

The Effects of Parental Involvement on Child Motivation to Continue Playing Soccer

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Abstract

This study investigated the impacts of parent involvement with female high school athletes' motivation to play club level soccer and their desire to continue playing in college. Motivation is made up of a multitude of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. For the purpose of this study, parental involvement was defined by the frequency of doing specific activities (i.e. driving their children to practices/games, talking about college soccer, picking which team their child plays for, etc.). Athlete motivation was defined by similar questions asked from their viewpoint. Involvement and motivation were measured by a self-report questionnaire using Likert scale items. The study consisted of 20 parents (mother or father) and their child (all female). The null hypothesis stated that parents' responses would not differ significantly from the child responses to the same questions. Not rejecting the null hypothesis supported the theory that parental involvement is correlated with player motivation. This was tested using a set of 16 paired t-tests using the conventional 5% significance level. The findings support the correlation between parental involvement and child motivation because in 14 out of the 16 comparisons, the null hypothesis was not rejected. To further enhance this research, this study should be replicated on a bigger scale, including a larger and more diverse sample size, as well as in depth data collection about family status affecting involvement.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Motivation is both an internal and external force that drives people to make daily and lifelong decisions. People workout because they are motivated to stay healthy. Adults go to work because they are motivated by family or the monetary benefit of the job. Children eat their vegetables because they are motivated by ice cream. But what motivates a child to participate on a youth sports team? Motivation is defined as a “hypothetical construct that is used to describe the internal and/or external forces that lead to the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior” (“Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Sport,” 2004, p. 1). Many factors affect a child’s decision, including social influences and parental support or pressure. At the earliest stages, parental pressures are lessened by the social value that comes with being in a team environment filled with friends (Allen, 2003).

Youth sports grow more demanding with age and, at higher levels, parents will have an impact on whether or not a child will continue to compete both from a financial perspective and their commitment to the child’s wish to play at a higher level. Parental involvement requires a fine balance of pressure and support to properly motivate the child to avoid burnout or limited satisfaction with the sport. Anderson, Funk, Elliot, & Smith (2003) suggest that “parental support and pressure are variables that may be central to understanding how to optimize children’s extracurricular involvement” (p. 241). Does the child only play the sport to please the parent(s)? Is the child happy with his/her sport because of parental support?

This study was initiated because of the current club soccer environment and the roles parents play as the child gets older. Youth clubs are run like machines. Parents put money into

the machine, and as long as the money keeps flowing, the club will build a player worthy of increasingly higher levels. Because of high demands and increased commitment, a child's motivation is one of the only elements that will influence not only performance, but overall experience in a chosen sport ("Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Sport," 2004, p. 2). During career transitions and developmental periods, it is imperative to have parental support. Previous studies have indicated that more parental involvement has led to more successful career development (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2002), while others found that parents can often try to live vicariously through their child, causing potential or added stress on the athlete (Clarke & Harwood, 2014). This study aims to compare different levels of parental involvement and perceived parental involvement to determine the best way to positively motivate a youth athlete.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if parental involvement in youth sports impacts the child's motivation for playing his/her chosen sport(s).

Hypothesis

Parental involvement in youth soccer (a. 10-18) has no influence on the child's motivation toward continued play and overall enjoyment.

Operational Definitions

Independent Variable – Parental Involvement in the child's sport(s).

Dependent Variable – The child's motivation toward continued play and overall enjoyment.

Motivation – continued play in the sport and overall enjoyment (satisfaction) of the child.

Parental Involvement – Attendance (at games/practices); how much say they have in which team the child joins; Transportation (do they drive them vs. carpool with other players); Do they talk about college soccer at home; Do they push the child to join other/better teams; Do they do a lot

of coaching on the sidelines and at home.

