

## SELF-EVALUATION OF PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS CHILDREN-ATHLETES

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### Abstract

*Parental support is a fundamental factor in children's participation and success in sporting events. The majority of parents behave positively, but behaviours which do not produce positive results are also observed. The purpose of this study was the self-evaluation of parental behaviours and the detection of behaviours that are critical regarding the psychology of a child-athlete. The instrument used was the Q-Parent Behavior Check List, which was completed by 204 parents (106 males and 98 females) of children-athletes who were members of the sports academies of "M.G.S. Ethnikos Alexandroupolis". The results were categorized in two groups according to: a) gender and b) age. Critical parental behaviours were narrowed down to: a) the avoidance of the sport's dominance in the whole life of the child-athlete, b) the emphasis parents place on fundamental values, c) the limits in parental participation in the training program and d) the parents' provision of resources to their child-athlete. It was concluded that parental gender and age play a decisive role in the exhibition of specific behaviours towards children-athletes. With the appropriate information and education, parents can improve their behaviour towards children-athletes, producing multiple benefits.*

**Key words:** *parental behaviour, parental provisions, parents, fundamental values, sports.*

### Introduction

#### *Self-evaluation of parental behavior towards children-athletes*

Parental behaviour towards a child engaging into sports has proven to play a significant role as regards the young family member's physical, behavioural, emotional and psychological development. For example, the correlations of parental attitudes with their children's outset and continuation of physical activity (Corder, Crespo, Sluijs, Lopez, & Elder, 2012), the child's (age 6-11) or adolescent's (age 12-18) extent of preoccupation with sports (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010), the extent and quality of parental involvement (Kanters & Casper, 2008), with the parental pressure or support as suitably perceived by the child-athlete (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004), with the establishment of positive relations and entertainment through each sporting experience (McCarthy, Jones & Clark-Carter, 2008), and on the other hand with the origination of stress-provoking situations, low levels of self-perception and a lack of motivation (Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006). While all the above is presented by researchers as the major set of outcomes of parental behaviour towards children-athletes, much less emphasis has been placed on parental self-perception of the presented behaviour at hand, leading to the genesis of the aforementioned outcomes. Parental involvement in the child's sporting career is well worth the research, provided that: a) sport is a widely public domain in which parents are capable of offering their children-athletes direct and specific feedback, b) their presence in their child-athlete's life is critical, c) their influence appears to be bipolar, meaning that they may affect their child-athlete positively and/or negatively (Holt,

Tamminen, Black, Sehn & Wall, 2008), and d) in all probability, they nourish the future household names of the country's top sporting stage. The relationship between sports and school has provoked dispute among a number of families. The phenomenon of sporting activities being interrupted by school obligations is not by any means uncommon. However, the bibliography shows the exact opposite type of approach. A characteristic example is offered in Shulruf, Tumen and Tolley's research (2008), which has indicated that through activities properly organized and appropriate from a developmental standpoint, significantly better academic as well as social results are produced. It is observed, therefore, that parental involvement in children's sporting development indeed plays a vital role. Eccles and Harold's "Expectation - Value" model (1991) highlights the relation between people's choices and expectations as regards their performance, meaning the importance and the value they see in the options available. The relevant levels are not determined only by each individual's personal beliefs, but also by the influences of their social and cultural environment combined, as well as their personal experiences, tendencies and aptitudes. The options eventually stem from interpreting the behaviours and situations encountered in everyday life, rather than merely experiencing them. Conclusively, parental influence at the beginning, as well as during the course or even at the end of their child's sporting career seems decisive, given that many of the young one's choices may be subconsciously guided by the parents' beliefs. The theory of motivation works in association with the above. It has been defined and examined through two of its outcomes.

