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The athlete's perception of parents behaviors in sport context: A study in youth handball players of the Madeira Handball Association

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ABSTRACT

The participation of parents in their children's sports is very important. However, many parents end up having negative and deviant behaviours in sports and social context, generating this participation some controversy and misunderstandings. With this study, we intend to assess the perception of the athletes about the behaviour of the parents in the sport context, considering the demographic characteristics of the athletes (gender and age). The sample is composed by young handball players from the Madeira Handball Association, aged 9-16 years of both sexes (n=284, male n=122, female n=162) registered by ten clubs and with a minimum of one year of organized sports practice. For the collection of data, a questionnaire previously constructed and duly validated was used. The results confirm the perception of the role of parents in supporting their children 's sports practices, as well as motivating them for the sport. There is also a perception of the young players of a pressure exerted by the parents in obtaining immediate results and little appreciation of the progress of learning. **Keywords:** Parents; Handball; Perception; Behaviour; Training.

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INTRODUCTION

With this study we intend to gauge how the young athletes perceive the behaviour and attitudes of their parents in the sporting context. Some authors point out the involvement of the family as an important factor in the physical, social and psychological development of young athletes (Buceta, 2015; Byrne, 1993; Sobral, Coelho-e-Silva, 2002). In recent years there have been reports of problems in competitions involving the parents of young handball players with increasingly frequent deviant behaviours, which will help us find answers about how young people perceive and characterize these behaviours and attitudes, that previous studies refer to the discomfort and embarrassment of young people about their parents' wrong attitudes and behaviours (Buceta, 2015).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

A total of 284 children and adolescents (122 boys and 162 girls), aged between 9 and 16 years old from u-10 to u-16 (12.82 + 1.67), enrolled at least one year in 10 clubs of the Handball Association of Madeira.

Measures

For this study, a questionnaire was constructed and validated through the Delphi method (Severino, 2014), by discussion and consensus among six handball experts. Subsequently, reliability was determined through the pilot study to quantify the consistency of the information collected and to identify possible ambiguous issues, high levels of intraclass correlation coefficient demonstrate the consistency of the information collected (ICC between .890 and .993). In this way, the final version of the questionnaire was composed of 38 affirmations according to a Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) and structured in the following dimensions: Characterization of the Practitioner, Participation of Parents in Children's Sports Practice, Fair play, Parent Types, and Athlete Perception of Parent Behaviour.

Procedures

The project was approved by the Scientific Committee of the Department of Physical Education and Sport of the University of Madeira. Participants were allowed to participate in the study through consent of the caregivers. Fulfilment of the questionnaires lasted for approximately 15 minutes. The questionnaires were applied by trained field team members who showed up for any requests for clarification that might arise.

Analysis

The mean and standard deviation were used to characterize the sample. Factor analysis was used to determine the dimensions, with 3 dimensions being extracted ("Extrinsic valorisation", "Support and Involvement of the Parents" "Individual Intrinsic Valorisation").

Pearson's correlations were used to analyse the association between scores of three dimensions and age. Student's t-test was used to study the differences between genders in the obtained scores. The statistical software used was SPSS v.25.0 and the level of significance was 5%.

RESULTS

The results show that the parents are participative, with presence in competitions (73.6%) and in training (73.1%). However, only 43.5% realize that parents are actively participating in the monitoring of their participation in the sport.

Two in three athletes (73.5%) have the perception that parents want them to be champions, but only 17% realize that parents want them to be called to the regional team or that they are the best players in the team (11.8%).

The perception that parents are angry when they lose was reported by 20% of the young respondents, although 92.9% of the athletes perceived that parents wanted them to be happy in sports and 81.4% said that parents value the acquisition of new techniques.

Through the extraction of the scores by analysis in main components, three scores were determined: (i) "Extrinsic Valorisation" (ii) "Support and Involvement of Parents" and (iii) "Intrinsic Individual Valorisation". It is verified that between the genders the boys have a perception of a greater pressure on the part of the parents in the dimension "Extrinsic Valorisation" ($t(282) = 2.731, p = .010$), not being verified differences in the remaining dimensions. Considering age, we found only association with statistical significance with the dimension "Support and Involvement of Parents" ($r = -0.334, p < .001$) and only in boys.

DISCUSSION

Most of the young players live with the perception of a pressure on the immediate results as the fact that the parents want their children to be champions or that they reach the level of their team or of calls to the regional selections, results that go to meet the Hollins study (2016) which states that young people feel pressure rather than support when their parents are very involved in their sport. These results are more felt by the boys, probably because their parents have a greater desire of the children to reach prominent positions in the modality (Buceta, 2015). In this case, the Hollins study (2016) states that in many cases parents are more emotionally involved in children's sports participation than they are, supporting early specialization because they are too focused on immediate outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

The presence and participation of the parents is unequivocal, starting from the perception of the athletes, which reveals some negative aspects. Although most young people are aware of the importance given by parents to the positive aspects of sports as fundamental to their personal and social development, there is a high number of young people who feel exaggerated pressure from their parents. It is important to highlight the perception of many athletes that their parents are angry when the results of the team are not what they want.

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