

PARTICIPATION RIGHT, PRESCHOOL QUALITY AND CHILDREN'S PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

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INTRODUCTION

Children's participation, defined as the right to participate in all matters affecting them, freely expressing their opinion, having it respected and taken into account, is increasingly considered a criteria of early childhood education quality (Sheridan, 2007). Many authors suggest, conceptually, relationships between participation and children's self-esteem, self-efficacy, negotiation or conflict resolution (e.g., Kirby & Bryson, 2002; Sinclair, 2004), although there is little empirical evidence to such claims. This study investigates the associations between preschool teacher's perceptions about participation practices, observed teachers' emotional support, and children's perceived-competence, controlling for children's sex, age, and mothers' education. As we hypothesize that teachers' participation practices and emotional support might have differential effects on children's perceived competence as a function of children's behavior, and research on the associations between preschooler's self-concept and their behavioral outcomes is scarce (Jia, Land & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2015; Lee & Stone, 2012), **externalizing behavior will be tested a moderator of the relationship between both teachers emotional support and participation practices, and children's perceived competence.**

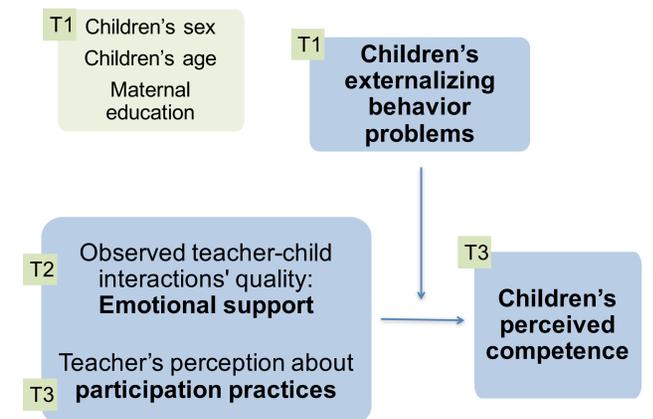


Figure 1. Hypothetic model of relations between variables

METHOD

Participants

- 180 typically developing children (90 ♂) ($M_{age} = 63.33$, $SD = 7.05$) from 44 preschool classrooms of the Lisbon area.
- 44 preschool teachers (1♂) ($M = 48.04$, $SD = 7.58$), with professional teaching experience ranging from 7 to 35 years ($M = 22.68$, $SD = 6.37$).

Measures and procedures

- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Pre-K version (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008) (Emotional Support, $\alpha = .90$).
 - "Teacher's perceptions about the implementation of children's participation right in preschool settings": Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all typical*, 5 = *Extremely typical*) (Factor 'Children's Expression and Responsibility', $\alpha = .85$; Factor 'Decision Making by the Adult', $\alpha = .78$).
 - Portuguese adaptation of the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) Preschool version (Externalizing behaviour problems, $\alpha = .87$).
 - Portuguese adaptation of Portuguese adaptation of "The Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children" - Harter (Mata, Monteiro, & Peixoto, 2008) (Perceived competence, $\alpha = .71$).
- ▶ Measures have been collected in three different moments (T1 to T3), with 5 months between T1 and T3.

DISCUSSION

- We did not find main effects of perceived teacher participation practices or teachers' emotional support on children's perceived competence, when controlling for children's sex, age, and mothers' education. Furthermore, children's externalizing behavior does not have a moderating effect on the hypothesized association. Therefore, our findings do not support claims by Kirby and Bryson (2002) and Sinclair (2004).
- Children's externalizing behavior problems in the beginning of the school year do not seem to influence the view that children develop of themselves, when considering teacher's restriction for children's opportunities for decision-making (regarding classroom features, schedule, and activities), teacher's allowance for children's expression of ideas and responsibility for different tasks, or classroom emotional support.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptives and correlations among variables

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|--------|--------|------|
| 1. Sex (1 = male) | --- | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age (months) | -.04 | --- | | | | | | |
| 3. Maternal education (years) | .04 | -.15 | --- | | | | | |
| 4. Perceived-competence | .08 | -.10 | .02 | --- | | | | |
| 5. Externalizing behavior problems | .31** | -.01 | -.05 | .21* | --- | | | |
| 6. Emotional support | .00 | -.01 | .30** | .05 | -.03 | --- | | |
| 7. Children's expression and responsibility | .00 | -.06 | .07 | .06 | .28** | .32** | --- | |
| 8. Decision making by the adult | .00 | .01 | -.08 | -.07 | -.15 | -.51** | -.45** | --- |
| <i>M</i> | | 63.33 | 11.80 | 3.36 | 0.51 | 5.02 | 4.37 | 3.20 |
| <i>SD</i> | | 7.05 | 3.81 | 0.43 | 0.50 | 0.80 | 0.42 | 0.54 |
| <i>N</i> | 180 | 180 | 167 | 131 | 180 | 176 | 160 | 160 |

Note. Variables were mean centered.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Summary of multilevel analysis (SPSS Linear Mixed Models) predicting children's perceived-competence and effect sizes

| | <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>Effect size</i> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Intercept | 3.36 (0.05)* | |
| Sex (1 = male) | .03 (0.09) | .07 |
| Age (months) | -.01 (0.01) | -.16 |
| Maternal education (years) | -.00 (0.01) | -.02 |
| Externalizing behavior problems | .09 (0.10) | .10 |
| Emotional support | .02 (0.07) | .03 |
| Children's expression and responsibility | -.06 (0.12) | -.05 |
| Decision taking by the adult | .01 (0.10) | 0.01 |
| Externalizing behavior problems * Emotional support | -.19 (0.14) | -.14 (+1 SD) .22 (-1 SD) |
| Externalizing behavior problems * Children's expression and responsibility | .13 (0.25) | .01 (+1 SD) .20 (-1 SD) |
| Externalizing behavior problems * Decision making by the adult | -.09 (0.23) | .05 (+1 SD) .08 (-1 SD) |

Note. Variables were mean centered.
* $p < .05$.