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Are children mindful decision makers? Investigating underlying mechanisms of Turkish-learning children's recency bias

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Abstract

We investigated recency bias (i.e., choosing the second option among two) of 3- to 5-year-old preschoolers (n=59) in a free order language, Turkish, regarding individual differences in working memory and verbal skills. Children were presented with a decision-making task in which they responded to questions about an imaginary character's decisions with familiar and unfamiliar objects in 3 word orders (both options at the beginning, both at the end, or first option at the beginning while the second at the end). Children exhibited bias in all word orders. WM skills, not language skills, predicted bias, even after controlling for age. As children aged, their bias decreased for unfamiliar options when both were at the beginning. Recency bias also decreased as children's WM skills improved when both options were at the beginning. Children are not mindful decision-makers and their WM skills interact with the way questions are asked.