

The Relationship between Parental Involvement and High School Athletes'
Performance and Enjoyment

by
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Abstract

Purpose: To determine the relationship between parental feedback to high school children and athletic performance and enjoyment, respectively.

Procedures: Electronic questionnaires were distributed to adults who majored in Exercise Science or participated in the Honors College at Middle Tennessee State University. A total of 139 responses from post-high school athletes across 18 different sports were received.

Results: There were no statistically significant differences in sport performance across the categories of parental feedback, ($F(1, 2) = 0.652, p > .05$). There was also no statistically significant relationship between parental feedback and enjoyment of high school sports, ($\chi^2(4) = 3.051, p > .05$).

Conclusion: Previous studies demonstrated a positive relationship between parents and their young children's enjoyment and performance in their sport. This study revealed this impact tends to dissipate when their children reach high school.

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Chapter I

Introduction

There are a multitude of psychological and physical benefits for the eight million high school student athletes in the United States (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2020). Psychological benefits entail the development of peer relationships, improved self-esteem, and the development of leadership skills, whereas some physical benefits are strengthening the cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal, and metabolic systems (DiFiori et al., 2018). With so many benefits, participating in sports as a high schooler can be a great experience; however, many high school athletes do not maintain participation throughout high school or continue participation beyond high school. In fact, only approximately 480,000 of these athletes will go on to play at the collegiate level (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2020). A variety of factors likely influence an athlete's decision to continue to play or stop participating in high school sports. Many student athletes continue to play for the health benefits mentioned above and the enjoyment of participation. On the flip side, some may stop participating due to poor performance, injury, time conflicts, or lack of enjoyment. One factor often researched in conjunction with adolescent sport participation is parental involvement which has been shown to both encourage and discourage participation (DiFiori et al., 2018).

Parents can affect the enjoyment their children have of the sport(s) they are playing. This is reinforced by a study conducted by Hoyle and Leff (1997). Participants were tennis players, 9 to 17 years of age (mean age 13 years). The authors indicated that the players with more parental support reported greater enjoyment of tennis. This

relationship is also observed across other sports. Bremer (2012) had a broader sample. The participants in this study varied from three years old to 19 years across multiple sports. He also provided evidence that enjoyment of the sport experience by children and adolescents was positively associated with parental involvement defined by directiveness and performance goals. Together, these studies allude to the idea that no matter the age, youth athletes' enjoyment of their sport is associated with their parents' feedback.

Whereas some youth continue to participate in sports because of their enjoyment, others continue because of their skill, leading to high performance levels. The specific factor of interest in this investigation is the effect of parental feedback in relation to how youth athletes perform. In a study on the stress of young athletes, Gould et al. (1993) concluded that open communication of feelings between parents and their children is associated with maximal athletic performance. This reinforces the idea that parents giving honest, positive feedback to their child athlete leads to better sports performance. However, Hoyle and Leff (1997) provided data to contradict this hypothesis finding a negative correlation between parental support and child performance level. In this study, tennis players who had supportive parents tended to enjoy playing tennis more, but they ranked lower in an objective state ranking system used to assess performance levels. These contradicting ideas support the notion that more research needs to be done to assess how parental feedback is related to child sport performance and the potential interrelationships among parental involvement, enjoyment of sport, and performance.

Although the correlation between supportive parental feedback and better athletic performance is unclear, it has been shown in different studies that negative or controlling parental feedback tends to hinder a child's athletic performance. Holt et al. (2007)

grouped controlling, derogatory, and negative comments in one category. They illustrated that when parents gave negative feedback or were negligent in providing feedback when their child did something correctly, the child had a lower sense of self competence and felt less control and motivation. This negatively affected performance. Holmbeck et al. (1995) focused on the general relationship between parents and children not specifically in relation to athletics. Their work demonstrated that when parents are supportive, it leads to achievement and positive outcomes for children; however, controlling parents lead to rebellious behaviors such as aggression, delinquency, and substance abuse. Although this is not directly related to sports, it can translate to the parent-child relationship on the field. Collectively, these studies lead to the conclusion that when parents give negative or controlling feedback to their youth athletes, it can decrease enjoyment of the sport and may ultimately lead to a lower level of athletic success.

