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Social Representations of Gymnastics, Teacher's Perceived Competence and Students' Gymnastic Skill Level in Ninth and Twelfth Grades: The Case of Lycée Moderne 3 of Divo (Ivory Coast)

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Abstract

Internships in secondary schools led us to observe a low level of gymnastic skills among students. This level of mastery is approached in the present research from the angle of students' social representation (SR) of gymnastics and their perception of the teacher's competence. Accordingly, 215 students from the ninth and twelfth grades were selected through stratified sampling and assessed with an instrument composed of evaluation grids and questionnaires. The results show that improving students' gymnastic skill level requires enhancing both their SR of this discipline and their perception of the physical education teacher's competence.

Keywords

Gymnastics, Skill, Social Representation, Perceived Competence

1. Introduction

Physical and Sports Activities (PSA) have, within a century, evolved from the status of marginal practices to an essential social phenomenon in the life of human beings (Bennour, 2014). Given its importance, sport in general has become a fundamental and vital need in the construction of societies and in all domains. This is why PSA has been integrated into the formal educational system as a subject called Physical and Sports Education (PSE) that contributes to the training of stu-

dents. Indeed, the interest in transmitting the values and ethics of sport to future generations through the process of socialization justifies the place of PSA in educational systems worldwide.

The introduction of sport into the Ivorian school system dates back to the colonial period (Bini, 2016). Following the independence, Ivory Coast was engaged, through its leaders, in a policy of consolidating Physical and Sports Education (PSE) within the educational system. The State therefore established a National Institute of Youth and Sports (INJS) in 1961 to train PSE professionals. It should be noted, within the entire Ivorian education system, that secondary education has received particular attention in terms of PSA teaching (Bini, 2016). Thus, infrastructures were built and teachers trained at INJS were assigned to secondary schools to educate students.

Behaim-Grosse (2007) points out that PSE, being a discipline in its own right, is taught in secondary schools just like other subjects (mathematics, physics, etc.). This subject aims to develop well-rounded, balanced citizens who master their psychomotor skills and are capable of sporting performance, thereby facilitating their social integration and openness to the world. Indeed, PSE enables students, regardless of their abilities or physical capacities, to experience bodily activities that constitute valuable educational situations. PSE is above all an education. Its specificity lies in the fact that it is a physical education, the motor skills being its primary focus. Given the importance of PSE in personality development, it seems essential to create favorable conditions for increasingly effective teaching of this discipline in schools.

However, it is clear that the PSE, in secondary schools, faces numerous problems, both in its organization and in the teaching process of the various PSA it encompasses (Agbere, 2010). In Ivory Coast, studies have been conducted on the challenges faced by the PSE discipline in high schools and colleges. Among others, we can cite pedagogical issues in private schools, the marginalization of PSE in secondary education in general, and the lack of infrastructures as fundamental difficulties of this discipline (Bini, 2016). Nevertheless, our focus is on the issue of teaching gymnastics in secondary school PSE.

Gymnastics is an activity involving the production or reproduction of motor forms that are either created or codified. It requires expressive, unusual, complex, and controlled body movements aimed at producing a sequence in a specific environment, which is judged and appreciated. This bodily expression gives rise to risky acrobatic situations where the implementation of bio-informational, biomechanical and bio-affective capacities is directly linked to mastering the physical constraints of the environment and the gymnasium.

Gymnastics at school is intended to enable children to adapt to unusual situations by mastering their bodies in space. It leads them to take and manage risks, to develop the ability of daring to carry out actions, to diversify, and to enrich one's modes of communication (whether through individual or collective productions) is a fundamental goal. Moreover, gymnastics, through its specific objectives and

the educational values it conveys, holds an important place in the teaching of Physical Education. Indeed, the specific objectives of gymnastics are not limited to bodily mastery in the execution of movements and gestures; they also embody educational intentions, which should correspond to one or more abilities and behaviors expected from the student, particularly in the context of integration into a society where children, confronted with a new material world, are compelled to support one another in complex situations. Thus, gymnastics also aims at the holistic development (physical, mental and moral) of the human being. These objectives stem from those of physical education as a whole. It is therefore important to clarify the relationship between physical education and gymnastics.

