

**Associations between Self-Esteem and Subjective Sport Performance in  
Gaelic Players**

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction:** The game of Gaelic football has been growing in popularity over the past number of years. Subjective sport performance (SSP) in Gaelic football players has been an under researched topic. Although, it is suggested that many factors influence an individual's levels of subjective performance which include self – esteem (SE), age, gender and country of residence.

**Method:** There were 119 participants in this study (68 males and 53 females) with age ranging from 18 – 41 years. 82 participants were located in Ireland and the rest were from other countries. SE was measured with the Rosenberg Self – Esteem Scale (RSES) and SSP was measured using the Physical Activity and Sports Anxiety scale (PASAS).

**Results:** It was found that there was a moderate, positive correlation between SSP and SE with higher scores of SE correlating with higher levels of SSP. Additionally, female Gaelic players had higher levels of SE than men, which is on the contrary of relevant research. There was no significant difference in age groups and levels of SSP. Additionally, there was no significant relationship with SSP and country of residence.

**Discussion:** The results from this study are profound as they highlight what affects an individual's levels of subjective sport performance and what does not. As this study is the first of its kind, that presents with new and under researched areas of sport psychology, makes this study influential.

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## Literature Review

### *1.1 Subjective Sport Performance*

In recent literature it is understood that a player's overall performance is of major importance to how a team functions, furthermore it is understood also that the performance levels of each player have to be at their highest in order to assist the team towards success (Duch, Waitzman & Amaral, 2010; Wann et al, 2006). In a team sport, individual performance is important, as each teammate has a personal standard of performance in which they feel they must reach (Frost & Henderson, 1991). Fellow teammates expect a high standard of performance from each other, as it is important for overall team success (Galli, et al., 2011; Baumeister & Showers, 1986). However, if there is too much pressure put on an individual to perform at a high level, then the entire performance from them could be jeopardized (Otten, 2007; Baumeister, 1984). This is due to a paradox performance effect, which can also be described as "choking under pressure" (Hill, et al., 2010; Baumeister & Showers, 1986). It is suggested that the reason behind such a phenomenon is that one overthinks one's performance, causing an increase in anxiety which in turn hinders their performance by not being in a calm and relaxed manner when performing (Harms, 2010).

The subjective performance levels in sport refer to each individual's personal judgement of their performance (Totterdell, 2000). If one player's subjective performance levels are not in sync with the rest of the team, then the team's success can be put at risk (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). This issue is highlighted with Totterdell's (2000) findings on the link between subjective sport performance and moods. He found that the entire team's subjective performance levels were affected negatively when one or more player's moods were not in sync with the rest of the team. This highlights the fact that when in an intense sport environment, it is important to keep high levels of subjective performance to benefit the team (Moritz, et al., 2000; Feltz, 2007). Very limited research has been done on the area of Subjective Sport Performance, in addition to very little research done regarding team sports and Subjective Sport Performance levels.



## ***1.2 Self-Esteem and Sports Performance***

Self – esteem is a major concept in psychology and plays a huge role in people’s everyday lives of how they view themselves (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Self-esteem can be defined as a basic view one has about their self - concept, their worth and self-value (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Self-esteem is believed to be demonstrated along a spectrum (Mann, et al., 2004) with some people having higher self-esteem than others. High levels of self – esteem develop by achieving certain tasks or milestones, and low levels of self-esteem can develop when an individual feels they have failed to achieve a certain task (Owens & King, 2001). Self-esteem can fluctuate from high to low at different points in time (Baumeister, 1993). Nevertheless, self-esteem is said to stabilize throughout the lifespan of a person which results in them having a secure sense of self - worth (Mann, et al., 2004).

Self-esteem affects the daily functioning of people and the way they carry out tasks. Some studies have indicated that those who have higher self-esteem will perform better when they are given a task to complete and they are able to perform well under pressure in a high intensity situation (Baumeister, et al, 2003; Shimizu & Pelham, 2004; Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007). These studies seemingly suggest that people who have higher self-esteem will be more confident when performing certain tasks. It also suggests why people perform better when they are in a high pressure environment, as it is due to them being more confident in their abilities.

However, some studies have suggested the contrary, in fact stating that people with high self-esteem will in turn perform less well in certain situations than those with lower self - esteem (Seery, et al., 2004; Baumeister, et al, 2003; Neff & Vonk, 2008). They perform worse in certain cases because it is believed people with high self-esteem will be over confident, which leads them to perform at a lower standard than what they need to. There are also other explanations that suggest this finding, moreover one study found due to the notion that those who have high self-esteem demonstrate the trait of narcissism (Neff & Vonk, 2008). They suggested that if a person displays this trait then they are more likely to value themselves more important than the rest of the team. With this high self – value along with playing a team sport, the narcissistic person is more likely to not pass the ball because they feel they are the only one good enough to score. This feeling is seemingly a lack of value for the rest of the teammates and is suggested to be a selfish behaviour that can inhibit the teams overall performance (Cronin, 2007).