Youth Soccer – The club level (ages 10-18) and freshmen at the collegiate level who are 18 or younger.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review examines the relationship between parental involvement in youth sports and the child's motivation toward happiness and continued play. The first section is an overview of motivation, which defines different styles and goals that motivate individuals to complete tasks and goals. The second section reviews sports motivation; specifically, what motivates athletes in different sports environments. The third section outlines parenting styles and involvement under the umbrella of all youth sports. Finally, the last section specifically looks at parental involvement in youth soccer and the different relationships that can influence a child's motivation to play the sport.

Motivation

Motivation is hard to determine because it is not a physical measurement. The most accepted definition of motivation is that "it represents the hypothetical construct used to describe the internal and/or external forces that lead to the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior" ("Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Sport," 2004, p. 2). As seen in the definition, motivation is narrowed down to two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to partaking in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction that results from participation. Three subcategories of intrinsic motivation are motivation to know (for the enjoyment of learning), motivation toward accomplishments (surpassing oneself), and motivation to experience stimulation (for sensory pleasure).

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is when individuals partake in an activity to receive physical awards outside of the activity itself or to avoid punishment. External regulation refers to "behavior that is regulated through external means such as obtaining rewards and

avoiding constraints” (“Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Sport,” 2004, p. 3). For example, an employee might go to the holiday party so the boss doesn’t make him get the coffee anymore. A second type of external motivation is introjected regulation, in which a person internalizes reasons behind his or her actions. That same employee might say he will go to the holiday party because he would feel guilty otherwise.

Another important definition is self-determined motivation, which is “characterized by high levels of intrinsic motivation and identified regulation but low levels of external and introjected regulation and amotivation [lack of motivation]” (“Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Sport,” 2004). A person with high self-determination has initiative, freedom, and choice in behavior.

Motivation is complex and driven by many different orientations and goal-directed behaviors. The motivational climate, or perceived motivational climate, refers to “perceptions of situational cues and expectations of significant others that encourage the development of a particular achievement orientation and induce[s] a certain goal involvement state” (Atkins, Johnson, Force, & Petrie, 2015, p. 1). Individuals collect certain information from the environment and context situations, which places them in task-involved situations or ego-involved situations. Task-involved individuals judge their abilities based on what they have done in the past, and ego-involved individuals base performance on the performance of others (Gershgoren, Tenenbaum, Gershgoren, & Eklund, 2011).

Parents also have their own motivational climate, which influences how “children perceive, understand, and react to achievement related contexts” (Atkins, et al., 2015). Parents can either foster a task-involving climate, in which they encourage learning and fun while praising novel tasks and mistakes throughout the learning process, or they can foster an ego-involving environment, promoting success without any effort.

Motivation in Sports

Motivation is one of the most important aspects in predicting whether or not an athlete will be successful in his or her sport. In regard to motivation, “coaches and athletes agree that [it] is one of the key elements that will facilitate not only performance, but also a positive experience in the sport area” (“Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Sport,” 2004, p. 2). Parents are typically the foundational influence for why children enter into youth sports. Their involvement, whether high or low, can predict the direction of the child’s sport participation and enjoyment through childhood and adolescence (Stewart, 1994).

In early childhood, motivation is often extrinsic before intrinsic because children do things for social and parental approval. The parental motivational climate plays a major role in how children perceive their sport, competition, and the value they contribute to the team. A task-involved parenting style is linked to “more positive outcomes for children and adolescents, including greater perceptions of physical competence, feeling happier, higher self-esteem, the desire to stay involved in sport, and persisting in sport” (Atkins, et al., 2015, p. 2). Not only are the parents’ attitudes important, but the child’s perceptions of his or her parents’ attitudes and behavior are equally important. In research found by Ullrich-French and Smith (2006) a study conducted by Babkes and Weiss (1999) found that “children who perceived their parents to be positive role models, to possess more positive beliefs about their competency, and to provide more frequent positive feedback...reported higher perceived competence, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation” (p. 2).