The first one is examined accordingly with the developmental result deriving from the interaction of the individual with their social environment, while the second one is touched upon accordingly with the individual's more personal character and takes on the shape of persistence, learning and eventually performance (Pelletier et al., 1995). The first years of a person's preoccupation with sports are the most decisive ones as regards the development of their internal motivation, which will lead them to either the continuation or the termination of their sporting career (Strachan, Côté, & Deakin, 2009). For that reason, the first years during which the essences of sports and physical activity are shaped in the young child's perception need to be characterized by a pleasant, entertaining environment. In this frame of mind, the role of the parents in the child's encouragement to engage into sports and physical activity in general appears to be significantly important (Sánchez-Migue, Leo, Sánchez-Oliva, Amado, & García-Calvo, 2013; Strachan et al., 2009).

There are three types of motivation: a) internal b) external and c) amotivation. The existence of Internal Motivation (IM) results into the participation in sporting activities solely for the enjoyment and the satisfaction stemming from it. On the contrary, External Motivation (EM), relies on merely external goals, such as the reward for a certain type of behaviour or action. The last type of motivation is the so-called amotivation. In this type, individuals fail to perceive any sort of interconnection between their efforts and the final outcome. They are neither internally nor externally motivated, and the lack of self-control leads them to quit sports altogether (Pelletier et al., 1995).

The appearance of each type of motivation depends directly on the attention given to the result or the performance. The emphasis on the result draws the child-athlete's attention on the display of certain types of behaviour due to the direct results which derive from them (Bandura, 1977). In the event of a combination of possibly negative results with any sort of social disapproval, the EM may end up being an obsession for the child-athlete, with negative consequences as regards the levels of IM, and of course the child's perceived personal ability and self-esteem. In contrast, focusing on performance creates the impression that the final result is produced thanks to the successful execution of every given action (Bandura, 1977). This means that positive feedback and support are capable of triggering a general increase of EM, and more specifically the appearance of high levels of ability, confidence, self-control and significant contribution in the promotion of appropriate physical activity (Bandura, 1977; Sánchez-Migue et al., 2013; Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006). The results of the research conducted by Sánchez and Migue et al., (2013) add generously to the notion of direct interaction of parental behaviour with children-athletes, since they prove that parental encouragement-related beliefs have a direct impact on those of their offspring as regards the realm of

sports. Consequently, if parents maintain performance-oriented beliefs as a means of goal attainment, it is only natural that their children's beliefs will be of a similar nature. Joan, Duda, Harry and Horn (1993) have proven that children with a work-oriented attitude considered their parents' beliefs to be such, too (White, 1998). Hence, development is a dynamic process between the individual and the social environments by which they are influenced on a daily basis. It seems, therefore, that the development of one's personality as well as their ability to adapt to newly founded circumstances may be partially hindered.

Taking into consideration the above information as well as White, Kavussanu, Tank and Wingate's (2004) general conclusion regarding the direct connection between parental ethics, beliefs and moral codes with their child's work- or ego-oriented attitude, the correlation between parental beliefs with the corresponding tendencies, intentions and behaviours by children-athletes is made possible. This sort of influence is not one-sided but rather functions as an interactional triangle among parental psychology and behaviour, the child-athlete's personality traits and the environmental stimuli which may bring about either a supportive state of mind or a stressful one (Egberts, Prinzie, Deković, Haan, & Akker, 2015; Weiss & Hayashi, 1995).

Described below are the three roles parents choose to play in order to enhance their child-athlete's sporting experience: a) the role of the "provider" of opportunities to engage into sport (e.g. by means of financial support, transportation to sporting facilities, etc.) (Harwood & Knight, 2009; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010), b) the role of the "interpreter" of the child-athlete's sporting experience (Bebetsos, Zetou, & Antoniou, 2014), and c) the "role-model" role. As regards this third one, the level of parental involvement is positively and directly associated with the level of entertainment and participation of the child in sport (Côté, 1999; Kanters & Casper, 2008).

