

## Relationship Between Academic Self - Concept and Self - Esteem Among Student-Athletes

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### Abstract

*Purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem among student-athletes. The level of academic self-concept was collected using the Liu and Wang's (2005) Academic Self-Concept Scale which consists of Academic Confident (AC) and Academic Effort (AE), whereas The Rosenberg's (1965) Self-esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem. This study was conducted on 52 athletes (male = 33 and female =19) during the tournament of Malaysian University Sports Council (MASUM) which was held at Hang Jebat Sports Complex, Melaka. The results had showed that males athletes had slightly higher of Academic Self-Concept (mean = 64.60) compared to females (mean = 63.37). However, females athletes (mean = 20.32) exhibited higher level of self-esteem higher than males athletes (mean = 18.78). Meanwhile the correlation result on academic self-concept and self-esteem showed there was a small negative correlation ( $r = .17$ ) but there is no significant relationship between both variables among university athletes ( $p < 0.05$ ). It concluded that academic self-concept and self-esteem played important roles for the student-athletes to success in academic and sports.*

**Keywords:** Academic self-concept, self-esteem, student-athletes.

### Introduction

Student-athletes' considered to be a unique group in universities since they pursue their life as students and athletes at the same time. It is a big dream for all students in university to achieve their best results in their study, but for those students who involve in sports, they also need to perform their best as an athlete. This 'double major' made student- athletes' faces a lot of pressure to perform well in academically and sports. Some of the student-athletes' may perform well and tend to achieve success in both academic and sport since they have the capability to focus on study and still be successful in sports. But unfortunately, some student-athletes' may only tend to be successful in one aspect due to lack of capability, time and energy.

There are many elements that can measure the student-athletes' performance in academic and sport. One of the most important elements in psychology is self-concept. Eccless (2005) defined self-concept as a general view about oneself across various sets of specific domains and perceptions based on self-knowledge and evaluation of values formed through experiences in relation to one's environment. Furthermore, Kalliopuska (1990) stated that the important placed on other people's evaluations of oneself may affect one's self-concept. Self-concepts include

only those behaviours of individual that he is aware of and believes he has the control. In other words, one's behaviour is externally influence by other people's evaluation instead of internally guided.

It is not surprising that self-concept remains as an element to be exposed and understood but in the case of student-athletes' in, the domain of academic self-concept is more interesting to be explored. Trautwein, Lüdtke, Kastens and Köller (2006) defined academic self-concept as a person's self-evaluation regarding specific academic domains or abilities. In other words, academic self-concept is how students do work or feel about themselves as learners (Guay, Marsh & Boivin, 2003; Harter, 1998). Previous research has discovered that academic self-concept has a stronger relationship with academic achievement (Tan & Yates, 2007; Marsh, 2004; Cokley 2000). However, there were only few studies that highlight the relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem.

Self-esteem is the attitude towards their self compare to other person, means that how we believe and appreciate our self on our capability in certain aspects (Rosenberg, 1989). High self-esteem is associated with independence, leadership, adaptability, and resilience to stress whereas low self-esteem is associated with depression, anxiety and phobias (Andrews & Brown, 1993; Wylie, 1989). For student-athletes', self-esteem is considered as one of the most important components, that assist them to achieve a great performance in both studies and sports.

Academic self-concept and self esteem are important element that may affect the student-athletes' performance. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the level of academic self-concept and it relation to self-esteem among Malaysian student-athletes'. Academic self-concept may affect the student-athletes' academic performance, and self-esteem may be important to be successful in both studies and sports involvement. Moreover, these two variables may have relationship that can influence student-athletes' that can lead them to be successful in both studies and sports. For the purpose of this study, the research questions that need to be answered are as follow:

1. Does male athletes academic self-concept is higher than female's athletes?
2. Does male athletes self-esteem level is higher than female's athletes?
3. Is there any relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem level among student-athletes?

The Rosenberg (1989) Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure self-esteem, and Liu and Wang's (2005) Academic Self-concept scale was used to measure academic self-concept.

## **Participants**

In this study the participants were athletes from several universities in Malaysia who participated in the tournament of Malaysian University Sports Council (MASUM) Series 1 which was held at Hang Jebat Sports Complex Melaka. The event was organized by MASUM and Technical University of Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) on 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The squash and swimming event athletes volunteered to participate in this study. The total participants in this study were 52 student-athletes' from various universities in Malaysia, who participated in MASUM Series 1 tournament.