The discussed research of self-esteem and performance shows that each person is different in how they perform. This is depending on the individual's levels of self-esteem when they are performing. The participation in a team sport is proven to help mental health problems (Tremblay, Inman & Willms, 2000). The contact between people on a regular basis, along with the benefits of physical exercise is shown to improve levels of self-esteem (Pederson & Seidman, 2004). It has been suggested that self-esteem levels will also be raised if the team is successful in their sport (Bizman & Yinon, 2002). Furthermore, in team sports it is important for an individual to have high self – esteem in order to subjectively perform well (Feltz, 2007; Nicholls, 1984).

There is much debate over the idea of subjective sport performance and self-esteem and whether they are related topics. It is also questioned as to whether one in fact is a cause for the other. Some of the earlier research that has been discussed seems to suggest that high self-esteem leads to higher or enhanced performance levels. However, one study implies that a small amount of self – doubt can help boost performance levels, due to self-esteem and sport performance having a strong relationship (Woodman et al, 2010). It has been indicated that self – doubt can cause anxiety in an individual before they perform which suggests that having self-doubt will make an individual work harder to prove to themselves that they can perform at a high standard (Felts & Wood, 2009). In order for an individual to not doubt their performance, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Hall, (2004) suggest that high self –esteem along with many years of experience are important. This combination is important for an individual to not worry or overthink situations that may not arise.

However, other research has found that athletes who display self – doubt are going to perform worse due to low confidence in their sporting ability (Smith et al., 2006; Mayers, et al., 1979). Having low self-confidence can hinder the performance levels making the individual feel nervous and unprepared about what they need to do. To avoid the feeling of self – doubt, it has been suggested that some people will stop playing the sport entirely (Stone, 2002). This way they won't have to endure the uncomfortable feelings and thoughts that come with self-doubt. These feelings that an individual exhibits can cause physiological reactions also such as sweating, muscle tension and nausea (Kias & Raudsepp, 2005) which can cause a negative effect on subjective performance levels (Stoeber et al, 2007).

The research is suggesting that a combination of many factors will help boost the subjective performance levels of individuals when they participate in sport. It is these factors that allow an individual to have confidence in their performance and from this will have higher

levels of global self – esteem. Additionally, self – esteem is evidently a highly correlated factor to high levels of subjective sport performance (Sonstroem, 1997) which makes this research profound.

### ***1.3 Gender Differences in sport***

There have been noticeable differences between the genders throughout the evolution of sport (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Woman and men are being constantly compared to see which gender will perform better in certain sports. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that women perform at a lower rate than men (Gneezy, Niederle & Rustichini, 2003). It has also been implied that males will always have a faster work rate due to them having a stronger build and bigger muscle mass (Thibault, et al., 2010; Miller, et al., 1993; Lindle, et al., 1997). Due to the different level of performance between males and females, the rules of some sporting games have to be altered for the different genders. Especially for Gaelic football, there are different rules for men and for women, for example, the yellow card rule (Connolly & Dolan, 2010). The yellow card is used as a warning card in Gaelic football when a player has committed a cynical foul against another player on the opposing team (Sadlier, Marlow, Connor & Murphy, 2002). Two yellow cards result in a red card which means you are now being “sent off” the pitch and cannot return. However there is a twist in women’s Gaelic football as this card signifies a suspension from the pitch for ten minutes, moreover this rule does not apply for men’s football. Also certain tackles are not allowed or tolerated in Ladies Gaelic Football. These rule changes are in place to accommodate the suggested different standards of performance between males and females. Gaelic football for men is at a much faster and higher intensity than it is for women’s which means the same rules and tackles cannot apply (O’Rourke, et al., 2007). The male sport is a more physical game than the women’s game and it is implied that women are too delicate for the more physical rules (Reilly & Doran, 2001).

According to research, the differences between males and females in sport are extensive and a big part of it is down to the general physical differences between the genders. For example, research shows men have bigger muscle mass than women, which essentially causes men to have higher sprint power (Perez – Gomez et al, 2008; Evans, Refshauge & Adams, 2006). Another analysis supports this idea and states that due to men having more muscle strength and their aerobic capacity being larger, leads to them having a faster running time with more power (Cheuvront et al, 2005). In relation to a high intensity competitive sport such as

Gaelic, running speed and power are critically important in making correct decisions and being first to the ball when playing. These studies emphasize the differences between males and females performance levels.

