

Effects induced by verbal information feedback upon the competency perception in an achievement motivation study

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Abstract

Background. In sports activity, the individual tries to show his competency, a phenomenon relying on two conceptions: the orientation to his own achievement and the orientation to the task achievement. In order to improve his performance, the athlete needs to evaluate both aims and feedback.

Aims. Our objective was to determine some possible effects of motivational orientations and investigate the positive or negative aspects of the verbal information feedback that can induce high or low perceptions upon the women gymnasts' competency.

Methods. 36 female gymnasts aged 15 to 20 were tested, participating in the selection process for the senior group national team.

The task had to emphasize the gymnast's competency, the effort made and the consequences on her results, derived from the chosen difficulty level. Gymnasts were given the possibility to prepare, within a 12-minute interval, a motor composition consisting of a combination of corporal technical elements from the fundamental groups (jumps, pirouettes, balance, suppleness/ wave), on a compulsory music (with a 35-second duration), and also by using a hand-apparatus. By the end of the preparation interval, the motor composition was evaluated, according to the number and value of the component technical difficulties, by two international women judges.

Results. By checking the feedback effects upon the competency perception, it was emphasized that: a positive feedback leads to a high perception of one's competency and a negative feedback to a poor perception of one's competency, in both the involvement conditions (task versus self).

Data analysis (Student's t calculation: $t = -1.413$, $p = 0.1383$) regarding the gymnasts' perceptions of their competency and of the applied effort, depending on the involvement conditions and on the received feedback, allowed us to conclude that the imposed aims (task versus self) did not have a direct impact upon the competency perceptions.

Within the conditions of involvement in the task, there is no connection between competency and effort. The analysis of variance (Anova) results emphasize that this variable does not significantly differ; namely it does not depend either on the established aim type (task versus self) or on the received feedback nature ($F(1,32) = 1.142$, $p > 0.10$). It can be stated that senior gymnasts show particular effort inferences.

Conclusions. As for the feedback effects upon the competency perception, the obtained results confirm the existence of coherence between the difficult chosen program and the important self-confidence feeling, the feeble discomfort sensation and the minor culpability, despite the incertitude related to the applied effort quantity. The gymnasts' feeling of having made a poor effort can be explained by the fact they have doubts about their capacity to achieve the proposed task and they try thus to anticipate a failure synonymous with incompetence.

Keywords: achievement motivation, involvement task, competency, effort, rhythmic gymnastics.