Different sources of motivation intermix as the child ages. Coaches and peers become motivators, who can easily affect the internal motivation of a child, teen, or young adult. As athletes get older, they rely heavily on coaches to provide feedback and support throughout their

seasons. Matosic and Cox (2014) conducted a study to determine which coaching style worked best on a group of collegiate swimmers. As they predicted, they found that task-involved and supporting roles led to the “greatest degree of psychological satisfaction, autonomous forms of motivation, and the lowest scored on external regulation and amotivation” (p.312). A study was also done on a group of 14-to 17-year-old volleyball players about parenting styles and involvement. The study found that parents fostered an ego-involved environment when they proposed that success could come without trying hard. When parents encouraged learning and enjoyment, the athletes reported a mastery-involved, [or task-involved,] climate (Atkins, et al., 2015). Lastly, Gershgoren, et al. (2011) found a study done by Harwood and Swain (2001) who investigated the different outcomes associated with task or ego-involved parenting among junior tennis players. The ego-involved parental feedback often led children to think that the outcome of the game was of utmost importance. However, the task-involved parental feedback led children to believe in themselves and their abilities more so than the result of the match.

Parental Involvement in Youth Sports

Specific parenting styles (over-involved or under-involved) say a lot about the parent, as well as what type of motivation the athlete will feel. The “over-involved” parent is often the parent who is the know-it-all, who argues with the coach about their child, and who takes on important roles like team manager, or even assistant coach. Over-involved parents seem to have personal needs fulfilled by their children’s participation in sports. They thrive vicariously through variations of their child’s involvement (Stewart, 1994). The under-involved parents are the exact opposite. They place their children in sports to get them out of the house, driving them to practice, or even having a carpool come pick them up. These parents may attend a few or every game each season, but do not say much from the sidelines. However, under-involved does not

mean “uninterested.” It can simply mean that the child’s parents have a full-time or two jobs, or that the parents want the child to have his or her own experiences without parent intrusion.

Although parents’ influences are important, the child and his or her relationship with the parents is a crucial factor when determining motivation. The theorist Bronfenbrenner established the ecological systems theory, which states the environment and people surrounding an individual are always influencing each other. Children often come off the field or court in the hopes of impressing their parents, while the parents want to encourage or teach their child any lessons stemming from that competition. Sometimes “parents experienced empathy in that they perceived sharing emotions their children felt in sport, and these emotions appeared to change in relation to dynamic game and contextual circumstances” (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008, p. 1). Essentially, a reciprocal and multi-directional relationship shows the most accurate depiction of parental involvement in youth sport.

Anderson, Funk, Elliot, and Smith (2003) developed the Parental Involvement Activities scale to measure how children perceive parental interaction and involvement. The PIAS measured this with two factors: support and pressure. Perceived parental support and pressure largely “predicted children’s affective experience of participation...and are variables that may be central to understanding how to optimize children’s extracurricular involvement” (p. 1). Where does parental support and pressure fall in regard to a child or teen transitioning from sport to sport, or season to season? Wuerth, et al. (2004) found that athletes perceived low pressure and high levels of praise and understanding. There is a difference in how parents perceive themselves, as “mothers see themselves primarily as a source of praise and understanding, [while] fathers give a greater amount of directive behavior” (p. 1). The study also found that athletes with more involved parents had an easier time transitioning from sport to sport.

Parental Involvement in Soccer

Soccer is a sport that involves many parents performing various social and managerial tasks. The socialization and dynamics among youth players and parents seem to be more separated than other sports. Soccer youth organizations provide an extremely social and dynamic way for parents to interact while their children are practicing or playing in games. Green and Chaplin (1997) found little to no correlation between parents' satisfaction with a soccer organization and the child's satisfaction. The children's satisfaction and participation was largely based on team and practice environments. The limitation to their study was the strong focus on parental satisfaction affecting the child's satisfaction, rather than looking at what specific parental motivational climate produce different goal orientations.

Another influence on youth soccer players is whether or not the parent played soccer, either in youth or professionally. In a European study, parents with soccer experience were influenced more than the child was (socially), but there was a hesitation about whether or not a child should compete in certain leagues or academies. Parents want to protect their children from “the experienced uncertainty regarding the commitment required to play at an academy (high level), given the potential for negative consequences” (Clarke & Harwood, 2014, p.1). Because parents experienced everything it takes to compete in high-level soccer, they might indirectly influence their child's experience by limitations and unique motivational tactics tailored to their knowledge of the system.

One of the biggest influences on the young soccer player is the positive or negative relationship between the parents and coach. This triangle of a relationship (parent, athlete, and coach) is a part of external motivation because of its social context. Youth are prone to seek social approval by peers, but also by adult figures and “when the parent and coach do not get

along, it can signify an imbalance in authoritative power, and it is likely to influence the social goals of the athlete” (Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavalley, 2009, p. 2). This is a conflict because the athlete is used to each person being an authoritative figure and influence in his or her life. When the two do not get along, it creates an internal tug-of-war and can create unnecessary stress and amotivation for the athlete in the middle.

Summary

A thorough review of the literature led to the conclusion that parents, coaches, and peers play the biggest role in regard to youth sport motivation. Motivation can come in multiple orientations and it is hard to physically measure, but children often are aware of their parents’ influences and how it makes them feel about their particular sport. Any research that discusses motivation and sport will reference parents and coaches because they are the role models, authoritarians, friends, and supporters who influence motivation the most.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This study was designed as descriptive research using a convenience sample. The independent variable was parental involvement in all facets of the child's soccer experience. The dependent variable was the child's motivation toward continued play and overall enjoyment, which was derived from a self-report questionnaire. This study used a convenience sample because it was hard to contact club teams throughout the country and distribute the questionnaire in the amount of time allotted for the research. The players and parents were chosen based on the child's age and the family's willingness to participate in the study. The players and parents were given separate questionnaires with similar, re-worded questions tailored to the specific first person. There was no pre-test or post-test.

Participants

The participants in this study came from local club soccer teams from suburban areas in a mid-Atlantic state. The survey was distributed to 80 families and 20 responses were returned from both the child and the parent making it 40 total responses. All child participants were female ranging between 14 and 19 years of age. Of the 20 parents who filled out the survey, 15 identified as the mother and 5 identified as the father.

Instrument

This study used a Likert-design scale to measure the results of the self-report questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using the researcher's knowledge of youth soccer and the demands placed on children by the parents and coaches at that level. The questionnaires involved three answer options, including "Check All That Apply," "Always – Sometimes – Rarely –

Never,” and “Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree.” The questionnaire was made up of twenty-two statements, covering topics such as parental involvement before and after practices/games, soccer in the home, college soccer conversations, and the participants’ motivation to play/let their child play soccer. The statements were out of order and the participants were not informed of the specific categories to control for inadvertent response bias. The survey was created by the researcher for use in this specific study. Therefore, content validity was of primary importance and was assessed by careful review of the questions by the researcher and a specialist in survey design and analysis. The evaluators of the survey content verified that the questions contributed to the purpose of the survey, were unambiguous, and matched the response scale.

Procedure

Before asking the parents and children to participate in this study, permission was requested by the coach of each soccer team. With permission granted, the researcher sent an email to all parents explaining the research and that participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were emailed a web link connecting them to the questionnaires, and given instructions to complete as many questions as possible at the top of the questionnaire. No question was mandatory for the child or the parent. The beginning of the questionnaire explained the purpose of the graduate research and notified the participants that answers are voluntary and anonymous.

While completing the questionnaire, the participants were instructed to choose the bubble most true to his or her specific situation. In the initial permissions email, parents were notified to let their children answer the survey as independently as possible. If a question was unclear, the participants did not have to answer because the software collected results regardless of whether all answers were completed. Once the participant clicked “submit,” the answers were sent to the researcher in a bar graph and pie chart format.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to compare whether a parent’s involvement influenced his or her child’s motivation to play soccer. The child and parent surveys each had eight similar items that were scaled “Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never.” These items were recoded such that Always=1, Sometimes=2, Rarely=3, and Never=4. The surveys also had eight similar questions that were scaled 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, and 5=Strongly Disagree. Table 1 and Table 2 summarize the results of the t-tests for the sixteen linked child/parent survey items converted to a numerical scale.