In Gaelic football, there are two different associations that run Gaelic football. The association that runs Male Gaelic football is the Gaelic Athletics Association, or otherwise known as GAA. The association that runs the ladies football is the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA). The GAA and LGFA are two separate governing bodies but set up and organised in the same way (Moran, 2013). It is suggested that the reason behind this difference is that on the whole, there is a prejudice against women's football and seemingly people prefer to watch the dominant group (Males) perform (Liston, 2014). Additionally, the GAA was set up back in 1887 and it wasn't until 1927 that women first played the sport (Reilly and Collins, 2008). According to Bourke (2003) women playing football was unheard of until the early 70's when the Ladies Football Association of Ireland (LFAI) was set up. It is suggested that due to the separate set up dates in the history of Gaelic football, that men's Gaelic is on a different par to women's. This highlights the prejudice present in how people view women and men in sport.

#### ***1.4 Self – Esteem and Gender***

Self – esteem is important when considering gender differences in Gaelic Football. There has been recent research done on this area and it has found that males have generally higher self-esteem than women (Gennitle, et al., 2009). It is being suggested that males are generally happier with their appearance and have overall high self – worth. According to one research study, women have more negative views about their physical appearance and their intellect (Kearney – Cooke, 1998). Males do not tend to display characteristics of body dissatisfaction whereas females are highly likely to display it (Furnham, Badmin, & Sneade, 2002). The research here implies that males have higher global self-esteem than women due to how they view themselves. Additionally, women have lower self-esteem because they are more concerned about their body image and how much they eat than males are (Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990).

However, one study by Barker (2009) has found that, apparently women score higher on self-esteem scale than men. He found that women display a more secure sense of self, and that they are quicker than men to figure out how to be happy in their bodies. Recent literature

is suggesting that men have lower self-esteem than women due to men being more likely to commit suicide (Callanan, & Davis, 2012). It was examined that men will display more aggressive and inhospitable behaviours which is due to an impulsive personality that is highly correlated to suicide attempts (Dumais, et al., 2005). This same study also found that men are more likely to have a drink or drug abuse problem which also can lead to suicide attempts. Additionally, males who experience loss of a partner are seemingly four times more likely to commit suicide than females (Agerbo, 2005). These findings are however the extreme cases of low self-esteem issues along with many other possible psychological factors.

Furthermore, in terms of global self-esteem, men apparently will have higher levels of self-esteem than women. Nonetheless in some instances women will show higher self-esteem levels. The research found on this topic has been mainly centred on a general population of people, whereas there has been very little research on sports players and their levels of global self-esteem.

### ***1.5 Age and Subjective Sport Performance***

Age is an important variable to look at when interested in subjective sport performance to see if different ages have a direct effect on performance levels. When examining previous research it is suggested that age has a significant effect on performance levels as an individual ages (Baltes & Baltes, 1993). It has been found that the older you are when engaging in sport, the worse the performance levels will be, showing a significant decline from younger adults (Molander & Bachman, 1996; Askling et al, 2008). This suggests that there is a certain time frame, between young adulthood and middle adulthood which is the ideal time to participate in a physically challenging sport.

According to Tanaka & Seals (2008), age is critical as the physical decline in athletic people starts to happen once the individual reaches the age of 35 and will continually decline slowly afterwards. It is suggested that when the individual reaches 50 years of age, rapid physical deterioration starts to take over (Wright & Perricelli, 2007; Feltz, 2007). This deterioration cannot be helped as it is a natural sign of aging, which results in people having to stop playing the intense physical sport (Wright & Perricelli, 2007). When they reach enter into older adulthood (40+ in sports) they will have to stop participation in the physical side of sport, due to the chances of them developing a sports related injury (Dugan, 2005). The chances of acquiring a sports related injury is more likely to happen when people go beyond their peak

years of performance, which is when they are at their highest level of performance (Mafulli, et al., 2009). It is suggested in sports, the older you are when playing then the more susceptible you are to developing an injury (Preiss-Farzanegan et al, 2009). This does not mean that younger individuals will not acquire an injury when playing sports, as it is highly common for younger people to develop an injury over time, such as a knee injury, a muscle injury or even a concussion (Dugan, 2005; Clayton & Court – Brown, 2008; Cubon, et al., 2011; Brooks et al, 2006). Contributing factors to injury in sport, particularly in Gaelic football would be the conditions in which the sport is played and the consistency of training. It is found that Gaelic players have a high likelihood of developing an injury due to the ground in which they play on, which can be unsuitable for running (Murphy, O'Malley, Gissane & Blake, 2012). However, when speaking of age differences and injury, the chances are higher for older adults than for young adults. This is due to the muscle power in older adults begins to deteriorate which makes it hard for them to stay at a high intensity during play (Goodpaster, et al., 2006).

The term peak performance is used a lot when talking about sports in psychology. It is a term used to describe the best possible frame of mind a person can be in when they are performing and in turn they feel they perform at their absolute highest or at their “peak” (Ericsson, 1990). Many researchers have suggested that this time is when people are at their fittest and produce their best performances in sports (Baltes & Baltes, 1993). Research has found that the peak performing years are in fact between the ages of 28 – 35 (Shultz & Cunrow, 1988; Rüst, et al., 2012; Tanaka & Seals, 2008). This research is suggesting peak performance occurs at the most optimal time in an athlete’s life. However, it has been suggested that once an athlete goes beyond 35 years of age, their physical fitness starts to decline (Ericsson, 1990). The research is suggesting that age is an important factor in determining levels of subjective performance in sport, with individuals reaching their peak performing years at 28 years old.

