172 - SCHOOL STUDENTS´ COMPETENCE PERCEPTION PROFILE

ROBERTO ANTONIO GRISA; CHRISTI NORIKO SONOO
State University of Maringá - MARINGÁ-PARANÁ-BRASIL
betogrisa@unipan.br

INTRODUCTION

Faria (2005), analyzing Hater´s essays (1982, 1985, 1999), reports that the increase of self-concept studies, in the last three decades, allowed to: (1) stretch our knowledge over this psychological construct; (2) relate it with other variables, such as school success, anxiety, sport practice and social competence, among others.

Panayota et al. (2004), say that many researches in consequences and correlations of children's self-perception have been facilitated by theory and measures advances which have explored important questions about self-concept structure from primary school children to adolescents.

Likewise, as staring point, it is essential to start by defining self-concept, and Faria (2005), describing some authors (BYRNE, 1984; FARIA 2002; FARIA & FONTAINE, 1990; MARSH & HATTIE, 1996), discovered that in general terms, it can be characterized as been the perception that an individual has over himself and, in specific terms, the attitudes, feelings and self-awareness above his capacities, competences, physical appearance and social acceptance.

Harter (1990, 1998) mentioned by Bee (2003), found that the self-concept evolves evaluative judgments and that it has several interesting aspects. One of them is that during the years of fundamental and standard teaching, children's evaluation over their own capacities become each time more diversified, with very distinct judgments about academic or athletic abilities, physical appearance, colleagues social acceptance, friendship, romantic attraction and parents relationship.

Faria (2005), according to (MARSH & HATTIE, 1996; SHAVELSON, HUBNER, & STANTON, 1976) argues that it can be said that the perceptions about ourselves and self-awareness emerges from the influence of experience in several life contexts, for instance, in family, in school, groups and in the sport context, and also from the interpretations that the individual do about this experiences and the reinforcements and evaluations that the significant others (parents, professors, coaches and, particularly, the pars) do about their behavior, over the attributions or causal explanations that others and himself creates for the most variable behaviors.

Although there still exist some ambiguity in competence conceptualization and measurement, it is generally accepted that competence has two components. For Schwab et al. (2001) one of them, the behavior aspect, is the individual actual performance; and the other, cognitive aspect, is a personal perception and interpretation of his/hers performance and consequences.

One of the slopes from human development connects with the existence of a crescent process for autonomy and independence. According to principles, values and rules instituted by society and with basis in the sharing between social relations, that the individual develops the competences necessary to become self-sufficient (BRÁS, 2006).

Moscovici (2003), quoted by Brás (2006), exposes that this process' core culminates in the adolescence moment. At this period, the young finds himself between the internal conflict (emotion and body changes) and the demands from the exterior World, reason why he is obligated to resort to adaptation strategies, at social, material and domain level, which allow him to develop critical thought and at the same time assure different relational sharing.

Brás (2006), supported by several authors (WHITNEY-THOMAS & MOLONEY, 2001; CAMPOS, 2003; NÓBREGA, 2003), points that the adolescent structures social presentations, with basis at the image that he builds of himself (how he sees himself and how he thinks the others see him), the interactions, comparison and categorization with the pairs, that allow him to build a "*shared, adaptable meaning to each situation"*, facilitating the parents distance, finding himself, the progress to an evaluative self-perception of his competences and consequently view a social dynamic in different contexts.

Carrroll and Loumidis (2001) have found that from motivational theories that have been empirically tested in sport and educational environments the one which has attracted more attention in the recent years is the Motivation for Competence Theory from Harter.

According to the competence model suggested by Harter (1982) quoted in Valentini (2002), intrinsic motivation is highly related with the competence perception that a child experiences in classroom. Children who demonstrate curiosity, who appreciate the learning steps and the resolution of challenges with autonomy, also feel competent in their skills, and as much competent the child perceives, highly positive are their affective reactions and more motivated this child becomes to the realization of new tasks. On the other hand, children who judge themselves as less capable of realizing different tasks try to avoid new learning possibilities.

It is known that the importance of self-concept is related to the predictive capacity of the most variable behaviors, in different life contexts, among them the school and sport ones.

This way, this study aimed to investigate 12 to 14 years school students' competence perception in two school form the city of Cascavel - Paraná. More specifically, tried to identify the level of school competence perception and compare the level of competence perception between gender, public and private schools and students who participated the sports training and those who didn't.

MATERIAL AND METODHS

This research was characterized as descriptive, trying to describe a situation not intervening at the same (BARBANTI, 1994).

The sample of this study was constituted by 41 students, aged from 12 to 14 years. Students from seventh and eighth grade from two schools were evaluated, being 15 students from private school and 26 from public school. Two students didn't have 12 to 14 years old and were excluded from the sample.

