

The level of self-esteem of young girls aged 12 to 14 years old from a municipality in the Mucuri Valley who practice volleyball

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Abstract— *This study investigated the self-esteem levels of female adolescents, aged 12 to 14, who practiced volleyball in a sports project in the Mucuri Valley. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), adapted by Silva and Nunes (2011), was used and applied to 14 participants. The applied research, with a quantitative approach, showed that all athletes presented self-esteem levels ranging from average to high, with no cases of low self-esteem. Positive responses indicated recognition of qualities and personal satisfaction, while negative responses indicated specific insecurities. The practice of volleyball was associated with increased self-confidence, socialization, and a sense of belonging. The results corroborate studies that link team sports to improved emotional health and self-image in young people. It is concluded that volleyball contributes significantly to the psychological and social development of adolescent girls, reinforcing the importance of sports policies focused on youth well-being.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Volleyball is a team sport created in 1895 in the United States by William George Morgan, with the aim of developing a less aggressive physical activity than basketball, suitable for practitioners of different ages (SANTOS, 2015). Initially called *mintonette*, the sport underwent adaptations until it acquired its basic rules, consolidating itself as a recreational and competitive practice at the beginning of the 20th century (OLIVEIRA, 2017). Its international expansion was favored by the work of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), being introduced in several countries, including Brazil, in the first decades of the last century (SILVA; MENDES, 2018). The institutionalization of volleyball occurred with the creation of the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) in 1947, which contributed to its inclusion in the Olympic Games in 1964. In Brazil, the sport became popular in

schools and clubs, playing a relevant role in the sporting and social development of young people (COSTA, 2016). Thus, volleyball has established itself as a prominent global sport with broad historical, social, and sporting relevance.

Several countries stand out on the international volleyball scene, in both men's and women's categories. Nations such as Brazil, Russia, Italy, and the United States accumulate titles in competitions such as the Olympic Games, the Nations League, and the World Championship (FIVB, 2021). Brazil, for example, is a global benchmark with multiple Olympic and world titles (Brazilian Volleyball Confederation, 2020). Serbia has excelled especially in women's volleyball (Lopes; Moura, 2022). Japan was a pioneer in the sport in Asia, maintaining tradition and strong performance (Yamamoto, 2019).

Volleyball, in addition to being a competitive sport, also plays a relevant role in promoting health and

social integration. Its practice contributes to the development of motor coordination, agility, and physical endurance (FERREIRA; LIMA, 2020). As a team sport, it also favors teamwork, socialization, and respect for rules (SOUZA; ALMEIDA, 2019). In school and community environments, volleyball is widely used as a recreational tool, providing moments of leisure and well-being (CARVALHO, 2018). Regular activity is associated with the prevention of cardiovascular diseases and the control of body weight, being indicated in public health programs (OLIVEIRA; SANTOS, 2021). Furthermore, it can be adapted for different age groups and physical conditions, which expands its access and benefits (MARTINS, 2022). Studies indicate that sports like volleyball reduce stress and anxiety levels, promoting mental health (PEREIRA et al., 2020). Thus, volleyball is established as a sporting practice with high pedagogical, therapeutic, and social value.

Sports practice during adolescence, such as volleyball, is fundamental for the physical, emotional, and social development of young people. It contributes to the formation of healthy habits, improves self-esteem, and promotes teamwork (SOUZA; ALMEIDA, 2019). Furthermore, it helps prevent risky behaviors and combat sedentary lifestyles (FERREIRA; LIMA, 2020). Sport also has a positive impact on discipline and academic performance (PEREIRA et al., 2020). Therefore, volleyball becomes an educational tool and promoter of comprehensive health during adolescence.

Adolescence is a phase of human development characterized by profound physical, cognitive, emotional, and social transformations that directly influence the formation of identity and how the individual relates to themselves and their surrounding environment (Silva & Nunes, 2011). One of the central aspects of this process is the construction of self-esteem, defined as the subjective evaluation that the individual makes about their own worth, ability, and social acceptance (Harter, 1999).

During this stage, self-esteem can be influenced both positively and negatively, depending on experiences in different contexts, such as family, school, and the sports environment. Sports practice, in particular, has been recognized as an important tool for the psychological and social development of adolescents, promoting benefits that go beyond physical health, such as improved self-confidence, discipline, teamwork, and socialization (Weinberg & Gould, 2017).

Volleyball, a team sport that demands constant communication and cooperation among participants, offers a conducive environment for strengthening self-esteem, especially for girls in the process of identity formation (Ferreira & Motta, 2010). Through sport, adolescent girls

have the opportunity to experience challenges, achieve goals, receive recognition, and learn to cope with successes and failures, factors that directly impact the construction of a positive self-image and personal value.

