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***SV: Självkänsla, Skolfrånvaro, Akademisk Prestation och Stress: En Kvantitativ Studie med Elever i Årskurs 6–9 i en Högindexskola***

***EN: Self Esteem, Absenteeism, Academic Performance and Stress: A Quantitative Study of Grades 6-9 Students in a High Index School***

**Winnie Carolina  
Pernilla Kvist**

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Handledare: Emilia Thorup  
Examinator: Roger Johansson

### **Abstract**

School absenteeism is today a worldwide phenomenon linked to a plethora of issues with long term consequences on both individuals and society, such as stress, social exclusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem and even drug abuse. This study investigates the interrelationship between global self-esteem and competence-based self-esteem (CBSE), absenteeism and academic performance as well as stress concerning students in grades 6–9 undergoing school in a socioeconomic vulnerable area. The objectives in this study were attained using a quantitative survey methodology with cross sectional correlational design, with the total sample consisting of 24 participants. The results showed neither correlation between scores on self-esteem and absenteeism nor academic performance. Conversely, significant negative correlation was observed between absenteeism and academic performance which added to strengthens previous research findings. In investigating group differences, the high CBSE's group were significantly more prone to absenteeism than those in the low CBSE's group. Further in the exploration of stress impact, students reporting stress-association had significantly higher absenteeism occasions and scores on CBSE as compared with those without. Those not associating their absence with stress showed significantly higher global self-esteem. The results suggest that stress is a relevant factor in evaluating absenteeism and by extension, academic performance.

*Keywords:* self-esteem, absenteeism, stress, academic performance, high index school

## Abstrakt

Skolfrånvaro eller skolk är ett fenomen ofta kopplat till olika orsaker som stress, social exkludering, förlust av självförtroende och självkänsla samt även drogmissbruk, något som har långtgående konsekvenser för individen och i förlängningen samhället. Huvudintresset i denna studie var att hitta och förstå relationerna mellan global självkänsla och kompetensbaserad självkänsla (CBSE), skolfrånvaro och akademisk prestation även stress i en studie med elever i årskurs 6–9 i en högindexskola. Målen i studien uppnåddes genom en enkät och kvantitativ metod med tvärsnittsstudie och korrelationsdesign där totalt deltagarantal var 24 elever. Resultaten i studien visade varken korrelation mellan självkänsla och frånvaro eller självkänsla och akademisk prestation. När vi undersöker frånvaro och akademisk prestation har vi en negativ korrelation, vilket styrker tidigare forskning. När vi undersöker gruppskillnader är gruppen med hög CBSE signifikant mer benägen till frånvaro än de i gruppen med låg CBSE. Vidare i undersökningen av stress och dess påverkan fann vi att elever som rapporterat stress association hade signifikant fler frånvarotillfällen och poäng i CBSE jämfört med de utan. De som inte rapporterade stress association visade signifikant högre global självkänsla. Resultaten visar att stress är en relevant faktor gällande prognostisering av skolfrånvaro och i förlängningen, akademisk prestation.

*Keywords:* självkänsla, frånvaro, stress, akademisk prestation, högindexskola

## **Self Esteem, Absenteeism, Academic Performance and Stress:**

### **A Quantitative Study of Grades 6-9 Students in a High Index School**

The importance of school attendance can never be overemphasized, especially in today's knowledge-based society where education plays a crucial role. All forms of absenteeism are known to have long-term consequences on students and society in general. Absentee students risk not being able to catch up with their schoolwork upon returning to school, leading to academic underachievement, stress, a loss of confidence and poor self-esteem which in some cases manifest into attention seeking and disruptive behavior that only further exacerbate the problem by creating a vicious cycle that is hard to break (Malcolm et al., 2003; SOU 2016: 94).

In Sweden, many students end up leaving their nine-year long compulsory school, also known as *grundskola*, without having proper credentials or their compulsory school leaving certificate, jeopardizing their future job prospects and increasing their risk factor associated with criminality, drug abuse and social exclusion (Ekstrand, 2015). Nevertheless, absenteeism is a complex phenomenon with multifaceted causes made up of several mutually inclusive factors influencing each other that is not unique only to Sweden but also a prioritized issue faced by many countries across the world (SOU 2016: 94). Generally, the three main areas that have been consistently brought up by researchers on school absenteeism are: school related factors; individual pathologies or personal traits; and social factors related to family circumstances and/or communities where the absentee students reside (Kinder et al., 1995).

Although there have been some Swedish studies relating to the causes of absenteeism as well as those linking academic performance with socioeconomic background along with those linking compulsory school absenteeism with big cities (Jönsson, 1990; Skolinspektionen, 2016; Skolverket, 2008; 2010; Sundel et al., 2005), to our knowledge, there has not been any quantitative study that specifically examines absenteeism in relation to compulsory school students in a socioeconomic vulnerable area of a city where the students come mainly from immigrant backgrounds. In the present study, we will examine school absenteeism together with academic achievement, stress, self-esteem and socio-economic factors in the aforementioned context including their interplay with cultural background, identity and upbringing amongst students from a school with a high proportion of immigrants in Malmö, Sweden's third largest city.

## **Absenteeism and Truancy**

Kearney (2004, 2007) described absenteeism as excusable or inexcusable absences from school where the former is related to medical illness or injury while the latter is related to environmental, social, psychiatric or other conditions including those where parents deliberately keep a child home from school due to domestic problems, to protect a child from perceived school-based threat or for other reasons. Inexcusable absences also include those caused by child-motivated school refusal behavior and/or problems staying in classes for an entire school day which is often linked to separation, generalized, or social anxiety and generally termed as anxiety-based absenteeism (Kearney, 2003). Truancy is generally described as unexcused absences, non-anxiety-based absenteeism, absences without parental knowledge, absenteeism linked to academic problems or delinquency as well as absenteeism linked to vulnerable social conditions such as poverty or homelessness (Fremont, 2003; Kearney, 2007). In this paper, we will view absenteeism together with truancy as a whole in relation to school attendance.

## **Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is one of the most studied concepts in psychology, although there is less than perfect agreement within the research literature on the meaning of the concept (Johnson, 1997; Lindwall, 2012). Nevertheless, it is an intricate phenomenon formed by different aspects of a self-related phenomenon, having different origin and related to different outcomes according to domain (Blom, 2011; Johnson, 2003). There are many factors contributing to a person's self-esteem and various theories share the belief that most humans have a desire and motive of protecting one's self-respect and sense of self-esteem (Rosenberg et al., 1989). According to the sociometer theory explained by Leary and Baumeister (2000), self-esteem is a subjective measuring instrument of the individual's interpersonal relationships together with appraisals and the need of belonging. Self-esteem develops through childhood and is known to decline in adolescence (Robins et al., 2002). In relation to social functioning and academic performance, self-esteem can be considered an important concept for children and adolescents (Bos et al., 2006).

## **Global Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem can be seen as a trait, that is, a personality variable that captures the "positive or negative attitude toward a particular object, namely, the self" (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 30), also referred to as global-self-esteem. Individuals with high global self-esteem hold

self-respect and see themselves as worthy, whereas individuals with low global self-esteem lack self-respect and see themselves as “unworthy, inadequate, or otherwise seriously deficient” (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 54). Whereas global self-esteem represents a global value belief about one’s self, domain-specific self-esteem on the other hand comprises appraisals of one's value in a specific area such as academic, artistic, athletic or aspects (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). In explaining the link between global self-esteem and domain specific self-esteem and their nature of applicability, Rosenberg et al. (1995), highlighted that while global self-esteem is most applicable to psychological well-being, domain specific self-esteem is most applicable to behavior. This further clarified as to why domain specific self-esteem is a better predictor when researching school performance than global self-esteem. Self-esteem can also be viewed as intentional acts where an individual actively earned self-esteem contingent upon competence and others’ approval (Forsman & Johnson, 1996). Generally, there is a consensus that self-esteem derived from external sources such as competence or other’s approval constitutes a highly unstable self-esteem that fluctuates with success and failure (Crocker et al., 2002; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Forsman & Johnson, 1996). Contingent self-esteem is asserted to be an unstable form of self-esteem which is based on perceived successes or failures in the domains where individuals staked their self-worth (Blom, 2011; Crocker & Park; 2004; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

### **Competence Based Self-esteem (CBSE)**

CBSE is a kind of contingent self-esteem and the phenomenon can be defined as a cognitive motivational behavior structure, which predisposes the individuals with the propensity to constantly strive for success and perfection in order to increase their competence related self-worth (Johnson & Blom, 2007). According to these researchers, a high CBSE does not consequently imply that the individuals have a high global self-esteem, in fact, typically for these individuals who are compelled to accomplish success in order to confirm their self-worth, would simultaneously, have a low self-esteem. Furthermore, when faced with setback or criticism, individuals with a combination of high CBSE and low basic or global self-esteem are inclined to boost their self-worth and strive excessively to the point of neglecting their physical and mental limits (Johnson & Forsman, 1995) and exhibit high emotional strain, strive for perfection and get easily frustrated in performance situations (Forsman & Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Forsman, 1995).

