

Introduction

The development of both a positive self-concept and an adequate goal-orientation is generally seen as a crucial factor in childhood and adolescence (e.g., Harter, 2007). Due to its social and performance-orientated structure, sport acts a socializing agent and plays an important role for the setting of these individual attributes (e.g., Conzelmann et al., 2011). However, little is known about the status quo of physical self-concept and goal-orientation in children of primary school age and in which extent it is affected by sports club membership, sex, and age.

Objective

The objective of this study was to examine the effect of sports club membership, sex, and age on physical self-concept and goal-orientation in primary school children. Based on previous research, we hypothesized that...

1. "Sports club-children" report significantly higher physical self-concept and intrinsic goal orientation-values than "No Sports club-children".
2. Boys report significantly higher physical self-concept-values than girls.

Methods

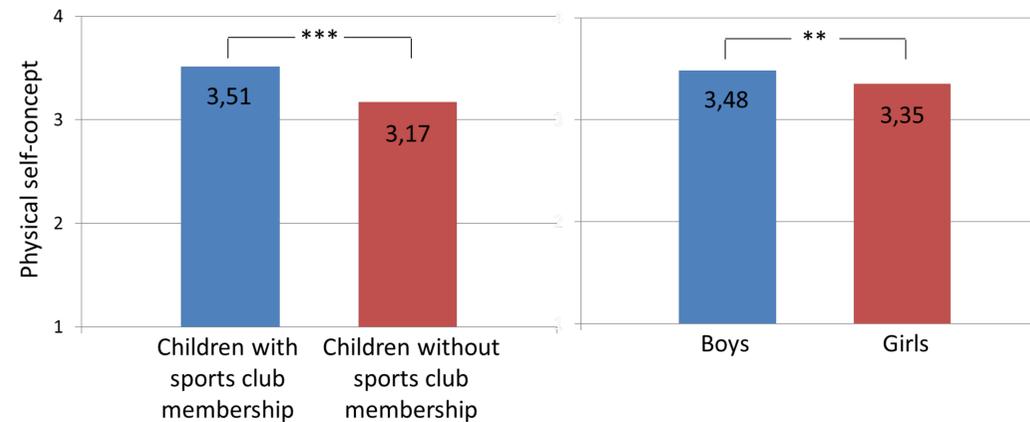
A sample of 365 primary school children of second ($n = 176$, $M_{age} = 7.5$) and fourth grade ($n = 189$, $M_{age} = 9.5$) completed questionnaires of physical self-concept and goal-orientation (see Lohbeck et al., in print). Items were reduced and linguistical simplified to be suitable for primary school children; in case of lack of understanding they were explained by the first author. Overall, the validation of the modified questionnaires led to satisfying results (see Lohbeck et al., in print).

Results

Data were analyzed in two separate 2 x 2 x 2-ANOVAs (sports club membership x sex x age) with physical self-concept and goal-orientation as dependent variables.

Effects on physical self-concept

Children belonging to a sports club reported significantly higher values than non-involved children, $F(1,357) = 54.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_{p2} = .13$, as well as boys than girls, $F(1,357) = 9.93$, 54.51 , $p < .01$, $\eta_{p2} = .03$. In contrast, age had no effect, $F(1,357) = 1.56$, $p > 2$.

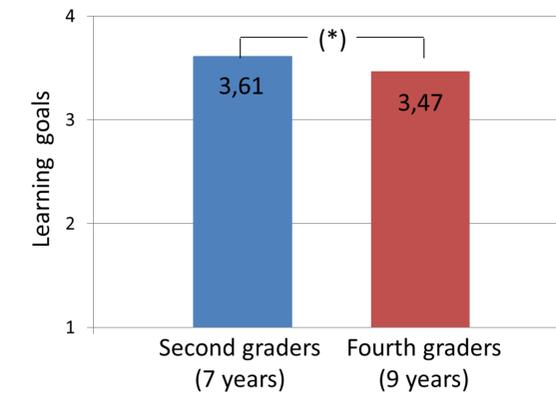


Graph 1a. Effect of sports club membership on physical self-concept of primary school children.

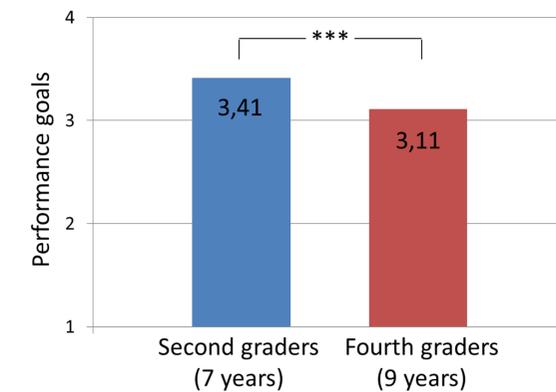
Graph 1b. Effect of sex on physical self-concept of primary school children.

Effects on goal-orientation

Relating to goal-orientation, sports club membership and sex had effects only on some subscales, e.g., boys showed a stronger orientation to performance goals than girls, $F(1,357) = 6.86$, $p < .01$, $\eta_{p2} = .02$. More importantly however, second graders (i.e., 7 years old children) generally scored higher on goal orientation subscales than fourth graders (i.e., 9 years old children), e.g., learning goals, $F(1,357) = 3.22$, $p < .1$, $\eta_{p2} = .01$, and performance goals, $F(1,357) = 13.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_{p2} = .04$. This finding corresponds to the developmental approach of Nichols (1984).



Graph 2a. Effect of age on learning goal orientation.



Graph 2b. Effect of age on performance goal orientation.

Conclusions

1. Yet in primary school age being in a sports club has a positive effect on the physical self-concept. Apparently, physical activities help children to develop a beneficial self-concept.
2. Differences between boys and girls regarding the physical self-concept were found in prior studies and has to be considered as a gender effect.
3. Further studies should include motor tests to assess not only the level of physical self-concept but also its veridicality.