Children learn to imitate their parents' reactions in the realm of sports (Harwood & Knight, 2009) and to act accordingly (Lauer et al., 2010). The function of "role-models" is shown in research where it was found that when parents pay attention to physical activity (Moore et al., 1991; Yang, Telama, & Laaksop, 1996) and they themselves are active, their child is more likely to love sport and engage into it (Moore et al., 1991). In fact, Yang et al. (1996) note that the paternal model plays a more decisive role in children's preoccupation with sports than the maternal does. The beliefs and ethics nourished in children's personality, as well as their behaviour and performance depend on the extent to which parents adopt the aforementioned roles as regards their very own values and attitudes (Harwood & Knight, 2009). Even though the offering of "role-models" could be considered enough for the child-athlete's positive development, supportive behaviour is eventually proven to play

the most decisive role in the creation of adequate confidence levels in the child. Therefore, if parents wish for a naturally active lifestyle for their children, it is imperative that they be something more than simply active role-models (Troost et al., 2003). It is recommended that a separation of parent types be made into four large categories: a) the authoritarian, b) the authoritative, c) the permissive and d) the uninvolved (Herbert, 1975; Jago et al., 2011; Steinberg, 1996). The "authoritarian" type of parent demands that children show submission (Jago et al., 2011; Sapieja, Dunn, & Holt, 2011) and obedience via punitive, coercive and dogmatic tactics (Steinberg, 1996). The "authoritative" type of parent uses reasoning (Jago et al., 2011).

Despite being characterized by usually ferocious behaviour, representatives of this category simultaneously display more composed and reserved sides of character. They set specific standards for their children's behaviour, but still rely more on their developmental needs and abilities rather than on absolute personal judgment (Steinberg, 1996). The "permissive" type of parent consents to the children's demands (Jago et al., 2011). Their expectations of their children are not too high and offer the choice of freedom as regards the way children become active and react to different situations. The "uninvolved" type of parent acts with their very own needs and interests as a reference point (Steinberg, 1996).

Stemming from the aforementioned parent types are the two wide parental involvement categories: a) support/reinforcement and b) pressure/punishment (Kanters & Casper, 2008; Wilson, 1993; Theodorakis, Goudas & Papaioannou, 2009). Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes and Pennisi (2006) claim that parental involvement and support are directly interrelated with the actualization of better sporting performance, increase of the child-athlete's confidence levels (Gould et al., 2006; Knight & Holt, 2013; Noller, 1994) and, consequently, consolidation of the enthusiasm drive to continue practicing sports (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003; Knight & Holt, 2013).

At the same time, McCarthy et al. (2008) state that psychosocial support on the parents' side plays an integral role in the creation of entertaining sporting experiences for their children-athletes. Parental "support/reinforcement" is also related to the parent roles of the "supplier" and the "interpreter" of sporting experience (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gould et al., 2006).

The supply of abstract resources (e.g. encouragement in success or not) (Lauer et al., 2010), as well as the disposal of concrete resources (e.g. purchase of equipment) (Côté, 1999; Lauer et al., 2010) constitute elements of parental "support/reinforcement" which take a significantly heavy toll of each given family's finances (Brand et al., 2011; Côté, 1999). On the other side of the coin stand those parents who not only support and

show interest in their children's sporting activities, but participate actively in them, displaying coercive behaviour (Wuerth et al., 2004) Excessive effort for their child-athlete's talent development, financial and other types of sacrifice, unawareness of their indeed pressing behaviour with an eye to stimulate their offspring (Anderson et al., 2003), as well as the exploitation of children-athletes for the satisfaction of their personal needs or the assurance of future financial income (Anderson et al., 2003; Lauer et al., 2010) are factors quite capable of bringing into existence not only stress-provoking situations, but eventually circumstances of pressure overall (Anderson et al., 2003).

Parental self-perceptions and "beliefs" form a system comprising three major elements: a) parental perception of a child-athlete's ability, b) the emphasis parents place on the given sports framework (Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2005) and c) parents' expectations as regards their children's potential success (Bois et al., 2005; Roberts, Treasure, & Hall, 1994). ž

What is more, when an athlete reaches a high performance standard, what is made noticeable is an increase of parental expectations (Côté, 1999; Kanters & Casper, 2008), which are expressed through the means each parent may choose in order to interact with their child-athlete (White et al., 2004).