## Stress

Stress is the term borrowed from physics to describe the process in which strain causing force, a load or stressor, is exerted to an object that triggers internal resistance (Leopardi, 2016). Applied to living organisms, a stressor is a stimulus that challenges the body's internal balance and triggers arousal with an ensuing behavioral as well as physiological stress responses that occur in order to reduce stress (Kolb et al, 2016). In his seminal paper published in 1936, Hans Selye described the three stages of stress reaction (i.e., general alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion) and the resultant physical damages by acute non-specific noxious agents subjected to the rats in his experimental study. In other words, stresses triggered or induced stress reactions that resulted in physical injuries. In the field of psychology, Robert Lazarus (1998) viewed stress as complex interactions involving transaction between the organism and the environment. Drawing from this conception of stress, Holt et al. (2015, p. 675-676) defined stress as, "a pattern of cognitive appraisals, physiological responses and behavioral tendencies that occur in response to perceived imbalance between situational demands and the resources needed to cope with them". Whereas life-threatening stressors such as those due to biological or physico-chemical factors are significantly fewer today, the number of chronic psychosocial stressors commonly linked to mental illness has increased in folds with the increasingly complex environments in our society (Leopardi, 2016). In terms of psychological stress, situations regarded as threatening to an individual's self-worth can be considered specifically stressful (Campbell & DiPaula, 2002; Crocker et al, 2006). Adolescence is known as a tumultuous period of "storm and stress" (Hall, 1904), a time of identity crisis (Eriksson, 1959, 1968) and what Blos (1967) called a "second individuation process". In adolescence, the brain undergoes neural maturation within the limbic and cortical areas accompanied by dramatic changes in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) operations including stress responsiveness (Romeo, 2013). Whereas stress and HPA axis dysregulation have been linked to externalizing behavior in adolescence (Schechter et al., 2012), cortisol is known to modulate the learning process (Vedhara et al., 2000). Additionally, greater cortisol reactivity is linked to both greater perceived stress and lower level of self-esteem which in turn linked to reduction in memory consolidation (Corbett et al., 2017; Pruessner et al., 2005). These mean by extension that stress related to striving for self-esteem can impair performance and learning ability (Crocker & Park, 2004). Parenting style can differ significantly across countries and cultures is known to also affect the adolescent development, schooling and achievement (Steinberg et al.,

1992). Moreover, stress and the patterns of stressors are also impacted by culture or subculture via stressful life events such as conventional habit surrounding adolescence and disparately allocated social resources stemming from living in different socioeconomic areas (Aldwin, 2004). Just like how experiences from early childhood subconsciously affect an individual through the lifespan, an individual's upbringing often tied to their cultural backgrounds also affects one's identity development at great length (Erikson, 1968; Aronson et al., 2018).

## **Previous research**

### ***Absenteeism, Academic Performance and Self-Esteem Among Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Students***

Educators and research literatures largely agree that missing school has an adverse relationship with academic performance (Gottfried, 2009; Lehr et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it is not so easy to prove with impartial empirical measures on how school absence actually affects performance (Gottfried, 2011). Although researchers mostly agree that absenteeism causes harm, especially to the perpetrators themselves and much effort has been made in managing absenteeism, the phenomenon remains problematic and has not reduced in its extent despite increasing research studies on the subject (Boyle & Goodall, 2005; Reid, 2008). Significant part of truancy and other forms of absenteeism, however, as Reid (2008) argued, are triggered by the schools and in that sense, schools need to change their structure and organization that may have been outdated. In relation to this, school segregation has been linked with absenteeism as well as the factor driving academic performance gaps (Carnoy & Garcia, 2017; García-Gracia, 2008; García & Weiss, 2018). Moreover, feelings of inferiority due to their status in the society as the result of school segregation has been pointed out as one of the causes of lower self-esteem among minority students (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). Additionally, it has been suggested that immigrant children are confronted with unique problems in relation to identity development which caused continual threat and subsequently contributed to their low self-esteem (Rumbaut, 1994). Nevertheless, there have been other studies that distinguished between personal self-esteem and ethnic or collective self, both explicit and implicit, and the relationship between them based on past experiences and situational variables (Deaux, 1993; Verkuyten, 2005). Taken these together, the study amongst youth from ethnic minorities showed they scored high on both explicit personal self-esteem and explicit ethnic self-esteem but lower on implicit self-esteem due to their disadvantages position and perceived discrimination (Verkuyten, 2005).



### ***Self-Esteem and Absenteeism***

In a study from Pakistan by Hassan et al. (2016) there was no significant relation being found between absenteeism (truancy) and low self-esteem and the researchers went on to suggest that being with friends can actually increase self-esteem. Nevertheless, a correlation between absent students and lower self-esteem/lower self-concept was observed in an earlier study by Reid (1982). In an even earlier study, Ogard (1972) investigated the correlation between truancy and self-concept where one of the hypotheses was that students with high absenteeism have lower self-concept than those who have a low absenteeism. The result did not show any significant difference between the self-concept of truant and non-truant students self-concept. A more recent study from the United Kingdom investigating the different reasons for school absenteeism indicated that there were many different factors impacting the students' absenteeism and one of the key factors is self-esteem (Reid, 2008)

### ***Self-Esteem and Academic Performance***

Rosenberg et al. (1995) found that school grades have a stronger effect on self-esteem than vice versa. The researchers mean that this can be due to the fact that they investigate global self-esteem and not specific self-esteem. Additionally, positive correlation between self-esteem and academic performance was found amongst pre-university students in a study by Aryana (2010) and amongst university students (Arshad et al, 2015). Furthermore, research indicates that academic performance and self-esteem affect one another in a bivariate association (Rosenberg et al., 1995). However, research findings about self-esteem and academic performance fail to agree as can be seen in other studies where no correlation between self-esteem and academic performance was found (Baumeister et al., 2003; Marsh & O'Mara, 2008). Although they theoretically assumed that self-esteem would affect the possibility to succeed in school, no correlation was found between self-esteem and academic performance. Bankston and Zhou (2002) studied groups with diverse ethnic backgrounds and found that children of immigrated parents have a complex relationship with school performance and psychological well-being. In the same study the researchers state that children with African-American backgrounds and Latino-American backgrounds have higher self-esteem in spite of lower school performance compared to white American students, and self-esteem does not only differ in degree between these groups but also in a cultural context. Blom et al. (2011) concluded that individuals with high scores in CBSE showed higher physical anxiety in a performance situation compared to those with low

scores. This in turn can be related to different stress-related syndromes (Dunkley et al., 2003).

### ***Stress***

Self-esteem, loneliness and stress are three of the contributing factors to depression in adolescence (Yaacob et al., 2009). Previous study investigating the relation between global self-esteem and ethnic discrimination found that global self-esteem correlated stronger with experiences of bullying and ranting than from social exclusion (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006). In another study on youths aged 11-13 of immigrant backgrounds in Canada showed that their self-esteem and sense of academic competence were negatively associated to perceived discrimination by teachers (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012). Moreover, the detrimental effect of social exclusion that ranges among others diminished self-esteem, anxiety, impaired self-regulation, reduced pro-social behavior have also been proven in many studies (Baumeister et al., 2005; Baumeister et al., 2007; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to Holt et al. (2015), the culture of individualism rules in the western world with a sense of autonomy clearly separated from other individuals, unlike collectivistic cultures where the self is more based on the community and the relation with other individuals, especially the family (Holt et al., 2015). They further described that culture has a great importance for psychological wellbeing and culture is continuously changing with time, situations and experiences. Stressful situations affect self-esteem which in turn affects how the individual deals and reacts to stress (Galanakis et al., 2016). Nevertheless, students with high self-esteem exhibited less stress than those with low self-esteem (Abouserie, 1994). Health and social integration are interrelated and people living in socioeconomic vulnerable areas where segregation and marginalization exist are especially afflicted as shown by a study linking additional risk for psychological illness amongst the migrants (Bäärnhielm, 2017).