Table 1. t-tests for Items with Always to Never Scale (1 to 4)

Question	Students		Parents		Paired t-test	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t	p-value
Drive to practice/games	1.35	0.59	1.70	0.92	-1.79	0.09
Talk of college soccer	2.20	1.01	2.15	0.75	0.21	0.83
Parent gives child tips	1.90	2.20	0.85	0.95	-1.45	0.16
Carpool to practice/games	2.20	2.60	0.41	0.75	-2.37	0.03*
Take child to tournaments	1.05	1.35	0.22	0.49	-2.85	0.01*
Parents attend practice/games	2.90	2.60	0.85	0.99	0.97	0.34
Want parents take to practice	1.30	1.55	0.47	0.83	-1.31	0.20
Parents talk about soccer future	2.15	2.30	0.88	0.73	-0.77	0.45

The findings in Table 1 suggest that six out of the eight activities were rated similarly by children and parents on a frequency scale of Always (1) to Never (4). These activities are: drive

to practices/games, children talk about playing soccer in college, parents give children advice, parents attend games, children want parents to take them to practice, and parents talk about college soccer and the future. Similar ratings by parent and child imply that the null hypothesis is not rejected for these six items, meaning parental involvement in these activities correlates with the child’s motivation to play soccer. The two items where the null hypothesis was rejected were: parents carpool children to practice/games and parents take children to tournaments. The t-test would suggest the two items were rated differently by children and parents, and may not influence player motivation.

Table 2. t-tests for Items with Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (1 to 5)

Question	Students		Parents		Paired t-test	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t	p-value
Child feels practice is forced	3.05	2.80	1.43	1.24	0.74	0.47
Child is allowed to pick team	1.55	1.80	1.00	1.10	-0.84	0.41
Child wants to play in college	2.25	2.85	1.62	1.66	-0.62	0.54
Child practices to get better	1.20	1.35	0.41	0.59	-0.90	0.38
Parents want child to play in college	2.70	2.60	1.22	1.43	0.32	0.75
Child want parents to see them play	1.55	1.30	0.76	0.57	1.42	0.17
Practice is fun	1.45	1.70	0.51	0.92	-1.16	0.26
Will play next season	1.30	1.55	0.57	1.00	-0.96	0.35

The findings in Table 2 indicate that all eight parental involvement items were rated similarly by children and parents on a frequency scale of Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). This implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected for these items, therefore

indicating that parent involvement on these scales is indicative of the child’s motivation. Out of the sixteen linked items between parent/child responses, fourteen did not reject the null hypothesis, indicating that parents have a strong influence on a child’s motivation to continue playing soccer.

Although the surveys were comprehensive and covered relevant content, the sample size was small and could reduce the precision of this survey. Small samples can make it more difficult to reject the null hypothesis. Another caveat to this approach is that the researcher defined what is meant by parent involvement and player motivation. The survey questions did not take into consideration all of the possible external or internal factors of motivation, nor did the survey take into consideration socioeconomic status or family matters in the home that could affect parental involvement.

The following tables indicate the answers for each question asked in the survey:

Table 3. Parents drive us to practice and games

	Child	Parent
Always	14	10
Sometimes	5	8
Rarely	1	0
Never	0	2*

*Child drives herself

Table 4. We talk about a future in soccer

	Child	Parent
Always	5	3
Sometimes	9	12
Rarely	3	4
Never	3	1

Table 5. Parents give tips to child

	Child	Parent
Always	7	5
Sometimes	9	8
Rarely	3	5
Never	1	2

Table 6. We carpool with friends to practice

	Child	Parent
Always	0	0
Sometimes	16	11
Rarely	4	6
Never	0	3

Table 7. Parents take child to tournaments/games

	Child	Parent
Always	19	13
Sometimes	1	7
Rarely	0	0
Never	0	0

Table 8. Parents come to practice/games

	Child	Parent
Always	0	3
Sometimes	8	6
Rarely	6	7
Never	6	4

Table 9. Child feels forced to go to practice

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	4	3
Agree	3	6
Neutral	5	5
Disagree	4	4
Strongly Disagree	4	2