### ***1.6 Age and Self esteem***

When considering the effects that age has on an individual, it is interesting to see if self-esteem levels vary in the different age groups. According to one study, older adults are more likely to have higher self-esteem than younger ages (Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2010). Older adults seemingly have higher self –esteem due to them having more self-confidence and self-worth as they are happy and content with their lives (McAuley, et al., 2005). Nonetheless, Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, (2010) also found that once an individual reaches 60 years of

age their self-esteem significantly reduces and keeps declining with age as they begin to feel more morbid about life. Certain factors can influence the self –esteem levels of someone once they reach older adulthood. For example, Wrosch & Heckhausen (2002) found that the reason why some older adults will be feeling morbid is due to some regrets they may hold from their younger years. The feeling that they missed an opportunity to do something is sometimes overpowering and can cause negative effects. The feeling or regret can cause the self – esteem of older adults to decrease and, in some instances, can cause depressive mood disorder (Battle, 1978). Consequently, self-esteem plays a large role in maintaining a healthy mind throughout life.

Moreover, one study found that adults in their 30's display high self-esteem, which is said to have improved over the course of their life from adolescence to adulthood (Erol & Orth, 2011). Additionally, a study by Robins & Trzesniewski (2005) has found a link between age and self-esteem suggesting that the lower your self-esteem is in adolescence and young adulthood (18 – 30 years of age), then you will have higher self-esteem in older adulthood. They found that people's self – esteem levels will stabilize throughout life as they learn to become happier in themselves and develop high levels of self – worth.

Furthermore, very little studies seem to state why the self-esteem levels increase over time. Interestingly, according to one study, they express the reason to be related to body satisfaction (van den Berg, et al., 2010). It has been suggested that the reason behind the boost in self-esteem is related to how one views their body and their life. One study done by Tiggemann (2005) has found that the less an individual cares about other people's opinions, then the higher their self-esteem will be. This finding is interesting as it gives an understanding as to why the different ages have higher self-esteem over others. For example, it has been found that in general, older adults will have higher self – esteem than younger adults, as they are happier with their body image (Grogan, 2007). This will help highlight the issues of low self-esteem and instigate more research towards age groups and building self-esteem levels.

### ***1.7 Country of Residence and Gaelic Football***

Many people move abroad to find better opportunities for themselves either for work or education (Thorn, 2009). Moving to a new country can certainly be daunting for anybody,

however thankfully there are certain pastimes available, such as sport that are there for people to engage in. In recent years, Gaelic football has found universal popularity in certain countries such as United Kingdom, Dubai and elsewhere (Reilly & Keane, 2013). As Irish people have immigrated abroad they have begun to set up Gaelic clubs to bring Irish communities that are abroad, closer together (Wickham, et al., 2014). One study by Brady (2007) has found that it is important to keep the native sport part of the Irish culture especially when people move abroad. He suggested this because when they play the sport abroad, it helps them feel as if a piece of home is with them, along with a community of Irish Gaelic players. Here, people will feel as though they belong as they are part of a community of Gaelic players. This is important to maintain relationship abroad and live happily in a new place (Twigger-Ross, & Uzzell, 1996). There is very little research on this topic, not to mention Gaelic football, and it is interesting to see what affects subjective sport performance levels of individuals when they play Gaelic football outside of Ireland.

## **Rationale**

The main rationale for this study is to find out if there is a strong relationship between self-esteem and subjective sport performance. Subjective sport performance is a topic that has very little research done on it. It is intriguing to see if self-esteem has a relationship to how people perceive they perform in Gaelic football. Self – esteem differences between males and females are interesting to observe to see which gender of Gaelic players has higher self – esteem levels. Research has stated that male’s self-esteem is generally higher than females (Gennitle, et al., 2009) and so this is driving the reason behind Hypothesis (2, to see if male Gaelic players have higher self – esteem than women. Age and subjective sport performance is also very under researched which makes it appealing to find out whether there is any significant differences in ages when they are playing Gaelic football. Additionally, research has suggested that middle aged adults will have higher levels of subjective sport performance; therefore this assumption is an intriguing one to explore. And finally, Country of residence and Gaelic football is quite an unknown topic as there is very little research done on whether country of residence has any effect on the levels of Subjective Sport Performance. However there is an important question for this study and that is whether being away from the native country where individuals would have grown up playing the sport of Gaelic football, does it have an effect on their subjective performance levels. If a devoted and passionate Gaelic player moved abroad and started



playing the sport in a foreign land and this country doesn't understand the sport, would this have an effect on how they perceive the sport? This is an intriguing topic to understand.

