ORAL: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERCEIVED MOTOR COMPETENCE AND WEIGHT STATUS IN CHILDREN AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS

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A large proportion of Spanish children and adolescents are overweight or obese with associated negative consequences to their health. Perceived motor competence (PMC) plays a role in young people's physical activity but association with healthy weight status is unclear. Objective: To analyze children's and early adolescents' perceived motor competence (PMC) according to body mass index (BMI). Method: A sample of 1358 students (48.3%) aged 8-14 years-old participated voluntarily. PMC was assessed by using the pictorial scale of Perceived Movement Skill Competence (6 locomotive + 7 object control items = overall PMC). BMI was computed using CDC Growth Charts (adjusting to age and sex), and categorized as normal-weight, over-weight and obese. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and hierarchical multiple regression models while controlling for potential confounding factors (age and sex) were conducted (pp=.05). Results: MANOVA exhibited a main effect of BMI in locomotion ($F(2,1358)=11.16$; pp=.001; $\eta_p^2=.016$) with no effect in object control and overall PMC. Obese individuals reported lower perceived locomotion than their over- and normal-weight counterparts ($p<.01$). After controlling for age and sex, BMI explained 2.3% of PMC in locomotion (Beta =-.154; pp=.001). Implications: Findings reflect data on actual motor competence where an unhealthy weight status is associated negatively with locomotor skill performance, but not object control performance. Locomotor skills involve body displacement across space whereas object control skills can be performed without imperative displacement. Even though a low percentage of PMC in locomotion is explained by BMI, it still shows being obese can affect experiences of body movement and may negatively influence engagement in physical activity. Interventions promoting healthy weight in children and adolescents should monitor individuals' PMC to screen how they perceive specific movement skill domains across time. The association between PMC and BMI suggests that self-perception might play a role in youth's motor development.