Reviewer’s report

Title: Determinants of motor performance in middle childhood: the role of sociodemographic factors in a resource-constrained rural African setting

Version: 1 Date: 15 April 2013

Reviewer: Ingegerd Ericsson

Reviewer’s report:

The paper is well written and concerns an area of interest in measuring motor skills in children. However, only two specific motor abilities are studied. Authors should clearly point out that only balance and fine motor coordination are measured.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Abstract: Several areas? Such as? Please give some examples.
2. How many children were examined? Include numbers of boys and girls
4. Sampling: …testing was attempted. How? What criteria?
5. How many children in the population? This needs to be added.
6. Details of the sample needs to be included also in this article.
7. Dropouts should be described and discussed here.
8. Ethical considerations: ……..the study’s eligibility criteria. Not sure what they were.
9. Step 1: Test of strength is mentioned, yet not measured in this study, or?
10. Step 2: Why was the Movement ABC used? Criteria for choosing only this test? Needs to be clarified.
11. Principal Investigator was involved …. How? Needs to be explained.
12. ….modifications made was a determining factor …… Unclear what is meant here.
13. ……background in education. What education? PE?
14. Step 4: …… non study children …. How many were they?
15. …very easy items were dropped. Which were they? Describe original items and which were excluded.
16. Data Collection: parental education: 2= 8 years of education; seems to me strange with only one year in this item compared to 9-12 years and other items. Explain the categories used.
17. Test administration: Include numbers of boys and girls respectively.
18. Why was lateral preference assessed?
20. …. About 150 children were tested a second time, how were they sampled? Why were not all 308 children tested again?
21. The last three lines could come earlier, see nr 19.
22. Manual dexterity was tested; why? I cannot see any analysis of this; needs commenting.
23. The description of tests is a bit unclear. Please include whether they measure static or dynamic balance or fine motor coordination.
24. Stork balance test and one board balance test give data on ordinal scale level, yet M and SD are reported. This needs to be explained.
25. Descriptive statistics: The first lines are not Results and could be moved to Sample description.
26. Reliability could be moved to Methods.
27. Discussion: …..on a range of motor ability tests. This is too unspecified. Authors should clearly point out that only balance and fine motor coordination are measured.
28. Bronfenbrenner´s model is mentioned for the first time here, as I can see. It should be described in Introduction.
29. Last line before Effects of ….: assessment of some motor abilities; not all!
30. Reference list (too many references?) needs corrections: Supply dates of retrieving online references; blank lines are missing.

Discretionary Revisions

31. The paper has no page numbers, which makes reviewing unnecessary difficult. It is long; tables on six pages, consider cutting down, omitting table 2 for example. Try to put every table in one page only.
32. Suggestion to make tables more clear: Mark (e.g. in bold) significant differences between groups.
33. Sampling: The TQQ was constructed for the use among 6-9 year-olds and are here used to measure 8-11 year olds. Comments on this?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests'