Children's attitudes towards comfort and safety of an extra seatbelt during car travelling

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to identify and analyse children's attitudes regarding comfort and safety of extra seatbelts in the car rear seat. Together with the existing three-point belt the extra seatbelt holds the child in a more upright and forward facing position, which is the desired sitting position for optimal protection. Focus groups were used to identify attitudes of 11 Swedish children between 8-10 years. First attitudes towards the standard three-point seat belt were discussed then two different extra seat belt concepts were introduced verbally with pictures. Finally the two concepts were tested in the rear seat of a car.

The results showed that the children were much aware of car safety issues but also influenced by their parents' attitudes regarding safety. They said the seat belt is good since it provides a feeling of safety and protection, even though it sometimes makes it uncomfortable to travel. The children reacted positively on the extra seat belts and considered them as nicer, simpler, more comfortable and cooler to use than solely the three-point belt. They also wished to have extra seat belts in their own car due to increased safety. However they were also much annoyed by discomfort. For some children the extra seat belt caused chafing to the neck or unpleasant pressure on their upper body. They also felt trapped because it reduced the possibility to move freely.

To conclude the children showed high acceptance of extra seat belts based on their first impression, much due to that their parents want them to be safe. However, after testing the concepts for only a couple of minutes, some concerns arose regarding comfort and handling aspects. The children believed that if the extra seat belt would cause discomfort or be troublesome to handle, it would result in decreased usage.