As measure instruments was used the Perceived Competence Scale for Children from Harter (1985) adapted by Fiorese (1993). The protocol is composed by six subscales, where each subscale has six questions and each answer is classified in a scale of 4 (four) points, representing 1 (one) the most negative pole of the self-evaluation and 4 (four) the most positive.

The data collection occurred at the third bimestrial of 2006, during the classes of physical education, in each school, with the allowance of the principal and the professors, and the parents' permission, after signing the free enlightenment consentient term.

The data were analyzed trough the descriptive statistics analysis and the *t* of *Student*'s test.

For the mean ad standard deviations calculation was used the Microsoft Office Excel 2003 program. For the *t* test was used the Instat® and the values of p<0,05 were considered significant.

RESULTS AND DICUSSION

The table 1 shows the general profile of the competence perception level from the school students, distributed in six subscales that were evaluated.

Table 1 School Students Level of Competence Perception.

Levels	*Low*		*Mean*		*Mean High*		*High*	
Competence Scale	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Cognitive	3	7,3	20	48,6	15	36,5	3	7,3
Affective	8	19,5	12	29,2	12	29,2	9	21,9
Motor	8	19,5	17	41,4	14	34,1	2	4,8
Physical Appearance	7	17	15	36,5	10	24,3	9	21,9
Behavioral conduct	8	19,5	13	31,7	17	41,4	3	7,3
Global Value	6	14,6	10	24,3	10	24,3	15	36,5

The values presented in Table 1 shows that for the cognitive subscale 48,6% (n=20) of the school students demonstrated a mean competence profile. At the affective subscale 29,2% (n=12) of the school students presented a mean profile, likewise 29,2% (n=12) also showed a mean high profile. At the motor subscale and physical appearance 41,4% (n=17) and 36,5% (n=15) of the school students revealed a mean competence profile, respectively. For the behavioral conduct subscale 41,4% (n=17) of the school students showed a mean high competence profile. And at the global value subscale 36,5% (n=15) of the school students revealed High competence profile.

Ames e Nicholls (1984), mentioned by Valentini (2002) say that generally, individuals that perceive themselves as highly competent in a determined domain (cognitive, social, and/or physical) are more intrinsically motivated in the maintenance of interest at the activities and are more inclined to show effort. Accordingly to these authors, at the present study a small part o the sample presents this kind of behavior, since a few students presented a high profile for competence in several domains.

Craft (2003), quoting Harter (1988), describes physical appearance competence as a feeling with his appearance, feelings of satisfaction with his body, the way he sees himself, etc. To Faria (2005), one of the domains that contributes the most for the definition of self-concept in children and adolescent is the physical domain and, particularly, the physical appearance, is also fundamental for the global self-esteem; so, the physical domain has an important role, since childhood, in the individual's psychosocial adjustment, because children receive very early a direct and indirect *feedback* about his physical attractiveness, his physical condition, his weight, his height and the way he dresses or presents himself.

Accordingly to what is descript by the authors mentioned above, the results of this studies points to a positive profile in relation to satisfaction with their body and for the global self-esteem for most o the children, because only 17% (n=7) and 14,6% (n=6) demonstrated having a low competence perception at physical appearance and global value, respectively.

The table 2 presents the mean and standard deviations values of the competence perception levels at the six subscales evaluated between genders.

Table 2 – Values distributed by gender.

	Masculine		*Feminine*	
Competence Scale	**A**	**DS**	**A**	**DS**
Cognitive	2,54	±0,38	**2,93***	±0,51
Affective	2,79	±0,68	2,66	±0,72
Motor	2,70	±0,52	2,41	±0,5
Physical Appearance	2,70	±0,63	2,74	±0,83
Behavioral conduct	2,65	±0,53	2,81	±0,73
Global Value	3,10	±0,61	2,83	±0,87

***p<0,05 vs. masculine.**

The data presented on Table 2 demonstrate that the masculine group showed better affective and motor competence perception meanwhile the feminine group showed better cognitive and behavioral conduct competence perception. For the physical appearance and global value subscales, both the groups perceive themselves equally.

However, it was verified a significant difference between the groups for the cognitive subscale, where the feminine group showed better competence perception (p=0,01).

Telama (1998) and Van Wersch (1997), quoted by Carroll and Loumidis (2001), demonstrated that the boys show higher levels of competence perception than girls, however these results were found only for the affective and motor subscales.

Faria & Fontaine (1995) and Fontaine (1991), mentioned by Faria (2005), in a study with Portuguese girls, showed that the girls presented a lower physical self-concept then the boys in the physical appearance domain.

Harter (1988), mentioned by Scwab et al. (2001), also discussed the difference of competence between gender. She verified that feminine adolescents evaluated their physical appearance in a more negative way than the boys. At the global self-value, girls see themselves as less acceptable than boys. In contrast, Scwab et al. (2001), verified that boys showed lesser global self-value than girls.