### ***Absenteeism and Academic Performance in the Context of Multicultural Sweden***

Children who are residents of Sweden are subject to a nine-year long compulsory schooling in accordance with Chapter 7, School Act (SFS 2010: 800). School is also the place where children from very diverse backgrounds meet and learn in multicultural Sweden. This is especially true for Malmö city, where 51.5% of the city's over 30,000 compulsory schools' students have a migration background (Grundskoleförvaltningen Malmö Stad, 2019: 7). In order to promote equal opportunity learning conditions in all schools, budget allocation for compulsory schools in Sweden are distributed according to the school's socioeconomic index

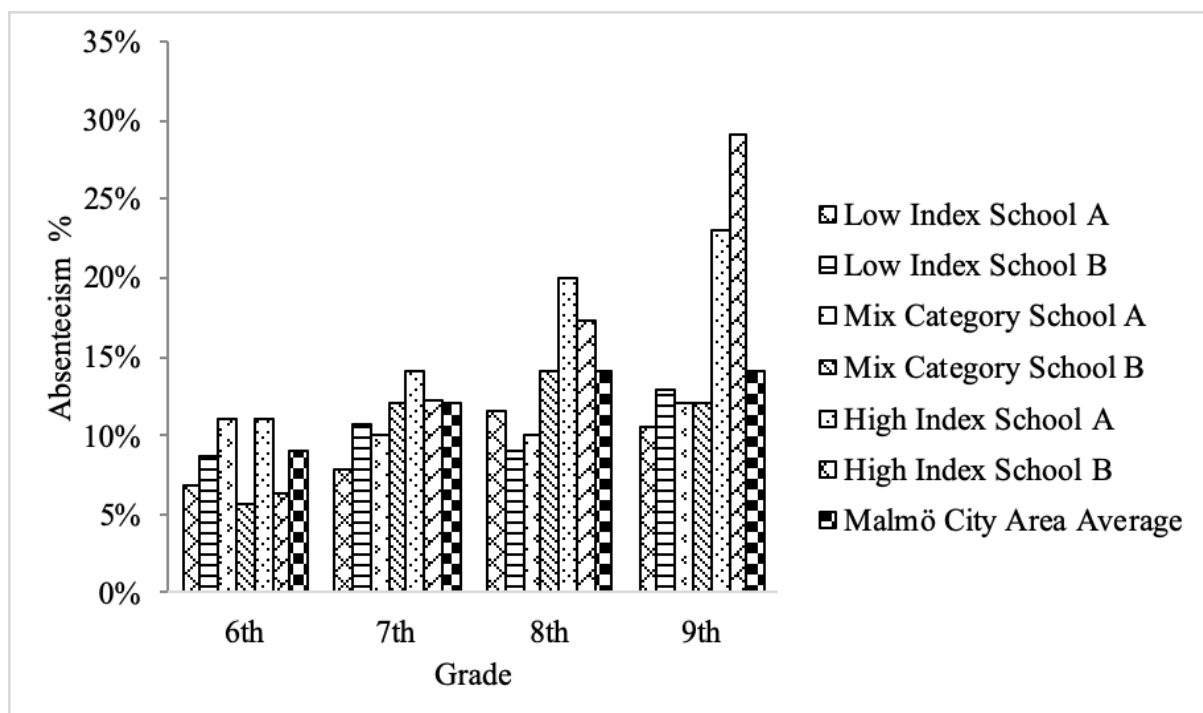
which in turn is often related to the students' socioeconomic and migration background (Skolverket, 2019). In other words, the higher the amount of subsidiaries and supports needed by the school, the higher is the school index rating. Furthermore, students' migration backgrounds were divided into; students with Swedish background for those born in Sweden with at least one of the parents also born in Sweden; born in Sweden with foreign background for those whose both parents were foreign born; foreign born migrated before school start; and foreign born migrated after school start (Skolverket, 2016).

Currently there are no national statistics on absenteeism available, a shortcoming that was highlighted in a recent state investigation (SOU 2016:94). Nevertheless, data collected from publicly accessible databases from the city of Malmö's compulsory school administration, known as the Grundskoleförvaltningen, showed that there are differences in school absenteeism as well as academic performance between compulsory school of different index rating (Grundskoleförvaltningen Malmö stad, 2019:20).

Illustrated in figure 1 is the cross-sectional data for absenteeism from grade 6-9 taken from six compulsory schools in Malmö city where each two of them are rated as having low-, mix- and high socioeconomic index respectively.

**Figure 1**

*Graph of Absenteeism percentage from selected schools in Malmö city. Data from Grundskoleförvaltningens skolstatistik, Malmö stad (2019:20)*

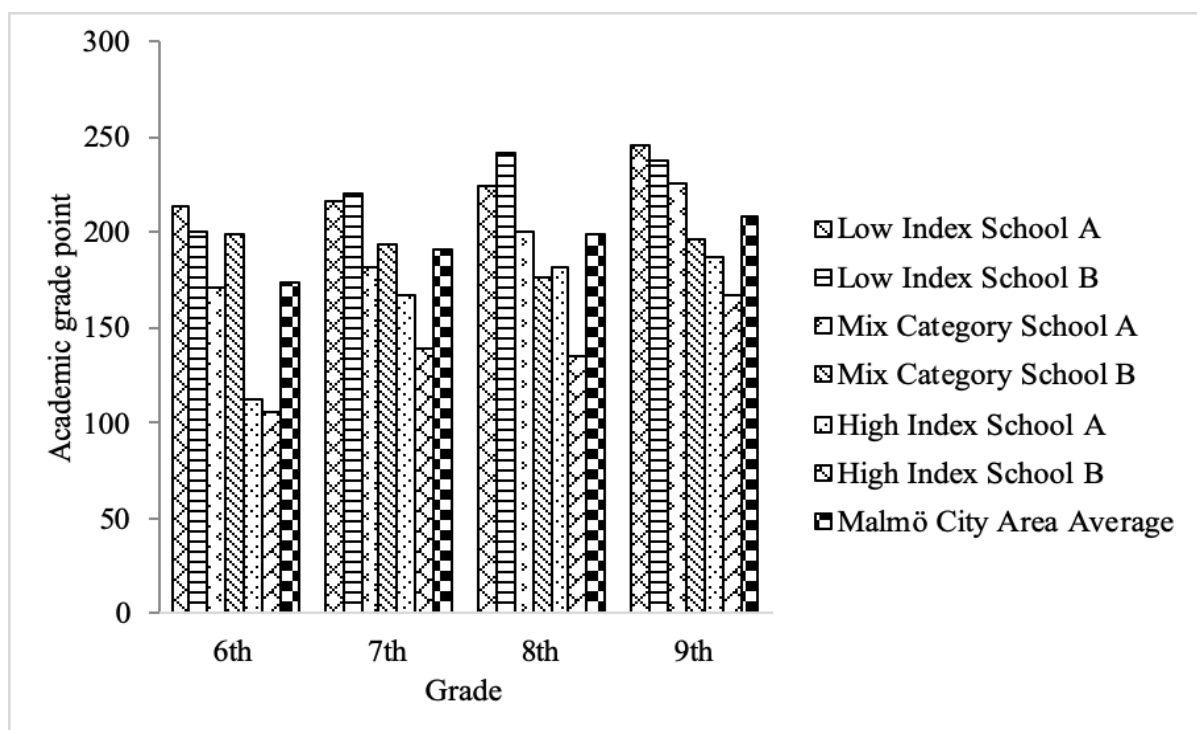


According to the report by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), absenteeism is increasing during grades 7-9 where nearly four out of 1,000 of the students were reported to have been absent consecutively for at least one month as compare to just under one out of 1,000 of the students in grades 1–6 (Skolinspektionen, 2016). Although the trend in Malmö city followed the national trend where absenteeism increased between grade 6 in comparison with grades 7-9, differences between schools based on their index were less pronounced in grade 6 and grade 7. In contrast, absenteeism was noted to increase markedly in grade 8 and grade 9 for schools with high index.

Similarly, cross-sectional data for academic performance absenteeism from grade 6-9 for the same six compulsory schools in Malmö city is presented in figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Graph of Academic Grade Point from selected schools in Malmö city. Data from Grundskoleförvaltningens skolstatistik, Malmö stad (2019:20)*



In terms of compulsory school performance, represented by whether or not a student qualified for the Swedish gymnasie education (equivalent to upper secondary school), students with foreign background generally performed less well than their peers with Swedish background. Nearly 50% of foreign born students that migrated after school start did

not qualify for gymnasie while similarly about 15% of both the foreign born students that migrated before school start and those born in Sweden with foreign background failed to qualified for gymnasie as compare to less than 10% in the cases of students with Swedish background (Skolverket, 2016). The trend in Malmö city showed that schools with low index generally performed much better than schools with high index while the performance of schools under mix category were in between the former two categories. The trends however also showed that academic grade point increased for all schools across levels with students in Grade 9 having the highest scores.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the relationships between school absenteeism, self-esteem in the forms of global self-esteem and CBSE, academic achievement as well as stress amongst students from a high index compulsory school in Sweden. The potential merits of this study would be that it could provide us with valuable insights into the multifaceted phenomenon surrounding absenteeism in the context of a city district in Sweden with a high proportion of immigrants. The interrelationships between these factors including their interplay with cultural background, identity and upbringing could be used as part of considerations when designing further studies aimed at improving and meeting the educational needs of today's youths in general and those coming from socioeconomic vulnerable areas and/or immigrant backgrounds in particular. The study aims to investigate the following research questions.

