

THE EFFECT OF PARENTAL PRESSURE ON THE STRESS, SELF EFFICACY & OVERALL WELL BEING OF  
ATHLETES

The effect of parental pressure on the stress, self-efficacy and overall well-being of athletes

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### **Abstract**

Research indicates that a child's interpretation of their parent's actions and words related to their sport experience has a direct influence on their child's ability to cope with the stressors of sport. The purpose of this synthesis was to review the literature on the effect of parental pressure on the stress, self-efficacy and overall well-being of athletes. Results indicate that parental pressure to be the best has a negative effect, while pressuring a child to be their best has more of a positive effect. While a parent may believe that are saying and doing all the right things, ultimately, the research proves that the way the athlete perceives these behaviors has the biggest effect on their athletic career.

**Keywords:** parental pressure, sports, stress, parental behavior

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

According to Schwebel, Smith and Smoll (2016) the number of adolescents who participate in team sports annually throughout the United States is over 45 million. This does not include the millions of children who chose to partake in individual sports during their adolescent years. Ultimately, more than half of children in the United States from the age of 6-18 participate in some form of athletic competition. However, this number drastically decreases as children start to grow older. Sports are supposed to be a place where young people learn important life lessons, such as teamwork, accountability, work ethic, and fairness among others. In addition to these benefits, sports can provide an avenue to enhance health and fitness.

As the dropout rates of athletes increase, we are forced to ask ourselves why. A topic that has been largely blamed for the burnout of athletes is parental involvement and pressure, as parental behavior has been shown to impact the goals, values, overall competence and lastly, desire to participate amongst youth athletes (Bois, LaLanne & Delforge, 2009). Perceptions and visions for not only the success of their children, but also the influence of sport in their lives plays a huge role in the way a parent views their child's athletic career. Parents are the sole reason many of these children begin to participate in sport at all, and their influence throughout their child's athletic career is essential (Bois, 2009; Pulido, 2018) If you ask children, research shows that they see their parental involvement as an important part of enjoyment and well-being in their sport, but they also view pressure from their parents as negative and stressful (Stein et al., 1999). Parents by nature are supposed to be the ones to guide their children down the right path. So really, is parental pressure always a bad thing?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Parents play a significantly large role in the development of their children both as human beings and as athletes. In terms of their development as athletes, the role of a parent can significantly impact the child's love for the game and their motivation to continue to succeed. Most parents want what is best for their child, and in the world of athletics, often times this means parents pressure their children to be the best they can be, or reach what they believe is their child's potential. And while the parent may believe they are helping their child, too much parental pressure actually has a negative effect on the development of an athlete in terms of their self-efficacy and overall mental well-being.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this synthesis is to review the literature on the role of parents in the enjoyment, self-efficacy and work ethic of an athlete's career.

### **Operational Definitions**

1. Athlete – a person who participates in any sort of organized sport.
2. Parent - for purposes of this study, a parent is any person who has primary custody of the athlete.
3. Enjoyment - willingness to participate in an activity because the activity is perceived to be desirable by the athlete.
4. Self – efficacy - a person's ability to believe in their own capabilities to succeed.
5. Work Ethic – How much energy and effort a person is willing to put forward in a given situation.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions will be answered as a result of this literature review:

1. How does parental pressure influence the stress of athletes?
2. How does parental pressure influence the self-efficacy of athletes?
3. How does parental pressure influence the well-being of athletes?

### **Delimitations**

The following delimitations guided the development of this paper:

1. This literature review is limited to articles and research published between the years 2009-2020.
2. The population studied is limited to boys and girls who compete in organized sport and have some form of parental involvement in their sport participation, as well as their parents.
3. The age range that was reviewed is between 8 and 35 years of age for athletes. For parents, the age was not always specified.

## **Chapter Two: Methods**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methods used to review the literature on the role of parents in the enjoyment, self-efficacy and work ethic of an athlete's career.

The studies collected for this synthesis were located using the EBSCO database from The College at Brockport's Drake Library. Within the EBSCO database the following databases were searched: SPORT Discus and Academic Search Complete. Within these databases a total number of 47 articles met the criteria for inclusion as part of the critical mass within this literature review. In order for an article to meet the criteria for selection in this synthesis it must have been published between 2009-present, this will provide the synthesis with the most up to date and current information available. Other criteria for selection included scholarly and peer reviewed articles that were full-text. Having scholarly and peer reviewed articles provides more validity within the articles and better overall quality. Other articles or sources selected as part of this literature review provided context about the topic, background information and supplemental information to complete the review. All articles and sources are appropriately cited in the reference section of this paper.