The results found differed from the ones found by Faria & Fontaine (1995), Fontaine (1991) and Harter (1988), mentioned above, because there was no significant difference between the gender for the physical appearance and global value subscales.

The table 3 presents the values for the six subscales evaluated distributed in private or public learning institution.

Table 3 – Values distributed by school.

	Private		*Public*	
Competence Scales	**A**	**DS**	**A**	**DS**
Cognitive	2,9	±0,51	2,59	±0,42
Affective	2,77	±0,83	2,71	±0,62
Motor	2,68	±0,45	2,51	±0,56
Physical Appearance	2,96	±0,74	2,58	±0,66
Behavioral conduct	2,94	±0,64	2,59	±0,58
Global Value	3,45	±0,60	**2,72***	±0,68

***p<0,05 vs. private.**

In the table 3 the values obtained revealed that the group from the private school showed better competence perception for the cognitive, physical appearance and behavioral conduct subscales, without, however, show significant difference. For the affective and motor subscales, both the groups showed an equal competence perception.

However, a significant difference (p=0,001) was found between the groups for the global value where the group from private school showed better competence perception than those from public schools.

Accordingly to the competence model proposed by Harter (1982) mentioned by Valentini (2002), the intrinsic motivation is highly related with the competence perception that a child experiences in the classroom. For the students from the private school the teachers may be acting in direction of promoting environments that provides a motivational climate, where the satisfaction and competence perception in some domains may be improved.

Data from Bouchey and Harter (2005) indicates that the perception the student has of what adults think and do foresee his self-perception and actual performance, where several reasons may potentially point to this pattern. One of them suggests that at the beginning of adolescence, children are more preoccupied with what adults think, because the adults are those who reward or punish the school performance, offering money for the good school essays.

Seen this way, it is possible that the students who have parents with better socioeconomic level, which is the case at private schools, show higher effort to obtain better rewards.

The table 4 shows the competence perception of students that participated in sport training and those who didn't.

Table 4 Values distributed by students who trained and who didnt train.

	Train		*Dont Train*	
Competence Scales	**A**	**DS**	**A**	**DS**
Cognitive	2,69	0,50	2,68	0,50
Affective	2,79	0,74	2,66	0,63
Motor	2,75	0,52	**2,35***	0,45
Physical Appearance	2,75	0,69	2,65	0,80
Behavioral conduct	2,62	0,57	2,83	0,67
Global Value	3,03	0,68	2,92	0,81

***p<0,05 vs. Trained.**

For the affective, motor and physical appearance subscales, the students that trained revealed a better competence perception than the students that didn't train. The behavioral conduct showed an inverse behavior, where the students that didn't train presented a better competence perception than the students that trained. At the cognitive and global value subscale, both groups showed an equal competence perception.

However, a significant difference was only identified between the groups, for the motor subscale, where the group that participates in the sport training showed better competence perception (p=0,01).

Researches have shown (BURTON and MARTENS, 1986; FELTZ and PETLICHKOFF, 1983; ROBERTS et al., 1981 apud CARROLL and LOUMIDIS, 2001) that the sport participants have a higher competence perception than the others who didn't participate on the training or those who have backed away from sport.

In this research only for the affective, motor and physical appearance subscales the sport participants demonstrated a higher competence perception.

Valentini (2002) found studies (HARTER, 1982; STIPEK & KOWALSKI, 1989) that points that the judgment that children create over their capacities is strongly dependent on the value they attribute to success at the ending and to the values manifested by their pairs, and at the "feedback" from the adults that are important for this child. Then it is possible that this significant difference at motor competence might be explained by the support from this important people - perhaps the parents - in the participation and positive reinforcement for this child during the sport practice.

Carroll and Loumidis (2001) found in their study that children with high competence perception significantly spend more time participating in sports teams and individual sports, than children with low competence perception.

CONCLUSION

Considering that the patterns and values may not be the same for every children, because some may have higher concern for sport abilities, other friendship, that a little difference - what he/she would like to be (or thinks should be) and what he/she thinks he/she is - do not protect the child from a low self-esteem if she don't receive sufficient social support; and that, besides, a lovely family or group of friends don't guarantee a high self-esteem if a child don't feel like living according his own patterns.

It is interesting to note that in spite of the differences found at the subscales, the children evaluated at this study apparently feel well with themselves, demonstrating that they perceive that are living accordingly with their objectives or values, that is, the level of difference between what he/she would like to be (or thinks should be) and what he/she thinks he/she is, is small.

This feeling of well-being may have been favoring by the support of the important people that surrounds these children, making them feel that the other people like them the way they are.