Thesis Statement

Although it has been shown that parental involvement and feedback affect youth athletic performance and enjoyment, there is less evidence specific to high school aged athletes. The two questions addressed in this thesis are: What is the relationship between parental feedback and high school athletic performance, and what is the relationship between parental feedback and enjoyment of athletics among high school athletes?

Significance of Study

According to Boggage's (2017) research, about 45% of children between ages 6 years and 12 years played at least one team sport in 2008, but that number decreased to

37% in 2017 when he conducted his study. Because of the volume of evidence showing youth team sports are beneficial to development in multiple areas, when there is a decline like this, it is important to understand why. To help determine why, this investigation serves to provide more information on whether parental involvement is a factor related to the stop in participation of high school athletes. Also, these data will provide feedback on how parental involvement is related to achievement in high school sports. Therefore, the conclusion of this research will be beneficial to high school athletes' parents to allow greater awareness of their impact on their children's participation in high school athletics.

Chapter II

Methodology

Participants:

The 139 participants were males and females who participated in at least one season of a high school sport. Participants with a minimum age of 18 years were recruited from the diverse population of Exercise Science majors ($n = 650$) as well as the population of the Honors college ($n = 1,039$) at a university in the southeast United States ($N = 1,689$). The purpose of asking college students to reflect on their high school athletic experiences rather than directly asking high school students was to reduce any recent emotional involvement in their responses. If high schoolers were the ones participating in the study, then their answers may have been skewed based on a recent poor performance or an unusually good performance. With the participants being in college, it gave them an opportunity to reflect on their time in high school and answer questions that summarize their experience, not just specific times.

Study Questionnaire:

To best understand the background of the participants of this questionnaire, they were first asked demographic questions such as sex, age, sports played, number of seasons, at what point they stopped playing if they were no longer playing, and their reason for stopping. This questionnaire addressed three points of interest: achievements and performance level, the role that their parents played in their high school athletic career, and their enjoyment of their sport. Performance level was determined by having participants provide a list of achievements, specify whether they were a starter (at their highest level of play or participation), and if they were a varsity player. The impact their

parents had on their play and/or participation was assessed by questions using a Likert scale of 1 to 7 (with one being poor and 7 being excellent). Participants were asked to rate how involved their parents were in their athletics, how often they gave feedback on their performance, and if their feedback in athletics was generally positive and encouraging or negative and controlling. Assessing their enjoyment was done also using the 1 to 7 Likert scale with questions such as rate your enjoyment overall after practices, rate your enjoyment after games/matches, and rate your enjoyment of the sport when you started and finished if they are no longer playing. Student athletes who were involved in multiple sports were asked to only answer these questions based on their experiences in their primary sport.

Procedures:

Following approval of this proposal, university institutional review board approval was sought. Once received, a recruitment email was sent to all Exercise Science majors as well as those in the Honors College at the university. A link to a Qualtrics survey was included in the email and interested students who met the study inclusion criteria were asked to complete the survey online.

Data Analysis:

Data analysis was completed using SPSS v.26 (IBM, Armonk, NY). Descriptive statistics were calculated to characterize the sample. A Chi-Square test of independence was conducted to determine the relationship between parental involvement (negative, neutral, or positive) and enjoyment (enjoyed, neutral, or did not enjoy), while an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate differences in sport performance (through a point system) across the categories of parental feedback. The parental

involvement variable was categorized by Likert scale score: 1-2 (negative), 3-5 (neutral), and 6-7 (positive). Enjoyment was also categorized by Likert scale score: 1-2 (did not enjoy), 3-5 (neutral), and 6-7 (enjoyed). A numeric value for athletic performance was calculated using a point system giving one point for each achievement participants listed, one point for each year on junior varsity, two points for each year on varsity, one point for playing on a travel team, one point for playing in college, and a scale for how often the started in games/events (always = 4, often = 3, sometimes = 2, rarely = 1, never = 0). Significance was established at $p < .05$ for all analyses.