1. To explore the relationships between absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE, academic performance and stress.
2. To examine if there are any differences between participants that have high CBSE compared to low CBSE self-esteem in terms of their absenteeism, academic performance and global self-esteem.
3. To examine if there are any differences between participants accounting their absenteeism with and without stress association in terms of their absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE and academic performance.

## **Method**

### **Design and Procedure**

The present study made use of a quantitative survey research methodology with cross-sectional correlational research design. A survey methodology was considered appropriate for this study because it had the advantage in which the participants were already familiar with this form of data collection from their exposure to schoolwide surveys which they participated regularly at the end of each school term. A self-administered questionnaire from an internet link to Google Form similar to what was used in their regular school surveys was used to collect data from participants in this study to further reinforce their familiarity with the procedure and to facilitate better understanding of instructions. The principal of the selected school was contacted and consent forms with information describing the study were subsequently sent to the school (Appendix A) as well as distributed via classroom teachers to be given to parents/guardians of students attending grade 6-9 (Appendix B). The closing date for parents/guardians to return their signed consent form was set on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The survey questionnaire (Appendix C) was conducted in school using Google Forms on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 during lesson hours which has been set aside in advance with prior arrangement with the classroom teacher who also acts as facilitator together with one of the authors of this study. Students' data was collected only in cases where both the students and parents/guardians voluntarily agreed and consented to participate in the study.

### **Participants**

Students from grade 6-9 attending a selected compulsory school from the school units with high socioeconomic index which had consented to participate in the study at school level were recruited to take part in the survey based on convenience stratified sampling made up of individuals that are representative of the population targeted in this present study. Although no socioeconomic background data were gathered on an individual level, the socioeconomic index of a compulsory school that a student is attending in Sweden is related to their socioeconomic and migration background (Skolverket, 2019). This stratified sampling strategy therefore ensured that the sample in this study represented students with predominantly immigrant backgrounds from socioeconomic vulnerable areas. Participation is voluntary and neither the school nor the students were compensated for taking part in the study. Individual consent form was sent to the parents/guardians of all 195 students of which 38 (19.5%) came back with signed consent allowing their child to partake in the survey. Two

reminders were relayed to the students through their respective class teachers asking the students about their interest in participating in the study and if so, they need to get their parents/guardians to sign and return the consent form. A possible reason as to only less than a quarter of the students signed up for the study could be due to many of the parents/guardians not being conversant in Swedish language and therefore did not reply or sign back the consents form which was written in Swedish. Of these 38 consented students, 10 dropped out from participating and another 4 were subsequently excluded from further analysis as these students did not complete the survey questionnaires. The final sample thus consisted of 24 students, of which, 2 were attending grade 6, 14 were attending grade 7, 3 were attending grade 8 and 5 were attending grade 9. Of the 24 participants, 62.5% were female and 37.5% were male.

### **Material: Instrument**

#### ***Demographic/School Engagement Data Sheet***

A simplified version of survey questionnaires based on the existing format that the school used in collecting absenteeism related data each school term was developed in order to obtain information about the students' gender, academic years, length being with the school as well as items regarding facets of the students' school engagement during the term prior to data collection such as tardiness, sick days, absenteeism and reasons related to those. Of particular interest are participants' absenteeism related accounts that can be associated with stress or stressful events. Included in the list of possible choices of answer in relation to absenteeism that participant could choose from in the survey questionnaires are: stomach-ache, headache, common cold, stress and worry, feeling sad or down, because my friends do that, difficulty with schoolwork, problem at home, conflict with other student and conflict with teacher. The first three items: stomach-ache, headache and common cold are considered as physical health or medical related accounts. The rest of the accounts are considered as explicit stressor accounts and used to group students into Yes and No categories in relation to stress. These categories are adapted following previous studies on Norwegian school adolescents by Murberg & Bru (2004) and another Swedish study by Hjern et al. (2007).

#### ***Measures of Global Self-Esteem***

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (*RSES*; Rosenberg, 1965) is a self-report scale that served as a reliable and valid measure of global self-esteem (Gray-Little et al., 1997). It is by far the most widely used (Baumeister et al., 2003; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991) and has

shown to have good internal reliability when evaluated using sample across demographic subgroups where Cronbach's alpha was within the range from 0.84 to 0.95 (Sinclair et al., 2010). The internal reliability of RSES when translated into 28 languages and administered across 53 nations continued to be substantial with a mean Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). In this study, the Swedish translated version obtained from Lindwall (2012) was used and with the present sample, Cronbach's alpha was 0.93. The scale consists of 10 items on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). The RSES has typically been scored on a metric range that goes either from a minimum score of 10 to a maximum of 40 or from minimum score of 0 to a maximum of 30 depending on how the response categories were coded and summed (Sinclair et al, 2010). In the present study, the former scoring system was employed in which the response to each statement was coded from 1-4. There are no discrete cutoff points in RSES, but high scores generally represent as being "good enough" (Rosenberg, 1965) and most scientific studies used the mean scores as an indicator (García et al, 2019). Recent study conducted on 2070 school going adolescents aged 15 years in Finland however has suggested a midpoint cutoff on RSES where total scores below 25 from a maximum of 40 is classified as having low self-esteem in both girls and boys (Isomaa et al, 2012). We adopted the cutoff points that they have suggested in their Finland study and categorize our participants with scores below 25 as having low self-esteem and scores on and above 25 as having high self-esteem.

### ***Measures of Competence Based Self-Esteem***

Competence Based Self Esteem (CBSE; Johnson & Blom, 2007) is a two-factors structure self-report scale that measure the extent to which one's self-worth was contingent on competence by evaluating behaviors and attitudes which arise when competence is pursued for self-validation; self-value conditional upon competence and self-criticism/comparison with others. The scale has shown high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 and test-retest reliability ( $r=0.93$ ) across different samples (Johnson & Blom, 2007). In this study, the Swedish version obtained through personal correspondence with Johnson based on the original scale (Johnson & Bloom, 2007) was used and with the present sample, Cronbach's alpha was 0.93. The scale consists of 12 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores represent a higher level of CBSE suggesting that one may set a higher bar on one's performance and strive for success to compensate for a low global or basic self-esteem whereas lower level of CBSE is associated with a presumably more desirable non-contingent self-esteem (Johnson,



1998). No discrete cutoff scores have been proposed, however, previous studies using similar constructs of self-esteem adopted the median-split principle in categorizing individuals into “highs” and “lows” in self-esteem (Johnson, 1998; 2002; 2010).

### ***Academic performance***

School records on students' individual academic grades were obtained and reviewed. Total academic merit point was calculated by first converting each subject grade from the scale of A-F to the corresponding grade in the point system of 20-0 and summed up to get the total. Academic grade point is a well-known benchmark indicator of student achievement and performance in school (Hallfors et al., 2002; McKee & Caldarella, 2016). Because not all the students in this study have the same number of total subjects, an average of the total academic merit point was calculated by dividing the total point with the number of subjects taken. The average academic point then serves as an indicator of individual students' academic performance.

### ***School attendance***

School records on students' attendance were extracted from Skola24, an internet-based information system for attendance related data. Absenteeism was calculated based on the number of occasions the individual student is missing from lessons. Descriptive statistic for absenteeism ranged from 0 to 156 ( $M = 54.2$ ,  $SD = 41.4$ ) for grades 6-9 at the participating school. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participating school, the standardized presentation of its absenteeism in the form of absenteeism percentage will not be disclosed because this figure may lead to the identity of the participating school being inevitably exposed when it is being compared to available data from Grundskoleförvaltningen. Nevertheless, when put in perspective respectively with other data from Grundskoleförvaltningen for Malmö city, the participating school had an absenteeism that is similar to other high index schools but higher than Malmö city's average in general.

### **Data analysis**

Jamovi v.1.1.9.0 was used in performing statistical analysis of the collected data (Navarro & Foxcroft, 2018). Reliability analyses were conducted on both the RSES and CBSE scale based on the sample in the current study. Cronbach alpha coefficient value of above 0.7 is considered as generally acceptable for a reliable scale (DeVellis, 2012).