Table 10. Child picked soccer team

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	14	11
Agree	3	5
Neutral	1	1
Disagree	2	3
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Table 11. Child wants to play soccer in college

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	11	10
Agree	2	3
Neutral	1	1
Disagree	3	2
Strongly Disagree	3	4

Table 12. Child goes to practice to get better

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	16	14
Agree	4	5
Neutral	0	1
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Table 13. Parents want children to play soccer in college

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	3	10
Agree	7	3
Neutral	5	1
Disagree	3	2
Strongly Disagree	2	4

Table 14. Child likes parents to attend games

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	12	15
Agree	5	4
Neutral	3	1
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Table 15. Child will play soccer next season

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	15	13
Agree	4	5
Neutral	1	1
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	1

Table 16. Parents want children to continue to play soccer

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	13	11
Agree	5	4
Neutral	1	5
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	1	0

Table 17. Practice is fun

	Child	Parent
Strongly Agree	11	NA
Agree	9	NA
Neutral	0	NA

Disagree	0	NA
Strongly Disagree	0	NA

Table 18. How parents support child at soccer (choose all that apply)

	Child	Parent
Cheer on sidelines	20	20
Offer advice afterwards	14	14
Offer support/kind words afterwards	19	19
Pep talks before game	17	17
Coach child before game	8	6

Table 19. Why children love soccer (asked of children only)

	Child	Parent
Fun	20	NA
Friends	20	NA
Coaches	17	NA
Parents	11	NA
Always played	16	NA
I'm good	15	NA
Want to play in college	14	NA

Table 20. What motivates child to play soccer (asked only of children)

	Child	Parent
Coaches	13	NA
Music	14	NA
Friends	15	NA
Parents	12	NA
Soccer on TV	6	NA
Self-motivated	5	NA

Table 21. Years child has played soccer?

	Child
3-4 years	2
5-6 years	3
More than 6 years	15

Table 22. Age of child

	Child
13-15	6
16-18	7
More than 18 years old	7

Table 23. Gender of parents in the survey

	Parent
Father	5

Mother	15
--------	----

Table 24. Did parent play competitive sports?

	Parent
No	4
Yes	16

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The researcher set out to compare parental involvement in youth sports with the child's motivation for playing his/her chosen sport. The hypothesis stated that parental involvement in youth soccer (a.10-18) has no influence on the child's motivation toward continued play and overall enjoyment; however, the evidence stated that parents do influence a child's motivation to play soccer at the youth level.

Implications of Results

The results of this study suggest that parents play a role in a child's motivation to continue playing youth soccer. Although the study focused on one sport, the correlation between parent involvement and child motivation had little to do with the actual sport of soccer. The questions were based on practices, games, talk of college, etc., which can encompass a multitude of youth sport organizations. The researcher observed that both parents and children agree they feel forced to attend practice, but every child agreed that practice is fun and that they attend each week to get better. There is also a positive correlation between the child wanting to play in college and talking about college in the household, suggesting that the parents are not forcing the idea of college soccer on the children, and that their involvement is not negatively impacting the child's motivation to play. The researcher also observed that more mothers than fathers completed the survey even though it was emailed to both parents. This finding could inspire future research to determine which parent is more influential regarding the child's motivation.

Theoretical Consequences

By definition, the word *motivation* is made up of two components: intrinsic and extrinsic. Individuals are usually motivated by extrinsic factors (i.e. parents) because of a physical reward

in order to avoid punishments, or through introjected regulation, in which a person internalizes reasons behind his or her actions (like feeling guilty, for example). Motivation is complex and determined by a multitude of goal-directed behaviors. From the current study, two extrinsic motivators are the parents' goals as well as the children's goals to play in college (the reward). Based on the result that children feel like practice is forced on them, the extrinsic motivators (parents and college) seem to be pushing the children toward their end goal. Meanwhile, the children also agree that practice is fun, which is considered an intrinsic motivator for continued play and happiness at the youth level.

