

Bar-Ilan University

Mastery Motivation

of Premature (less than 32 Weeks Gestation) and Term Toddlers

Aged 12-24 Months

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Abstract

Introduction: Mastery Motivation is the multifaceted internal psychological force driving the individual to achieve mastery in the skills and tasks which are challenging, the force behind exploring and mastering one's surroundings. In the past 30 years research has focused on the manifestation of the "Mastery Motivation" assessment across cultures and populations. The findings of the research have revealed that Mastery Motivation is a decisive factor in normal development and the assessment of the child's cognitive, emotional, social, motor, and psychomotor abilities. In the present study the level of mastery motivation of premature and term toddlers was assessed and compared. The assessments were made both by the researcher, a developmental professional, and the parent.

Procedure: The subjects were toddlers aged 12 to 24 months, the premature toddlers' fixed age was calculated. The 30 premature toddlers were born before 32 weeks of gestation. The control group included twenty term toddlers. Mastery Motivation was assessed by the researcher during observation of the toddlers performing age appropriate tasks, and the parents' completed the Mastery Motivation questionnaires. Temperament and sensory regulation were assessed by parent questionnaires.

Results: The results of the study revealed that the parents of the premature subjects rated their children's Level of Mastery Motivation higher than the parents of the term toddlers, and the term subjects were observed as having higher levels of Mastery Motivation than their premature counterparts by the researcher. The relationship between Temperament and a higher level of Mastery Motivation as assessed in parent questionnaires in both the premature and term toddlers was found to be related to perceiving the Temperament as adjusting. In contrast, the relationship between an adjustable Temperament and higher Levels of Mastery was found only in the term (control) group of toddlers, as assessed by the researcher. The demographic variables did not differ significantly between the two groups, nor did they differ on sensory regulation measures except for a slight but not significant difference of tactile sensitivity.

Discussion: In this study the parents' and researcher's evaluation not only complemented one another but provide a definitive advantage in the selected method of assessment of Mastery Motivation. The perceived relative achievement of the premature child in the eyes of the parents were beyond their initial expectations. The researcher, however, found the premature toddlers' Mastery Motivation to be relatively lower than the term toddlers as she relied on her professional know how of what is expected of children aged 12 to 24 months. The lack of expected correlation between Temperament and Mastery Motivation when assessed by the researcher can be attributed to the influence of the emotional difficulties inherent in parenting and the distractibility of the premature toddler (which might be caused by tactile sensitivity) on the premature child's ability to cope with the tasks.

Research Implications: Focusing on Mastery Motivation provides a sound way of assessing the toddler's abilities and can be applied to intervention programs. The results of this study can serve as the base for training and developing community services for parents, day care directors, caretakers, as well as the implementation of intervention programs geared at promoting development and bridging the gaps before the children reach kindergarten and school age.