In order to gather valuable articles for this synthesis certain keywords and phrases were used when searching the data-base. The first keywords searched were parent, pressure and sport and all articles were peer reviewed and published between the year 2009 and 2020. The search required that all three keywords were in the abstract of the article. That resulted in 45 hits. While all of these articles talked about parents and pressure, not all articles were specifically focused on parental pressure. Many of the articles in this search focused on injury and return to play, as well as how physically active parents are in comparison to their children. In total from this search 10 articles were collected.

A second search was conducted using the terms “parents,” “athlete,” and “well-being.” Parents was required to be in the title and both athlete and well-being were required to be in the abstract. This resulted in 3 hits and collected 1 article. Using this more specific approach, a search was conducted using the terms “parent,\*” “athlete\*” and “perfect,\*” with parent required to be in the title and athlete and perfect required in the abstract. This resulted in 4 hits, again using 1 article for synthesis review. Another search, using the terms “parent,” “athlete,” and youth success requiring the first two to be in the abstract and youth success in the keywords resulted in 1 hit that was used for data collection. Finally, the terms “parent\*,” “influence,” “stress” and “sport” were searched. Parent and influence were required to be in the title, while stress was a keyword requirement and sport a subject. This resulted in 1 hit that was used for synthesis review. It is important to take note that many of the studies found throughout the more in depth searches were also found in the first search. Similar to the first search, all of these searches required that the articles were peer reviewed and published between the year 2009 and 2020.

Articles that were selected for use in this synthesis were scholarly and peer reviewed. Also when selecting articles for use in this synthesis it was important that each article selected had valuable information regarding parent involvement at a variety of different levels- negative, positive, too involved and nonexistent.

Specific criteria were used in order to be a part of the literature review. All of the articles selected were based on the involvement of parents in their child’s athletic career and how that involvement impacts the wellbeing and self-efficacy of their child. Participants in the studies reviewed were boys and girls aged 8-35 who participated in some form of organized athletics in their lifetime, as well as their parents.

For this synthesis a total number of fourteen articles were used to compile data on the topic of parental pressure in sport. Articles came from a variety of journals including The Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, The Journal of Psychology of Sport and Exercise, Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología del Ejercicio y el Deporte, The Journal of Sport Sciences, The Sport Psychologist, The Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, The Journal of Human Kinetics, The International Journal of Sport Sciences and Coaching, the International Journal of Sport Psychology and The Journal of Physical Education and Health.

The critical mass for this synthesis is comprised of 6,942 participants. Within the fourteen articles used for the literature review there was a total of 5,118 athletes who's ages ranged from 8-35 years, and 1,824 parents (their ages were not always specified). Amongst the athletes, there were 2,098 female participants and 3,020 male participants. It is important to note that the majority of the athletes ranged from 8-18 years of age, with only two studies including athletes who competed through age 35. The athletes came from a variety of backgrounds including location, race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status. There was a combination of two parent and single parent homes, only children and multiple child households, and non-traditional households such as living with grandparents or other family members. The athletes also participated in a wide variety of sport that included individual and team competition, as well as a high variety of recreational all the way to elite level competition. Amongst the parents, 958 mothers participated and 866 fathers participated. Their involvement in their child's athletics varied across the studies as did their demographics and personal athletic history. It is important to point out that one study accounted for 134,313 performances amongst elite track athletes, but the actual number of participants was never specified.

Data were analyzed using the following methodologies for the studies under review; the Perceived Parental Success Standards (PPSSS) questionnaire, the AGSYS, the Sport Anxiety Scale-2, the Washington Self-Description Questionnaire (WSDQ), the Motivational Climate Scale for Youth Sports (MCSYS), ANOVA, CSAI-2, the Multi Trait Multi Method Analysis (MTMM), the Parental Involvement in Sport Questionnaire (PISQ), SPSS21, PISQ, Pearson product moment correlations, regression analysis, SPSS 19.0 Statistical Package, Power 10 Database, Pearson correlation coefficients, two step multi regression analysis, r-metaphor package, mediation analysis, MANCOVA and principal component analysis (PCA).

### **Chapter 3: Review of Literature**

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature related to parental pressures in sport and the impact it has on their athletes in terms of their self-efficacy, enjoyment and work ethic. While reviewing the literature, four categories stood out in how these pressures related to the overall well-being of the athletes. These topics include parent involvement, pressure to be the best, perfectionism and excelling youth.

#### **Parent Involvement**

Parental involvement in relation to their child's life can be shown in a variety of ways. In sport specifically, booster club activities, attending games, driving to and from practice and coaching, among many other things, are ways parents can display involvement in their child's athletic activities. High amounts of parent support, through games, training, practices and other related events, correlates positively with the overall enjoyment of the sport by the athlete (Sanchez-Miguel, et al., 2013) While this synthesis was intended to focus on parental pressure, the research showed a trend between parent involvement and general stress levels and well-being. The importance of healthy parent child relationships and how involvement can be viewed positively or negatively was evident throughout the research.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982), is a theory of relationship quality of an individual that relates to their self-esteem, well-being and stress levels. Essentially what this means is humans have a physiological need to have significant relationships to other human beings. Felton and Jowett (2012) looked at this theory specifically in terms of sports and the relationship between an athlete and their parents, as well as their coach. It aimed to see if an athlete's level of basic needs satisfaction is a predictor of their level of overall well-being as well as their secure or insecure attachment style. The participants included 430 athletes (166 males

and 264 females) who ranged from 15 to 35 years old. The sample included a variety of sports as well as a variation in levels of competition. Using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (Wei, et al., 2007), the Needs Satisfaction Scale (La Guardia et al., 2000), the Subjective Vitality Scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997), the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Elite Athlete Self-Description Questionnaire (Marsh, et al., 1997) and the International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (Thompson, 2007), the athletes participating in the study answered a range of questions regarding their attachment levels, anxiety, autonomy and perception of themselves, among other related things. The results showed that on average, the athletes who participated in this study identified as securely attached (Felton & Jowett, 2012), meaning they felt taken care of and protected by their guardian. Specifically in terms of the parent-athlete relationship, this study showed the importance of parental involvement in the overall well-being and happiness of their athlete. When an athlete feels that those basic needs are met, they are more likely to view their parent's involvement as positive. This is especially true for those who have an anxious attachment style, meaning they have a high need for close relationships. This study found that these athletes benefited immensely from having their basic needs satisfied with their parent, as often times this form of attachment does not result in an interpretation of high level of basic needs met by their coach. Similarly, this study found that when overall basic psychological needs are met by the parent, the athlete tends to be less anxious, much happier and generates higher levels of self-esteem.

Just as parental involvement can influence their child's anxiety in a positive way, it can also do the opposite. Pre-competitive anxiety is one area that can be influenced by parents Bois, Lalanne and Delforge (2009) looked at this concept. The overall purpose of this study was to observe the impact of parental presence on anxiety during competition for both individual and

team sports and to look at the extent that their parenting practices impact this. Using the French version (Debois & Fleurance, 1998) of the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (CSAI-2, Martens et al., 1990), The Parental Involvement in Sport Questionnaire (PISQ; Lee & MacLean, 1997; Wuerth et al., 2004) and a small questionnaire that indicated how many, if any, of their parents were at the competition chosen for the study, 341 athletes were surveyed. The results showed significantly higher levels of pre competitive anxiety among athletes when both parents were present.

These higher levels of anxiety can be connected to intensity of parental involvement. This study also showed that controlling a child's sport experience, even if they don't directly apply "pressure to succeed," may be just as detrimental to their overall enjoyment of their sport. Excessive parental interest in their child's sport success may result in negative emotional feelings towards their experience and an overall decline in motivation. Ultimately, parental over involvement can not only lead to higher anxiety levels, it can lead to complete burnout (Bois, Lalanne & Delforge, 2009).

Bois, Lalanne and Delforge (2009) also found a correlation between parents who pressure their children athletically and parents who use controlling behaviors within the context of their children's athletic career. Another example of was found in research by Mudrak in 2011. The study interviewed five boys between the ages of five and thirteen who were extremely gifted in some way, as well as one or both of their parents. The overall purpose was to examine the approaches parents took to their child's giftedness. For the purposes of this synthesis, just David, an eight year old elite hockey player, will be discussed. David's parents are significantly involved in his athletic career. Instead of taking the approach of pushing David to be the best, they instead believe David is the best, and therefore is entitled to constant recognition for his

greatness, as well as access and exposure to the best teams and training. When he is not granted this, his parents try to overcompensate and control the situation by publically promoting David's skill level themselves. While his parents in their heart believe they are making sure David gets what they believe he deserves, these actions add extra pressure to David to perform at the level his parents are promoting him at. This inaccurate interpretation was reoccurring throughout the research, and showed significant impacts on both the athlete's stress levels and overall well-being.

Another study that highlighted this false reality was discussed by Pulido (2018). Pulido researched the opinions of both parents and children in terms of the involvement of the parent with the football (soccer) team in the Balearic Islands in Spain. The participants were members of a fourteen to sixteen year old club organization. Parental involvement was analyzed using a questionnaire that inquired about managerial behaviors, support and understanding as well as active involvement of the parent. One of the main things concluded in this study was that while athletes perceive that their parents were significant in terms of support and understanding, they did not feel as though they were involved enough in their sport. On the contrary, parents believed that they were extremely involved in their child's athletic career. So where is the disconnect?