In the context of this municipality, there is a growing interest in promoting sports projects aimed at introducing women to volleyball, which seek not only technical development but also the emotional and social well-being of the participants. Therefore, it becomes relevant to investigate the self-esteem levels of these young women, seeking to understand how the practice of volleyball can positively influence their self-perception and mental health.

This study aims to evaluate the self-esteem level of female adolescents, aged between 12 and 14 years, who practice volleyball in a sports project in a city in the Mucuri Valley, using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), adapted for Brazil by Silva and Nunes (2011).

JUSTIFICATION

The choice of this theme is based on the importance of self-esteem for the healthy development of adolescents, especially regarding its impact on school performance, mental health, and social relationships (Harter, 1999). Low self-esteem during adolescence can lead to anxiety, social isolation, and difficulties in facing daily challenges, compromising the potential for personal and academic growth (Silva & Nunes, 2011).

On the other hand, the regular practice of sports activities has proven to be a facilitating agent in promoting self-esteem, especially among young women, who frequently face greater barriers to participation and recognition in sports (Ferreira & Motta, 2010). Volleyball, in particular, stands out for its collaborative characteristics and encouragement of teamwork, factors that contribute to the development of self-confidence and a sense of belonging.

In this municipality, sports programs aimed at adolescents are an important strategy for social inclusion and health promotion. However, there is a gap in the local literature regarding the evaluation of the psychological benefits of this sporting activity, especially concerning self-esteem.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap, offering data and analyses that can support teachers, coaches, and sports managers in developing actions that promote not only the technical development of athletes, but also their emotional well-being. Thus, it is hoped to contribute to the holistic development of these adolescents, preparing them for the challenges of life inside and outside of sports.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is characterized as an original, applied research paper, as its objective is to generate knowledge that can be used in practice, contributing to a better understanding of self-esteem in adolescent volleyball players. A quantitative approach is adopted, combining numerical analysis of the collected data with qualitative interpretation for a better understanding of the results within the social and sporting context of the participants.

The research used the data collection method, which consists of the systematic collection of information directly from the research subjects, through the application of specific instruments, allowing a detailed view of the reality studied.

The study population comprised 23 female adolescents, aged between 12 and 14 years, who regularly participated in a volleyball initiation project in a city in the Mucuri Valley. The sample consisted of 14 students, corresponding to 60.87% of the population, selected based on their attendance at activities and availability to participate in the research, respecting the criterion of informed consent from their guardians.

For data collection, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) was used, a widely recognized and validated instrument for assessing global self-esteem. The version applied corresponds to the Brazilian adaptation made by Silva and Nunes (2011), which preserves the validity and reliability of the instrument in our cultural context. The scale consists of 10 items, which assess both positive and negative aspects of self-esteem, and is answered using a four-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was administered individually, in a private and quiet environment, aiming to guarantee the privacy and comfort of the participants, as well as ensuring the reliability of the responses. The

research followed ethical principles, with the signing of the Informed Consent Form by the legal guardians of the adolescents, in accordance with current regulations.

The data obtained were organized and tabulated for quantitative analysis. The descriptive analysis will be presented through graphs and tables that show the distribution of self-esteem scores among the participants. In addition, an interpretive qualitative analysis will be conducted, relating the numerical results to the social, sporting, and psychological context of the students, with the aim of providing a broader and deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied.

III. RESULTS

Applying the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to the 14 athletes allowed for the analysis of responses by question and the total score of each participant. The resulting graphs show that:

In the positive questions (1, 2, 3, 6 and 7), the responses were concentrated at levels 3 (agree) and 4 (strongly agree), indicating that the athletes recognize their qualities and, in general, are satisfied with themselves.

In the negative questions (4, 5, 8, 9 and 10), there was a predominance of intermediate responses (2 and 3), which demonstrates the presence of insecurities typical of adolescence, but without a great predominance of feelings of worthlessness.

In the final graph, with the sum of each athlete's score, it was observed that all fell between average self-esteem (20 to 29 points) and high self-esteem (30 to 40 points). No cases of low self-esteem were identified.

These findings reinforce the importance of sports practice as a positive factor in the emotional and social development of adolescent girls.