Chapter III

Results

There were 139 responses to the survey including 57 males (40% of the sample) and 86 females (60% of the sample). The age of the participants ranged from 18 years to 57 years with a mean of 21 years and a standard deviation of 5.8 years. There were 18 sports represented in the sample with the most frequent being soccer (28 participants), football (16 participants), volleyball (12 participants), and softball (12 participants).

There were no statistically significant differences in sport performance across the categories of parental feedback, $F(1, 2) = 0.652, p > .05$ (see Table 1 and Figure 1). There was also no statistically significant relationship between parental feedback and enjoyment of high school sports, $\chi^2(4) = 3.051, p > .05$ (see Table 2).

Table 1

Participant Distribution Across Parental Feedback Categories ($N = 139$)

Parental feedback	N
Negative	11
Moderate	54
Positive	75

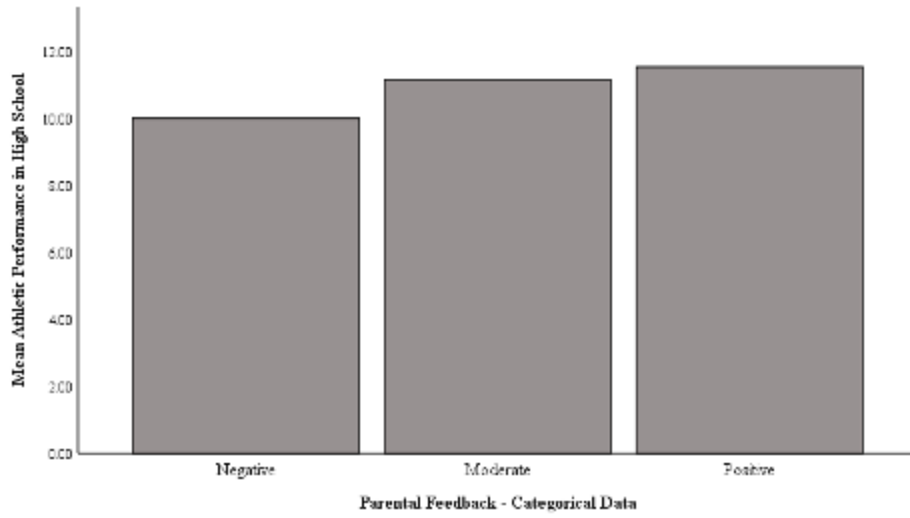


Figure 1: Relationship Between Parental Feedback and Athletic Performance

Table 2

Parental Feedback * Sports Enjoyment Cross Tabulation

		Sports Enjoyment			Total
		Did not Enjoy	Neutral	Did Enjoy	
Parental Feedback	Negative	0	3	8	11
	Moderate	1	25	28	54
	Positive	1	25	48	74
Total		2	53	84	139

Chapter IV

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between parental feedback to high school children and athletic performance and enjoyment. A questionnaire was sent out to all exercise science students ($n = 650$) and all members of the Honors College ($n = 1,039$) at a university in the southeast region of the United States ($N = 1,689$). Participants had to be over 18 years of age, out of high school, and participated in at least one high school sport. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to answer questions characterizing the type of feedback their parents gave, how much they enjoyed their primary sport, and their performance level in their primary sport. Overall, there were no statistically significant differences in sport performance across the categories of parental feedback, $F(1, 2) = 0.652, p > .05$. There was also no statistically significant relationship between parental feedback and enjoyment of high school sports, $\chi^2(4) = 3.051, p > .05$.