## **Hypotheses**

**HYP 1:** That high self - esteem levels will significantly correlate with high levels of subjective sport performance among Gaelic football players.

**HYP 2:** Males Gaelic players will have higher self – esteem than female Gaelic players.

**HYP 3:** There will be a significant difference between the age groups of Gaelic players, with middle aged players having higher subjective sport performance levels.

**HYP 4:** Players who are participating in Gaelic football outside of Ireland will have lower subjective sport performance levels than those who are currently playing in Ireland.

## **Methods**

### ***4.1 Participants***

Participants consist of 121 adults who currently play Gaelic Football competitively in Ireland (Republic & Northern) and abroad. This convenience sample consisted of 68 males and 53 females. The ages for the participants were separated into four groupings: 18 – 25 (54%); 26 – 32 (34%); 33 - 40 (7%); and 41+ (5%). 68% of the participants currently reside in Ireland. The remainder of participants resided in and played Gaelic football in other countries. For the purpose of this study the ‘other countries includes England (31%) and ‘other’ (2%).

#### **4.2 Materials**

An online questionnaire was constructed in order to test people’s general self-esteem and their perceived performance levels in Gaelic football. These were tested using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale and the Physical Activity and Sport Anxiety Scale (see below and appendix B & C for scales). Other questions included in the questionnaire focused on demographic variables such as gender, age and country of residence. The questionnaires were shared via Social media website Facebook in order to obtain participants who are willing to volunteer to be part of the study. The scales used are explained as follows:

***Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES):*** The RSES (Cronbach’s alpha = .85) is a self-report 10 – item, four point Likert scale which ranges from 1) strongly agree to 4) strongly disagree. The scale was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg (1965) and examines the global level of self-esteem of an individual. Higher scores on the RSES predict higher self-esteem levels. In this study the scale is used to test for self-esteem in Gaelic football players and also to examine the differences between male and female self-esteem levels.

***Physical Activity and Sport Anxiety Scale:*** The second scale that was used was the Physical Activity and Sport Anxiety Scale (PASAS) which was developed by Norton, Hope and Weeks (2004). It was developed originally to test what a person might be feeling and thinking while participating in sport activities. In this study the PASAS was used as a self-assessment tool for Gaelic players to grasp how characteristic each statement is of them when they perform. The PASAS (Cronbach’s alpha = .84) is a 16 - item, five point Likert scale ranging from 1) Not at all a characteristic of me to 5) Extremely characteristic of me. Higher scores on this scale predict higher anxiety levels when you perform which in turn will result in lowered perceived performance while playing. This scale is being used in this study to test how people think, feel and perceive their own performing levels while they are playing Gaelic football.

### **4.3 Design**

The design for this research study is a Quantitative, between participants design which is cross-sectional in nature to compare different groups at one point in time. Variables tested for include self –Esteem, Subjective Sport Performance (SSP), Gender, Age and Country of Residence. The test's that were performed for this study are as follows:

**Hypothesis (HYP) 1:** High self - esteem levels will significantly correlate with high levels of subjective sport performance among Gaelic football players.

**Dependent Variable (DV):** Subjective Sport Performance.

**Independent Variable (IV):** Self – Esteem.

**Tests' Run:** Pearson product – moment correlation coefficient.

**HYP 2:** Male Gaelic players will have higher self – esteem than female Gaelic players.

**DV:** Self – esteem.

**IV:** Gender.

**Tests' Run:** Independent samples t – Test.

**HYP 3:** There will be a significant difference between the age groups of Gaelic players, with middle aged players having higher subjective sport performance levels.

**DV:** Subjective Sport Performance

**IV:** Age

**Tests' Run:** One - way between groups Analysis of Variance.

**HYP 4:** Players who are participating in Gaelic football outside of Ireland will have lower subjective sport performance levels than those who are currently playing in Ireland.

**DV:** Subjective Sport Performance.

**IV:** Country of Residence

**Tests' Run:** Independent samples t – Test.

### **4.4 Procedure**

Questionnaires were delivered in an online format via the use of the social networking site Facebook. Before access to the questionnaires could be gained, participants first had to read a consent form (see appendix A) and electronically agree to participate. This electronic agreement was taken as informed consent. Inclusion criteria comprised of adults above the age of 18 who currently participate in Gaelic football on a regular basis. These participants were obtained from Ireland (Republic & Northern) and abroad. Exclusion criteria comprised of individuals who no longer participate in Gaelic football and individuals who have never played the sport. Additionally, all participants were informed that partaking in this study was completely voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any stage, any person who withdrew from the study had their responses removed. Any participation in this study was completely anonymous and responses cannot be traced back to the individual. All responses were recorded and transferred on to an output SPSS data file which is where all tests were run. All questionnaires were included in the final study as no violations were breached.