GRAPHS AND QUESTIONS

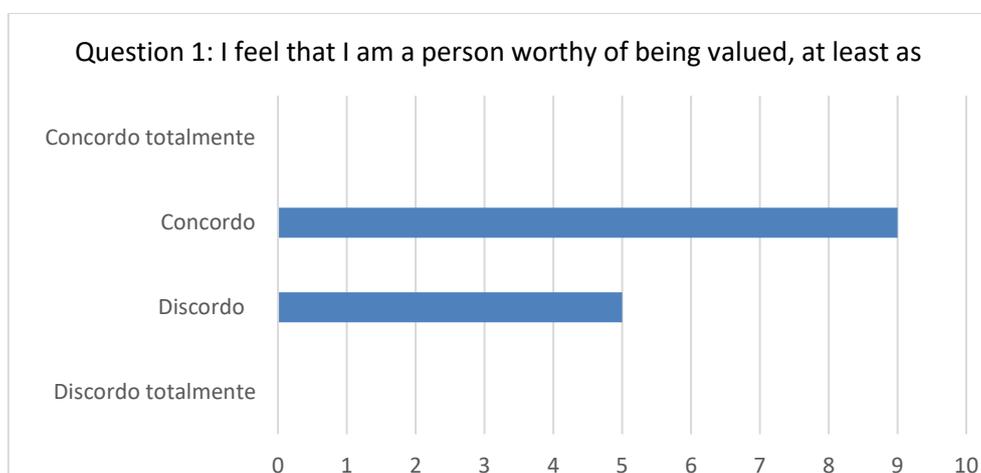


Chart 1: I feel that I am a person worthy of being valued, at least as much as others.

The results showed that most participants responded “agree” 9, while 5 stated “disagree”. No adolescents selected the options “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree”. This data indicates that a large proportion of adolescents

recognize a certain personal value, but there is still a significant group that has insecurities regarding their own worthiness of appreciation.

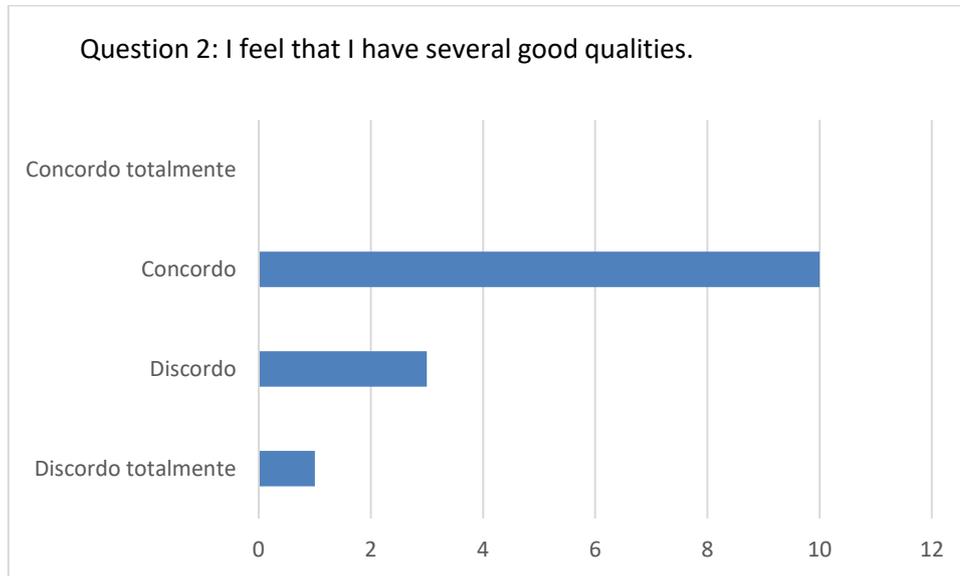


Chart 2: I feel I have several good qualities.

Most responded “agree” 10, while 3 marked “disagree” and 1 opted for “strongly disagree”. No teenager chose the alternative “strongly agree”. These results suggest that most young people recognize that they possess positive

qualities, but there is still a portion that demonstrates difficulties in perceiving or valuing their own personal characteristics.