For the next studies it is suggested to verify if the socioeconomic status, just like the participation in different sport modalities may influence at the competence perception of the students. And if there is a relation between competence perceptions, physical exercises practice and risk behavior.

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Endereço: Rua Belo Horizonte, 1372.
CEP: 85802-010 - Cascavel - Paraná - Brasil
Telefone: (45) 9921-0228
Roberto Antonio Grisa

SCHOOL STUDENTS´ COMPETENCE PERCEPTION PROFILE

ABSTRACT

This descriptive study had as objective to investigate 12 to 14 year school students´ competence perception from the city of Cascavel - Paraná. The aim was to verify the competence perception profile and to compare the levels of competence perception between genders, different schools and the students who participated the sports training with those who didn't. The sample was constituted of 41 students. Perceived Competence Scale for Children from Harter (1985) adapted by Fiorese (1993) was used as measure instrument. The data were evaluated by descriptive statistics analyses and the *t* of *Student* test. The results showed that exists significant difference (P<0,05) for the cognitive, global value and motor subscales, for the values distributed by gender, by school and by participants of the sports training, respectively. However, the children evaluated in this study apparently feel good about them selves, showing that they perceive that are living according to their objective and values.

Keywords: perception, competence, self-concept.

PROFIL DE LA PERCEPTION DE COMPETENCES DE COLLEGIENS

RESUME

Ce travail, de caractère descriptif, a eu comme objectif évaluer la perception de compétence de collégiens âgés de 12 a 14 ans dans la municipalité de Cascavel - Paraná. On a essayé de vérifier le profil et comparer les niveaux entre les genres, les collèges et les collégiens qui participent des entraînements sportifs avec ceux qui n'en participent pas. L'échantillon s'est constitué de 41 (quarante et un) élèves. Comme outil de mesure, on a utilisé le Protocole de Perception de Compétences de Harter (1985) adapté par Fiorese (1993). Les donnés ont été évalués à travers l'analyse de la statistique descriptive et Test *t* de *Student* appariés. Les résultats ont démontré qu'il existe des différences significatives (0<0,05) pour les sous échelles cognitives, valeur globale et moteur, pour les valeurs distribuées par genre, par collège et par participants d'entraînements sportifs, respectivement. Toutefois, les enfants évalués dans cette étude apparemment ont une bonne perception d'eux-mêmes, en démontrant qu'ils perçoivent qu'ils vivent en accord avec leurs buts ou valeurs.

Mots-clé: perception, compétence, estime de soi.

PERFIL DE LA PERCEPCIÓN DE LA COMPETENCIA DE LOS ALUMNOS

RESUMEN (ESPANHOL)

El presente estudio descriptivo, tuvo como objetivo general investigar la percepción de competencia de alumnos de 12 a 14 años en la ciudad de Cascavel - Paraná. Buscóse identificar el perfil y comparar los níveles entre los géneros, las escuelasy los alumnos que participam del entrenamientos de deportes con los que no participan. La muestra constituyóse de 41 alumnos. Utilizóse de un instrumiento de evaluación *Perceived Competence Scale for Children* de Harter (1985) adaptado por Fiorese (1993). Los datos fueron analisados a traves de la estatística descriptiva y Teste *t* de *Student*. Los resultados muenstraron que existen diferencias significativas (p<0,05) para las subescalas cognitiva, valor global y motora, para los valores distribuídos por género, por escuela y por participantes del entrenamientos, respectivamente. Sin embargo, los niños parecen sentirse bien con ellas mismas y percibense que están viviendo de acuerdo con sus objectivos o valores.

Palavras chave: percepción, competencia, autoconcepto.

PERFIL DA PERCEPÇÃO DE COMPETÊNCIA DE ESCOLARES

RESUMO

O presente estudo, de cunho descritivo, teve como objetivo investigar a percepção de competência de escolares de 12 a 14 anos no Município de Cascavel - Paraná. Buscou-se verificar o perfil e comparar os níveis entre os gêneros, as escolas e os escolares que participam de treinamento de esportes com os que não participam. A amostra constitui-se de 41 alunos. Como instrumento de medida foi utilizado o Protocolo de Percepção de Competência de Harter (1985) adaptado por Fiorese (1993). Os dados foram avaliados através da análise da estatística descritiva e Teste *t* de *Student* não pareado. Os resultados demonstraram que existem diferenças significativas (p<0,05) para as subescalas cognitiva, valor global e motora, para os valores distribuídos por gênero, por escola e por participantes de treinamentos de esportes, respectivamente. Porém, as crianças avaliadas neste estudo aparentemente sentem-se bem com elas próprias, demonstrando que elas percebem que estão vivendo de acordo com seus objetivos ou valores.

Palavras chave: percepção, competência, auto-conceito.