The Mediator Role of Social Competence in the Relation between Effortful Control and Maths Achievement

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Abstract : The aim of this work was to analyze the relation between children´s effortful control and Maths achievement in a sample of 447 Spanish children aged between 6 and 8 years. Traditionally, the literature confirms that higher level of effortful control has been associated with higher academic achievement, but there are few studies that include the effect that children´s social competence exert to this relation. To measure children's effortful control parents were given the TMCQ (Temperament in Middle Childhood Questionnaire), and Maths achievement was taken from teacher´s rates. To measure social competence, we used the nominations method in the classroom context. Results confirmed that higher effortful control predicted a better maths achievement, whereas lower effortful control scores predicted lower Maths scores. Using a statistical modeling approach, we tested a mediation model that revealed the mediating role of social competence (popularity and rejection) in the relation between effortful control and Maths achievement. Concretely, higher social competence (higher popularity and lower rejection) seems to mediate the better Maths achievement showed by better self´regulated children. Therefore, an adequate social competence mediates the positive effect that self-regulatory capacity exerts to academic achievement. The clinical implications of the present findings should be considered. Specifically, rejected children must be detected and evaluated in community settings, such as school or community programs, due the relevant role of social competence in the relation between temperament and academic achievement.