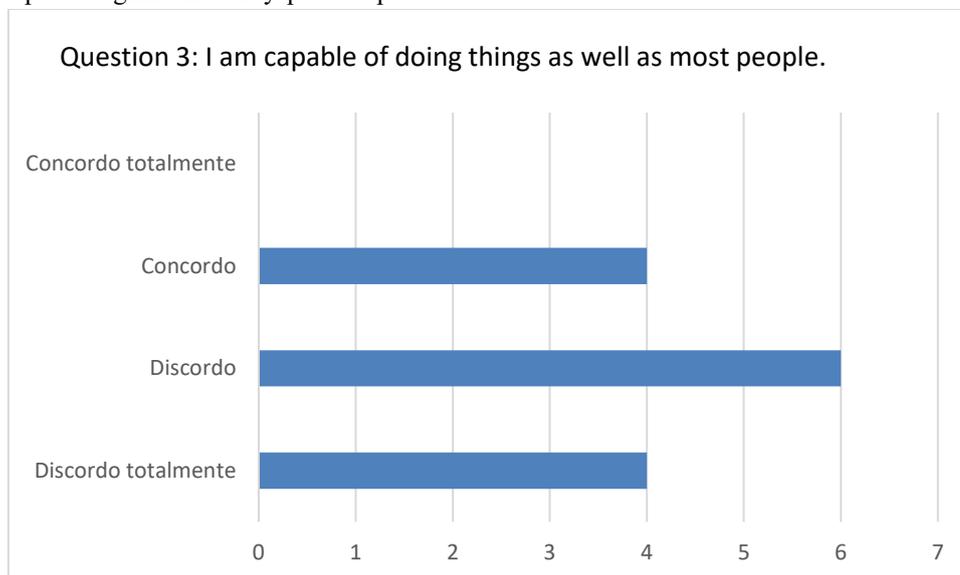
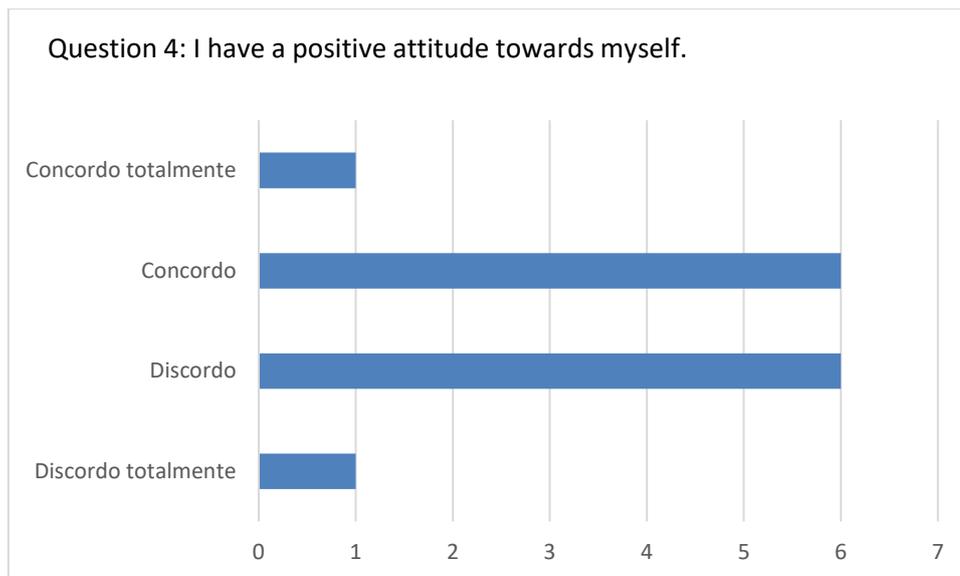


Chart 3: I am able to do things as well as most people.

The 14 teenage volleyball players presented responses that point to different levels of self-confidence. Only 4 participants marked "agree," while the majority revealed some difficulty in believing in their own abilities: 6 responded

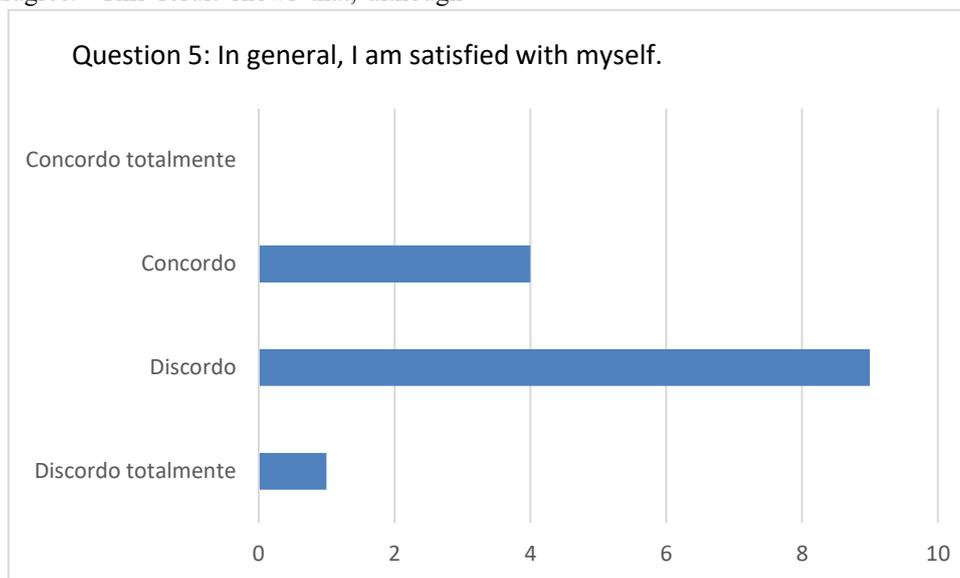
"disagree" and 4 marked "strongly disagree." No teenager selected the "strongly agree" option. These results show that a significant portion of young people have insecurities about their competence compared to others.



Graph 4: I have a positive attitude towards myself.

The volleyball players presented responses that were evenly distributed between positive and negative perceptions. 1 participant responded "strongly agree," 6 marked "agree," while another 6 opted for "disagree," and 1 chose "strongly disagree." This result shows that, although

some young people demonstrate a favorable attitude towards themselves, there is also a significant portion that reveals difficulties in maintaining a positive attitude about their own image.