## **Results**

*Table 1: Demographics table*

| <b>Variables</b> | <b>Sample</b> | <b>Valid Percent</b> |
|------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>Gender:</b>   |               |                      |

|                              |    |       |
|------------------------------|----|-------|
| Males                        | 68 | 59.2  |
| Females                      | 53 | 43.80 |
| <b>Age:</b>                  |    |       |
| 18 – 25                      | 65 | 53.7  |
| 26 – 32                      | 41 | 33.9  |
| 33 – 40                      | 9  | 7.4   |
| 41+                          | 6  | 4.9   |
| <b>Country of Residency:</b> |    |       |
| Ireland                      | 82 | 67.8  |
| England                      | 37 | 30.6  |
| Other                        | 2  | 1.7   |

*Note:* To test for country of residence, England and Other were placed into the one group labelled as Other, this was due to the small sample size in the original group of Other. The same recoding applied for Age. As there was so few in the 33 – 40 and 41+ categories, the two were blended together, and labelled as 33+.

**Table 2: Correlations between all continuous variables.**

| Variables                          | SSP   | SE |
|------------------------------------|-------|----|
| Subjective Sport Performance (SSP) | 1     |    |
| Self – Esteem (SE)                 | .43** | 1  |

Note. Statistical significance: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

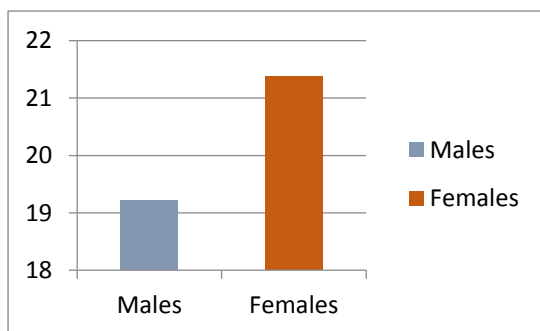
### **Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 states that “high self - esteem levels will significantly correlate with high levels of subjective sport performance among Gaelic football players”. The relationship between subjective sport performance and self – esteem was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no

violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a moderate, positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = .43$   $n = 121$ ,  $p < .01$ , with high levels of self – esteem associated with higher levels of subjective sport performance.

## Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis states that “male Gaelic players will have higher self – esteem than female Gaelic players”. An independent samples t-Test was conducted to compare the self-esteem levels between Male and Female Gaelic football players. There was a significant difference in scores between the two groups of Gaelic players,  $t(119) = -2.29$ ,  $p = .02$ , two-tailed with female Gaelic players ( $M = 21.38$ ,  $SD = 5.10$ ) scoring higher than male Gaelic players ( $M = 19.21$ ,  $SD = 5.24$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-2.17$ , 95% CI:  $-4.04$  to  $-.29$ ) was small (eta squared =  $.05$ ).



*Figure 1* illustrates the mean difference between males and females Gaelic players.

## Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis has stated that “there will be a significant difference between the age groups of Gaelic players, with middle aged players having higher subjective sport performance levels”. A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age on subjective sport performance. Participants were divided into three groups

according to their age (young players = 18-25; middle aged players = 26-32; and mature players = 33 and above).

There was no statistically significant difference in level of subjective sport performance scores for three age groups  $F(2, 118) = 1.07, p > .001$ . The actual difference in mean scores between groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .02.

The mean scores for young players ( $M = 20.77, SD = 5.18$ ), middle aged players ( $M = 19.64, SD = 4.86$ ); and mature players ( $M = 18.86, SD = 6.65$ ) were not statistically significant and there was no relationship between groups.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

The final hypothesis stated that “players who are participating in Gaelic football outside of Ireland will have lower subjective sport performance levels than those who are currently playing in Ireland”. An independent samples t-Test was conducted to compare the subjective sport performance levels of country of residence between local (Ireland) Gaelic football players and those who live abroad (England and other). There was no significant difference in scores between the two groups of Gaelic players,  $t(119) = -1.14, p > .05$ , with local Gaelic players ( $M = 37.84, SD = 11.60$ ) and abroad Gaelic players ( $M = 40.33, SD = 10.51$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -2.49, 95% CI: -6.83 to -1.85) was small (eta squared = .01).

## **Discussion**

The rationale for this study was to investigate the associations between self – esteem and subjective sport performance in Gaelic football players. There were four hypotheses for

this study investigating the different factors that influence subjective sport performance and self-esteem in Gaelic football players. The results from this current study will be discussed.

### ***6.1 Hypothesis 1***

Hypothesis 1 stated that “high self - esteem levels will significantly correlate with high levels of subjective sport performance among Gaelic football players”. The analysis reflects previous research which suggests that there is a strong correlation between self – esteem and subjective sport performance (Baumeister, et al, 2003; Shimizu & Pelham, 2004; and Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007), which in turn supports the hypothesis. It has been examined that higher self – esteem scores will correlate with higher scores of Subjective Sport Performance. The results show a positive linear relationship suggesting that for individuals to feel good about their personal performance in Gaelic football, they will need higher levels of global self – esteem.