This sort of interaction is usually focused on the fundamental ethics, values and habits which parents attempt to pass on to their children via their preoccupation with sports, as well as the establishment of a long-term relationship with sport-deriving pleasure (Gould et al., 2006).

The ethics enjoying the lions' share of attention in the bibliography are the emphasis on hard work with an intention to achieve the goals at hand in each case (Duda & Horn, 1993; Gould et al., 2006; Lauer et al., 2010), the creation and eventual fulfillment of commitments (Lauer et al., 2010), and, generally speaking, the desire for success to always be in a clear and obvious position in the child-athlete's mentality and actions (Gould et al., 2006).

Bearing in mind that parents are the primary and eventually the most determinant factor influencing children in their decision-making process as regards whether they engage into sports or not (Bois et al., 2005; Wuerth et al., 2004), the purpose of the present study has been the self-evaluation of parental behaviours (e.g. Limits - Rules - Ethics - Values, Direct reinforcement and Avoidance of Action) and the detection of how these might prove critical for the child-athlete's psychology (e.g. pressure or encouragement).

We have assumed that there are bound to be differences between the criteria present in the questionnaire and the independent variants, the gender and age of parents defined.

## Methods

### Participants

The specimen comprised 204 parents, approximately 9% of whom were parents of young M.G.S. Ethnikos Alexandroupolis Sports Club athletes [106 fathers (52%) and 98 mothers (48%)], with an age average of 43 years (+/- 5,58 years). The agenda included team and individual sports alike, the former group being represented by football, volleyball and basketball, the latter consisting of athletics, rhythmic gymnastics, table tennis, badminton and swimming. To suit the needs of the research, the specimen was divided accordingly with the parents' age, with the younger-than-specimen-average ones comprising a percentage as high as 57,8% (118 parents), while the remaining 42,2% (86 parents) was of an older age than the specimen average.

### Measurement instrument

For the actualization of the research purpose, the "Q-Parent Behavior Check List" questionnaire by Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes and Pennisi (2006) was utilized, modified by Maria Psihountaki (2013), Associate Professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens-Physical Education and Sports Science Faculty included 29 questions and touched upon 3 dimensions of parental behaviour: a) the "Limits - Rules - Ethics - Values" on the side of the parent, with which they guide and mentor their children, b) the "Direct reinforcement" offered by parents to children and c) the "Avoidance of Action" which could possibly pose insurmountable obstacles in the way towards the further reinforcement of the child's endeavours. The answers were given on a 5 Likert-type scale (from 1= "does not characterize me at all" to 5 = totally characterizes me).

### Measurement procedure

The research was conducted during the 2015-2016 period and the specimen was picked by means of random sampling. The parents in question participated voluntarily and their children were actively preoccupied with sports at the time of the questionnaire's completion. Furthermore, the parents filled out the measurement instrument anonymously during their children-athletes' arrival at or departure from the sporting facility.

## Results

The questionnaire was regarded as monofactorial. As regards the majority of the questions asked, the "Cronbach  $\alpha$ " index was satisfactory (AVG=0,834). In addition, Frequency Analysis and the non-parametric test  $\chi^2$  (Chi-square) were utilized. From the average values for each question, it was made apparent that the parents answered above the 5 Likert-type scale midway point. From the standard deviation points it was observed that their answers for each question did not present much diversity. The average and standard deviation points for each questionnaire entry separately are included in Table 1 below.

In total, the questions produced an average of 4,133, with a highest possible value of 5 ("Likert" 5-grade scale). The lowest value observed was 3,191 and the highest was 4,789. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  index rose as high as 0,834, a value considerably close to the value of 1, indicating that the results were convincingly accurate. The above-mentioned data is included in Table 2. For the number of parents believing they avoid having their children's sport dominating their whole life (trying to encourage them to have other interests as well) to be established, frequency analysis was conducted.

