

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Does Skill Performance Influence Young Children's Perceived Physical Competence?

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THE PROBLEM

Young children's perceived competence is critical for their engagement in a variety of different physical activities. However, these perceptions are often inaccurate in early childhood and do not become accurate until about seven years old. While improved effort from over-estimating motor competence may encourage practice in young children, this approach may be detrimental later to an individual persistence, once the individual matures to a point where they can accurately assess their actual motor competence. As children's perceptions of their motor competence is correlated to their physical activity it is important for children to have high motor competence and perceived competence so they can engage in a variety of physical activity and motor skills later in life.



Research Summary

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, it aimed to determine whether children display differences in their perceptions of competence before performing skills, after performing the skills, and after observing their performance. Second, it sought to investigate whether children who are given the opportunity to perform or observe a video of their own motor skill performance have more accurate perceptions of their physical competence compared to those who do not have this opportunity. This study included 76 children (37 males and 39 females) in grades K-2. The Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance was used to measure perceived physical competence (Harter & Pike, 1984), and the Test of Gross Motor Development-Third Edition (Ulrich 2013) was used to assess motor skills.

Conclusion

The study found that conditions in which children are placed before testing their self-perceived competence can influence their responses, particularly for motor skills the children were skilled in or more familiar with such as running. Video feedback of the child's performance improved the accuracy of their perceived competence for running, suggesting that researchers should consider incorporating such methods to reduce inconsistencies in assessments.

Key Takeaway

All participants in this study reported high/inflated perceptions of motor skills competence regardless of condition. By allowing the child to perform the skill of running, their perceptions of competence increased, but when they were allowed to view their own running performance, they saw that they were not as skilled as they initially thought before their observation. These findings were not found for other skills like skipping, dribbling and hopping where their perceptions remained inflated before performing and after watching themselves perform. However, with the second aim of the study, the researchers found that children's perceived competence was closely related to their actual motor competence for running when they were able to observe their performance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Harter, S., & Pike, R. (1984). The pictorial scale of perceived competence and social acceptance for young children. *Child Development*, 55(6), 1969-1982.