### ***6.2 Hypothesis 2***

Hypothesis 2 stated that “male Gaelic football players will have higher self – esteem levels than female Gaelic football players”. The study consists of 68 males and 53 females which shows an uneven balance between the groups. In this study, the results above have shown that females have a higher level of global self – esteem than Men. This finding rejects the hypothesis and is on the contrary to previous research, which has implied that men will have higher levels of self – esteem than women (Gennitle, et al., 2009). Furthermore, this study focuses on gender differences between the Gaelic players’ general levels of self – esteem. This is different to previous research which has concentrated on a general population of people, making the finding for this study very profound.

### ***6.3 Hypothesis 3***



Hypothesis 3 stated that “there will be a significant difference between the age groups of Gaelic players, with middle aged players having higher subjective sport performance levels”. From the results above it has been found that there is a non – significant relationship between age and subjective sport performance. This suggests that age has no effect on individuals perceived level of performance when they play Gaelic football. Previous research has suggested that adults aged between 28 – 35 years old will have higher subjective sport performance levels (Tanaka & Seals, 2008; Baltes & Baltes, 1993), however, the findings in this study have failed to signify this. The results above have shown that there was no significant difference between age groups of Gaelic players, even though the mean difference between each group was small. The level of non - significance found here could be due to the uneven number of participants in each group. There was only a small number of participants in the 33+ age group ( $n = 15$ ) which would have caused the insignificance.

#### ***6.4 Hypothesis 4***

The final hypothesis stated that “players who are participating in Gaelic football outside of Ireland will have lower subjective sport performance levels than those who are currently playing in Ireland”. It was found from the results above that there was no significant difference between scores of the players’ subjective sport performance and their country of residence. This indicates that country of residence does not matter when playing Gaelic football as the level of subjective sport performance was high. In fact, the results show higher scores for people who are situated abroad than those who play Gaelic football in Ireland. This suggests that there is more confidence in players abroad as their subjective sport performance was higher. There has been little to no research done on this area of Gaelic football, thus making this finding the first of its kind.

#### ***6.5 Strengths***

There are several strengths that shed light on the benefits to this study. The first strength observed in this study is the quantitative nature of the study. By this study being quantitative in nature allows statistical tests to be made, such as descriptive and inferential statistics. By running statistical tests, it can help obtain important research data which include demographics and different scores between groups. An additional strength observed is the sample size.

Although, it is quite a small sample size ( $n = 119$ ), it allows for the research question to be answered in a rapid manner as the participants were gathered in a small space of time. When gathering participants across many countries, a smaller study can be easier to obtain consent from volunteering individuals, than a larger study. Moreover, it is easier to test a new hypothesis with a smaller sample size.

Another strength that has been observed is the method of collecting the participants. As the questionnaires were distributed over a social media site, this allowed for many participants from different countries to take part in the study voluntarily. This way, many people from different backgrounds could have taken part in the study which allows for a variety in scores. Additionally, collecting in this manner proved to be hassle free as more people were inclined to be part of the study as they knew it was anonymous. Also, the benefit of using social media is that people shared the questionnaires to other Gaelic football players which helped gather the sample size rapidly.

## **6.6 Limitations**

Although this study has numerous strengths and has various new findings, it contains some limitations. The first limitation observed is that this study was cross – sectional in nature which allowed for a snapshot of the population at a single point in time. Baumeister (1993) found that self – esteem levels can change and fluctuate over time, similar to subjective sport performance levels. Because this change can occur in a short space of time, a longitudinal test would produce a more reliable end result as it could observe and record the changes that may occur in an individual over a longer period of time.

Another limitation that was observed was that there were very few participants in the “Other” category of Country of Residence which made it hard to test for this group alone. As a result, the “Other” category had to be combined with the “England” category to make this sample size more eligible for testing. Furthermore, there was a large difference in the number of participants in each category with the majority of participants being from Ireland ( $n = 82$ ) and the rest were abroad. The difference between each group can cause outliers in the scores, or, the larger category could skew the results in its favour. An additional limitation to this study was the somewhat uneven balance of gender. There were more male ( $n = 68$ ) participants in this study than females ( $n = 53$ ) which could have theoretically skewed the results in favour of the males. Preferably, if this current study was to be replicated, a recommendation would be to have an even number as possible in each group of gender.

There were some limitations to the research behind the study. For example, there was very little research behind what the effects were when an individual moves to a new country and starts playing Gaelic football. It is an interesting topic to see whether people's subjective sport performance is influenced by the environment in which it is played. Additionally, it is thought – provoking to see whether playing with a completely new team has an effect on an individual's subject performance in Gaelic football. There is very little research on subjective performance in sports psychology which makes it a more fascinating area of research with a great deal to learn.

