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PARENT'S PERCEPTION AND CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR WHILE TRYING TO RETRIEVE A TOY FROM THE SWIMMING POOL

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Children drown while trying to catch toys in swimming pools. This study examined children's behaviour and parent's estimation of children's capabilities, in a task of retrieving a toy out of the water. Seventy six parents of 1 to 4 year-olds estimated their child's action limits before children tried to reach the toy. Absolute error, error tendency, accuracy of predicted behaviour and the action modes used for reaching, were analyzed. The influence of the child's and the parent's gender, and several predictors for real and estimated maximum reachability were investigated. Absolute error ranged from 0 to 30 cm ($M=8.49$, $SD=7.03$) and no gender effects were detected. More than 50% of parents underestimated their child's reachability. Mothers had a greater frequency of accurate estimations than fathers (33% vs 10%) but their mean absolute error was identical. Nearly 80% of the parents correctly predicted their child's behaviour when the toy was unreachable. Most children (78%) sat to retrieve the toy out of the water, and 70% fell in while attempting to grasp beyond their reaching limits. Height and sitting height were the best predictors of maximum reachability ($R^2=.469$), and the sitting height was a predictor of estimated maximum reachability ($R^2=.209$). Parents were cautious in predicting their child's maximum reachability. Mothers' greater involvement with children in younger ages might explain their higher rate of adjusted estimations. Body dimensions and proportions had a limited effect in predicting children's capabilities.