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To cite this version:

Noémie Lienhart, Virginie Nicaise. The gap between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices: The role of gender. Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 2022, 63, pp.102296. 10.1016/j.psychsport.2022.102296 . hal-03794302

HAL Id: hal-03794302

https://hal.science/hal-03794302v1

Submitted on 23 Mar 2023

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Title Page

Original research – Brief report

Title: The gap between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices: the role of gender

Short running title: Perceptions of parental practices

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Declarations of interest: none.

Date of submission: July 5, 2021.

Date of revision 1: December 3, 2021.

Date of revision 2: March 31, 2022

Date of revision 3: September 6, 2022

Declarations of interest: none.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1469029222001649

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The gap between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices: the role of gender

Research has provided evidence that the quality of a sports environment (e.g., parents, coaches, peers) plays an essential role in young athletes' experiences (Knight et al., 2017). Parents provide emotional, financial, organizational, and social support to their children. They are the most cited supporters by student-athletes, regardless of context (i.e., personal, sport, and university levels; Condello et al., 2019). By providing such support, parents influence athletes' psychological experiences and performance in sport (Knight et al., 2017). Through their involvement, some parents have a positive influence on the young athletes' experiences while others have a detrimental influence on the young athletes' experiences (Gould et al., 2006; Knight et al., 2017; Lienhart et al., 2020). For instance, adaptive psychological outcomes (e.g., enjoyment, positive affects, self-determined motivation, self-esteem) have been positively associated with athletes' and parents' perceptions of praise and understanding behaviours. In contrast, detrimental psychological outcomes (e.g., anxiety, controlled motivation, negative affects) have been positively associated with athletes' and parents' perceptions of directive behaviours and pressure (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Bois et al., 2009; Dorsch et al., 2016; Lienhart et al., 2019). Researchers have paid considerable attention to understanding how parental practices and involvement in the sport context may positively and negatively influence the quality of young athletes' experiences in sport. Parental practices include "specific, goal-directed behaviours through which parents perform their parental duties" concerning their child's sport (i.e., at home, during training, or competitions; Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). Parental involvement entails "the time, energy, and money parents invest in their child's sport participation and includes things such as transportation, attending practices and games, providing instructional assistance, and purchasing sport equipment" (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999, p. 592).

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The majority of studies have used athletes' perceptions of parental practices and involvement to explore the influence of parenting in sport (e.g., Bois et al., 2009; Lienhart et al., 2019). This approach was the most appropriate since previous studies sought to identify the consequences of parental practices and involvement on athletes. However, recent studies have highlighted that parents want to have relevant educational resources and provided strategies to enhance parental involvement through the implementation of evidence-based parental education (Dorsch et al., 2017; Gjaka et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2017; Thrower et al., 2017, 2018). One of the goals of these educational programmes was to increase parents' awareness of their practices and their impact on their children (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Thus, parents should be aware of whether or not the practices they believe they have implemented are aligned with their child's perceptions. If there is a lack of agreement, knowledge of these differences will optimize parents' support to their children.

Studies have explored the concordance between how children and parents report parental practices (for a review, Hou et al., 2020). In the sport context, like in the clinical and developmental context, preliminary evidence has outlined that parents and athletes do not systematically agree about parental practices. Parents and children have reported moderate-to-low agreement on parental practices (e.g., Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Boiché et al., 2011; Dorsch et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2020; Kanters et al., 2008). For example, in the sport context, young hockey players have reported significantly higher scores regarding parental pressure than their parents, whereas they reported lower scores of parental support than their parents did (Kanters et al., 2008). Many factors influence perceptions of parental practices and involvement (Knight et al., 2017). Among these factors, specific characteristics of parents and children, such as gender, have a significant role (Hou et al., 2020). Consequently, this study explored the agreement on parental practices by considering children's and parents' gender.

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Sports literature has shown that fathers are more likely than mothers to claim expertise in sports (Brand et al., 2011). In the case of youth sports, this means that fathers have expected to support and guide children as they learn to play sports (Coakley, 2006). More specifically, studies in youth sport have highlighted that fathers report engaging in more pressure and directive behaviours, whereas mothers report offering more praise and understanding (Dorsch et al., 2016; Wuerth et al., 2004). In addition, there is evidence that athletes' perceptions of parental practices differ according to whether the athletes are female or male (e.g., Lienhart et al., 2019). Fathers have reported using more directive behaviours and more praise and understanding behaviours with sons than with their daughters (Boiché et al., 2011). Male athletes have reported higher levels of parental pressure compared to female athletes (Amado et al., 2015). These findings are in line with Fredricks and Eccles' study, which revealed that both mothers and fathers tended to perceive their sons as more competent in sport and to provide more encouragement and equipment for them than for their daughters (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005).