From the final results it was understood that as regards the total of all the parents who participated (N=204), 118 of them realize that the above statement characterizes them fully, while 56 of them understand that it characterizes them to a considerably large extent. The same analysis was used to find out how many parents believe they put emphasis on fundamental values. From the results it was found that there is absolute diversity, with most of them (64) from the total number (N=204) finding themselves in the middle of the scale.

Moving forward with the frequency analysis, it was found that out of the 204 parents involved, 155 of them realize they are fully characterized by the statement regarding the supply of concrete and abstract resources, while 38 of them find the above statement characterizing them to a significant extent.

Furthermore, 153 believe that they encourage their children to the fullest by acknowledging all that they do well, while 39 find that their characterization by this action is marked by the immediately following value on the questionnaire scale. For a discovery to be made as regards the presence of statistically important differences in the perception about parental avoidance to behave like a coach towards children when an actual coach is in place, among fathers and mothers there was conducted a value independence check with  $\chi^2$  (Chi-square) distribution.

From the results it was concluded that in the N=204 total of parents there is a statistically important difference between fathers and mothers regarding the perception about parental avoidance to behave like a coach when an actual coach is in place ( $\chi^2(4) = 14,604$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ). Utilizing the same sort of analysis for the agent about the offering of opportunities for trying different sports, there was observed an important statistical difference between fathers and mothers ( $\chi^2(4) = 11,571$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ). Addressing the agent for emphasis on fundamental values, a value independence check was carried out with  $\chi^2$  (Chi-square) allocation.

The results offered an opportunity to realize that in the N=204 total of participating parents, there is presented a statistically important difference between younger and older parents as far as the perception of concrete and abstract resources supply is concerned ( $\chi^2(4) = 13,859$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ).

Table 1. Data for each questionnaire entry separately

Questionnaire Entry	AVG	SD
1. Do I emphasize on my child's development and entertainment more than I do on winning?	4,5132	0,81368
2. Do I have realistic expectations of my child as an athlete?	4,0329	1,13591
3. Do I apply criticism on my child's performance only rarely?	3,6974	1,15110
4. Do I allow my child the freedom to get ready for practice or matchday on their own (meaning that I do not do everything for them, like, for instance, carry their bag, bring their water bottle, invite others to train with them, prepare their equipment, etc)?	3,8553	1,21474
5. Do I avoid behaving like a coach for my child even though they already have one?	4,1842	1,23643
6. Do I love and support my child regardless of the match result?	4,7895	0,68698
7. Do I highlight to my child the importance of hard work?	4,1908	0,93308
8. Do I provide my child with the opportunity to try different sports?	4,1842	1,06988
9. Do I function as a parent aiming at future happiness?	3,5724	1,25862
10. Do I present my child with a positive and optimistic parental model?	4,1316	0,88163
11. Do I avoid having my child's sport ruling their entire life (I strive for my child to have other interests, too)?	4,4539	0,77919
12. Do I scold my child when they display unsportsmanlike behaviour on the pitch?	3,8289	1,50397
13. Do I urge my child to carry on when they act lazy or do not work hard enough?	3,1908	1,24875
14. Do I encourage my child to seek new challenges and opportunities?	4,2500	0,88587
15. Do I avoid applying pressure on my child, demanding that they win no matter what?	4,0526	1,35094
16. Do I provide a good example of an active lifestyle?	3,7368	1,13194
17. Do I emphasize on fundamental values such as the saying "if you are going to do something, you might as well do it properly"?	4,2171	0,93439
18. Do I assist my child with their transportation, offer financial and managerial support (e.g. management of time, school subjects, entertainment)?	4,7500	0,56674
19. Do I encourage my child, showing acknowledgement of everything they do properly?	4,7171	0,62421
20. Do I try to bring competition's joyful and entertaining side to the fore?	4,6053	0,75606
21. Do I avoid having most of the discussions in the household revolving around my child's sport?	3,6842	1,02564
22. Am I calm and confident as regards my child's performance when they are competing?	4,1579	0,99072
23. Do I avoid considering my child's sport an investment, expecting to eventually make something of it (material earnings, publicity)?	4,0658	1,38426
24. Do I offer my child plenty of opportunities and resources, so that they may succeed in their sport?	3,9868	1,01634
25. Do I allow my child to have their own say/opinion in the decision-making process as regards their sport?	4,4934	0,71869
26. Do I try to set my own beliefs on my child's sport aside (giving center stage to my child's own mind about their sport)?	3,9342	1,16614
27. Do I avoid obsessing over my child's sport, considering it do be the most important thing in their life?;	4,0461	1,29358
28. Do I regard my child primarily as a son/daughter, and secondarily as an athlete?	4,6579	0,83074
29. Do I avoid applying criticism on my child right after the match or on the way home?	3,8882	1,12497