However, teaching gymnastics at school represents a real risk for teachers (Agbere, 2010). Gymnastics is indeed a declining activity, suffering from a somewhat outdated image within the framework of Physical Education practices. Due to its acrobatic nature, it is associated with objective risk and therefore with the possibility of injury. Consequently, when gymnastics is included in the school curriculum, student motivation often proves very inconsistent. These observations support the notion of a real crisis in the teaching of gymnastics.

Furthermore, the difficulties related to the teaching of gymnastics in schools appear to be recurrent. Studies have shown that these issues arise both from learners, who encounter learning difficulties (Agbere, 2010), and from teachers who sometimes display shortcomings in pedagogical and didactic knowledge (Cizeron & Gal-Petitfaux, 2005).

In Ivory Coast, the floor gymnastics exam in both the BEPC and the Baccalauréat has revealed rather unsatisfactory results. At the grammar school called Lycée Moderne 3 de Divo (LM3D), during the 2020 session, only 11.05% of BEPC candidates and 21.31% of Baccalauréat candidates obtained the average score in gymnastics. Similarly, in 2021, only 13.77% of BEPC candidates and 18.51% of Baccalauréat candidates achieved the average in gymnastics. Despite the efforts of teachers, and with only a few exceptions, gymnastics remains weak, inconsistent, lacking amplitude and rarely focused on correction.

During our internship periods, we were assigned to supervise classes from sixth to twelfth grade. However, in our undergraduate year (2019-2020), when interacting with ninth and twelfth-grade classes, we observed students struggling with the performance of basic gymnastic elements. These students therefore displayed a very low level of mastery in gymnastics. In our first year of Master's studies (2020-2021), we returned to the LM3D school for a two-month internship. It became clear that this issue persisted. We then consulted the head of pedagogy, who stated the following: "*For many years, we have noticed that students' level in floor gymnastics has dropped considerably. This is why we decided to include a floor gymnastics cycle at all grade levels, with the aim of improving practice standards.*"

The grammar school LM3D is the setting where the low level of gymnastic skill among PSE students was observed. Its size of 5795 students (47.33% female and 52.75% male) makes it a particularly relevant field for the present study. Beyond

this school, the low level of gymnastics practice was also noted at the regional level in Lôh-Djiboua during the BEPC and Baccalauréat trial physical exams of 2023-2024. For both boys and girls, ninth-grade students (BEPC) had to choose to perform between compulsory sequence A or compulsory sequence B. Most opted for sequence A that they found easier since it consisted of simple gymnastic elements. However, twelfth-grade students (Baccalauréat) often struggled to design a short sequence and to perform their routine properly.

In addition to weak performance levels, some students displayed behaviors reflecting their lack of interest in floor gymnastics classes. When it was time for the lesson, they dragged their feet, chatted, or distracted themselves with other activities. From our discussions with them, we gathered that they viewed athletic sports as the main priority in PSE.

On the one hand, interactions between students and their teachers during PSE classes strongly influence their motivation and competence (Martel et al., 2011). Moreover, what matters is not so much what is said or done, but rather how students and teachers interpret what they have seen or heard. In this sense, the way students and teachers perceive situations has a significant impact on their thoughts and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Perception can be defined as the relationship between an individual and an object: while the object has its own characteristics, the individual perceives it through subjectivity, shaped by previous experiences, socio-cultural environment, and personal interests (Allain et al., 2016). The individual's perception is so influenced by his affective state. Thus, every perception is an interpretation that involves the whole personality.

However, research on students' perceptions in Physical Education (PE) has focused on various aspects of their ideas and experiences (Allain et al., 2016). The perceptions students have of their PE teacher and their competencies constitute a theme that should therefore be taken into account (Madi & Messaoudi, 2020). This could have either a negative or positive impact on students' practices.

