier research results that the social skills also alter with age, senior high school age students were divided into two different age groups. The independent random sample consisted of 244 (15 – 16 years old) students and 258 (17 – 18 years old) students, of which there were 224 boys and 278 girls. The social skills rating system, (Gresham & Elliot, 1990) for secondary level (grade 7 – 12) students was used to evaluate students' social skills in physical education. The test is comprised of 39 items from the main domains of social skills (self – control, cooperation, empathy, and assertion). The SSRS utilizes a three point rating scale to rate the perceived frequency of social behaviour's ranging from 0 to 2: 0 = „never occurs”, 1 = „sometimes occurs” and 2 = „occurs very often”. The reliability of this scale in our study was adequate: Cronbach's alpha was 0.81 for social skills. The statistical hypotheses were tested by applying the Student t-test. The comparison of social skills among 15 – 16 years old and 17 – 18 years old students revealed that 17 – 18 years old students have better assertion skills in physical education classes:  $t(500) = -2.47$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . The comparison of social skills among boys and girls revealed that girls have better cooperation skills in physical education classes than boys:  $t(500) = -2.74$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . No statistically significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) were observed according empathy and self-control levels among senior high school age students in physical education classes. It was found that 17 – 18 years old students have better assertion skills than those of 15 – 16 years old and girls have better cooperation skills in physical education classes than boys ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** *social skills, students, physical education classes, senior high school age*