Abbreviations: AVG = Average; SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2. Data for all questionnaire entries in total

	AVG	Min	Max	R	Cronbach a
Total	4,133	3,191	4,789	1,599	0,834

Abbreviations: AVG = Average; Min = Lowest value; Max = Highest value; R = Range

Last but not least, another advantage of the value independence check with  $\chi^2$  (Chi-square) conducted was that statistically important differences were also observed in another area; that of the agent regarding the freedom given to children to maintain their own opinion and freedom of speech as regards their sport, as well as the decisions they may make in relation to it ( $\chi^2(4) = 9,135, p < 0,05$ ).

## Discussion and conclusion

The main purpose of this study has been the self-evaluation of parental behaviours (e.g. Limits - Rules - Ethics - Values, Direct reinforcement and Avoidance of action) and the detection of how these might prove critical for the child-athlete's psychology (e.g. pressure or encouragement). The results clarified that the research hypothesis is

confirmed, which is the fact that differences among the questionnaire agents and the independent variants initially established are indeed existent. Taking into consideration the independent variants, such as the specimen's gender and age, it is observed that there are similarities with corresponding recent surveys. Starting with the gender of the participating parents who were picked by means of random sampling, there was detected a relative analogy of fathers and mothers. Respectively, in research by Sánchez-Migue et al. (2013) in regard to the relationship between the motivational orientations of parents and their children-athletes of team sports, there was observed the same relative analogy as the one mentioned earlier, with the percentage of fathers rising as high as 51,45%, while that of mothers reached the point of 48,55%. Proceeding with the specimen age average (approximately 43 years), it was found to be in agreement with that of the study conducted by the aforementioned researchers (around 46,46 years of age) and the study by Dorsch, Smith, and McDonough et al. (2009) (approximately 44,2 years of age), in which the possibility of parents' socialization through their

children's participation in sports was examined. Separately delving into the average ages for each gender of the participants, it was observed that it is in agreement with the research conducted by Bois et al. (2005) placing under the microscope the extent to which parental behaviours and beliefs about their children-athletes' abilities may predict juvenile self-perception as regards the abilities of the latter.

The primary agent of the questionnaire, in which there were highlighted significant differences, was that of parental avoidance to behave like a coach with an actual one present. Via the non-parametric Chi-square test there were observed differences in the agent about parental perception regarding their efforts to substitute the already existing coach and their gender, where it was eventually found that mothers in the specimen realize the essence of the above statement in a percentage almost twice as high as that which marks the fathers' corresponding realization. The parents' general tendency to try to replace the existing coach can be further understood bearing in mind the research by Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo and Fox (2009), regarding parental involvement in their children-athletes' competitive sports framework. Inside it, the relentless verbal reactions by parents (positive or negative), the perceived parental knowledge and experience on the sport at hand, as well as the effort to provide parental feedback in connection to it, made up a set of indications that efforts to substitute the existing coach were indeed made.