Nevertheless, discussions about perception cannot be held without introducing the question of social representations. Indeed, social representations consist of a set of phenomena such as attitudes, perceptions, images, and beliefs (Abric, 2005). In PE, the study of social representations appears necessary to understand students' behaviors (Chemineau, 2020). In fact, adolescents come to PE classes with conceptions that guide and give meaning to their actions. While these models constructed by students may seem effective and relevant in everyday life, they sometimes constitute real obstacles to learning. It is therefore a matter of changing their perceptions, of "removing the obstacles already piled up by everyday life" (Bachelard, cited by Chemineau (Chemineau, 2020)). Representations are considered as guides for action because, in interaction situations, they often play a more important role than objective characteristics in the behaviors of individuals or groups (Abric, 2001).

Gymnastics is a Physical and Sports Activity (PSA) known for its acrobatic nature and synonymous with objective risk. This PSA appears to be a subject of so-

cial representation for students in the school setting. The behaviors and attitudes of students toward PSA allow to affirm, on the basis of our personal observations, that they hold a representation of gymnastics. From a scientific view, several researchers have studied students' behaviors and attitudes toward gymnastics (Aubert & Chifflet, 2001). The present study therefore aims to highlight the influence of students' social representations of gymnastics and perceived competencies of the teacher on their level of gymnastic skill. This general objective is divided into five specific objectives that are respectively:

- Os1: the effect of students' social representations of gymnastics on their level of gymnastic skill,
- Os2: the effect of the teacher's perceived competencies on students' level of gymnastic skill,
- Os3: the interaction effect of students' social representations of gymnastics and their perceptions of the teacher's competencies on their level of gymnastic skill.

These considerations lead to the general hypothesis that students' level of gymnastic skill in secondary schools can be explained by their social representations of gymnastics and their perceptions of the teacher's competencies. These same considerations also make it possible to specify the operational hypotheses of the present study as follows:

H1: Students with positive social representations of gymnastics have higher skill levels than those with negative social representations (Hypothesis linked to objectve Os1).

H2: Students with positive perceptions of teacher competence have higher skill levels than those with negative perceptions (Hypothesis linked to objectves Os2).

H3: The difference in skill levels between students with positive and negative perceptions of teacher competence depends on their social representation of gymnastics, and vice versa (Hypothesis linked to objectves Os3).

2. Methodology

2.1. Variables and Indicators

The study involves three variables. These variables are described below.

First, students' gymnastic skill level is the dependent variable. It is a quantitative variable whose score is the sum of those obtained on the items of the scale measuring the students' gymnastic skill level. This measurement has a lower limit ($LI = 0$) indicating the lowest level in gymnastics (lack of knowledge in gymnastic elements by category, lack of mastery of gymnastic elements, inability to design a short sequence, poor motor coordination). The measurement has also an upper limit ($UI = 20$) indicating the highest level in gymnastics (strong knowledge in gymnastic elements by category, mastery of gymnastic elements, ability to design a short sequence, good motor coordination).

Second, the social representation (SR) of gymnastics among students is the first independent variable. It has two categories: Positive SR of gymnastics (associated

with positive or favorable words/expressions related to gymnastics); Negative SR of gymnastics (associated with unfavorable or negative words/expressions related to gymnastics). The SR is considered positive when the elements of the central core of the SR refer to an idea of pleasure, sweetness, attractiveness, happiness, goodness, love... On the other hand, the SR is considered negative when the elements of the central core evoke displeasure, disgust, hardship, rejection, harm, stress, sorrow...

Third, teachers' perceived competence is the second independent variable. It also has two categories: Positive perception of teacher competence; Negative perception of teacher competence. A teacher's perceived competence is positive when it projects a good image of his teaching, such as: clear explanations, well-organized lessons, passionate teaching style, adaptability to student needs, encouragement and support. On the opposite side, a teacher's perceived competence is negative when it projects a poor image of his teaching, such as: unclear explanations, poorly organized lessons, inappropriate lessons for students, lack of encouragement and support.