Graph 5: Overall, I am satisfied with myself.

Only 4 participants marked "agree," while the majority demonstrated a negative perception: 9 responded "disagree" and 1 chose "strongly disagree." No adolescent selected the "strongly agree" option. These results show that a large part of young people face difficulties in recognizing self-satisfaction, which can reflect on aspects of self-esteem and emotional well-being. The mother of athlete number 5 shared

that, after starting volleyball training, she noticed significant changes in her daughter's behavior. She began to show more willingness to leave her room and interact with the family, reducing the time she spent on her cell phone. In addition, the athlete began to get more involved in school activities, even receiving praise from teachers for her performance and attitude. This account shows that sports practice has played a

motivating and positive role in the young woman's social and emotional development.

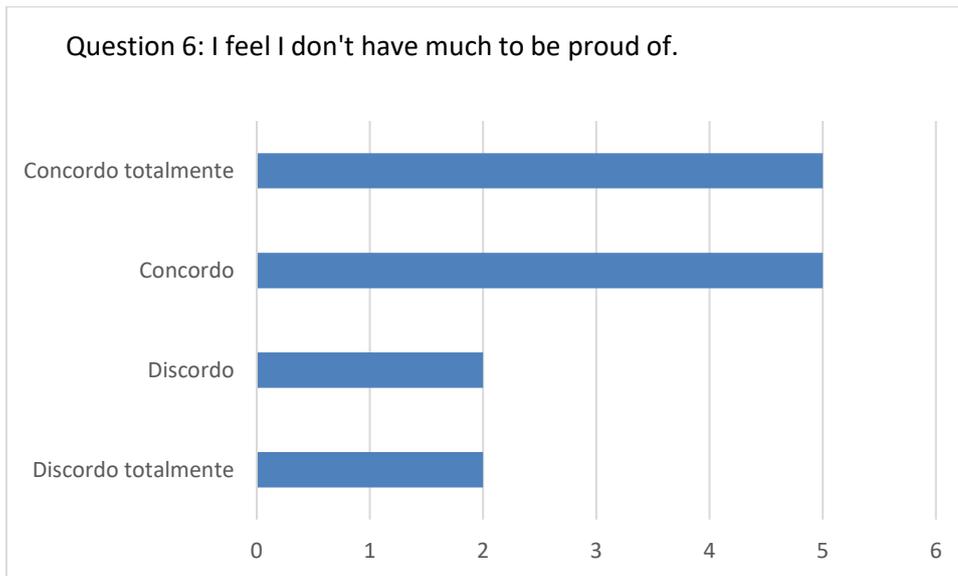


Chart 6: I feel I don't have much to be proud of.

The responses point to a considerable level of self-criticism. Most young people positioned themselves negatively in relation to their own worth: 5 marked "strongly agree" and 5 responded "agree". In contrast, only 2 indicated

"disagree" and another 2 chose "strongly disagree". These results suggest that a significant portion of adolescents have difficulty recognizing reasons for personal pride, which may indicate weaknesses in the development of self-esteem.