The one way that this may be misinterpreted is through "in-game" fan engagement. For example, David's parents seemed to believe that constantly promoting their son and being at every single event was displaying their passion and involvement with their son's athletic career positively. David, however, viewed these actions as another source of added pressure. Similarly, Pulido (2018) found that parents seemed to think very negatively regarding officiating and fair play, which resulted in commentary from the fan section- commentary that is almost always heard by their child. Parents must be aware that even though they perceive their engagement

from the stands as a high level of involvement, their child may not necessarily interpret their actions in a positive way.

Dorsch, Smith and Dotterer (2016), investigated the concept of parental support vs. pressure, more specifically what causes the perception of each. There were two purposes to this study, the first being to evaluate the reports of parental involvement by both the parent themselves and the interpretation of their children. Secondly, was to answer the question of the effect of the coach on the motivational climate and the parents' involvement in their child's sport. The participants included 226 families, which included 141 fathers, 194 mothers, 90 girls and 136 boys. Using a modified version of the Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schwarz, Barton-Henry & Pruzinsky, 1985), the study questioned the participants on parent-child conflict in sport, parent positive and negative effect, coach-created motivational climate, parent support and pressure in sport and demographics. The study concluded two important findings. First, the study concluded that mothers were more likely to show what children view as support, while fathers were more likely to demonstrate what was perceived by the child as pressure. Secondly, this study concluded that higher ratings by both the child and their parent of warmth and positivity were highly correlated with feelings of support, whereas conflict and negativity were highly associated with feelings of pressure. The findings in this study reiterated the importance of positive parental involvement.

Parent involvement is essential in a young athlete's life both on and off the playing field. The research described above clearly shows the importance of being involved but not controlling, and remaining positive through words and actions with both their own athlete and other parents, coaches and spectators.

### **Pressure to Be the Best vs. Your Best**

The research conducted for this synthesis answered the question of the impact striving to be the best has on athletes in the long term. Achievement Goal Theory is a great way to understand and interpret this form of motivation. In Achievement Goal Theory, there are two different ways one may perceive success. First, ego achievement goal orientation, is the desire to be the best. One perceives their successes based on their finish compared to those around them. The best performance of their life is not good enough if they do not place first. The other way one may perceive success is through mastery achievement goal orientation. Through mastery, one perceives their success based off their own personal goals and individual performance, regardless of what happens around them.

Achievement Goal Theory was discussed in depth by Schwebel, Smith and Smoll (2016). One of the main focal points of this study was the impact of the motivational climate put in place by the parent of the athlete and its impact on performance, and stress and anxiety among athletes as a whole. Using multiple questionnaires, 612 basketball players between the ages 9 and 16 answered questions regarding their perceived parental success standards, achievement goal orientation, performance trait anxiety, coach initiated motivation climate and self-esteem. The results indicated that a perceived ego oriented climate resulted in higher levels of performance anxiety, whereas a mastery oriented climate resulted in lower levels of anxiety. The results also indicated that a mastery climate, put in place by parents, also resulted in higher levels of self-esteem among athletes (Schwebel, Smith & Smoll, 2016).

The concept of ego climate vs mastery climate brings up another question, is parental pressure always a bad thing? O'Rourke, Smith and Smoll (2011) looked to examine the impact parental behaviors had on sport specific anxiety. The study questioned 307 swimmers, 122 boys

and 185 girls, age 9-14 on a 5 point scale. They were asked questions like: “before races do they tell you what you need to do to do well”; and “after a race do your parents give you their opinion on what you need to do better”. The results showed that athletes had the highest level of anxiety in a high ego-centric environment, and the lowest levels of anxiety in a high mastery climate. However, those who experienced no parental pressure experienced less anxiety than both the other groups.

Over the course of the season, the swimmers reported that those who were in a strong mastery climate at the beginning of the season were the least likely to experience performance anxiety at the end of the season. What this says about parenting is that putting pressure on your child does not always result in high levels of stress and anxiety, but the type of pressure is pivotal. When parents intensely encourage effort, attitude and focus on improving their individual skill set, the chances of their child struggling with performance anxiety are significantly less than if they were pushing their child to “be the best.”

While what parents say to their children is extremely important in their ability to cope with stress in sport, what they do may be just as important. Sanchez-Miguel, et al. (2013) examined the effect a parents’ motivation climate had on the development of their child’s motivational climate (Sanchez-Miguel, et al., 2013). The study sample was comprised of 723 athletes and 723 parents. The athletes all participated in some kind of team sport and were between 11-16 years of age. Different questionnaire measures were used to determine motivational orientations, parents’ involvement in sport practice, enjoyment of practice and amotivation in sport practice. The questionnaire responses were all submitted on a 1-5 Likert scale, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. Overall, the study concluded that the motivation orientation of the parent had a strong impact on the development of that specific

motivation style in the athlete. This is essential for parents to know, as they could be telling their children all the right things, but if they don't back up their words with actions they could still cause high anxiety levels in their children. Also, similar to the studies noted above, the study found a positive correlation between pressure and ego orientation and support and task orientation.