2.2. Study Site and Population

The study was conducted in the city of Divo, Ivory Coast, specifically at the grammar school named Lycée Moderne 3 de Divo (LM3D). The choice of this school as the study site was based on several reasons. First, we carried out our internships there from the undergraduate level up to the Master's level. Second, it is in this institution that we thist observed the low level of students' gymnastic skills in PSE. Third, the individuals concerned with PSE practice in secondary education are the students. The study population was therefore enrolled from the 5795 students of LM3D school composed of 47.33% girls and 52.75% boys.

2.3. Sampling

A stratified sampling was used for this study. This method involves subdividing the total population N into P subpopulations or "strata" of size Ni, such that $N = \sum Ni$ or $N = N1 + N2 + \cdots + Np$.

From each stratum, we independently selected a sample of size Ni, applying proportional stratified sampling. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the sample by stratum (school level) and by sex.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample by sex within strata.

Sex / Class	Girls	Boys	Total
Ninth Grade	69	66	135
Twelfth Grade	36	44	80
Total	105	110	215

Source: Survey data, May 2025.

In summary, the sample of 215 students is distributed as follows:

- Ninth-grade students: n1 = 135, representing 63% of the sample,
- Twelfth-grade students: n2 = 80, representing 37% of the sample.

2.4. Instruments

The study required the use of two types of instruments, namely: an observation grid for assessing students' gymnastic skill levels, and two questionnaires (the hierarchical evocation questionnaire and a questionnaire on students' perceived competence of the PE teacher).

2.4.1. Observation Grid for Students' Gymnastic Skill Levels

The observation grid for gymnastic skill levels was developed by the coordination of the PE Pedagogical Units (UP) of the Regional Directorate of National Education and Literacy (DRENA) of Abidjan 3. It consists of 20 gymnastic elements taken from the different families of gymnastic skills (families of jumps, rotations, supports, inversions, flexibility, and holds). Using this grid, students are graded based on formative assessments conducted by the teacher. It should be noted that all these assessments were carried out by the same PE teacher.

2.4.2. Hierarchical Evocation Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks participants to produce the first five words that spontaneously come to mind when they hear the inductive word. In this study, the inductive word is "gymnastics." This method has the advantage of somewhat reducing the effect of social desirability, since we rely on participants' memory. It also provides access to a collective description of the object of study, as participants draw on their social knowledge of the object. We then focused on the structure of the representation, asking participants to rank the words they had produced in order of importance.

2.4.3. Questionnaire on Students' Perceived Competence of the PE Teacher

This instrument consists of 27 questions (DCQs) that the respondents must answer either "yes", "often" or "no". The instrument covers three dimensions: teacher-student relationships, teacher behavior, and teaching practices. The first dimension « teacher-student relationships » is made up of questions such as « Are physical education teachers attentive to what the students are doing? » or « Are physical education teachers' patient with the students? ». The second dimension « teacher's behavior » includes questions like « Do physical education teachers remain seated throughout the lesson? » or « Are physical education teachers punctual for class? ». The third dimension « teaching practices » consists of questions such as « Do physical education teachers explain the lesson clearly? » or « Do physical education teachers check if learning has taken place? ». Through this structure, the questionnaire allows for determining the quality of students' perception of their PE teacher's competence.

2.5. Data Processing

Data processing and analysis were carried out using the EVOC and SPSS software. EVOC (2005) was used to capture the contents and structures of students' social representations of gymnastics activities in the ninth and twelfth grades. As for SPSS, it is a tool particularly well-suited for applying statistical data analysis techniques. This software enabled us to conduct a comparative analysis of two groups using Student's t-test. Thus, we were able to assess the differences between the means of the student groups formed.

Table 2. Distribution of evocations according to rank and frequency for all respondents.