For statistical data analysis in this study, a two tailed test with significant level set at an alpha of 5% for the probability of Type I error is used as criterion. In determining the

strength of the relationship between two variables,  $r$ , the correlation coefficient itself represents the measure of effect size. Cohen's (1988) suggested  $r$  of .10 for a small effect size, .30 for a medium effect size and .50 for a large effect size as a general guideline. Additionally, Cohen's  $d$  statistic (Cohen, 1988) was used as a measure of effect size in comparing groups and according to the convention suggested 0.2 for a small effect size, 0.5 for a medium effect size and .80 for a large effect size. Recent literature has expanded the suggested size to Cohen's  $d$  and include 0.1 for a very small effect size, 1.2 for a very large effect size and 2.0 for a huge effect size (Sawilowsky, 2009). For assumption checks, normality of data was checked using Shapiro-Wilk test and homoscedasticity was checked using Levene's test and for both tests, a significant value ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the test would suggest violation of the assumption which has to be addressed accordingly.

Descriptive statistics were computed for each variable with summarizing statistics and plots to aid in the exploration of the shape and distribution of the data as well as assessing normality and checking for outliers. When an outlier was present, as shown by an extreme high value on variables for absenteeism from one of the participants' data in this study, these data were winsorized by assigning the outliers with a lower weight by way of replacing the extreme value with the next highest score that is not an outlier (Field, 2016). This method was chosen instead of removing the entire data from the participant who contributed to the outlier because apart from the absenteeism variable, the participant's scores on other variables were within the normal range, suggesting that this case belongs to the population of intended sample. Transformation of the variable with outlier using logarithm was also made as an alternative to correcting the data before winsorizing it. This was performed as a safeguard so that the statistical results performed from the data with a winsorized outlier and from the data with logarithm transformation can be compared with each other to ensure that winsorizing the outlier data did not drastically alter the results.

Choosing the right statistical approach in addressing the research questions of concern is an essential part of the research process because there are a large variety of statistical techniques that are available but which approach to be used will have to depend on not only the type of questions being addressed but also the nature of data gathered (Pallant, 2020). Statistical prediction such as regression analysis is one of the techniques often employed by research psychologists when exploring relationships between variables and their predictive ability (Aron et al, 2014; Field, 2016; Navarro & Foxcroft, 2018; Pallant, 2020). The purpose of our study amongst others is to try to understand how the various factors such as self-

esteem, academic performance and stress might affect the outcomes on absenteeism. Thus, one of the initial questions in our study was on how absenteeism can be explained by data gathered on self-esteem, academic performance as well as stress and which of these variables is the best predictor.

Sample size is one of the assumptions in running a reliable regression model and different authors have proposed different guidelines on the number of cases needed for each predictor in multiple regression (Field et al., 2012; Pallant, 2020). Two rules of thumb were proposed by Green (1991) in calculating the minimum sample size required using the formulas,  $N > 50 + 8k$  for testing overall fit of the regression model and  $N > 104 + k$  for testing individual predictors, where  $k$  is the number of independent variables used as predictors. Steven (1996) maintained that 15 participants per predictor are required to obtain a reliable model in social science research. Taking these recommendations and the sample size in the present study as considerations we decided to forego regression analysis and used only correlation analysis with regards to questions involving exploring relationships amongst variables. In other words, instead of trying to predict an outcome, we will now explore the strength and direction of the relationship between the main variables, namely absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE, academic performances and stress association which is related to the first question in our study.

In exploring the first question in the study, linear relationships between variables were examined and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed. Included in the computations are also point-biserial correlation coefficients used when one of the variables is discrete dichotomous and the other is continuous (Field, 2012). This relates to measurements of strength and direction of relationships between stress association which is a discrete dichotomy variable in our study since it is categorized as either yes or no with the other variables such as absenteeism or global self-esteem or CBSE or academic performance which are continuous variables. Nevertheless, since the p-value yielded from the point biserial correlation will be the same as the p-value for an independent t-test generated from the same set of data for question three in our study, point-biserial correlation coefficients relating to the stress association variable were excluded in the correlation result reporting for simplicity of reporting.

Although correlation analysis has been conducted to examine the relationships between CBSE and other variables in the study, it only tells us the strength and direction of the relationship. The second question in our study is aimed at comparing groups, on whether

there are significant differences between participants associated with high and low CBSE in terms of absenteeism, academic performance and global self-esteem. To answer this question, an additional analysis using a series of independent t-tests was conducted in which the median split principle (Johnson 1998; 2002; 2010) was adopted in categorizing the participants into high- and low CBSE groups. In performing the assumption checks on the data, while the rest of variables fulfilled both tests for normality and homoscedasticity, CBSE in relation to absenteeism using the variable with winsorized data failed the equality of variance test. As such, Welch's t had to be used in place of Student's t. In contrast, another attempt made using student's t by substituting absenteeism variable with the logarithm transformed data resulted in passing both normality and homoscedasticity test. Nevertheless, both Welch's t and Student's t showed significant results that are very close in its value. As such, the result based on the variable with winsorized data is the one selected to be reported because it provided easier interpretation with the group descriptive reflecting value of the original data which will not be the case with logarithm transformation.

In answering the third question in our study aimed at comparing groups, on whether there are significant differences between participants associated with stress and without stress in relation to absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE and academic performance, a series of analysis using independent t-tests was performed since there were only two groups involved. No adjustment on data was made as the assumption checks on both normality and homoscedasticity showed values that were within the acceptable range denoting no violation.

### **Ethical Consideration**

This study is guided by the ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct set up by the APA (American Psychology Association, 2018). An ethics declaration was signed by the authors together with the research supervisor prior to carrying out the survey assuring that the study would also be carried out in accordance to the ethical principles mandated by the Swedish's research ethics committees under the Swedish Ethics Review Authority, Etikprövningsmyndigheten (EPN). Furthermore, the study employed the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement and the use requirement following the ethical principles as expressed in the four main requirements stipulated by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). Additional precautions and careful considerations were taken together with the research supervisor in reviewing the type of measurement instruments and questions used in the survey questionnaires considering that these participants were school going children aged 12-17 years. The type of

measurement instruments and questions administered in the present study were those that have been judged as not to pose any risk that could in any way harm the participants psychological well-being. Informed consent is obtained from the school, participants and their parents/guardians. Although the use of the name of the participating school in this study was consented, the authors decided to use a fictitious name and kept the school name anonymous. Before the participants began the survey, the voluntary nature and anonymity status of participation as well as the right to terminate at any time during the course of the study was highlighted by the co-author who was present on-site. Participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study after the survey and advised to contact teachers or the school's student health team should they need to talk to someone and get help.

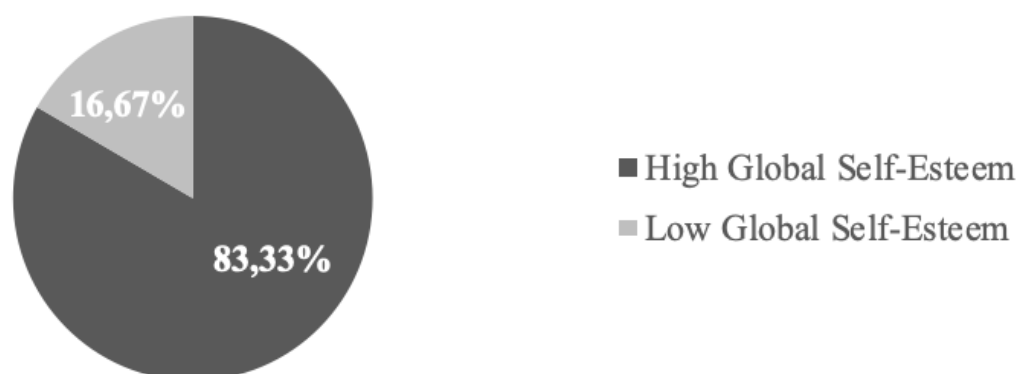
## Results

### Descriptive statistics

The analysis of the data found that the vast majority of the students exhibited a high level of global self-esteem with only less than one sixth of the participants exhibiting low level global self-esteem (see Figure 3).