While the research has shown that pressuring a child to be their best results in lower anxiety levels than when they are pressured to be the best, it is still essential that parents show their child love and acceptance. Bois, Lalanne and Delforge (2009) aimed to determine the impact of parenting practices on the pre competitive anxiety of the athlete. In terms of the connection of parenting practices and pre competitive anxiety, it was found that perceived parental pressure and direct parental behavior correlated positively with higher anxiety levels, whereas praise and understanding correlated with lower anxiety levels. One important finding of this study was among higher level female tennis players, specifically at the provincial and national levels. This group reported significantly higher amounts of pressure from their parents than the other groups in the study. This leads to the conclusion that the closer an athlete gets to being perceived as "the best," the more likely it is that this athlete will perceive higher levels of parental pressure.

### **Excelling Youth**

The idea of a potential free college education and a career in professional sport is extremely appealing to many parents today. Young athletes who succeed early in their particular sport are often chosen to compete on elite teams and participate in development programs to maximize their potential (Vaeyens, et al., 2009). Kearney and Hayes (2018) aimed to discover if these developmental clubs are realistic in terms of predicting success of these young athletes in

the future. The study consisted of 134,313 performances in the events of sprints, throws, jumps and middle distance events from athletes ages 12 to 35. The results showed that among those who had been ranked in the top 20 at age 13, less than 30% were still ranked nationally by age 20. On the contrary, 22% (9% males & 13% females) who were ranked in the top 20 at age 20 were also in the top 20 nationally at age 13 (Kearney & Hayes, 2018). While this study does not necessarily answer any questions as to why a large percentage of athletes who succeed at a young age aren't still on top of their peers by their young adult years, it does however, demonstrate that succeeding at a young age is definitely not a guarantee for high level success in the future. Therefore, as parents, it is important to implement an optimal youth experience for their children, rather than placing them in high level development programs.

But what is an optimal youth experience? According to Watchman and Spencer-Cavaliere (2017), free play is a thing of the past. The days where children just go outside a play with their friends and siblings are nonexistent now-a-days, largely due to their packed schedule of sport practices, piano lessons and math tutoring. The purpose of their study was to look at children's sport participation and free play through the lens of the parent. The participants included 12 parents who had at least one child 8 to 10 years of age participating in a specific soccer program. Data were collected via face to face interviews. The interview results showed that while parents understood the positive effects of free play, they believe that their children's packed schedules don't allow time for it. They also expressed that their children learn more important lessons through sport that will set them up to achieve success, whereas they feel that free play gave their children higher chances of getting in with the wrong crowds and getting into trouble. This is another example of parent controlling tactics discussed in parent involvement.

The interesting piece in this study came when the interviewer talked about resisting, accepting and appreciating sport. An overwhelming majority of the parents in this study believed it was good for their children to engage in youth sport, and multiple sports at that, but felt significant pressure to start specializing and getting their children on elite teams. The parents noted that there are always coaches promoting extra training, summer leagues, etc. that get their kid playing the same sport year round. The parents explained that they often end up signing up for all these extra events and trainings because of fear that their child will fall behind. Ultimately, this leads to a packed schedule and the concept that there is no time for free play- something the parents noted their children often complain about. Ultimately, this trend is an example of how easily parents can fall into society's trap of what is good and what is bad for their children. They want to do everything they can for their children, no matter the mental, physical and even financial cost.

These elite teams, as well as the training and travel that are required to be on them, are not cheap. Wendling, et al. (2018) talked about the increase in financial investment parents make for their children's sport at a young age. The parents noted that this is a small price to pay for their child to eventually receive a college scholarship- but can they really predict that in an 8 year old? This study in particular focused on why sport participation is going in this "elite" direction and to why this trend is affecting overall enjoyment and retention in youth sport. The participants included a large sample of 1258 (556 boys and 692 girls) athletes who compete on either travel or elite sport teams. All participants were between 10 and 18 years of age, with the majority (53.4%), being between 10 and 13 years old. A self-reported questionnaire asked questions regarding their "why" for their participation in the sport. Secondly, it asked about their motivation for competing at an elite level. Other sections talked about injuries, time,

parental pressure and investment, as well as coach pressure. A 5 point Likert Scale was used for each question. Overall, the findings in this study showed that those who participated had a high level of enjoyment and very low intentions to quit.