To reduce bias, the questionnaire was offered to a diverse demographic across ethnicities, social classes, sexes, ages, family situations, and other factors. Also, the target audience was individuals no longer in high school, so participants would not answer questions emotionally due to a recent game or practice. An issue that may have impacted study outcomes was that only a small number of participants reported negative feedback from parents, which may not be an accurate depiction of the general population. Specifically, only 11 participants of 139 participants indicated the feedback their parents gave them was negative. One reason this might be skewed in this manner could be due to the bulk of exercise science students who participated in the study. The questionnaire was

distributed to exercise science students as a convenient sample with appropriate diversity. Also, these students may have been more likely to have participated in high school sports. However, this fact could have resulted in bias because students in this major are interested in physical activity which could have affected the average enjoyment level. Therefore, this study could also be conducted with a sample not recruited from an exercise science pool to eliminate the potential bias of starting with individuals who may have baseline levels of enjoyment of sport and or physical activity potentially higher than the general population.

While potentially limited by the above factor, the results of this study do provide contrasting results of a positive relationship between parental feedback and children's sport performance and enjoyment. In a previous study with younger children (Bremer, 2012), it was determined that parents had a strong impact on their children's' athletic performance and enjoyment. As there is little research with participants in the high school age range, the current study is unique and helps provide an understanding of the age parental impact on children's athletic experience begins to dissipate. Hoyle and Leff's (1997) study on tennis players included a small portion of participants in the high school age range (9- to 17-year-olds), although the sample was composed mainly of those in the lower end of that range with a mean age of 13 years. The current data add to the literature and document less impact of parental feedback on participants with a mean age of 21 years (± 5.8 years). Had current results indicated parental feedback had a relationship to high school athletes' performance and enjoyment, then the next step for future research would have been to assess this relationship at the college level to define the age that this relationship vanishes.

Understanding what factors support enjoyment in sports is valuable as it is known that physical activity is beneficial to health and academic performance. It may be speculated that high school is the age group where children begin to become more independent. Perhaps by the time students are in high school other factors impact enjoyment such as skill, team record, class load, coaches, and involvement of friends. These factors could be evaluated in a survey of high school athletes to determine the most impactful factors. Additionally, this study could be conducted with students of high school age as opposed to retrospectively.

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[http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-](http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics#:~:text=Nearly%20eight%20million%20students%20currently,th)

[competing-college-](http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics#:~:text=Nearly%20eight%20million%20students%20currently,th)

[athletics#:~:text=Nearly%20eight%20million%20students%20currently,th](http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics#:~:text=Nearly%20eight%20million%20students%20currently,th)

[e%20professional%20or%20Olympic%20level](http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-college-athletics#:~:text=Nearly%20eight%20million%20students%20currently,th)

Appendix A

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129
 FWA: 00005331/IRB Regn., 0003571



IRBN007 – EXEMPTION DETERMINATION NOTICE

Thursday, October 29, 2020

Protocol Title ***The Relationship between Parental Involvement and High School Athletes' Performance and Enjoyment***

Protocol ID **21-1059 2q**

Principal Investigator **Jarod Ball** (Student)

Faculty Advisor Jennifer Caputo

Co-Investigators Sandra Stevens

Investigator Email(s) *jrb2cb@mtmail.mtsu.edu; jenn.caputo@mtsu.edu*

Department/Affiliation Health and Human Performance

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXEMPT** review mechanism under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) within the research category (2) **Educational Tests, surveys, interviews or observations of public behavior** (Qualtrics Survey). A summary of the IRB action and other particulars of this protocol are shown below:

IRB Action	EXEMPT from further IRB review***		
Date of Expiration	10/31/2021	Date of Approval: 10/29/20	Recent Amendment: NONE
Sample Size	SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY (650)		
Participant Pool	Healthy adults (18 or older) - Former High School Athletes		
Exceptions	Online consent followed by internet-based survey using Qualtrics is permitted (Qualtrics links on file).		
Type of Interaction	<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual/Remote/Online Interview/survey <input type="checkbox"/> In person or physical– Mandatory COVID-19 Management (refer next page)		
Mandatory Restrictions	1. All restrictions for exemption apply. 2. The participants must be 18 years or older. 3. Mandatory ACTIVE informed consent. Identifiable information including, names, addresses, voice/video data, must not be obtained. 4. NOT approved for in-person data collection.		
Approved IRB Templates	IRB Templates: Online Informed Consent and Recruitment Email Non-MTSU Templates: NONE		
Research Inducement	NONE		
Comments	NONE		

***Although this exemption determination allows above defined protocol from further IRB review, such as continuing review, MTSU IRB will continue to give regulatory oversight to ensure compliance.