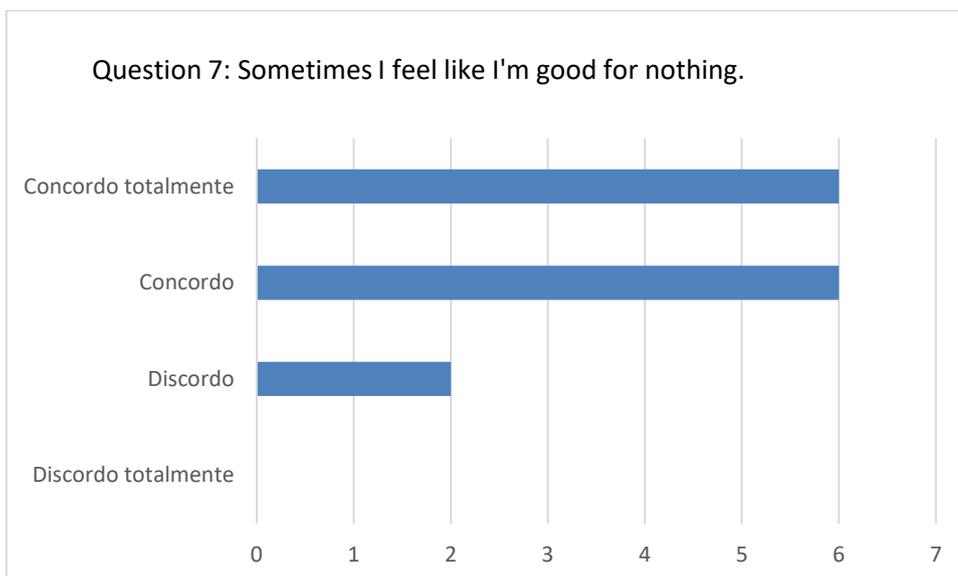
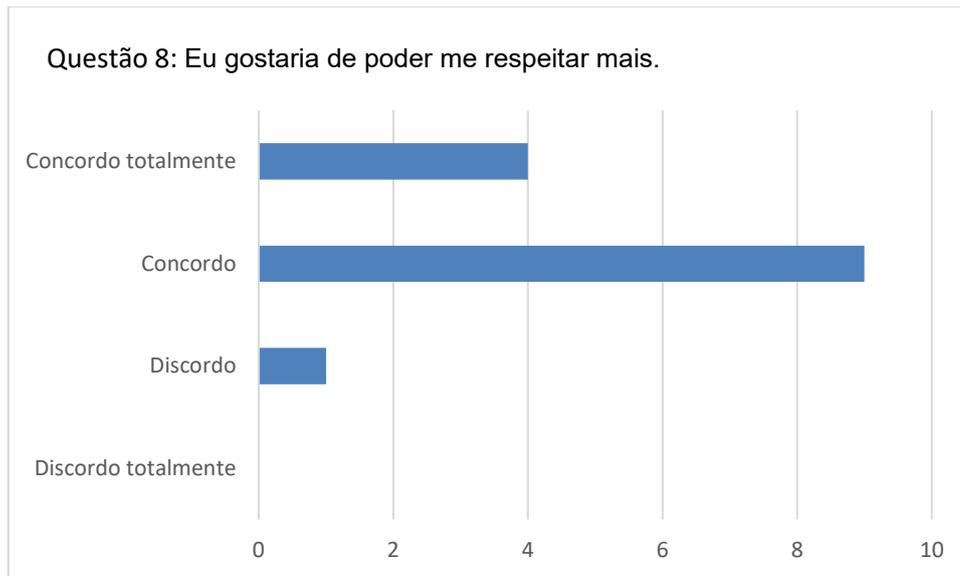


Chart 7: Sometimes I feel like I'm good for nothing.

The responses indicate a worrying level of self-deprecation. Six participants marked "strongly agree" and another six marked "agree," showing that the majority identify with the statement. Only two adolescents responded

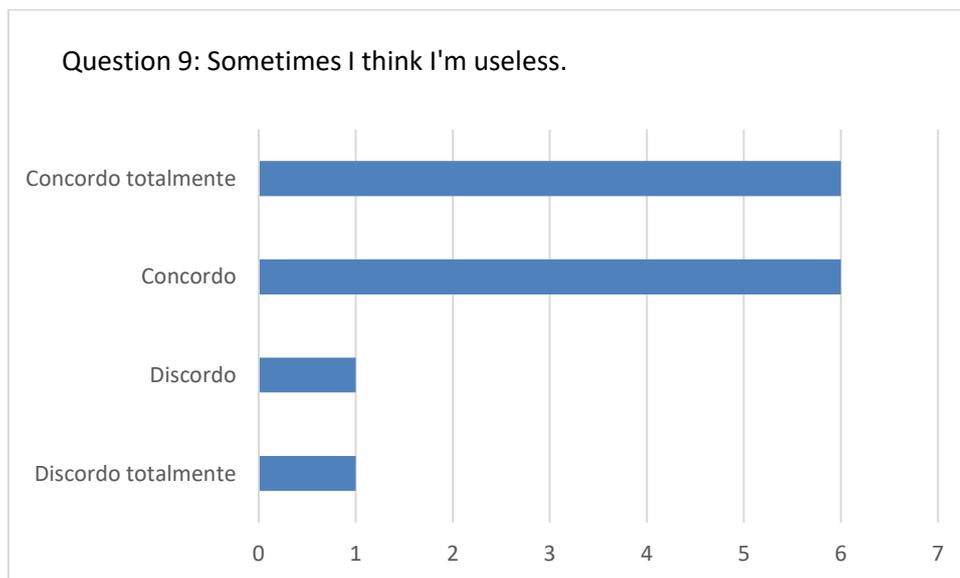
"disagree," and none selected "strongly disagree." This data suggests that many young people experience frequent moments of insecurity or self-deprecation, signaling a possible area of focus for strengthening self-esteem.



Graph 8: I wish I could respect myself more.

The vast majority agreed with the statement: 4 responded “strongly agree” and 9 marked “agree”. Only 1 adolescent chose “disagree”, while none selected “strongly disagree”. These results indicate that, despite recognizing

some personal value, most young people feel the need to strengthen their self-respect, revealing weaknesses in the construction of self-esteem.



Graph 9: Sometimes I think I'm useless.