### Figure 3

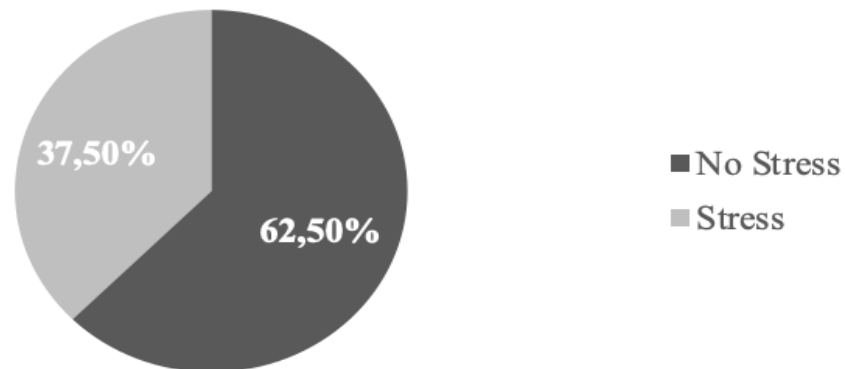
*Percentage of students with high global self-esteem versus low global self-esteem*



In examining the participants' absenteeism related accounts that can be associated with stress or stressful events, slightly more than one third of the students related the occasion to stress while the remaining of them appeared not to have such association (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Percentage of students with no stress association versus with stress association*



### **Relationship between absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE and academic performance**

Presented in table 1 are means and standard deviations along with the matrix of Pearson's correlations between absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE and academic performance. There was no significant correlation between absenteeism and global self-esteem ( $p = .994$ ). Significant correlation was also not noted between absenteeism and CBSE ( $p = .146$ ). In contrast, absenteeism was noted to have a significant medium negative correlation with academic performance ( $p = .016$ ). Nevertheless, the confidence interval was noticed to be wide. Additionally, the participants' scores on global self-esteem was negatively associated with their scores on CBSE where large and significant correlations were observed ( $p < .001$ ). Even so, the confidence interval was also noted to be fairly wide. No significant correlation was noted between academic performance and global self-esteem ( $p = .599$ ). Likewise, academic performance was not significantly correlated to CBSE ( $p = .751$ ).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistic and intercorrelations between absenteeism, academic performance, global self-esteem and CBSE (n=24)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Absenteeism	31.00	24.10	-			
2. Global self-esteem	31.40	7.97	.002 [.405, -.402]	-		
3. CBSE	36.30	12.90	.306 [.631, -.111]	-.663*** [-.354, -.841]	-	
4. Academic performance	11.50	3.69	-.487* [-.104, -.744]	-.113 [.304, -.494]	-.068 [.345, -.459]	-

*Note.* \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$ . 95% CIs reported in brackets.

### **Differences between students with high and low levels of CBSE on absenteeism, academic performance and global self-esteem**

A series of independent t-tests was conducted to examine differences between the groups of participants with high and low CBSE respectively as presented in table 2. On average students in the high CBSE's group were significantly more prone to absenteeism than those in the low CBSE's group. Moreover, the high CBSE's group also exhibited significantly lower global self-esteem in comparison with the low CBSE's group. A very large-sized effect that nevertheless accompanied by a very wide confidence interval were observed along with the group differences on both absenteeism and global self-esteem. Interestingly, the academic performance for students in the high CBSE's group was noticed

to be slightly lower than their peers in the low CBSE's group. This difference was however not statistically significant and represented a small-sized effect.

**Table 2**

*Mean differences between high- and low CBSE on absenteeism, academic performance and global self-esteem*

	High CBSE			Low CBSE			$M_{diff}$	95% CI		$t$	$df$	$p$	$d$
	$n$	$M$	$SD$	$n$	$M$	$SD$		$LL$	$UL$				
Absenteeism	12	42.30	26.12	12	19.80	16.00	22.58	4.02	41.14	2.55 <sup>a*</sup>	18.2	.020	1.043
Academic performance	12	11.00	2.95	12	12.10	4.37	-1.13	-4.28	2.03	-0.74	22.0	.466	-0.303
Global self-esteem	12	27.40	8.43	12	35.40	5.18	-8.00	-13.92	-2.08	-2.80 <sup>**</sup>	22.0	.010	-1.144

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Levene's test is significant ( $p < .05$ ), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variance. Owing to this violated assumption, a Welch's  $t$  statistic not assuming homogeneity of variance was computed with the degree of freedom adjusted to accommodate the lack of homoscedasticity.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

### **Differences between students who associate their absenteeism with stress and those who do not**

A series of independent t-tests was performed to further explore the mean differences between groups of participants with and without stress association. The results are as reported in table 3. Student reporting stress associations had significantly higher absenteeism occasions and scores on CBSE as compared with those without. In contrast, students not associating their absence with stress displayed significantly higher global self-esteem than



those who reported stress association. No significant mean differences were observed between students with and without stress association in relation to academic performance. Although, very large effect sizes were noted on group differences on all variables that showed significant value, very wide confidence intervals were also observed.

**Table 3**

*Mean differences between stress and no stress association on absenteeism, academic performance, global self-esteem, and CBSE*

	Stress			No Stress			$M_{diff}$	95% CI		$t(22)$	$p$	$d$
	$n$	$M$	$SD$	$n$	$M$	$SD$		$LL$	$UL$			
Absenteeism	9	43.80	27.73	15	23.40	18.70	-20.38	-39.97	-7.9	-2.16*	.042	-0.909
Global self-esteem	9	24.60	7.11	15	35.50	5.19	10.98	5.76	16.19	4.37***	<.001	1.841
CBSE	9	45.30	9.92	15	30.90	11.51	-14.40	-23.98	-4.81	-3.12**	.005	-1.314
Academic performance	9	11.10	3.02	15	11.80	4.12	0.67	-2.62	3.95	0.42	.677	0.178

*Note.* \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

## Discussion

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the relationships between school absenteeism, self-esteem in the forms of global self-esteem and CBSE, academic achievement as well as stress amongst students from a high index compulsory school in Malmö, Sweden's third largest city. This study provides several insights into the interrelationships between these factors within the context of a school in a socioeconomic vulnerable area where students come mainly from immigrant backgrounds that also shed some lights on their interplay with cultural background, identity and upbringing.

### **Global self-esteem and students in multicultural Sweden**

Our results showed that the vast majority of the students, represented by 83.33% of the participants, have a high level of global self-esteem. The high proportion of participants with high level of global self-esteem is not totally unexpected because people across different cultures have been shown to exhibit positive regards toward themselves as reflected in their above average score on RSES in a study conducted by Schmitt & Allik (2005) which also suggested that high global self-esteem maybe culturally universal. Nevertheless, past studies on the self-esteem of immigrant children have been inconclusive (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). Although the indexing of school in Sweden might resonate segregated schools since high index schools are usually associated with students of immigrant backgrounds, the phenomena in which the feeling of inferiority (Armor, 1995) and threat to identity development (Rumbaut, 1994) as some of the contributing factors to their lower self-esteem are not reflected in case of the participant in our study. This may in turn suggest that the amounts of subsidies and support given to the high index school in providing equal learning opportunity for learning amongst students could mediate and level out differences brought by disadvantage socioeconomic status, protecting and boosting the students' global self-esteem. Additionally, the ethnicity, cultural backgrounds and upbringing of these students might also play some part in fostering high personal self-esteem and explicit self-esteem (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Deaux, 1993; Verkuyten, 2005). This in turn is being reflected in their high level of global self-esteem which further indicates to us how an individual's past experiences, cultural backgrounds and upbringing might contribute to one's identity development at great length (Erikson, 1968; Aronson et al., 2018).

## **Relationship between absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE and academic performance**

Past research examining the relationship between absenteeism and self-esteem has also been indecisive (cf. Hassan et al., 2016; Reid, 1982). The result in our study adds to the no significant correlations on participants' scores for both global self-esteem as well as CBSE in relation to absenteeism.

In line with previous research literature linking the adverse relationships between absenteeism and academic performance (Gottfried, 2009; Gottfried, 2011; Lehr et al., 2003), significant medium negative correlation was noted between absenteeism and academic performance in our study. At the same time, our result also suggested a deviation from the statistical trend amongst grades 6-9 compulsory schools in Malmö city, which indicated that while absenteeism increased across grade levels, academic performance too moved in the same direction with students showing improved performance across grade levels. A possible explanation towards the trend in Malmö could be the higher expectation imposed on students' academic learning and performance in grades 8-9 with the increasing stake as end of compulsory schooling approaches. Nevertheless, this again brought to our attention that it is never easy to prove with impartial empirical measures on how school absence actually affects performance (Gottfried, 2011).

Participants' scores on global self-esteem were negatively associated with their scores on CBSE. This result is as expected owing to the nature of both the scales and in accordance with previous scholarly works (Blom, 2011; Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Blom 2007).

Academic performance was not significantly correlated to either global self-esteem or CBSE in our study. In relation to global self-esteem, results from previous studies have yielded conflicting results. Although there is a general notion that high self-esteem correlates with academic achievement and some studies have shown a positive relationship between academic point and self-esteem (Arshad et al., 2015; Aryana, 2010; Filozof et al., 1998). Other studies suggest that global self-esteem has influence on both directions in a bivariate association and more robustly associated to measures of psychological well-being while specific academic self-esteem is a better predictor of academic performance (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Furthermore, there is also a study which showed that minority students living in socioeconomic vulnerable areas generally have higher self-esteem regardless of their academic performance (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). Even though the students in our study might have corresponding backgrounds as those in Bankston & Zhou's (2002) study, our

result does not follow theirs. Nevertheless, our result is equally inconclusive because not only do we not have a significant relationship between academic performance and global self-esteem, whether it is global self-esteem that predicts academic performance or is it the other way around was not being explored in our study. This is because not only some studies concluded that self-esteem has no effect on academic performance (Baumeister et al., 2003; Marsh & O'Mara, 2008), some of them also argued that it is the academic performance which has an effect on self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2003; Pullman & Allik, 2008). Additionally, since the relationship between academic performance and CBSE amongst adolescent students has not been widely explored, our results add to the literature and can be used as comparison for future study.

