

INFLUENCES OF PERCEIVED SPORT COMPETENCE ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENJOYMENT IN EARLY ADOLESCENTS

STEFANO SCARPA AND ALESSANDRA NART
University of Padua

In the sport and physical activity (PA) field, *enjoyment is a positive affective response to the sport experience* (Scanlan & Simons, 1992) and it can also be considered an important factor in promoting active lifestyles and regular PA among school-aged children (Carraro, Young, & Robazza, 2008). Although PA enjoyment depends primarily on intrinsic factors, sport competence may influence PA enjoyment (Carroll & Loumidis, 2003). We investigated the effects of perceived sport competence on PA enjoyment, initially expecting that perceived sport competence could be predictive of high levels of PA enjoyment.

At present, there are no studies in which the influences of perceived sport competence on PA enjoyment have been examined with Italian adolescents. A review revealed that the sport literature features only one study on this topic conducted with English children (Biddle, Wang, Chatzisarantis, & Spray, 2003) in which it was found that levels of sport competence did not seem to influence their levels of enjoyment. This study was carried out to increase the existing body of knowledge about the relationship between perceived sport competence and enjoyment.

Participants were 394 pupils (173 boys and 221 girls) aged between 12 and 13 years ($M = 12.2$) and recruited from a number of schools located in a northeastern region of Italy. They completed an Italian version of the Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale (PACES; Carraro et al., 2008) and the Physical Self Description Questionnaire-Short (PSDQ-S; Marsh, 1996). The Italian version of the PSDQ-S (Scarpa, Gobbi, Paggiaro, & Carraro, 2010) contains five factors of physical

Stefano Scarpa, Department of Educational Sciences, University of Padua; Alessandra Nart, Interfaculty Course of Human Movement Sciences, University of Padua.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Stefano Scarpa, Department of Educational Sciences, University of Padua, Via Beato Pellegrino 28, 35137 Padova, Italy. Email: stefano.scarpa@unipd.it

self-concept which are used to assess perceived sport competence: endurance, flexibility, strength, coordination, and sport skill.

Questionnaires were completed in groups in the classroom. All respondents and their parents gave their informed consent and were assured that individual data would be kept confidential.

Pearson's correlation test was used to measure the association between variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the correlation between PSDQ-S scores (independent variables) and PACES total score (dependent variable). Pearson's correlation test revealed the following positive associations between PSDQ-S variables and PACES total score: endurance ($r = .527, p < .001$); flexibility ($r = .206, p < .001$); strength ($r = .365, p < .001$); coordination ($r = .427, p < .001$); sport skill ($r = .546, p < .001$). Multiple linear regression analysis showed the following score indices: $SE = 7.76$; $t = 20.79$; $R^2 = .363$; $F(5, 388) = 44.13$; $p < .001$.

Our results highlighted positive associations between physical self-concept scales and PA enjoyment, and our hypothesis that perceived sport competence can be considered a good predictor of PA enjoyment was confirmed. The results could contribute to our understanding of the processes involved in the promotion of active lifestyles and regular PA among young people.

Keywords: physical activity, physical activity enjoyment, perceived sport competence, early adolescence, Physical Self Description Questionnaire, Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale.

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