The responses reveal a high level of self-criticism. Most identified with the statement: 6 marked "strongly agree" and another 6 marked "agree." Only 1 adolescent responded "disagree" and 1 chose "strongly disagree." These results suggest that many young people face moments of self-devaluation, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and confidence in different aspects of life. During training, athlete number 3 shared a significant account of her personal

experience: she said that since she started participating in the team's activities, she has felt included in an environment of coexistence and support. According to her, this feeling of belonging is something she did not experience in other contexts, such as at school or in other everyday situations. Training, therefore, has provided not only physical and technical development, but also a safe space to strengthen social relationships and self-esteem.

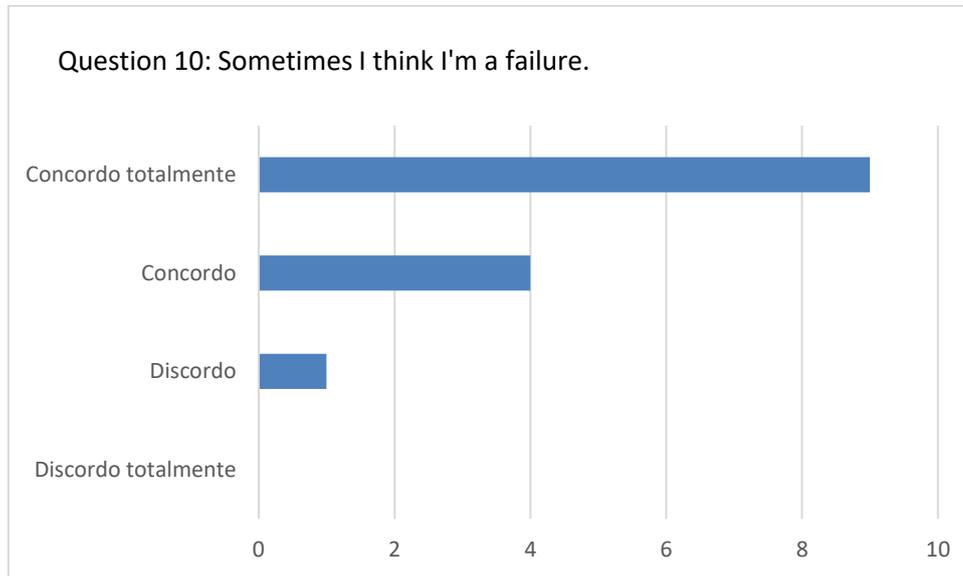


Chart 10: Sometimes I think I'm a failure.

Nine participants marked “strongly agree” and four marked “agree,” showing that the vast majority identify with the statement. Only one adolescent responded “disagree,” and none selected “strongly disagree.” These results indicate that

many young people have frequent feelings of failure, pointing to weaknesses in self-esteem that can influence their emotional well-being and personal performance.

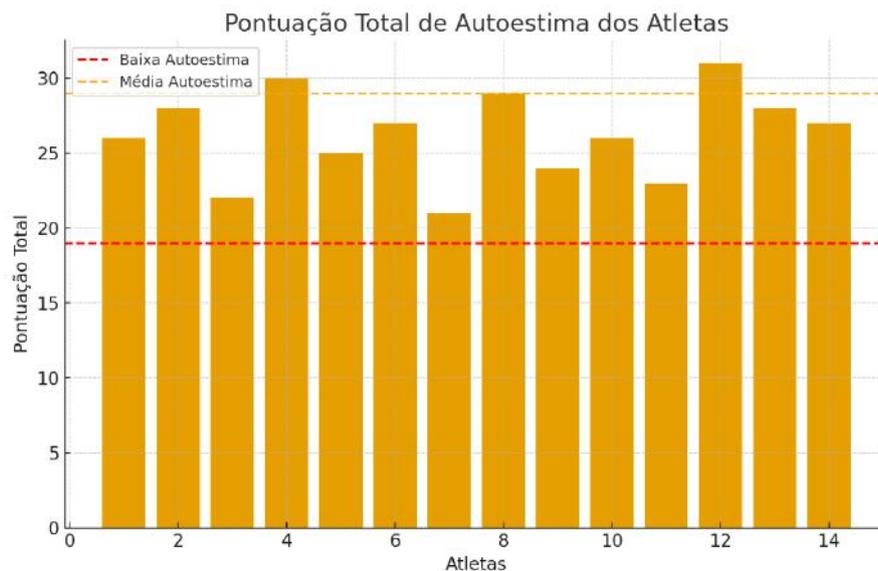


Chart 11: General Summary

The graph shows the distribution of total self-esteem scores of athletes assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. It can be observed that most participants obtained scores in the medium to high self-esteem range, indicating a positive self-perception.

The findings of this study show that the adolescent girls (12–14 years old) participating in the volleyball initiation project have self-esteem levels ranging from “average” to “high,” with no cases of low self-esteem. This pattern suggests that regular participation in team activities, such as volleyball, may be associated with a positive self-perception and increased self-confidence (according to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale scores observed in this study).