**Are there any differences between participant groups that have high CBSE compared to low CBSE self-esteem in terms of their absenteeism, academic performance and global self-esteem?**

A significant combination of propensity to be absent from school and lower scores on global self-esteem was noted on participants group with high CBSE. The conceptual basis of CBSE is grounded on the presence of low global self-esteem where an individual would attempt to compensate by being overly success and perfection driven (Blom, 2011). Inherent to individual with low basic or global self-esteem is also the susceptibility to maladaptive behavior such as unwarranted self-criticism and self-punishing when confronted with failures along with excessive emotional tension and sense of frustration in performance situations (Forsman & Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Forsman, 1995). Drawing from these theoretical concepts, students with low global self-esteem would strive hard for better achievement to boost their self-esteem, hence, their high scores on CBSE, a combination which has been shown to lead to excessive striving to the point of neglecting physical and mental limits (Johnson & Forsman, 1995). Although the result was not significant, it is interesting to note that despite the assumed striving, participants group with high CBSE displayed a lower academic performance than their peers in the low CBSE's group. Taken together, it is probable that by relying only on success while not being able to accept failure or mistake may lead these students to skip classes when things do not go their way. A possible scenario would be when confronted with less than desirable academic performance or being reprimanded by teachers, these students adopted an acting out behavior such as playing truants and skip classes to gain a different kind of status amongst peers to boost their self-

esteem. This may explain their higher absenteeism which further contribute to their lower academic performance.

**Are there any differences between groups of participants accounting their absenteeism with and without stress association in terms of their absenteeism, global self-esteem, CBSE and academic performance?**

In examining the participants accounts in relation to absenteeism, 37.5% of them associate their absenteeism to stress or stressful events while 67.5% appeared not to have such associations. Consequently, along with their significantly lower scores on global self-esteem, groups of students reporting stress association exhibited significantly higher absenteeism occasions as well as scores on CBSE. Extending on what we have elaborated in the earlier section on groups of students having high CBSE in relation to absenteeism and low global self-esteem, their stress association can be viewed as an additional factor contributing to higher absenteeism. This is especially true taking into consideration that our participants are also adolescence, a period which is stressful as it is as they are going through many changes developmentally including figuring out who they are, the self and the identity (Eriksson, 1959, 1968). Although academic performance was not significantly different between groups associated with and without stress, their mean values are very similar. This suggested that students in the stress groups might be pushing themselves extremely hard to meet the performance of their peers in order to uphold their self-esteem. The level of stress could also be linked to cultural backgrounds and parenting style which have been shown to affect adolescent schooling and achievement (Steinberg et al., 1992). This over striving for performance to protect their self-worth that they deemed as being threatened in such a situation and its resulting effect could be specifically stressful (Campbell & DiPaula, 2002; Crocker et al, 2006). In other words, the individual's ambitions to succeed becomes overwhelming, causing an inflated fear of failure in meeting their own as well as parental expectation. This fear also might impact their performance negatively. Here, the fear of failure might induce the students to skip classes rather than face up to failure. They might decide to stay at home in order to study round the clock for an exam in striving for a higher grade to the point of neglecting physical and mental limits (Johnson & Forsman, 1995). This in turn might lead to fatigue and illness which make them have to stay home even longer. In comparison, students not associating their absence with stress in our study showed significantly higher global self-esteem which is in accordance with previous studies (Abouserie, 1994; Dixon & Kurpius, 2008).

## **Limitations**

Several methodological limitations must be acknowledged in relation to the present study. An important limitation in the study is related to the small sample size which was clearly reflected in the wide confidence intervals on statistical analysis of our results suggesting that the sample size was too small. This also means that any conclusions that we might try to draw from the data in our study need to be replicated with a larger sample size. In other words, our results may not be representative of the target population due to the low number of participants in the study. Another limitation is the sample profile, which includes only a school unit from high index areas without comparison to other schools from other index areas. The method does not include a longitudinal study nor a qualitative approach which is suggested for future research to capture the individual perspectives. Data collected were based on self-reports which may be subjected to reporting bias and social desirability. Additionally, there could also be a response rate bias that might compromise the representativeness of the sample due to the low response rate which was likely contributed by many of the parents/guardians not being conversant in Swedish language, the language used in the information letter and consent form. One suggestion is to set up translation help for future studies. Time is another limitation, maybe it would help to set a longer time period to collect the survey answers. Although we already prolonged the time to increase the possibility to receive more participants, we could not extend the time further. Moreover, in taking advantage of redeploing some of the questions that the students already familiar with from their regular school wide survey in categorizing stress in this study, no scale with scores were used in measuring stress but instead a very broad categories were used and furthermore dichotomized.

## **Future research**

Included in the initial intention with our study was to examine how absenteeism can be explained by data gathered on self-esteem, academic performance as well as stress and which of these variables is the best predictor. Due to our small sample size however, we decided to forego regression analysis that would allow us to try to predict an outcome. Future study could explore this area by recruiting more participants. Since our study is conducted only with participants from a high index school, future study can be conducted with more schools and hence more participants and comparison can be made between participants from another high index school as comparison and even another school from different index units to explore differences between indexes. Other studies have shown that students with foreign

backgrounds in socioeconomic vulnerable areas generally have higher self-esteem regardless of academic grades (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). Considering the high percentage of inhabitants with foreign backgrounds in the socioeconomic vulnerable area which we have investigated, it will be of very great interest to study the relationship between self-esteem and ethnicity. Parenting styles can differ significantly across countries and cultures which in turn affects the children's identity development, schooling and achievement (Steinberg et al., 1992; Aronson et al., 2018). It was not a focus area in our current study, but ethnic backgrounds, behavior and self-esteem is an interesting and not the least complex area for future research. The correlation between absenteeism and academic performance is not easy to prove. The combination of the factors and their impact is complex and multidimensional and further research is suggested. Tentatively a quantitative, longitudinal study that grasps the causes over time and also with the individual perspective to provide further insights in the cause and effect of the phenomenon. Perhaps even case studies to capture the individual perspective on the impact of the factors.

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## Appendix A

### Information Letter and Consent Form to Participating School



Institutionen för psykologi

Kandidatuppsats VT-2020 PSYK11, Pernilla Kvist [pernilla.kvist.8634@student.lu.se](mailto:pernilla.kvist.8634@student.lu.se) och Winnie Carolina

Handledare: Emilia Thorup, universitetslektor, [emilia.thorup@psy.lu.se](mailto:emilia.thorup@psy.lu.se)

#### Examensarbete om elevers frånvaro, självkänsla och prestation

Vi läser kandidatkursen i psykologi vid Lunds Universitet. Just nu håller vi på med ett examensarbete om elevers frånvaro, självkänsla och prestation. Vi undersöker varför skolfrånvaron ökar mellan åk 6 och 7, samt möjliga samband mellan skolfrånvaro, självkänsla och upplevda prestationskrav för elever i årskurs 7, 8 och 9.

Vi kommer att använda oss av en frågeenkät som eleverna i åk 7 har besvarat angående sin frånvaro under HT-2019 och en ny frågeenkät som vi kommer att skicka ut till elever i årskurs 7, 8 och 9 under vecka 17, 2020. Exempel på frågor som ställs är "Har du någon gång varit frånvarande från skolan?", "Vad beror frånvaron på?", "Har du en positiv attityd mot dig själv?" och "Är det viktigt för dig att prestera väl?".

Enkäten har 30 frågor och vi kommer att skicka ut den till eleverna elektroniskt, via email.

Informationen som vi samlar in kommer vi att analysera och koppla till teorier i psykologi. Vi kommer i studien också att använda oss av ifrån skolan inhämtad information om elevernas närvarostatistik samt betyg. All insamlad data kommer att koda så att identifierande information så som namn inte kan kopplas till vare sig enkätsvar, närvarostatistik eller betyg. Resultaten kommer att presenteras anonymt." Dokument förvaras inlåst. Uppgifter om individer kommer endast att användas i forskningssyfte.

Härmed beviljas samtycke för Pernilla Kvist och Winnie Carolina att undersöka, dokumentera, bearbeta och arkivera den information som samlas in under examensarbetet samt att publicera resultat från studien. Materialet från examensarbetet kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt i den meningen att skolans och elevernas namn aldrig kommer att publiceras.