Finally, children imitate the parent of the same gender given their shared gender identity (Washburn, 1994). In addition, parents' and adolescents' perceptions of their relationships evolve during adolescence (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019). The gender intensification hypothesis posits that during adolescence, same-gender parent-adolescent dyads shift towards greater agreement over perceptions of their relationships compared to opposite-gender dyads (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Gender may therefore play an essential role in the concordance between how adolescents and parents report parental practices in sport.

In the interest of educating parents, the purpose of the current study was to explore the differences between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices by considering athletes' and parents' gender. Based on previous research on parenting practices and

involvement with adolescents in various contexts, this study investigated three main hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The concordance between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices is expected to be low to moderate regardless of the gender of parents and athletes (Boiché et al., 2011; Dorsch et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2020).
- Hypothesis 2: The perceptions of parental practices would be different depending on the respondent. Athletes would report more frequent use for directive and pressure behaviours and less frequent use for active involvement and praise and understanding behaviours than their parents (Kanters et al., 2008).
- Hypothesis 3: The differences in perceptions of parental practices would be predicted by athletes' gender, parents' gender, and/or their interaction (e.g., Brand et al., 2011; Lienhart et al., 2019). In particular, it is expected that same-gender parent-adolescent dyads would be more concordant than opposite-gender parent-adolescent dyads (Hill & Lynch, 1983; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019; Washburn, 1994).

Method

Participants

A sample of 256 competitive adolescent elite athletes (Swann et al., 2015), aged 14.72 years ± 1.53; and 352 parents, aged 46.52 years ± 7.36, participated in this study. They represented four sub-groups of 88 dyads: father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son. A total of 96 athletes were represented in two dyads (i.e., mother-son and father-son or mother-daughter and father-daughter), while 160 athletes were represented in only one dyad. Athletes trained in intensive training centres and involving in national sport competitions were eligible to take part. They are accommodated on weekdays at centres run by France's national sports federations and returned to their family homes on weekends.

Measures

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An adapted French version (Lienhart et al., 2019) of the Parental Involvement in Sport Questionnaire (PISQ; Lee & MacLean, 1997) was used to assess the mothers' and the fathers' behaviours separately. The questionnaires contained four dimensions for parental practices: *Directive behaviours* (5 items; e.g., "before a contest your father/mother tells you what particular things you need to work on to do well"); *pressure* (4 items; e.g., "your father/mother puts pressure on you to win"); *active involvement* (3 items; e.g., "does your father/mother take an active role in running your club?"); and *praise and understanding* (4 items; e.g., "after a contest your father/mother praises you for trying hard"). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Cronbach's α ranged from .71 to .87 for athletes and from .69 to .76 for parents in the present study.

Procedure

The present study was conducted according to international ethical guidelines. The coaches of the training centres comprised in the study were contacted before data collection. They presented the study to all athletes and parents before the start of the season, emphasizing that their participation was voluntary and that their answers remain confidential. Written informed consent were obtained from parents before the beginning of the study. Athletes and parents completed the questionnaires in a separate place in groups of 10 to 20 participants managed by one of the research team members during welcome meetings at the training centres.

Data analysis

First of all, zero-order correlations were computed with SPSS software (Version 20; IBM SPSS Predictive Analytics, Chicago IL) for the entire sample and each sub-group (i.e., father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son) to assess the strength of the linear relationships between athletes' and parents' perceptions of the four parental practices

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(hypothesis 1). Cohen's classification (1988) was used to define the strength of the relationships (i.e., low: .30, moderate: .50, and strong: .80).

Then, multilevel models were used to test hypotheses 2 and 3 because sampling data are nested (i.e., some athletes appear in two dyads). The multilevel models were specifically designed to model dependent observations (Field et al., 2012). Theses statistical analyses were carried out with R software (RStudio Team, 2015). One series of models was computed to answer each of the two hypotheses. First, a one level multilevel model was computed to explore the influence of the respondent (level 1 units of analyses) on the perceptions of parental practices (hypothesis 2). A null model (i.e., no predictor) was estimated for each parental practice (i.e., directive behaviours, pressure, active involvement, and praise and understanding). Intra-Class Correlations (ICC) were calculated from these models to estimate the amount of variance at the between and within individual levels. The ICC determined whether conducting multilevel models was relevant or not. Then, the respondent (i.e., athlete vs. parent) was added as a predictor of the perceptions of parental practice to the final model. Second, a two-level multilevel model estimated the impact of the athletes' gender, parents' gender, and their interaction on the differences in perceptions of parental practice (hypothesis 3). The respondent (level 1 units of analyses) was nested within the dyad (level 2 units of analysis). A new dependent variable was created for each parental practice: the difference between the athletes' and the parents' perceptions (i.e., the difference in perceptions). A null model was estimated for each difference in perceptions for the four parental practices. Then, a two waves interaction (i.e., athletes' gender*parents' gender) was added as a predictor of the difference in perceptions to the final model. An estimate of the effect size was reported for each model using the conditional pseudo R^2 (using the MuMin package of the R software).

