Reliability and Validity for Measures of Children’s Self-Efficacy for Walking to School

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Despite well documented associations between physical activity and well-being, most children do not meet current physical activity recommendations. Active commuting (e.g., walking, cycling) has been identified as a key target behavior for increasing physical activity in children. Self efficacy (SE) is a mediator of health behaviours such as active commuting. **PURPOSE:** To assess the reliability and validity of children’s SE for walking to school as measured by child (C-SE) and parent (P-SE) questionnaires. **METHODS:** Complete data were collected for 165 elementary school children (57.0% boys, 43.0% girls; age 8-9 yr) and one of their parents (n = 115). The C-SE and P-SE assessed children’s self-perceptions of SE and parents’ perceptions of their children’s SE, for overcoming barriers associated with walking to school. Both instruments comprised 14 items with either a 3-point (C-SE) or 5-point (P-SE) Likert response. To assess test-retest reliability of the C-SE, a subgroup of children (n = 23) completed the C-SE on two occasions, 7 days apart. **RESULTS:** Internal consistency was C-SE α = .80; P-SE α = .96. Test-retest reliability was ICC = .86 (2-way ANOVA model, adjusted for a single administration), with a trivial (D = 0.05), nonsignificant (p > .05) mean difference between trials. Preliminary exploratory factor analyses indicated that a unidimensional model explained 32% and 66% of total item variance in C-SE and P-SE respectively. C-SE and P-SE correlated significantly (r = .31, p < .01). Children’s SE was significantly and meaningfully higher for children who walked to school compared to non-walkers, as measured by C-SE (p < .01; D = 0.60) and by P-SE (p < .01; D = 1.06). **CONCLUSION:** Reliability (internal consistency and 7-day test-retest) and validity (structural, convergent, and construct-related evidence) were acceptable to high for both parent and child questionnaire measures of children’s SE for walking to school. SE for walking to school may be better represented by a multidimensional model. These instruments are suitable for use in investigations of active commuting in elementary school children. Future research will evaluate test-retest reliability over a longer period (8 weeks).