Keeping in mind the results about domination avoidance as regards the sport's role in the child-athlete's life, it was observed that the greatest percentage of parents was found to agree either totally or, at least, quite a lot. The proper orientation of parents in this study in this specific agent of the questionnaire is in agreement with the research by Laurer et al. (2010), where the interviewed parents were found in good balance as regards their notions about school performance, family and sporting activity by their child-athlete. As a continuation of this agent's analysis and through the non-parametric Chi-square test, there were observed differences in the agent about parental perception of the issue of opportunities presented to children, which might enable them to explore and discover different sports. From the bibliography, and more specifically the research by Jago et al. (2011), the mothers of the specimen from the present study are found to be mistakenly oriented as regards this very agent of the questionnaire, since the aforementioned researchers showed that girls with lenient mothers display higher percentages of average-high physical activity. Naturally, in the general expression of this result in the present survey, it was observed that parents displayed positive perceived behavioural direction, agreeing with Neely and Holt's (2014) survey, in which a case was made in favour of the prospect of children engaging into multiple sports, especially during the initial stage of sporting development (stage of Experimentation).

The third agent of the questionnaire, in which significant statistical differences were brought to the surface, was that of emphasis placed on fundamental values. To begin with, absolute diversity was observed in the specimen as a total through frequency analysis. Relevant results were observed in the research conducted by Shields, Bredemie, Voi and Power (2005), where parents did not state that they advise their children to hurt their opponents, even though some claimed that they did give advice regarding payback of responding to some sort of negative behaviour in a similar fashion. It is, therefore, obvious that parental perception as regards the display and eventually the adoption of the necessary fundamental values by children-athletes is not crystal clear. As continuation of this agent's analysis through the non-parametric Chi-square test, there were observed differences in the agent about parental perception regarding the emphasis they place on fundamental values and their age. It was proven that older parents pay more attention to the impartment of fundamental values to their children-athletes than younger parents do. The explanation for this phenomenon may be spotted in those situations and experiences characterized as more intense, which were faced by older parents and rendered the implementation of those fundamental values of paramount importance.

The fourth questionnaire agent, in which statistically important differences were highlighted, was that of the supply of concrete and abstract resources. To start with, in the specimen total and through frequency analysis there were observed high percentages of total agreement among parents, a result agreeing with the review of the bibliography regarding parental roles in the sporting framework. The first and most critical of these roles for the continuation of a child-athlete's preoccupation with sports is that of the "provider" of opportunities for preoccupation with sports, such as the purchase of the necessary sporting equipment, transportation to the relevant sporting facilities, etc (Harwood & Knight, 2009; Laurer et al., 2010; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

Also, a number of studies agree with the above finding, focusing on the material as well as the socio-emotional support with the display of love, compromise and sacrifice on the parents' side (Dorsch et al., 2009; Gould et al., 2006; Laurer et al., 2010). As continuation of the analysis of this agent, and via the non-parametric Chi-square test, there were observed differences in the agent about parental perception regarding the supply of concrete and abstract resources to their children-athletes for their sport and their age. It was discovered that older parents realize that they provide their children-athletes with greater numbers of concrete as well as abstract resources than younger parents do. The explanation for this phenomenon may possibly be spotted in the existence of a more stable professional environment at the age of 43 or older (AVG of specimen age).

Finally, the fifth agent of the questionnaire in which there were observed statistically important differences, was that about parental perception regarding the offering of opportunities to their children-athletes to express themselves in relation to their sport, and the parents' age. To begin with, in the specimen total and through frequency analysis there were observed high percentages of total agreement among parents regarding the encouragement they show their children-athletes by acknowledging whatever it may be that they do properly. This finding agrees with the previous research by Wuerth et al. (2004), in which the types of parental involvement in the child-athlete's sporting preoccupation during the several stages of their sporting development were examined. In this study, parents and children-athletes made mention of high levels of understanding and average levels of parental involvement.

As a continuation of the analysis of this agent, and via the non-parametric Chi-square test, some differences were observed in the agent regarding parental perception of the issue of presenting their children-athletes with opportunities to express themselves, and the parents' age. Therein it was eventually found that older parents realize that they offer their child-athlete more opportunities to express themselves in relation to their sport than younger parents do.