Results

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Table 1 presents demographic information for the entire sample, and Table 2 the mean and standard deviation of each subscale for the entire sample and each sub-group. Overall, both mothers and fathers reported higher scores for active involvement and praise and understanding behaviours than the athletes did. Conversely, they reported lower scores for directive behaviours and pressure than the scores reported by athletes, with a single exception (the mother-daughter dyad regarding pressure).

Firstly, correlations were calculated for each subscale of the PISQ between the mothers' and fathers' self-reported scores and the athletes' scores (Table 3; hypothesis 1). Overall, the correlations were significant and positive at $p < .001$, for the directive behaviours, pressure, and active involvement subscales. They were low to moderate in magnitude, ranging from $r = 30$ (pressure) to $r = .57$ (directive behaviours). Conversely, the correlations failed to reach significance at $p = .05$ for the praise and understanding behaviours. Similar results were found for three of the four sub-groups. The correlations for directive behaviours, pressure, and active involvement were significant, and low ($r = .22$) to moderate ($r = .57$) in magnitude for father-daughter, father-son, and mother-son dyads. For the mother-daughter dyad, only moderate correlations for directive behaviours ($r = .57$) and active involvement ($r = .64$) were significant and positive at $p < .001$.

Secondly, two series of multilevel models were conducted to (1) measure the influence of the respondent (i.e., athlete vs. parent) on the scores of the four subscales of the PISQ (Table 4) and (2) explore the impact of the athletes' and parents' gender on the difference in perceptions of the four parental practices (Table 5). The ICC (i.e., $\tau 00/(\tau 00+\sigma^2)$) reported that the within-individual variance represented 57– 95 percent of the total variance for the four parental practices and the differences in their perceptions, and the between-individual variance corresponded to 5–43 percent of the total variance. Therefore, the results of the null models indicated that total variances were not fully explained by only within-individual or

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only between-individual variance. Thus, the results of the null models highlighted the usefulness of multilevel models in the case of the present study.

Results showed first of all that the scores of directive behaviours (β = -.29, p < .001), active involvement (β = .18, p < .05), and praise and understanding (β = .27, p < .001) were predicted by the respondent (hypothesis 2). Compared to athletes, parents reported significantly lower scores (i.e., less frequent use) for directive behaviours and higher scores (i.e., more frequent use) for active involvement and praise and understanding. Furthermore, the differences in perceptions of the directive behaviours (β = -.22, p < .01) and active involvement (β = .22, p < .05) were predicted by the parents' gender (hypothesis 3). The differences in perceptions of these two parental practices were higher when the father was involved in the dyad (i.e., father-daughter and father-son) compared to the mother (i.e., mother-daughter and mother-son). In contrast, results highlighted that the differences in perceptions of the four subscales were not significantly predicted by the athletes' gender and the gender match of dyads (i.e., athletes' gender*parents' gender).

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the differences between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices in sport by considering athletes' and parents' gender. Our findings highlighted relatively modest concordance between perceptions of parents and adolescents. This result supports previous work showing that parents and children have different perceptions of parental practices in the sports context (Boiché et al., 2011; Dorsch et al., 2016; Kanters et al., 2008). This study extends this observation to adolescents involved in the elite context of team sports. Gender plays a significant role in parenting in sport but its influence still needs to be clarified (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Knight et al., 2017). This study intends to advance knowledge about the role of parents' and athletes' gender in the differences in perceptions of parenting practices. Results showed that the

differences in perceptions of parental practices between athletes and parents differed according to parent's gender. In particular, the differences in perceptions of two (directive behaviours, active involvement) of the four parental practices explored were higher when the father was involved in the dyad (i.e., father-daughter and father-son) compared to the mother (i.e., mother-daughter and mother-son).

