THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL ASPECTS ON ARITHMETIC WORD PROBLEM-SOLVING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

Eleonora Doz (Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita, Università di Trieste), Elisa Colombini (Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita, Università di Trieste), Alessandro Cuder (Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita, Università di Trieste), Sandra Pellizzoni (Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita, Università di Trieste), Barbara Carretti (Dipartimento di Psicologia Generale, Università degli Studi di Padova), Maria Chiara Passolunghi (Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita, Università di Trieste)

Previous studies found emotional factors, such as math anxiety, to be consistently related to students' poor math performance. However, less is known about the link between math anxiety and children's arithmetic word problem-solving achievement. A construct that seems to be associated with anxiety is the perceived task difficulty: judgments of difficulty may arouse feelings of worry which negatively impact students' performance. In this presentation, data on the contributions of math anxiety and perceived task difficulty to arithmetic word problem-solving performance among primary school students will be reported. Fifth graders were administered a math anxiety scale, an arithmetic word problem task and a task evaluating the perception of problems' difficulty. In particular, the arithmetic problem-solving task included compare problems which contain a relational term (e.g., more than and less than) that compares the value of two variables. Results revealed that math anxiety significantly predicted students' problem-solving achievement and it completely mediated the relationship between perceived task difficulty and problem-solving performance. Moreover, a gender difference in math anxiety was found. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings will be discussed.