This finding in specific was found to be in opposition with the previous research by Shields et al. (2005), in which, based on the parents' own reports, as many as 13% of them had criticized their child-athlete's performance quite harshly. Taking into consideration the wider picture of the findings, parents in their majority appear to be positively oriented, without noteworthy negative behaviours towards their children-athletes. In their majority, they refuse to restrict their offspring to the sport they might be currently preoccupied with. They maintain a rather generous stance as regards the concrete or abstract resources they provide for their children-athletes' sport of choice, a fact especially true for older parents. On the other hand, they fail to pass on to their children-athletes the fundamental values of sportsmanship, and

display the tendency (especially fathers) to take the place of the already existing, qualified coach. In conclusion, one might notice that apart from the education of children by the parents, it is imperative that parents receive education as well. Hence, the design of behavioural codes should not discourage sports clubs, but should rather encourage them, since a direct outcome of all that will be the creation of higher-quality sporting environments and also the production of sports enthusiasts rather than fanatics.

The proposals deriving from the present study are the following:

a) cultivation of sportsmanship and sportsmanlike conduct for parents of children-athletes, b) establishment of correctional educational programs for the development of enhancement strategies for the frequency with which parents: i) transport their child-athlete to and from sporting facilities (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010; Jago et al., 2011), ii) display genuine interest when their child-athlete is competing (Jago et al., 2011; Egberts et al., 2015; Trost et al., 2003), iii) partake in physical activity and iv) adopt a positive and optimistic outlook on sports and the benefits therein (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010; Trost et al., 2003), c) desire for - and pursuit of - all sorts of opportunities by the parents to join their children in physical activity, so that they may eventually nurture not a champion, but rather a human being whose primary characteristic will be a healthy lifestyle (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010), d) briefing sessions for parents at the beginning of every season by the club's officials regarding the role they play in the proper treatment and development of their children, e) training for parents so that they may become capable of teaching their children-athletes important skills such as time management, which shall, in turn, enable them to efficiently combine sports with school obligations, without having one taking a toll on the other (Knight & Holt, 2013; Trost et al., 2003), f) establishment of parent training institutions (Herbert, 1975) by sports clubs as well as public sector members (Jago et al., 2011), g) conduct of similar research on larger population and in different geographical areas.

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## SAMOPROCJENA RODITELJSKOG PONAŠANJA PREMA DJECI SPORTAŠIMA

### Sažetak

Roditeljska podrška temeljni je čimbenik u sudjelovanju djece i uspjehu u sportskim događajima. Većina roditelja se ponaša pozitivno, ali se uočavaju i ponašanja koja ne daju pozitivne rezultate. Svrha ovog istraživanja bila je samoprocjena roditeljskih ponašanja i otkrivanje ponašanja koja su kritična u odnosu na psihologiju djeteta sportaša. Upotrijebljeni instrument bio je Popis za provjeru ponašanja kod Q-roditelja kojeg je popunjavalo 204 roditelja (106 muškaraca i 98 žena) djece - sportaša koji su bili članovi sportskih akademija M.G.S. Ethnikos Alexandroupolis. Rezultati su bili kategorizirani u dvije skupine prema: a) spolu i b) dobi. Kritična roditeljska ponašanja bila su sužena na: a) izbjegavanje športske dominacije u cjelokupnom životu djeteta-sportaša, b) naglasak koji roditelji stavljaju na temeljne vrijednosti, c) ograničenja u sudjelovanju roditelja u programu obuke i d) Roditeljima pružanje resursa njihovom djetetu-sportašu. Zaključeno je da roditeljski rod i dob imaju odlučujuću ulogu u izložbi specifičnih ponašanja prema djeci sportašima. Uz odgovarajuće informacije i obrazovanje, roditelji mogu poboljšati svoje ponašanje prema djeci sportašima, stvarajući više koristi.

**Ključne riječi:** roditeljsko ponašanje, roditeljske odredbe, roditelji, temeljne vrijednosti, sport.

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