Threats to Validity

This study has both internal and external threats to validity. The first internal threat to validity is the distribution of the survey. The survey was emailed to coaches and parents with instructions to take it alone. There is no way for the researcher to know if the parent and his or her child were in the same room together and if that affected the honesty of the answers. Another internal threat is the survey itself. The researcher defined motivation as continued play and overall satisfaction. As stated in chapter two, motivation is a deeply multifaceted concept consisting of hundreds of definitions, making it hard to define why a person does anything. In addition, the researcher also defined parental involvement as attendance, transportation, picking a club team, talking about college soccer, and how involved they are on the sideline. The survey does not take into account the numerous other ways a parent could be involved in his or her child's sport life.

An external threat to validity is the sample and size of the survey. The researcher emailed 80 different families and only received 20 results. In the United States, there are 3.2 million participants from all backgrounds involved in youth soccer (Epps, 2016). The sample taken for

this study consisted of upper-middle class families living in a specific suburban area, which challenges the results of the survey as it applies to youth nationally.

Connections to Existing Literature

Existing literature speaks a great deal about the dual involvement parents and coaches have on child motivation. A European study found that parents who played soccer at a high level in youth indirectly hindered their child's experience. The researchers found that the parents were trying to protect their children from the insecurity experienced from their previous lives committed to soccer at a high level (Clarke & Harwood, 2014).

The relationship between the parent and coach also has a complex effect on the child's social experience. Children naturally seek approval from their peers and adult figures, but when a parent and coach do not get along, the child often experiences confusion over the imbalance in authority. This is likely to influence the social motivation and goals of the athlete and the parent (Keegan, et al., 2009). The athlete understands both the parent and the coach as authority figures in his or her life, so when these figures don't get along, it can create an internal tug-of-war, forcing the athlete to pick sides.

A study from the University of Houston found that a child's experience could differ based on whether the mother or father is more involved. "Maternal support and expectations were *positively* associated with the level of child enjoyment, [whereas] paternal expectations and directiveness were highest when child ability or effort was *low*" (Averill & Power, 1995). Fathers and mothers have different roles in a child's sport experience and when a father is most involved, it tended to correlate with more pressure and less enjoyment. This study also discovered that children were less cooperative with their coach when parents exhibited the most involvement.

Implications for Future Research

This topic can be researched more effectively in the future by focusing on the factors that influenced its validity. Rather than only distributing the survey to a small suburban area, the researcher could take years to gather results from all over the country. The researcher could also conduct pre-test interviews with children to discover their top motivators to play soccer. Likewise, the researcher could talk to parents prior to the survey distribution to get a sense of different kinds of involvement. This would significantly lower the chances of missing certain definitions of motivation and involvement that are important for the study.

The study did not take into consideration the family life or socioeconomic status of each parent/child combination. First, the researcher has to assume that every family has access to a computer, smart phone, and email. If it has been established that all participants do have that access, the researcher could add more questions to the survey that identify different background items. Such questions could be: How many children are in the family, is the parent a single parent, do both parents have jobs, do all of the children play sports, what are the ages of siblings, does the child attend a public or private school, etc.? Adding these questions to a larger and more precise study could more narrowly define the correlation between parental involvement and child motivation.

Conclusions

This study shows that parents have an influence on their child's soccer and sports motivation.

The results were clear in that 14 out of the 16 comparisons rated the parent and child answers similarly. They both agree that soccer is fun, but practices often feel forced on them. Every child also answered that friends are a main component of what makes soccer fun. Although the sample size is small, the data indicates that there is a large correlation between parental involvement and

a child's motivation to continue playing soccer. The research is worth continuing to find out the different aspects of parental involvement that influences children the most.

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