These results align with a broad body of evidence linking sports participation, especially in team sports, to improved self-esteem and psychological well-being in young people. Recent reviews and observational studies demonstrate consistent associations between sports participation (especially team sports) and positive self-esteem/mental health in adolescents (DONALDSON; RONAN, 2012), as well as direct and indirect effects of sports participation via emotional intelligence and self-esteem (FERNANDES et al., 2024). For example, a recent systematic review pointed to general benefits of sports participation for mental health and social outcomes, highlighting potent effects when it comes to team sports. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies have also recorded higher levels of self-esteem among physically active adolescents and participants in team sports.

In the Brazilian context, studies that have evaluated the applicability and psychometric properties of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in sports contexts indicate that the instrument presents good consistency and validity for use with athletes and practitioners of team sports. For example, Silva, Medi -Emanuel, Pesca & Cardoso (2021) found adequate construct validity and good internal consistency in a sample of athletes from team sports. Furthermore, the Dutch longitudinal study shows that team and non-aesthetic sports have a stronger association with self-esteem compared to individual or aesthetic sports (THE LONGITUDINAL ASSOCIATION, 2024), which reinforces the reliability of the findings presented here.

- Specific comparison with other studies: Magnitude of the effect (absence of cases of low self-esteem): While many studies report a distribution in which the majority present medium/high self-esteem, some studies with larger samples and contexts of vulnerability indicate the occurrence of low levels in a portion of the participants. The complete absence of low cases in this study may reflect sample characteristics (regular project participants, with good attendance and

institutional support) or selection bias (only available participants with consent). The study " *Participation in organized sport and self--esteem across adolescence*" shows that perceived competence acts as a mediator in this relationship between sports practice and self-esteem, which helps to explain differences in magnitude between samples with different characteristics (PERCEIVED SPORT COMPETENCE ..., 2014).

- Team vs. Individual Sports: The literature often shows that team sports promote, in addition to physical fitness, psychosocial factors (co-authorship, belonging, social recognition) that positively influence self-esteem, something consistent with the volleyball results observed here. Recent reports

They highlight that, in girls, engagement in team sports tends to amplify gains in confidence and a sense of belonging.

- Possible mediating factors (experiences of success, social support, team identity): Research indicates that the positive effects of sports practice on self-esteem can be mediated by factors such as experiences of competence (success/mastery), support from coaches/peers, and the development of social skills. Recent studies have identified, for example, mediation by emotional intelligence and feelings of competence between sports participation and life satisfaction/self-esteem. These mechanisms offer plausible explanations for the high-average scores in the present study.

Limitations (compared to the literature)

- Sample size and generalization: The sample of 14 participants is small compared to population-based studies; therefore, the generalization of the results to other realities in the municipality or to other age groups is limited. Many comparative studies use larger samples and controls, allowing for more robust estimates. - Cross-sectional design: The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences—that is, it is not possible to state whether the practice of volleyball caused average/high self-esteem or whether young people with higher self-esteem tend to participate in and persist in sports projects. Longitudinal studies show that positive effects tend to persist, but require follow-up over time for confirmation.
- Lack of a control group: Without comparison to non-practicing youth, it is difficult to estimate the incremental effect of local sports practice

compared to other contexts. Comparative studies usually include school controls to isolate the effect of sports.

- Limited sociodemographic characterization: Variables such as socioeconomic status, family support, and practice time can modulate self-esteem and were not detailed in a way that would allow stratified analyses, something that larger studies frequently investigate.

Practical implications and recommendations for future research: Maintaining and expanding sports programs: The results support the continuation and expansion of youth volleyball initiatives, especially due to their potential psychosocial benefits. However, programs should incorporate inclusion strategies and continuous evaluation.

Longitudinal studies with control groups: It is recommended to replicate the investigation with a larger sample, longitudinal design, and control group (or non-practicing school sample) to assess causality and the evolution of scores over time. Assess mediators and moderators: Investigating mediating variables (coach support, perception of competence, team cohesion) and moderating variables (socioeconomic level, body mass index, history of sporting success) will allow us to understand why and for whom sport works best. Attention to instrument validity: Continuing to use validated scales (adapted Rosenberg) and reporting indicators of internal consistency (Cronbach's α) improves comparability with national and international literature.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results demonstrate that the adolescent girls evaluated generally have average to high self-esteem, suggesting that playing volleyball has played a relevant role in strengthening self-confidence and a positive self-perception.

This outlook is encouraging, as self-esteem is directly associated with motivation, academic and athletic performance, and mental health. The absence of low self-esteem levels among the participants indicates that the sports project analyzed contributes not only to technical development in volleyball, but also to the promotion of psychological and social well-being.

It is therefore recommended that such initiatives be maintained and expanded, ensuring that more and more young people can experience sports that stimulate personal growth and individual development.

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