THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS' ACTUAL MOTOR COMPETENCE, PERCEIVED MOTOR COMPETENCE AND QUALITY OF MOTIVATION FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

An De Meester¹, Greet Cardon¹, Jolien Maes¹, Jacqueline Goodway², Leen Haerens¹

¹Ghent University, Ghent, Flanders, Belgium, ²Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

Purpose: Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2000), it was hypothesized that children's competence for PE relates to their quality of motivation for PE. In the present study we not only assessed relationships between perceived motor competence and children's motivation, but also included measures of actual motor competence.

Methods: Validated questionnaires were completed by 132 children* (82.6% boys; M age=13.65 years, SD=.67) out of 11 8th grade classes from 7 Flemish elementary schools to assess perceived motor competence (Children and Youth Physical Self-Perception Profile, Whitehead, 1995) and motivation towards PE (Behavioral Regulations in Physical Education Questionnaire, Aelterman et al, 2012). actual motor competence was assessed with the Körperkoordinationstest für Kinder test battery (Kiphard & Schilling, 1974, 2007) and 2 additional tests to measure speed and balls skills. Relationships were assessed with multilevel regression modeling, to account for the hierarchical structure of the data.

Results: A significant relationship was found between actual motor competence and perceived motor competence [β=.58, SE=.11, χ²(1)=26.98, p<.001]. Furthermore, both actual and perceived motor competence were significantly directly and positively related to autonomous motivation towards PE [β=.23, S.E.=.07, χ²(1)=10.78, p<.01 and β=.40, S.E.=.10, χ²(1)=17.59, p<.001 respectively]. Mediation analyses (Baron & Kenny, 1986) to assess the indirect relationship from actual motor competence to autonomous motivation trough perceived motor competence showed that the effect of actual motor competence is fully mediated (28.3%) by perceived motor competence.

Conclusions: The significant relationship between actual motor competence and perceived motor competence suggests that children are able to correctly assess their own motor competence. The finding that perceived motor competence mediates the relationship between actual motor competence and autonomous motivation indicates that higher levels of perceived motor competence may lead to more autonomous motivation for PE. This underlines the importance of supporting children’s need for competence within the SDT-framework.