

Abstract

This research investigated the development of the conception of procedural justice in childhood, which whether or not their perception of fairness would be skewed by ‘voice’ (the opportunity to express their opinions) and group membership (whether they are in-group or out-group members). A moderator of the parental autonomy support was also tested, to understand the origin of the conception. 64 participants (23 junior primary school students, 22 senior primary school students, and 19 college students) joined a scenario study, in which the authority provided either pre-decision voice, post-decision voice or no voice procedure in in-group and out-group condition. Results reveal that while pre-decision voice yields the highest perceived fairness, followed by post-decision voice and no voice, only college students were able to distinguish between the three procedures. College members would also be more sensitive when they are out-group members, while the primary school students revealed an opposite pattern. Moderation effect of parental autonomy support is significant in primary school students, which highlight the importance of family education and parenting in fostering the development of the concern of procedural justice in childhood.

Keywords: Procedural justice, voice effect, group membership, parental autonomy support, moral development, social cognitive development