Skola

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Underskrift, titel

Datum

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## Appendix B

### Information Letter and Consent Form to Parents/Guardians



Institutionen för psykologi

Kandidatuppsats VT-2020 PSYK11, Pernilla Kvist [pernilla.kvist.8634@student.lu.se](mailto:pernilla.kvist.8634@student.lu.se) och Winnie Carolina

Handledare: Emilia Thorup, universitetslektor, [emilia.thorup@psy.lu.se](mailto:emilia.thorup@psy.lu.se)

#### Examensarbete om elevers frånvaro, självkänsla och prestation

Vi läser kandidatkursen i psykologi vid Lunds Universitet. Just nu håller vi på med ett examensarbete om elevers frånvaro, självkänsla och prestation. Vi undersöker varför skolfrånvaron ökar mellan åk 6 och 7, samt möjliga samband mellan skolfrånvaro, självkänsla och upplevda prestationskrav.

Vi kommer att använda oss av en frågeenkät som eleverna i åk 7 har besvarat angående sin frånvaro under HT-2019 och en ny frågeenkät som vi kommer att skicka ut till elever i årskurs 6, 7, 8 och 9 under vecka 17-19, 2020. Frågorna handlar om frånvaro, självkänsla och prestation. Exempel på frågor som ställs är "Har du någon gång varit frånvarande från skolan?", "Vad beror frånvaron på?", "Har du en positiv attityd mot dig själv?" och "Är det viktigt för dig att prestera väl?".

Enkäten har 30 frågor och vi kommer att skicka ut den till eleverna elektroniskt, via email.

Informationen som vi samlar in kommer vi att analysera och koppla till teorier i psykologi. Vi kommer i studien också att använda oss av ifrån skolan inhämtad information om elevernas närvarostatistik samt betyg. All insamlad data kommer att kodas så att identifierande information så som namn inte kan kopplas till vare sig enkätsvar, närvarostatistik eller betyg. Resultaten kommer att presenteras anonymt. Dokument förvaras inlåst. Uppgifter om individer kommer endast att användas i forskningssyfte.

Vi vänder oss till dig för att fråga om ditt barn får delta i vårt examensarbete.

Barnet kommer själv att få bestämma om hon/han vill delta när vi kommer och hon/han får avbryta sin medverkan när hon/han vill. Om du har frågor om studien kan du kontakta Pernilla Kvist, [pernilla.kvist.8634@student.lu.se](mailto:pernilla.kvist.8634@student.lu.se) , 0733-125823.

Med vänliga hälsningar

Pernilla Kvist och Winnie Carolina  
Lunds Universitet, kandidatkurs PSYK11

Lämna lappen åter till skolan senast den 8/5.

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\_\_\_\_\_ deltar  /deltar ej

**Barnets namn**

i studien om elevers självkänsla, frånvaro och prestation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Förälders/vårdnadshavares namnteckning**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ditt barns namnteckning**

## Appendix C

### Survey Questionnaire

# Elevenkät

Frågeenkät årskurs 7 – 9

Information: Vi läser kandidatkursen i psykologi vid Lunds Universitet. Just nu håller vi på med ett examensarbete om elevers frånvaro, självkänsla och prestation. Vi undersöker varför skolfrånvaron ökar mellan åk 6 och 7, samt möjliga samband mellan skolfrånvaro, självkänsla och upplevda prestationskrav för elever i årskurs 6, 7, 8 och 9. Deltagande i frågeenkäten är frivilligt.

Om du som elev behöver prata med någon:

Skolans elevhälsoteam (EHT) arbetar för att skapa en god lärande miljö för elevernas kunskapsutveckling och personliga utveckling. Du som elev kan kontakta elevhälsan när som helst, om du behöver prata med någon eller få hjälp med något annat. Det kan vara om du t e x är stressad, blir mobbad eller har svårt att klara av skolan. Elevhälsan jobbar för att alla elever ska må bra, utvecklas och lära sig saker. I elevhälsoteamet arbetar skolkurator, skolsköterska, elevkoordinator, specialpedagog, logoped och studievägledare.

E-postadress \*

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1. Ditt kön?

*Markera endast en oval.*

Flicka

Pojke

2. Vilken årskurs började du på VR?

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3. Har du någon gång haft frånvaro under förra terminen?

*Markera endast en oval.*

Ja

Nej

4. Var frånvaron giltig eller ogiltig?

*Markera alla som gäller.*

- Giltig  
 Ogiltig  
 Både ogiltig och giltig

5. Har du någon gång skolkat?

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Ja  
 Nej

6. Hur ofta skolkar du?

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Ofta  
 Sällan  
 Aldrig

7. Hur ofta kommer du försent till skolan?

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Ofta  
 Sällan  
 Aldrig

8. Vet du hur hög din frånvaro är?

*Markera endast en oval.*

Ja

Nej

9. Hur får du kännedom om din frånvaro?

*Markera endast en oval.*

Lärare

Föräldrar

Kurator eller Elevkoordinator

10. Min frånvaro beror på? *Markera endast en oval.*

Sjukskrivning

Skolk

Sena ankomster

11. Hur ofta är du sjukskriven?

*Markera endast en oval.*

Ofta

Sällan

Aldrig

## 12. Varför blir du sjukskriven/frånvarande från skolan?

Markera alla som gäller.

- Magont
- Huvudvärk
- Förkylning
- Stress och oro
- Nedstämdhet
- För att mina vänner är det
- Svårt för skolarbete
- Problem hemma
- Konflikt med andra elever
- Konflikt med lärare
- Övrigt

## 14. Varför skolkar du?

Markera alla som gäller.

- Magont
- Huvudvärk
- Förkylning
- Stress och oro
- Nedstämdhet
- För att mina vänner gör det
- Svårt för skolarbete
- Problem hemma
- Konflikt med andra elever
- Konflikt med lärare
- Övrigt

## 15. Hur ofta kommer du försent på dina lektioner?



Markera endast en oval.

- Ofta
- Sällan
- Aldrig
- Övrigt

16. Varför kommer du försent på dina lektioner?

Markera alla som gäller.

- Magont
- Huvudvärk
- Förkylning
- Stress och oro
- Nedstämdhet
- För att mina vänner gör det
- Svårt för skolarbete
- Problem hemma
- Konflikt med andra elever
- Konflikt med lärare

I följande frågor ska du ta ställning till hur väl påståendet stämmer. Skalan går från "instämmer helt" till "instämmer inte alls".

17. Jag känner att jag är en värdefull person, åtminstone lika mycket som andra.

Markera endast en oval.

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

18. Jag tycker att jag har en massa goda egenskaper.

Markera endast en oval.

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

19. När allt kommer omkring har jag en tendens att se mig själv som ett misslyckande.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

20. Jag klarar av saker och ting lika väl som de flesta andra människor.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

21. Jag känner att jag inte har mycket att vara stolt över.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

22. Jag har en positiv inställning till mig själv.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

23. På det hela taget är jag nöjd med mig själv.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

24. Jag önskar att jag hade mer respekt för mig själv.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

25. Jag känner mig verkligen oduglig ibland.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

26. Då och då tycker jag att jag är värdelös.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer något
- Instämmer ej
- Instämmer inte alls

I följande frågor ska du ta ställning till hur väl påstående stämmer. Skalan går från "stämmer inte alls" till "stämmer precis".

27. Jag blir lätt rastlös när jag inte har något till hands att prestera.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

28. När jag har blivit underkänd på en skrivning eller i annat sammanhang presterat sämre resultat än jag väntat mig, har det påverkat min självkänsla.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

29. Oavsett det faktiska resultatet har jag alltid en gnagande känsla inom mig att jag borde presterat bättre.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

30. Jag tror att jag ibland försöker bevisa mitt värde genom att vara duktig.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

31. Jag upplever andras framgångar lite som ett hot.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

32. Jag känner att jag aldrig riktigt når mitt bästa resultat, även om jag jobbar hårt.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

33. Andras framgångar gör att jag piskar mig själv att prestera lite extra.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

34. Jag anser att mitt värde som människa beror på hur väl jag lyckas med saker och ting.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

35. Jag har svårt att förlåta mig själv om jag misslyckas med någon viktig Uppgift.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

36. Enligt mig är det inte 'vem jag är', utan 'vad jag har presterat' som räknas.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

37. Min självkänsla är mycket beroende av vad jag åstadkommer i mina dagliga sysslor.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

38. Jag känner att jag duger endast när jag har lyckats bra med något.

*Markera endast en oval.*

- Stämmer inte alls
- Stämmer ganska dåligt
- Stämmer delvis/delvis inte
- Stämmer ganska bra
- Stämmer precis

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