## **Instrument**

The original Academic Self-concept (ASC) scale by Liu and Wang (2005) was used to measure academic self-concept. The ACS had two sub scales namely academic confident (AC) and academic effort (AE). Each sub scales had 10 items. The Academic Confidence subscale assessed participants’ feelings and perceptions about their academic competence Sample questions included ‘*I can follow the lectures easily*’ and ‘*if I work hard, I think I can get better grades.*’ The Academic Effort subscale assessed athletes’ commitment, involvement and interest in studies. Sample questions included ‘*I pay attention to the lecturers during lectures*’ and ‘*I am usually interested in my course work.*’

The Self-Esteem Scale (SES) developed by Rosenberg (1965) was used to measure the level of self-esteem. The SES consists of 10 items scale using 4 point of Likert-type scale that ranges from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The samples questions were ‘*I feel that I have a number of good qualities*’ and ‘*I wish I could have more respect for myself.*’

**Procedure**

The researches went to the MASUM Series 1 tournament location which was at Hang Jebat Sports Complex Melaka to collected data from student-athletes’ who participated in this tournament. The athletes were requested to fill the SES and ACS scale with some demographic data. Besides that, they were also requested to sign a short consent form. The data which was collected then were analyzed and presented as the results of this study.

**Profile of the respondents**

The descriptive statistics of demographic data in this study were presented in Table 1 and 2. The participants comprised of 33 male and 19 female athletes which engage in squash (n = 23) and swimming (n = 29) events. All participants were randomly selected from their respective events. The total numbers of participants according to the sports are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: the total participants that involve in this study

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Sports	Squash	17	6	23
	Swimming	16	13	29
Total		33	19	52

The data of minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation (SD) were used to describe the basic characteristics of participants. Table 2 showed the minimum age of participants were 19 and maximum 26 years old. The heights of participants ranged between 148 cm to 184 cm with mean value of 167.21 and SD 8.06. The participant’s weights were between 45 and 90 kg.

**Table 2:** the basic characteristics of participants (N=52)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	19	26	21.75	1.64
Height	148	184	167.21	8.06
Weight	45	90	64.58	10.88

### The Level of Academic Self Concept and Self Esteem between Gender

The means and standard deviations of the academic self-concept subscale and self-esteem scale scores of male and female student-athletes' were computed and are presented in Table 3. The overall scores of academic self-concept scale were obtained by adding all of the subscale scores.

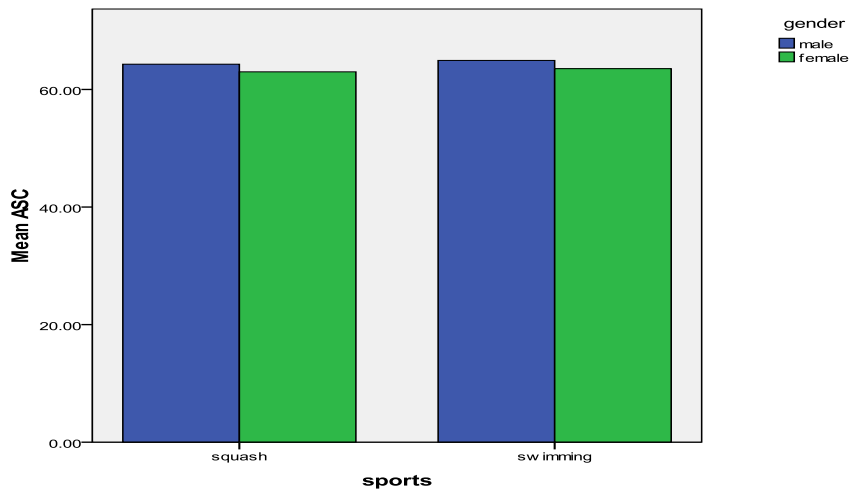
Result indicated that male student-athletes' had slightly higher of Academic self-concept (mean = 64.60) compared females (mean = 63.37). However, the results of self-esteem level showed that females student-athletes' achieve higher results (mean = 20.32) than males (mean = 18.78).

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics of variables

	Male (N=33)				Female (N=19)			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
AC	15	44	32.42	5.68	17	44	32.21	5.62
AE	28	42	32.18	2.94	15	40	31.16	4.8
Total ASC	45	86	64.60	7.83	32	84	63.37	9.98
SES	13	26	18.78	3.61	15	25	20.32	3.04