Case 1: Frequency ≥ 10 and Rank < 2.5			Case 2: Frequency ≥ 10 and Rank ≥ 2.5		
Words	**Frequency**	**Average rank**	**Words**	**Frequency**	**Average rank**
Physical activity	12	2.250	Amusing	36	3.611
Warm up	32	1.969	Injury	19	2.579
Fear	68	2.324	Dance	12	3.250
Risk	13	2.385	Pain	11	4.000
			Gymnastic element	13	3.538
			Sequence	40	3.025
			Boredom	15	2.667
			Stretching	24	2.667
			Tiredness	46	2.717
			Strength	11	3.636
			Interesting	13	3.846
			Movement	12	4.167
			Relaxation	14	3.714
Case 3: Frequency < 10 and Rank < 2.5			**Case 4: Frequency < 10 and Rank ≥ 2.5**		
Words	**Frequency**	**Average rank**	**Words**	**Frequency**	**Average rank**
Entertainment	5	2.400	Handstand	9	3.556
Hard	6	2.333	Shoulder stand	7	3.571
Training	8	2.000	Elegant	9	3.556
Strait jump	9	1.222	Cool	6	3.333
Suffering	7	2.429	Body development	6	2.833
			Physical effort	6	2.667
			Irritating	6	3.167
			Boring	7	3.000
			Self-development	5	3.800
			Balance	7	3.571
			Body exercise	6	3.000
			Experience	5	3.200

Source: Survey data, May 2025.

3. Results

This research focuses on ninth and twelfth grades students' social representations of gymnastics in relation to their perception of the PE teacher's competence and their level of gymnastic skill. The results are presented in four parts: (1) students' social representations of gymnastics, (2) Their perception of the teacher's competence, (3) Their level of gymnastic skill, and (4) the relationship between their social representations, their perceived competence of the PE teacher, and the level of their gymnastic skill.

3.1. Social Representations of Gymnastics for all Respondents

Table 2 presents the content and structure of the social representation of gymnastics among all respondents.

Students' social representation of gymnastics in PE is structured around physical activity, warm-up, fear, and risk. For students, gymnastics is perceived as a physical activity that makes warm-up indispensable—in other words, the elevation of body temperature. Furthermore, this physical activity is synonymous with an objective risk that generates the emotion of fear.

The following Table 3 provides the distribution of respondents according to their grade level and the quality of their social representation of gymnastics.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to the quality of their social representation of gymnastics.

Quality / Grade level	Good social representation	Poor social representation	Total
Ninth grade (Troisième)	95 (44.19%)	44 (20.47%)	135 (62.79%)
Twelfth grade (Terminale)	55 (25.58%)	25 (11.63%)	80 (37.21%)
Total	150 (69.77%)	65 (30.21%)	215 (100.00%)

Source: Survey data, may 2025.

This table shows that 150 students (69.77%) have a good social representation of gymnastics, while 65 students (30.2%) have a poor social representation of gymnastics.

3.2. Perception of the PE Teacher's Competence by Students

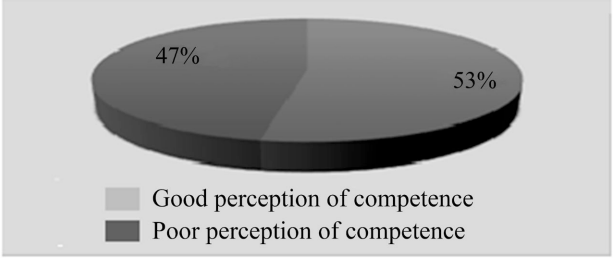

Figure 1. Perceived competence of the PE teacher.

Following the analysis, we were able to present the results related to students' perception of the PE teacher's competence in graphical form. This graph is shown in Figure 1.

This figure shows that 53% of the students have a good perception of the PE teacher's competence, while 47% have a poor perception of the PE teacher's competence.

3.3. Students' Level of Gymnastic Skills

The learning of gymnastics is approached through the acquisition of fundamental gymnastic elements that are essential for its practice. Thus, the measurement of students' gymnastic skill level involves subjecting them to 20 gymnastic elements taken from different families of movements. This allows the teacher to assign grades according to the students' mastery of these gymnastic elements, thereby justifying their level of gymnastic skill.