### **Perfectionism**

The concept of perfectionism is discussed often in today's society. Perfectionism is one's belief that they need to do everything absolutely perfect. Multiple studies throughout the research conducted for this synthesis linked the development of perfectionism in the sport to parental pressure to succeed. Madigan, Curran and Stoeber et al., (2019) researched this connection amongst athletes. The participants included 456 athletes between the ages of 16 and 19 years old who participated in a wide range of sports. Using the Multidimensional Inventory of Perfectionism in Sport (MIPS), the study aimed to determine if coach and parental pressure would predict perfectionism in athletes over time, as well as reexamined the prior research concept that coach and parental pressure to be perfect results in athlete perfectionism. Perfectionistic strivings, perfectionistic concerns, coach pressure to be perfect and parental pressure to be perfect all resulted in a positive correlation with athlete perfectionism. Coach pressure was the most likely form of pressure to cause perfectionist tendencies among athletes. These results demonstrated the essential need for positive parental support, specifically in the ability of the athlete to cope with external pressure, as often times perfectionism is directly related to inability to cope with failure.

There are a wide variety of coping mechanisms children learn at a young age, and unfortunately they are not always positive. Tamminen, McEwen and Crocker (2016) used an online survey to determine the impact of parents' socialization of coping on the coping mechanisms of their athletes. 85 athletes and their parents completed the survey. The results

showed that parents had a significant impact on their athletes' task oriented coping, which was showed to be an extremely effective form of coping that focuses on controlling what one can control and finding a solution. On the contrary, parental pressure and negative support correlated positively with disengagement coping, or focusing on emotion rather than the issue causing the emotion, is a negative form of coping that research has proven does not last long term. The results also showed that a lack of parental involvement often times led to disengaged coping mechanisms from the athlete. When there is negative pressure, an athlete may choose to use disengagement coping and attempt to solve the issue with their emotions to please, developing perfectionism.

Likewise, in a day and age where college scholarships and professional sport aspirations are a parent's dream before their child can even walk, success at a youth level can often cause parents to dream big for the future of their offspring. This frequently leads to early parental pressure and the development of coping mechanisms at a young age. Mudrak (2011), described David experiences with "excessive perfectionism" and his an extremely tough time coping with and accepting losing. In an interview with David, he expressed that he is constantly feeling scared before games, and fears that if he plays bad, he will lose, and his dad will yell at him. This fear forces David to attempt to control an uncontrollable situation, which results in him trying to make every single move he makes perfect. His perfectionism developed as a coping mechanism to his father's anger and disappointment in his play on the ice.

The research clearly showed that perfectionism can be developed as a coping mechanism, but it can also be learned from observation. Appleton, Hall and Hill (2010) set out to discover where exactly the perfectionism in elite athletes is developed. More specifically, this study looked at how the perfectionism of parents influenced traits of perfectionism in their children.

The participants included 302 mothers, 259 fathers, 324 sons and 237 daughters. The average age of the athletes was about 14 years old and they participated in a variety of sports, both individual and team. All of the participants were considered to be at the top of their competition and competed at a high level in their particular sport. The athletes were measured on three forms of perfectionism; self-oriented perfectionism (I must be perfect), socially prescribed perfectionism (People expect me to be perfect), and other oriented perfectionism (If I am given a task, I will complete it perfectly) (Appleton, Hall & Hill, 2010). Each form of perfectionism had 15 questions related to that particular type, and the participants answered the questions on a seven point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The athletes were also asked to complete these same questionnaires regarding their interpretations of their parent's perfectionism. The results showed that perfectionism in parents is a noteworthy predictor for the development of perfectionism in their children. One significant finding was that the other oriented perfectionism in parents directly correlates to the development of socially prescribed perfectionism in their children. Ultimately, this means when parents show that every task given to them by others needs to be perfect, even if it is simply their own interpretation, their children develop a sense that other people expect them to be perfect constantly, including on the athletic field. Another important finding from this study showed that the athlete's perception of their parents level of perfectionism was much more of an indicator for their own perfectionism than what the parent believed was their level of perfectionism.

The development of perfectionism amongst athletes is correlated to both the observation of their parents and their ability to cope with the outside pressures of the world, on and off the playing field. The role of the parent is clearly significant in both the development of perfectionist habits as well as the prevention of them and the implementation of proper coping practices.

Wendling, et al. (2018) also found that while participation in elite sport at a young age is not a direct prerequisite for burnout, retention is significantly higher if those participants are motivated intrinsically. Those who are motivated by a college scholarship, or because of their parent's time and investment, are much more likely to experience burnout than those who play because they enjoy competing at a high level. Similarly, when parents allow their children to play for themselves and their goals, rather than their parents and their goals, the level of retention is significantly higher. Wendling, et al. (2018) discussed the concept of "professionalism" amongst youth sport now-a-days, and that parental desire for a scholarship, high level success, sport specialization and year round training limit the opportunity for kids to just "go out and play." These parental desires seem to outweigh their children's wants, especially at the youth level, which results in extrinsic motivation by the athlete early on in their career. As mentioned above, extrinsic motivation is more likely to lead to burnout than intrinsic motivation.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this literature review was to determine the effect of parental pressure on the stress, self-efficacy and overall well-being of athletes. Delimiting variables were used to do an exhaustive data-based search which yielded 14 articles. These articles were then systematically used to determine the effect of parental pressure on the stress, self-efficacy and overall well-being of athletes. Research revealed that parental pressure is not an absolute prerequisite to anxiety and stress in athletes, however the right form of pressure is vital to avoid excessive stress. It also revealed that the outlook parents have toward their own goals and achievements is vital to the development of effective coping mechanisms in their children. Ultimately, this study reiterated concept that parental influence and support are vital in a child's athletic career in terms of their stress, well-being and self-efficacy.