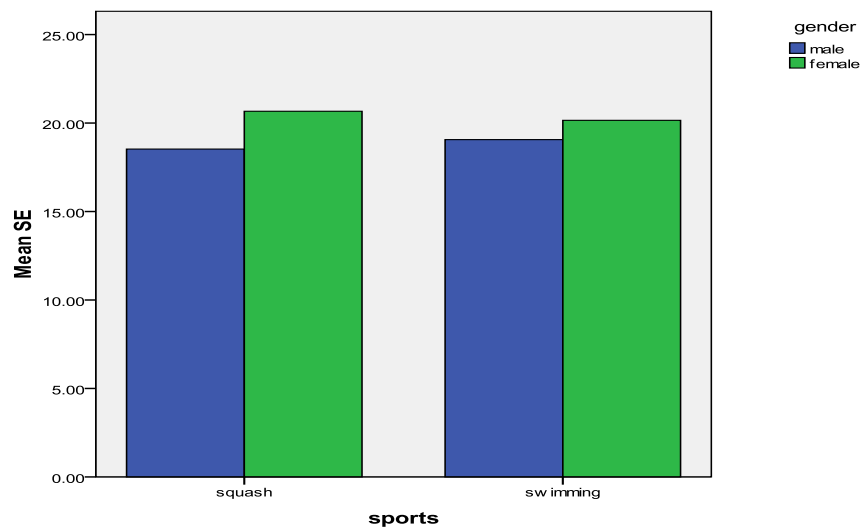
Clearer picture comparing the level of academic self-concept between male and female student-athletes' of Squash and Swimming are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Academic self-concept between male and female student-athletes



Clearer picture comparing the level of self-esteem among male and female student-athletes are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Self-esteem between male and female student-athletes'



**The Relationship between Academic Self Concept and Self Esteem**

The aim of this study was to determine the academic self-concept and its relation to self-esteem among student-athletes'. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis was used to find out whether there is any relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem level among student-athletes'. Table 6 had revealed that there was a small negative correlation ( $r =$

.17), however no significant relationship detected between academic self-concept and self-esteem level among student-athletes' ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 6:** Correlation between Academic Self-concept and Self-esteem

		ASC	SE
ASC	Pearson Correlation	1	-.17
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.22
	N	52	52
SE	Pearson Correlation	-.17	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.22	
	N	52	52

**The Level of Academic Self Concept and Self Esteem between Gender**

The results of this study demonstrated that male student-athletes (mean= 64.60) showed slightly higher in academic self-concept compared to females (mean= 63.37). These results indicated that the level of academic self concept among male and female student- athletes' are not much different. In this study, only 2 males and 1 female student-athlete had shown the lowest academic self concept. However, in self-esteem, female athlete-students' had shown higher level than males (mean: male = 18.78 and female = 20.32). This may due to result in self-esteem scale, which showed that 4 male student-athletes' scored the lowest level in self-esteem but none of female have scored that lowest level.

In the world of education, improving self-concept and self-esteem of students is one of their main priorities. Teachers, administrators, and parents commonly voice out their concern about students' self-esteem. According to Manning, Bear, and Minke (2006), its significance is often exaggerated to the extent that low-self esteems are viewed as the cause of all evil and high self-esteem as the cause of all good. Based from this statement, Manning (2007) believed that promoting high self-concept is important because it relates to academic and life success. Therefore, it was attached with this study that only few student-athletes had a low level in academic self-concept and self-esteem. However, the small number of differences cannot represent whether male or female student-athletes are better. Moreover, in this study, subject only represent two sports which is squash and swimming.

**The Relationship between Academic Self Concept and Self Esteem**

The results of this study also discovered that there was a small correlation ( $r = .17$ ) but not significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem. The small correlations mean there was a relationship between this two variables but not significant for the subjects in this study. Moreover, there was no published previous study reported directly relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem. However, both academic self-

concept and self-esteem are important for athletes to enhance their performance as student-athletes’.

There was no doubt that self-concept and self-esteem was widely studied in the realm of education and sport. For example, research done by Alfermann (2000) and Nigg (2001), concluded that taking part and doing well in sports and physical exercise can help build self-confidence, internal power, and positive self-concept. This research proved that physical activity can help to reinforce positive self-concept in an individual. Similarly, Nourbakhsh (2003) agreed that self-esteem and self-concept are very important factor in the improvement of sports, physical and sport activities. Furthermore, taking part in sports also can play an important role as an influential factor in the improvement of self-esteem and self-concept. At the same time, he suggested that educational districts should prepare suitable conditions that encourage the students to take part in sport activities.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study found out that there were small relationship between academic self-concept and self-esteem in university athletes. These two elements were important for the student-athletes’ to improve their academic and sport performances.

There were several limitations to this study that could affect the interpretation of the results. This study has been conducted only in squash and swimming student-athletes’ and the small number of participants, which were 52 might not enough to represent the student- athletes’ in Malaysia. Moreover, the questionnaire used in this study was self-administered and reliance on self reported data, which depends on honesty and ability of the athletes to understand the questions.

Further research can be performed in order to have a better result such as including more participants with different sports. Besides that, the differences between team event and individual sports can be done to seek more variables differences.

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