The data processing made it possible to produce Figure 2 below, which represents the quality of students' gymnastic skill levels according to gender and grade level.

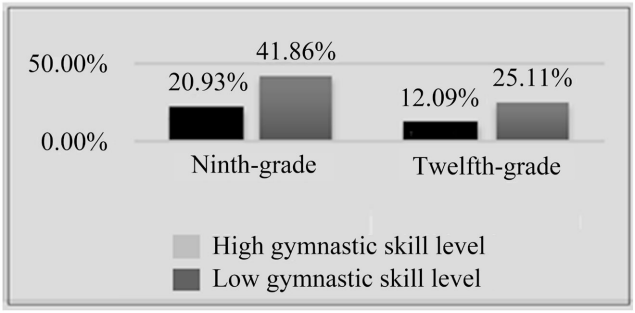

Figure 2. Quality of students' gymnastic skill levels.

According to the figure, among the 33% of students with a low skill level, 20.93% are in the ninth-grade, 12.03% are in the twelfth-grade class. Among the 67% of students with a high gymnastic skill level, 41.86% are in the ninth-grade and 25.11% are in the twelfth-grade.

3.4. Effect of Social Representations of Gymnastics and Perceived Teacher Competence on Students' Gymnastic Skill Levels

In order to test the operational hypotheses, we verified whether the variables social representation of gymnastics and perceived teacher competence are related to students' gymnastic skill levels. For this purpose, we compared the means of students' gymnastic skill levels. The data in Table 4 below were processed using Student's t-test. The application of this test allowed us to check whether social representations of gymnastics and perceived teacher competence influence the differences between group results. Specifically, the tables provide the group statistics of independent samples.

Table 4. Students' gymnastic skill level according to their social representation of gymnastics and perceived teacher competence.

Perceived teacher competence \ SR of gymnastics	Good	Poor	Total
Good	18	10	28
Poor	9	4	13
Total	27	14	41
H1: tc1 = −8.27, $p \leq 0.0001$***			
H2: tc2 = 7.30, $p \leq 0.0001$***			

The results from the previous table allow us to highlight the following points.

First, regarding hypothesis H1, it is observed that students with a good social representation of gymnastics achieved a total skill score of 27, compared to 14 for students with a poor social representation of gymnastics. Analysis using Student's t-test indicates a t value of −8.27 ($p \leq 0.0001$*). This highly significant result confirms hypothesis H1 and allows us to state that students with a good social representation of gymnastics have a higher level of gymnastic skill compared to those with a poor social representation.

Second, regarding hypothesis H2, students with a good perception of the teacher's competence achieved a gymnastic skill score of 28, compared to 13 for students with a poor perception of the teacher's competence. Application of Student's t-test to compare the scores of the two groups yields a t value of 7.30 ($p \leq 0.0001$*). This highly significant result supports hypothesis H2, confirming that students with a good perception of the teacher's competence have a higher level of gymnastic skill compared to those with a poor perception.

Third, the interactive effect of the factors "social representation of gymnastics" and "perceived teacher competence" on students' gymnastic skill levels was tested using Analysis of Variance (Anova). The analysis yielded an F value of 17.0 ($p \leq 0.0001$). This highly significant F value indicates that the "social representation of gymnastics" and the "perceived teacher competence" jointly determine students' gymnastic skill levels. This result supports the interactive hypothesis H3 and confirms that the difference in gymnastic skill level between students with a good perception of the teacher's competence and those with a poor perception depends on the variable "social representation of gymnastics," and vice-versa.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the effect of students' social representations of gymnastics and their perception of the teacher's competence on their gymnastic skill level provides insights into strategies for improving these skills. This study particularly demonstrates that it is possible to establish links between components of the representation of gymnastics and students' behavior in response to motor tasks. These findings align with those of Aubert (1997). Students hold different repre-

sentations of gymnastics, and depending on the gymnastic situations proposed by the teacher, these representations are more or less activated.