Summary of the Post-approval Requirements: The PI and FA must read and abide by the post-approval conditions (Refer "Quick Links" in the bottom):

- **Final Report:** The Faculty Advisor (FA) is responsible for submitting a final report to close-out this protocol before **10/31/2021**; if more time is needed to complete the data collection, the FA must request an extension by email. **REMINDERS WILL NOT BE SENT. Failure to close-out (or request extension) may result in penalties** including cancellation of the data collected using this protocol or withholding student diploma.
- **Protocol Amendments:** IRB approval must be obtained for all types of amendments, such as:
 - Addition/removal of subject population and sample size.
 - Change in investigators.
 - Changes to the research sites – appropriate permission letter(s) from may be needed.
 - Alteration to funding.
 - Amendments must be clearly described in an addendum request form submitted by the FA.
 - The proposed change must be consistent with the approved protocol and they must comply with exemption requirements.
- **Reporting Adverse Events:** Research-related injuries to the participants and other events, such as, deviations & misconduct, must be reported within 48 hours of such events to compliance@mtsu.edu.
- **Research Participant Compensation:** Compensation for research participation must be awarded as proposed in Chapter 6 of the Exempt protocol. The documentation of the monetary compensation must Appendix J and MUST NOT include protocol details when reporting to the MTSU Business Office.
- **COVID-19:** Regardless whether this study poses a threat to the participants or not, refer to the COVID-19 Management section for important information for the FA.

COVID-19 Management:

The FA must enforce social distancing guidelines and other practices to avoid viral exposure to the participants and other workers when physical contact with the subjects is made during the study.

- The study must be stopped if a participant or an investigator should test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of the research interaction. This must be reported to the IRB as an "adverse event."
- The FA must enforce the MTSU's "Return-to-work" questionnaire found in Pipeline must be filled and signed by the investigators on the day of the research interaction prior to physical contact.
- PPE must be worn if the participant would be within 6 feet from the each other or with an investigator.
- Physical surfaces that will come in contact with the participants must be sanitized between use
- **FA's Responsibility:** The FA is given the administrative authority to make emergency changes to protect the wellbeing of the participants and student researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the FA must notify the IRB after such changes have been made. The IRB will audit the changes at a later date and the PI will be instructed to carryout remedial measures if needed.

Post-approval Protocol Amendments:

The current MTSU IRB policies allow the investigators to implement minor and significant amendments that would not result in the cancellation of the protocol's eligibility for exemption. **Only THREE procedural amendments will be entertained per year (changes like addition/removal of research personnel are not restricted by this rule).**

Date	Amendment(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

Post-approval IRB Actions:

The following actions are done subsequent to the approval of this protocol on request by the PI or on recommendation by the IRB or by both.

Date	IRB Action(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE	NONE

Mandatory Data Storage Requirement:

All research-related records (signed consent forms, investigator training and etc.) must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data must be stored for at least three (3) years after the study is closed. Additionally, the Tennessee IRBN007 – Exemption Notice (Sta)

State data retention requirement may apply (*refer "Quick Links" below for policy 129*). Subsequently, the data may be destroyed in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity of the research subjects. **The IRB reserves the right to modify/update the approval criteria or change/cancel the terms listed in this notice.** Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:

- Post-approval Responsibilities: <http://www.mtsu.edu/irb/FAQ/PostApprovalResponsibilities.php>
- Exemption Procedures: <https://mtsu.edu/irb/ExemptPaperWork.php>
- MTSU Policy 129: Records retention & Disposal: <https://www.mtsu.edu/policies/general/129.php>