In line with our first hypothesis, the correlations highlighted mainly relationships low to moderate between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices. *This study intends to advance knowledge* in the correlations for the mother-daughter dyad, whereas the results showed three significant relationships for the other dyads, which confirms the interest in considering athletes' and parents' gender. The results of multilevel models provided evidence for the second hypothesis: parents and athletes had different perceptions for three of the four parental practices measured. Adolescents perceived more frequently directive behaviours and less frequently active involvement and praise and understanding than what parents reported. This supports previous work in hockey showing that children perceived a higher degree of parental behaviours generally associated with negative psychosocial outcomes (i.e., pressure and directive behaviours) and a lower degree of parental behaviours generally associated with positive psychological outcomes (i.e. support and active involvement) in comparison with what parents reported (Kanters et al., 2008). In contrast, although in the present study, adolescents reported pressure behaviours more frequently than parents, no significant difference was detected between adolescents' and parents' perceptions. This second result provides evidence that parents and adolescents are more in line with each other over the course of adolescence compared to childhood (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019).

In an attempt to further understand the role of gender in the concordance of athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices, a second set of multilevel models were conducted to explore the impact of the athletes' and parents' gender on the difference in

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perceptions of the four parental practices. Consistent with the third hypothesis, parents' gender predicted the difference in perceptions of parental practices. Indeed, results showed that differences in perceptions of directive behaviours and active involvement were higher when the father-was involved in the dyad compared to the mother. These findings suggest that sporting experiences fall on a continuum from more to less shared depending on parents' gender. The mother seems to have a privileged relationship with her children during adolescence since the concordance is higher than with the father. This is consistent with previous research in relationships that have indicated that adolescents and parents report more conflict with the father than the mother (Dorsch et al., 2016; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019). Thus, the age of the athletes in this study (i.e., adolescents) could explain why the differences in perceptions were lower with mothers than fathers, even though fathers have expected to be more supportive and guiding than mothers in athletes' learning of sports (Coakley, 2006; Ehrlich et al., 2016).

Furthermore, multilevel models highlighted that athletes' gender and the interaction of athletes' and parents' gender did not significantly predict the difference in perceptions of parental practices. Thus, the data of this study did not provide evidence for a lower difference in perceptions in the same-gender parent-adolescent dyads compared to opposite-gender parent-adolescent dyads and partially supported the third hypothesis. An explanation of this finding could be based on the gender theory, which postulates that the mother has more interaction and communication with adolescents than the father regardless of the athletes' gender (Ferree, 1990; Palkovitz et al., 2014).

Various research studies have recommended the implementation of evidence-based parental education to enhance parental involvement (e.g., Knight et al., 2017). Recognizing that parental behaviour impacts the child through the child's perception of that behaviour (Stein et al., 1999), the findings of this study could enrich the content of evidence-based

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programmes for parents. Indeed, one of the goals of these programmes was to increase parents' awareness of their practices (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Thus, it seems relevant to alert parents to the idea that the behaviours they believe they are using are not necessarily those perceived by the athletes, especially since athletes perceive a greater use of certain maladaptive behaviours and a lesser use of adaptative behaviours than those reported by parents. Parents may believe they are providing an adaptative involvement for their child's development when it is not perceived as such by the athlete. In addition, education programmes for parents should measure the perceptions of athletes and parents for each dyad regarding parental practices because the concordance differed according to gender. These measures could be an educational tool for parents and athletes to share their perceptions of parental practices. The exchanges induced by the sharing of these measures could also lead to awareness, among athletes, of the impact they can have (e.g., athletes' motivation, emotions, commitment) on parental practices (Knight et al., 2017). Finally, the findings suggest a particular focus on the father-daughter and father-son dyads.

Researchers can build upon the contribution of the present study by addressing its limitations. The primary limitation concerns the specificity of our sample (adolescent athletes in French intensive training settings in team sports). Therefore, caution is required before generalizing the findings of the present study to parenting in sport as a whole. Researchers could extend the present study by exploring differences between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices across the different phases of participation in various sports and countries (Côté & Abernethy, 2007). The second limitation lies in the impact of the agreement and disagreement on athletes' experiences. Kanters et al. (2008) have shown that parent-child agreement may be a significant predictor of the affective outcomes typically associated with young people's participation in sports. Although the findings of this study alert parents as to the perception of their behaviours, the current study did not explore the

influence of the differences in perceptions on the sporting experiences of adolescents and parents.

Notwithstanding these limits, the current study meaningfully contributes to knowledge of parenting in sports by exploring the influence of gender in the difference between competitive elite athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices in sport. The perceptions of adolescents and parents concerning parental practices are not always convergent (Dorsch et al., 2016; Kanters et al., 2008), especially in the father-daughter and father-son dyads. The current study provides evidence that researchers and practitioners can use to inform evidence-based parental education programmes. With continued attention to the perception of athletes and parents, there is much potential for generating strategies to enhance both parents' and athletes' sporting experiences.

Declarations of interest: none.

This research received no specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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