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## Socioeconomic Status, Parental Support, Motivation and Self-Confidence in Youth Competitive Sport

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### Abstract

The relationship between family and competitive sport and its complex interactions has been studied as a key factor by several authors. However, many questions about how psychological, cultural and social variables interact have been unanswered. The aim of this study is to evaluate the relationship between socioeconomic status and perceived parental support in young athletes of a high performance center and subsequently, with motivation and self-confidence, as these two variables have been identified as relevant by previous research. For this purpose, and with a DEXPLoS design, a parental support scale was made. It resulted in a six items scale whose discriminative capacity in addition to its internal consistency was high (Cronbach Alpha =0.84). Firstly, an open-ended-questionnaire (qualitative phase) was filled out by 346 youth athletes, measuring socioeconomic status (residence, parent's educational level, parent's job and income) besides athlete's parental support perception. These answers were analyzed by judge agreement to lead into a quantitative close-end-questionnaire, which was completed in a five-interval Likert scale by 209 people. Furthermore, motivation and self-confidence were evaluated through the Questionnaire of Psychological Characteristics involved in Sport Performance (Cuestionario "Características Psicológicas relacionadas con el Rendimiento Deportivo"-CPRD) in order to review whether the perception of parental support or its lack is reflected in these two relevant psychological variables for sport performance. Results show that there exists a positive relationship between parental support and status (living in a single-parent family because of divorce or abandonment, the state of origin and the father's educational level), as well as related to specific aspects of self-confidence during competition and motivation. It therefore aims to further definition of the "parental support" construct, avoiding reductionist views that limited it to a certain type of variables. It might not only help to explain the concept but it can also be a useful tool for coaches, sport managers and administrators in their daily job with sport youth.

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## 1. Introduction

Parents have an essential influence in children participation in sports, even choosing their activities or the orientation of them. Value that parents give to sport activities and competition, the meaning and importance given to success or failure or sportsmanship could be decisive in the children behavior and attitude toward physical activity medium and long term. Parental behavior facilitates children perception of their own competence, modeling their achievement expectations. Thus, parental behavior and attitudes may have consequences in children specific psychological and cognitive processes in the sport practice, like achievement orientation or self-perception of competence and capacity (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005).

Despite of the amount of studies in this subject, Teques and Serpa (2009) conclude that beyond psychological variables, other variables, like socio-economic ones, should be considered to comprehend the phenomenon complexity and to contribute to explain (1) Why parents involve in their children sport? (2) Which are the ways to get involved? And (3) Why this involvement promotes children self-sense while practicing sport?

“Parental support” could be defined as the parent’s behavior perceived by their children as facilitator of the sport participation and performance (Leff & Holyle, 1995) whereas that “parental pressure” as the discrepancy between parent’s and children’s expectations.

Gimeno (2003), following a careful review of the previous research about family and sport relationship, insures that parents and coaches are mainly responsible of the consequences that this sport practices would have in the children physical and psychological development. Among the different models there are, the Teques and Serpa (2009) adaptation from an academic model to a sport one appears to be relevant to this study because starting from the personal motivation, athlete requirements and life context, through parental implication mechanisms (modeling, instruction, backing and support) and the athlete perception of them, children acquirement would be facilitated (self-efficiency, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation and self-efficiency in relationship). These attributes acquired through sport activity might be transferable to other daily life situations. These authors remark the need of including in the model socio-economic variables to get a holistic comprehension of the parental involvement in sports.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the relationship between socioeconomic status and perceived parental support in young athletes of a high performance center and subsequently, with motivation and self-confidence as these two variables have been identified as relevant by previous research.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

In the first phase (qualitative) of this study participated 346 athletes of 19 sports who practiced their sport in the National Talent and High Performance Sport Center in Mexico City (CNAR).

There were 209 athletes of 17 sports participating in the second phase (quantitative). They were in a wide age range (9-28 years old) because of the coexistence of early specialization and late specialization sports in the center.

### 2.2. Instruments

In the first phase (qualitative), and with a DEXPLOS design, a parental support scale was made. Firstly, an open-ended-questionnaire (qualitative phase) was filled out by 346 youth athletes, measuring socioeconomic status (residence, parent’s educational level, parent’s job and income) besides athlete’s parental support perception. They were questioned about:

- What do your parents do for your performance in sport?

- Do you think your parents desire you to enjoy your sport?
  - Yes/No (please, explain your answer).
- Do your parents support you in sport?
  - Yes/No (please, explain your answer)

Content analysis was performed identifying the content units included in the children's responses. The content units stand for sentences, cases or paragraphs that contain relevant conceptual information (Tesch, 1990). These answers were analyzed by judge agreement to lead into a quantitative close-end- survey, which was completed in a five-interval Likert scale by 209 people (from 1-completely agree to 5-completely disagree). It resulted in a six items scale, whose discriminative capacity in addition to its internal consistency were high (Cronbach Alpha =0.84).