### ***6.7 Future research***

The subject of Gaelic football is an under researched area even though it is a very popular sport in Ireland and is growing in popularity around the world. This is the first study of its kind to focus on the self – esteem levels and subjective sport performance levels in Gaelic football players. It is of importance to discover factors that influence an individual's performance when they are playing Gaelic football, as this may help to understand why an individual's subjective performance levels are higher than another's. Moreover, from the results above, self – esteem is seemingly important in aiding subjective sport performance levels, which makes for an interesting outcome. If this study were to be done again, it would be an interesting topic that could possibly help to understand how individuals could better their subjective performing levels in Gaelic football.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to gathering more participants from a broader variety of countries that play Gaelic football. This will make for a better analysis and help to understand if there is difference in subjective sport performance levels in players from different countries. It also would be of keen interest to involve participants who were not born in Ireland but who still play Gaelic football in their own country. This would be interesting to see if they have the same level of passion and commitment to the sport as players who are Irish born.

### **6.8 Conclusion**

There have been some interesting and unexpected findings from this study. Although the majority of hypotheses were rejected, this is still an important result for this study as it

helps to understand what doesn't affect subjective sport performance levels in Gaelic players. Research reported that age was significantly correlated to subjective sport performance, however, the current study rejected this finding as it was reported that age had no relationship to subjective sport performance. Additionally, country of residence was reported to have no correlation with subjective sport performance, which is the first finding of its kind. Interestingly, there has been no research to date in relation to country of residence and levels of subjective performance in sport. Moreover, it was found that subjective sport performance is affected by self – esteem levels, with gender influencing self – esteem in Gaelic football players. To understand further what influences the different levels in self – esteem between males and females, more significant research has to be done. This is to understand whether the results from this study, stating females had higher levels of self – esteem, happened as a chance occurrence or whether it is true for all Gaelic football players across the board. To conclude, the findings from this study will assist future research in Gaelic football and discover what contributes to the different levels of subjective sport performance.

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## Appendix A

## Associations between Self-Esteem and Subjective Sport Performance in Gaelic Players

Hello, my name is Chloe Hurst and I am in my final year of my Undergraduate Psychology Degree in National College of Ireland. As part of my degree I am required to conduct my own research paper and I ask you to spare 5-10 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire. My research paper is to investigate whether self-esteem has a direct effect on competitive performance anxiety in Gaelic football players.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. If you decide to participate in this research questionnaire, you have the right to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw then any information you have given will be removed from the study. All answers will remain anonymous and be only available to the researcher. You must be 18 years or older to participate in this study. Any information you do give will be used for research purposes and will remain confidential.

The nature of the study is to gather information on levels of Self-Esteem and Competitive performance anxiety and if you are affected by any of the topics in the study please feel free to contact me via e-mail at [hurst.chloe@gmail.com](mailto:hurst.chloe@gmail.com) and I will answer any questions you may have.

### \* Required

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By clicking "I agree to participate" then you are agreeing to participate in this study, that you understand and have sufficient knowledge of what is being asked of you, and you are giving informed consent to be part of this study

- I agree to participate

### Demographic Questions

Select one category that applies to you

#### Gender \*

- Male
- Female

#### Age \*

- 18 - 25
- 26 - 32
- 33 - 40
- 41+

**Country of Residence \***

- Ireland
  - England
  - Other
- 

**Appendix B**

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)**

This scale is used to measure your levels of self-esteem. Please select which option closely relates to you and how you feel. 1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree

**1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**2. At times, I think I am no good at all \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**4. I am able to do things as well as most other people \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**5. I feel I have not much to be proud of \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**6. I certainly feel useless at times \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane to others \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**8. I wish I could have more respect for myself \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

**10. I take a positive attitude toward myself \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

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## Appendix C

**Physical Activity and Sport Anxiety Scale (PASAS)**

This scale is used to measure how a person might feel or think while participating in athletic activities (In this study, Gaelic games) 1 = Not at all a Characteristic of me 2 = Slightly Characteristic of me 3 = Moderately Characteristic of me 4 = Very Characteristic of me 5 = Extremely Characteristic of me

**1. I worry about what people will think of me while playing sports, even though it will not make any difference \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**2. I feel that I will humiliate myself when I play sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**3. I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone while playing sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**4. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I am making while playing sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**5. I am afraid that people will find fault with my performance while playing sports \***

- 1

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**6. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think about my performance while playing sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**7. I feel nervous if other people are watching me when I am playing sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**8. I usually get nervous when I play sports in front of even a few people who are watching \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**9. I feel that I will humiliate myself when I play sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**10. I don't want the ball to come to me when I play sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3



- 4
- 5

**11. Other people's opinions of how well I play sports do not bother me \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**12. I feel self-conscious when playing sports \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**13. I pass the ball to a teammate when I get nervous \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**14. I could not care less if an audience was watching me perform \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**15. I avoid social gatherings if I think they will involve an athletic activity \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**16. I avoid exercising where others can see me \***

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5