#### **Chapter 4: Results, Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the review of literature on the effect of parental pressure on the stress, self-efficacy and overall well-being of athletes and how these results align with the purported research questions which guided this synthesis project. In addition, recommendations for future research as it relates to parental pressure in sport are presented. The results of this review of literature revealed the importance of the role of parents in a child's long term and healthy athletic career. How a parent treats and attempts to motivate their child athletically at a young age significantly impacts their ability to cope with stressors, the way they view themselves and their overall happiness on and off the playing field.

One of the biggest things showed in the results is the importance of parental behavior. While a parent might say all the right things and believe they are doing the right things, the research revealed that it is the interpretation of their actions by the child that most directly influences their child's ability to deal with stressors in sport. This was proven true for both the parents' reactions and responses to their own goals and obstacles, as well as their actions and choices regarding their child's athletic career.

#### **Discussion**

#### **Interpretations**

As part of this literature review, several research questions were posed. The first research question examined the impact parental pressure has on the stress of athletes. The results showed that egocentric environments, or pressure by parents to be the best at their sport results in high levels of stress and often times the development of perfectionism. The second research question looked at the influence of parental pressure on the self-efficacy of athletes. The data suggests that the higher levels of mastery climate implemented by a parent, the more self-efficacy that child

will have, specifically related to sport. Lastly, the third research question aimed to determine the impact of parental pressure on the overall well-being of athletes. The results showed that the more enjoyment of sport at a young age, which allows for the development of intrinsic motivation, results in higher levels of well-being and enjoyment of the sport later on in their career.

### **Implications**

The conclusions found agree with previous research that parental pressure to be the best, especially at a youth age, is positively correlated with high stress levels and youth burnout. This research discovered the importance of the combination of the way parents act in front of and talk to their children and the impact this has on the self-efficacy and well-being of their child. Overall, these results confirmed existing theories. However, there is a misinterpretation that all parental pressure has negative effects of a child's stress level, and the research showed that is not entirely true.

Practically, this information can be used by coaches and parents around the globe. For coaches specifically, especially at the youth level, developing a mastery climate environment and explaining the importance of this to parents will help both children and parents buy in. Similarly, as discussed in chapter three, youth training and elite teams are taking up a lot of free play and added more pressure to children at a young age athletically. If coaches understood this and offered less intense training for youth children, this could change the stress levels and burnout related to sport dramatically.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In reviewing the data base on parental pressure in sport, the following limitations were noted regarding the studies under review, including lack of response from children who decided

to end their sport career, lack of information regarding success of siblings in sport and lack of information regarding coach / parent relationship. Many of these limitations were a result of the lack of longitudinal studies conducted throughout the research.

Based on these limitations and other insights related to the literature the following recommendations for future research should be considered:

1. To examine the impact of parental pressure on the long term parent- child relationship.
2. To determine if the success of siblings impacts the pressure placed on a child athletically.
3. To interpret the importance of a healthy coach / parent relationship in the overall well-being of an athlete.

