



Associations between Domain-Specific Self-Efficacy and Gender Typicality in Preadolescents



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Introduction

What is self-efficacy?

- The **belief in “one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action”** to complete goals (Bandura, 1977, p. 3)
 - It can be thought of as “domain-specific,” where children develop a sense of worth in specific areas of psychosocial development (e.g., sports or body image self-efficacy).
- Children tend to be well-adjusted when they demonstrate high self-efficacy**, regardless of whether it is in a generalized or domain-specific form (Clevinger et al., 2020; Gomez-Baya et al., 2019).

What is gender-typicality?

- A feeling of compatibility with one’s biological sex** develops through factors such as parenting styles and peer expectations of gendered behavior (Egan & Perry, 2001; Lemelin et al., 2020; Zosul et al., 2016).
- Feeling “gender-typical” has benefits in children, notably higher self-esteem and fewer instances of peer victimization (Collier et al., 2013).

Method

Participants: 195 middle-school girls ($n = 94$) and boys ($n = 101$) were solicited from a university-affiliate school in south Florida (M age = 12.01 years)

Materials and Procedure: Research assistants held one-on-one interviews with children.

- Self-efficacy** was measured in three domains asking participants, on a 1-4 scale, how “hard” or “easy” certain activities are.
 - Body-image:** “Feeling good looking is ____ for me.”
 - Sports:** “Throwing a ball is ____ for me.”
 - Popularity:** “Having a lot of friends is ____ for me.”
- Gender typicality** was measured for boys and girls separately. Higher scores indicate feeling more typical.
 - “Some girls feel they are very different than other girls.”
 - “Some boys like to play with the same toys that other boys do.”

RQ1: Are there sex differences in self-efficacy or gender typicality?

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and independent samples t -tests for girls and boys.

	Girls ($n = 94$)	Boys ($n = 101$)	t -test
Body-Image Self-Efficacy [†]	3.21 (.68)	3.04 (.76)	$t(193) = 1.65, p = .10$
Sports Self-Efficacy*	3.08 (.73)	3.35 (.60)	$t(193) = -2.82, p < .01$
Popularity Self-Efficacy	3.29 (.56)	3.32 (.61)	$t(193) = -0.35, p = .72$
Gender Typicality*	2.81 (.58)	3.05 (.65)	$t(193) = -2.52, p = .01$

Note. An asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference between groups at $p < .05$. A dagger (†) indicates an effect approaching significance, $†p < .10$.

Four independent samples t -tests were conducted to examine sex differences in these variables. Significant differences are highlighted in red.

- One of the primary findings from RQ1 is that **preadolescent boys tend to exhibit higher sports self-efficacy**
 - This makes sense as sports is still a male-centric activity in our culture.
 - Males gain popularity when they are involved with sports (Kleiser, 2021)
- Over numerous samples, gender typicality is higher in boys, and this is corroborated here (Corby et al., 2007; Egan & Perry, 2001; Hoffman, Dumas et al., 2017; Smith & Leaper, 2006).

RQ2: Is self-efficacy and gender typicality correlated for boys and girls separately?

Table 2. Correlations between all measures

	Body-Image Self-Efficacy	Sports Self-Efficacy	Popularity Self-Efficacy	Gender Typicality
Body-Image Self-Efficacy	--	.15	.51***	.09
Sports Self-Efficacy	.45***	--	.45***	.03
Popularity Self-Efficacy	.62***	.49***	--	.09
Gender Typicality	.14	.24*	.19 [†]	--

Note: All correlations are controlled for age. Correlations for girls can be seen above the diagonal. Correlations for boys can be seen below the diagonal. [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Correlations between all variables were run separately for boys and girls. Focal correlations are highlighted in red.

- The significant correlation between gender typicality and sports self-efficacy lends credence to our findings in RQ1. **Boys who are good at sports, or at least feel that they are, also feel more aligned with their gender.**
- A surprising finding was that popularity self-efficacy is associated with gender typicality in boys but not girls.**
 - Popularity is not a gender-typed behavior (i.e., boys and girls at this age tend to desire popularity).
 - The fact that boys’ popularity and gender typicality are positively associated needs to be explored further.

Take Home Message: Although both self-efficacy and gender typicality contribute to well-being, they are not necessarily associated with each other. Promoting either of these behaviors can contribute to preadolescent well-being.