A second study conducted by Aubert and Chifflet (2001) also supports our results. These authors establish a connection between students' social representations of gymnastics and their gymnastic practice, highlighting that students' social representations play a major role in their practice of gymnastics in Physical Education (PE).

Furthermore, the study shows that students' perceptions of the PE teacher's competence affect their level of practice or gymnastic skill. This finding is reinforced by Le Bel (2016) who emphasizes the link between teacher-student relationships and academic motivation. Le Bel's study focuses on students' perception of their teachers' supportive behavior and how it influences academic motivation. It demonstrates the importance of supportive relationships and reveals that teachers' attitudes—both in terms of skills and interpersonal behavior—play a key role in students' academic experience by shaping their perceptions of competence.

The study by Agbere (2010) also supports our results. It examines whether the differences in students' perceptions of the support provided by their PE teacher overlap with objectively defined criteria of effectiveness such as seniority or the level of qualification obtained. The study shows that, on average, students feel well supported by their PE teacher and are satisfied with this support. They feel even more supported and satisfied when the teacher is young, inexperienced, a trainee, or an associate professor. Consequently, relational and emotional aspects appear to take precedence over learning, and younger teachers seem to better meet students' expectations. From these studies, it emerges that greater attention should be paid to what students think about the PE subject and the teacher who delivers it.

One may so assume that, in general, students' beliefs, perceptions, and opinions about the subject they study and about their teachers have an impact on their learning outcomes. Therefore, to improve students' understanding of gymnastics, instructions in this subject should begin at a very young age (preschool) and continue at least until the final year of secondary school. For a quick and effective grasp of observation criteria, students should be involved in developing the rules of gymnastics.

While it's true that many teachers who have chosen their profession, and are destined to practice it, generally have a positive perception of it, what about teachers of gymnastics who don't have a positive perception of their profession? Actually, the bad perception of a teacher to his own subject can arise from several sources. Among these sources, we can first mention pre-teaching factors such as unwanted career choice, internalization of social stereotypes about gymnastics as a feminine and unproductive sport, negative initial training experience). Secondly, we have teaching and institutional factors (overcrowded classrooms, lack of recognition). Thirdly, this bad perception can also come from pedagogical factors like fear of risks, gap between educational objectives and realities on the ground, misunderstandings about the educational value of gymnastics. The need of elucidation about how this teacher perception interacts with other factors to

partially determine the students' level of gymnastic competence can be carried out by further qualitative and quantitative studies.

5. Conclusion

Recognizing the necessity of examining students' gymnastic skill levels implies acknowledging its importance in the broader need to build a fair society that offers all citizens equal opportunities for success. It is therefore essential to understand the quality of students' gymnastic skill levels. This study fits within this framework. Its aim was to examine the quality of students' gymnastic skill levels according to their social representations of gymnastics and their perceptions of the PE teacher's competence.

The problem lies in the fact that the skill levels of third- and final-year students remain low despite the instruction they have received. Data were collected from 215 students in the ninth-grade and the twelth-grade using a research instrument consisting of questionnaires (a hierarchical evocation questionnaire and a perceived competence questionnaire) and an observation grid assessing gymnastic skill levels. Data analysis was performed using Excel, EVOC 2005, and SPSS.

The results show that students' social representations of gymnastics are organized around a central core composed of four elements: physical activity, warm-up, risk, and fear. Overall, the main effects of the two factors on the quality of gymnastic skill levels are significant. Similarly, the interactive effect of the factors "social representation of gymnastics" and "perceived teacher competence" appears significant on students' gymnastic skill levels.

This study has however some limitations. Thus, the fact that it's limited to students in exam classes at the Lycée de Divo constitutes a limitation. Students in different school environments (field, teaching materials, administrative support from the teacher, etc.) could produce different results from ours.

Furthermore, the present study could not examine all factors that might explain students' gymnastic skill levels. Future research is therefore necessary to refine the results of this study and to deepen understanding of students' gymnastic skill levels by expanding the investigation to other contributing factors.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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