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The Impact of Parents’ Past Experiences on Parenting Styles and Practices in Organized Youth Sport

Kyle Haderlie, Utah State University

Introduction

PARENTS are highly involved and play a critical role in the facilitation of their children’s youth sport experience (Knight, Neely, & Holt, 2011).

One area of youth sport parenting research that has received little attention is the parent’s BACKGROUND and EXPERIENCE. These may shape parents’ involvement styles and practices in sport.

Because the CHILD’S PERCEPTION influences their psychosocial outcomes (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2008), it is important that parents understand their children’s preferences for communication and behavior.

Research by Snyder and Purdy (1982) showed that parents without backgrounds in sport became more interested in the sport experiences of their children, whereas parents with backgrounds in sport attended more of their children’s sporting events. Therefore, PARENTS’ PAST EXPERIENCES seem to have an impact on PARENT INVOLVEMENT in organized youth sport. Importantly, the involvement may be positive or negative as some parents’ experience may provide appropriate support, whereas others may be too overbearing and critical.

The PURPOSE of the present research was to illuminate patterns of parent experiences that are consistent with positive sport parenting styles and practices.

Method

Participants

A subset of 46 U.S. PARENTS (17 fathers, 29 mothers) were recruited from a large-scale study being conducted in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US.

Parents ranged in AGE from 33 to 53 years (M = 43.96, SD = 4.84).

83% as White or Caucasian, 11% Black or African American, 6% multi-racial or “other”.

Parents reported a RANGE OF EXPERIENCE in sport, ranging from 2 to 20 years (M = 2.55, SD = 1.22).

- 91% participated in youth sport
- 70% participated in secondary school sport
- 26% participated in club, travel, or elite sport
- 35% participated in college or community sport
- 4% participated in Olympic or international sport
- 4% participated in professional sport

Procedure

Participants were recruited through league directors in non-school based youth sport programs. Data were collected through the OPEN-ENDED SURVEYS via online interface at the convenience of the participant.

Data Analysis

OPEN CODING (i.e., the process of identifying themes in the data) was implemented independently by the author and a graduate research assistant trained in qualitative data analysis.

Consensus meeting

Critical friend (Hill, 2002)

AXIAL CODING (i.e., the process of identifying categories and subcategories of the themes identified in open coding) was used to develop structure through Hierarchical organization of the data.

Results

Parents’ previous sport experiences, the perceived benefits and drawbacks of these experiences, and the goals parents held for their sport experiences influence their CURRENT INVOLVEMENT in their children’s sport participation.

The primary reason parents reported for involvement as a coach, manager, or administrator was so they could control influences that might have created negative environments for their children.

An INTERESTING FINDING of this study was that the goals of the four participants who did not participate in organized youth sport aligned largely with the goals of the other 42 participants who did.

Because the experiences of sport parents are influenced by personal and family demographic factors (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004), FUTURE RESEARCH aimed at understanding parenting styles and practices in sport in more diverse populations could target parents from a range of ethnicities, SES, and geopolitical backgrounds.

References


Haderlie, K., & Smith, P. H. (2003). Special thanks also to the many youth sport parents who took part in this research.