Motivation and self-confidence were evaluated by using the the questionnaire of Psychological Characteristics involved in Sport Performance (Cuestionario “*Características Psicológicas relacionadas con el Rendimiento Deportivo*”-CPRD; Gimeno, Buceta & Perez-Llantada, 2001). CPRD questionnaire is a 55 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree/strongly agree). This instrument has proved its validity for the assessment of five variables: stress control, influence of the performance assessment, motivation, mental preparation and team cohesion.

### 2.3. Procedures

After obtaining authorization, coaches were summoned to a meeting in which the project was explained and a summary copy was delivered, being informed about the voluntary participation and ensuring the confidentiality of data provided. An informed consent letter was given with a athletes list pointing out which of them were authorized to participate in the study (as the majority of the athletes were minor, the coach appears as the responsible person of each group).

## 3. Results

The qualitative phase resulted in a six items scale whose discriminative capacity in addition to its internal consistency were high (Cronbach Alpha =0.84). The item discrimination analysis related to parental support is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Discrimination analysis of the six items related to parental support perception

	Average	Deviation	Item- Total correlation	Cronbach Alpha
1. My parents support me to performance in my sport	7,06	12,424	,741	,799
2. My family give me economic support to stand out	7,00	13,274	,538	,836
3. My parents know that I can thrive in life through sports	7,13	12,828	,662	,813
4. My parents desire me to enjoy my sport	7,09	12,541	,670	,811
5. My parents give me emotional support (encouraging)	7,07	12,409	,714	,803
6. My parents fully support me in my sport	6,74	12,214	,498	,855

In the quantitative phase, the relationship between parental support and socioeconomic variables was analyzed. Parental support was measured by the designed scale whereas the family socioeconomic level was measured through the INEGI (Mexican Geography and Statistics Intitute) municipal and State index, father and mother academic level as well as their job level encoding the answers obtained in the questionnaire, and the athletes' income level becoming from public and private institutions (table 2).

Among the studied variables, there are only significant relations between “parental support” and status when there is a single-parent family because of divorce or abandonment ( $r_s=0,30$ ,  $p<0,05$ ), with the State of origin ( $r_s=0,42$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) and with the father educational level ( $r_s=0,22$ ,  $p<0,05$ ).

Table 2. Association between parental support and socioeconomic variables in CNAR athletes.

Rho of Spearman		PARENTAL SUPPORT
Municipal socioeconomic level (INEGI)	Correlation coefficient	,111
	Sig. (bilateral)	,129
Single-parent family socioeconomic level (INEGI)	Correlation coefficient	,157*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,030
Grandparents socioeconomic level (INEGI)	Correlation coefficient	,075
	Sig. (bilateral)	,305
State socioeconomic level (INEGI)	Correlation coefficient	,147*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,042
FATHER ACADEMIC LEVEL	Correlation coefficient	,160*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,022
FATHER JOB LEVEL	Correlation coefficient	,083
	Sig. (bilateral)	,234
MOTHER ACADEMIC LEVEL	Correlation coefficient	,035
	Sig. (bilateral)	,618
MOTHER JOB LEVEL	Correlation coefficient	,048
	Sig. (bilateral)	,491
ATHLETE INCOME	Correlation coefficient	-,016
	Sig. (bilateral)	,828

\*  $p<0,05$

Finally, the possible associations between “parental support” and the two more relevant variables appeared in previous research were studied, self-confidence and motivation, through CPRD questionnaire. A positive relationship was found between “parental support” and self-confidence in competition situation, reflected in the items “I often feel self-confident even in the most difficult moments of a competition (or game)” ( $r_s=0,43$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) and “In most competitions (or games) I believe that I’m going to succeed” ( $r_s=0,06$ ,  $p<0,05$ ).

There is also a relationship between “parental support” and motivation toward sport in the CPRD item “In this moment, doing my best in my sport is the most important thing in my life” ( $r_s=0,21$ ,  $p<0,05$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

Using a mixed-methodology as done in this study is relevant to ensure the content validity and construct validity of the target variables in a psycho-social research. As results reflect, identifying the relevant variables has been possible thanks to actor opinion (the athletes in their own words) and the psychometric parameters were

appropriate (internal consistency and discrimination), so it could be asserted that the resulted six-item-scale designed measure the “parental support” construct as intended. It could be useful for coaches and sport administrators in order to identify different parental support degrees and consequently, advise parents to stimulate sport adherence. It also could be used to detect critical cases and to plan an intervention.

Parental support association with socioeconomic variables like the single-parent family could be explained because of a major involvement of the only parent in the son or daughter activities or either because of the expectation of a social mobility through the sport by the mother or father in charge. Association with the father educational level could correspond to a male chauvinist culture where men decide the main things in a family, so if previous studies relation educational level with sport practice, in Mexico, men educational level seem to be more decisive to decide whether the children participate in competitive sport and be supported or not. Finally, the State of origin might have influence because of the huge differences existing in social, educational and economic development in general and particularly in sports, where infrastructure, organization and support varies from almost nothing to first-world facilities depending on the country area.

It is surprising that there is not a relation between parental support and variables that indicate social mobility expectations as the athlete income or the parent’s job status.

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