



The Effects of Parenting on the Self-Esteem of High School Athletes

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Abstract

An athlete's environment has a large impact on their performance and wellbeing. Teammates, coaches, and family members all contribute the level of stress and resulting self-esteem of an athlete. This study researched the perception of parental involvement from the eyes of an athlete. From a mid-sized suburban high school with an upper-middle class community, 130 out of an estimated 585 athletes, from teams who participated in the study, were surveyed. Additionally, four in-depth interviews were conducted. The majority of the participants showed that their parents' involvement reflected positively on their athletic careers and self-esteem levels.

Introduction

A prominent element of sports psychology revolves around the self-awareness of an athlete. Non-physical obstacles, or "mental barriers", are common and can manifest even in the best of athletes. While many of these problems can be created as a result of negative internal self-talk, they can also formulate in response to external pressures. The self-esteem of an athlete depends greatly on how their environment. Often, the most influential role models throughout a child's life are their parents. Negative responses to the athletic career of a child significantly contribute to the stress and lowered self-esteem experienced by the athlete. These critical influences may be conveyed through known disapproval, complete disengagement, or extreme investment to the point of hovering.

Question and Hypothesis

What are the effects of parenting on the self-esteem of athletes?

Hypothesis: The majority of athletes analyzed feel negatively pressured by their parents to succeed in their sport. This leads to undesired drops in self-esteem.

Literature Review

- **Parental Involvement in Children's High School Sports (2014)** – Discussed the concept of "Helicopter Parents" vs. "Absentee Parents", also explained that parenting is a spectrum.
- **A New Competitive Sport - Grooming the Child Athlete (2006)** – A case study of high school baseball player Beau Fraser whose parents spent \$30,000 on professional coaches, private trainers, athletic testing, baseball camps, tournaments, and travel with elite teams.
- **Sport Participation and Self-Esteem As Mediated By Perceived Peer Acceptance (2012)** – Found that the attitude of an athlete's peers impacts the athlete's self-perception and resulting levels of self-esteem

Methods

Surveys

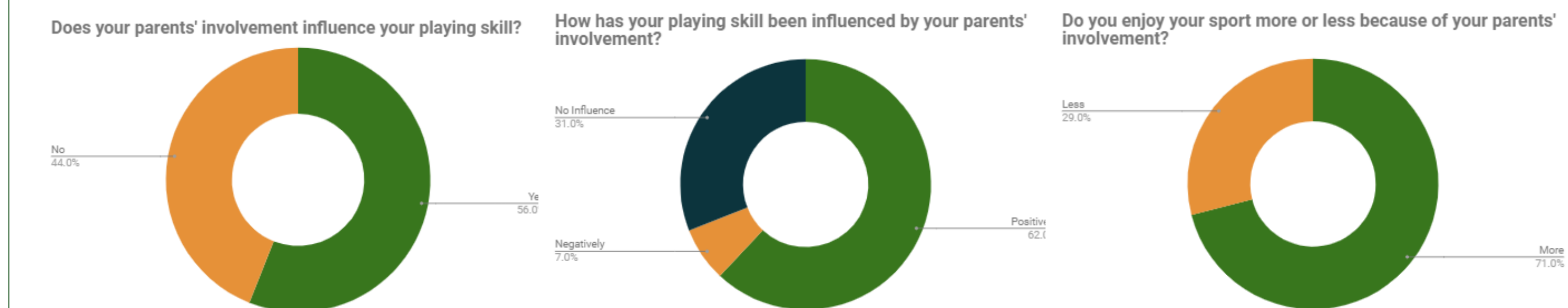
- 130 High School Athletes
- 3 Types of Questions
 - Identifying Questions (grade, type of sport, team level, etc.)
 - Level of Parental Involvement (how often parents attend games, practices, how they help their athlete outside of school sports, etc.)
 - Athlete's Perspective (the athlete's perception and feelings about their parents' involvement)

In-Depth Interviews

- Athlete A (female, 11th grade, varsity swimmer)
- Athlete B (female, 10th grade, junior varsity swimmer)
- Athlete C (male, 10th grade, junior varsity baseball player)
- Coach (male, 15 years of coaching experience)

Results

Survey Results



Interview Results

- **Athlete A** demonstrated a positive approach to her parent's involvement, saying that hers were "not those parents who run down the sidelines during a race." She then revealed that the only stress she feels from swim is her self-generated desire to improve.
- **Athlete B** had a more negative approach, saying that specific behaviors her father performs – timing her races separately, attending every meet, and hiring private coaches – pressures her too much. Her father's unfulfilled desire to swim in high school was put on her shoulders.
- **Athlete C** showed the most positive response of all of the Athlete interviews. He said that he had a deep appreciation towards his parents' contributions. His parents pay for one-on-one lessons with a private coach, and he says that his playing has improved significantly. It appears that supportive parents have led him to feel confident and stable.
- The **coach** took a similar approach to Athlete C, believing that parental involvement is important because "students rarely achieve [their goals] without significant investment from their parents." He also said that through all of his coaching years, he only experienced two cases of extreme parenting that resulted in verbal harm to the athlete.

Discussion

After analyzing the results further, I noticed that there was a common theme in the overall pattern of results: the majority of the interviews and survey responses reflected that parental involvement proves positive in any athletic endeavors the child has. The remaining responses were either indifferent, or they were the complete opposite of the spectrum: extremely negative. This pattern has shown up in the survey results and interviews, and it appears to hold true. The majority of the high school athletes involved in this study were content and grateful to their parents for their contributions and support, rather than stressed out and lacking in confidence when it came to their abilities.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine what influence parental involvement had on the self-esteem of high school athletes. The end result was that while half of the high school athletes who participated believe their parents have an effect on their playing skill, the majority believe that the involvement of their parents has reflected positively in their athletic career. Whether it was demonstrated through paid lessons, or simply their support at every sporting event, the actions of a parent are consequential to the adolescent's development of self-confidence. Future research within this lens of sport psychology could reveal the perspective of the parents on this topic, and further lead humanity toward the complete understanding of the relationship between parent and child.

Future Directions

Future research in this field would be extremely beneficial in furthering the awareness of adults when it comes to adolescents and athletics. This could revolve around the parents' perception of their children's athletic performance as a result of their involvement. Future research might discover a correlation between the levels of communication, parental influence, and perceived stress.

Contact Information

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