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## Appendix

Author	Title	Source	Purpose	Methods & Procedures	Analysis	Findings	Discussion/ Recommendations Research Notes Commonalities/Differences
O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll & Cumming (2011)	Trait Anxiety in Young Athletes as a Function of Parental Pressure and Motivational Climate: Is Parental Pressure Always Harmful?	Journal of Applied Sport Psychology	To assess the role of parental behaviors on sport performance anxiety.	307 athletes (122 boys, 185 girls age 9-14 years) who participate in USA swimming associated program  Questionnaire about parental pressure, parent initiated motivational climate, performance trait anxiety  Administered 3x over 32 weeks	Pearson product-moment correlations	High ego climate = higher anxiety  High mastery climate = lower anxiety	The highest level of time 3 anxiety is seen when there is a high pressure is and strong mastery climate  The negative impact of parental pressure within the context of an ego climate is not concluded with these results
Mudrak (2011)	He was born that way: parental constructions of giftedness	SPORTDiscus	Analyze the ways in which social constructed meaning of giftedness may translate into parental nurturing practices and shape the development of gifted children	5 boys aged 8-13 years w giftedness (focus on athlete, David) Parents were interviewed	Interviews transcribed with thematic analysis, opening coding, categorization	Parents believed that their child's giftedness is innate and they set them up to best succeed given their natural gifts	David's Interview**
Appleton, Hall & Hill (2010)	Family Patterns of perfectionism : an examination of elite junior athletes and their parents	Journal of Psychology of Sport & Exercise	Investigate the origins of self-oriented, socially prescribed, and other oriented perfectionism in elite junior athletes	302 mothers / child, 259 fathers / child  Hewitt and Flett's (2004) Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale	Regression analysis	Parent perfectionism relates directly to perfectionism ... even child's perception of parents perfectionism has a high impact	Perfectionism comes from social learning and social expectation pathways
Sanchez-Miquel, Leo, Sanchez-Oliva,	The importance of Parents' Behavior in their	Journal of Human Kinetics	Examine the relationship between parents' motivational orientation and behaviors in their influence on youth	723 athletes / parents, ages 11-16 / 36-49  Questionnaires – beginning of the	SPSS 19.0 Statistical Package	Positive relationship w motivation climate of parent compared to children. Pressure = ego orientation & support =	Ego vs task orientation Support = positive, pressure = negative

Amado, Garcia-Calvo (2013)	Children's Enjoyment and Amotivation in sport		players' orientation and motivational climate, enjoyment and motivation.	season, took 15-20 min		task orientation. Amotivation greater when parents pressured.	
Kearney & Hayes (2018)	Excelling at youth level in competitive track and field athletics is not a prerequisite for later success	Journal of Sport Sciences	To enhance our understanding of athlete development would be valuable for coaches, parents and administrators to set realistic performance expectations and to advance youth sport policy	184 senior men and 151 senior women  Microsoft Excel sheets comparing champions at age u13 to age 20	Power 10 database  Pearson correlation coefficients	See figure 1: early success (u13) does not automatically determine future success (u20)	Discussion... OPTIMAL YOUTH experience Parents, coach's administrators need to consider structures to implement for optimal youth experience.
Schwebel, Smith & Smoll (2016)	Measurement of Perceived Parental Success Standards in Sport and Relations with Athlete's Self-esteem, performance anxiety and achievement goal orientation: comparing parental and coach influences	Hindawi Publishing Corporation	First, assess the psychometric properties of the new scale and to assess its construct validity as reflected in its relationship to other athlete variables Second, comparison of the relative impact of perceived parental standards with that of the coach initiated motivational climate	612 basketball players (369 boys, 243 girls) age 9-16  Perceived Parental Success Standards (PPSS)  Measured Achievement goal orientation, performance trait anxiety, self-esteem coach initiated motivational climate, procedure	AGSYS, SAS-2, WSDQ, MCSYS,	Mastery scores for both parents and coaches were positively related to athlete self-esteem and athlete mastery achievement goal orientation and negatively correlated with anxiety and ego goal orientation	Parental motivational climate was more influential than the coach initiated climate  Coach ego climate not significantly related to anxiety, whereas parental ego standards were a significant positive predictor  Motivational climate intervention for parents could have a strong positive impact on athletes psycho social development
Dorsch, Smith & Dotterer (2016)	Individual, relationship & context factors associated with parent support and pressure in organized youth sport.	Journal of Psychology of Sport and Exercise	Assess the concordance among self, partner and child reports of fathers & mothers.  Examine warmth & conflict in parent-child relationship, parent affect, coach created ego / mastery climate	226 families, 109 child and both parents, 85 child and mother only, 32 child and father only.  Measured parent child warmth in sport, parent child conflict in sport, parent positive	Multi trait multi method analyses (MTMM)  Multivariate multiple regression models	Participants reported high levels of warmth in parent-child relationship, support, mastery climate.  Low levels of conflict & parental pressure.	Reported higher father pressure and higher mother support.  Mastery vs ego climate... pressure vs support.

				<p>/ negative affect, coach created motivational climate, parent support / pressure &amp; demographics.</p> <p>Surveys &amp; in person meetings</p>			
Madigan, Curran, Stoeber, Hill, Smith, Passfield (2019)	Development of Perfectionism in Junior Athletes: a three sample study of coach and parent pressure	Journal of sport and exercise psychology	Examine the extent to which pressure to be perfect from parents and coaches showed in cross sectional and longitudinal relationships with perfectionism in junior athletes	<p>212 junior athletes (158 male and 54 female)</p> <p>Questionnaire measuring perfectionism, coach pressure and parent pressure administered twice over 6 months</p>	<p>Fixed effect models (R – metaphor package)</p> <p>Two step multi regression analysis</p>	Both parental pressure and coach pressure positively correlated with perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns. In our longitudinal analysis, however, only coach pressure predicted increases in perfectionistic striving and concerns	Unlike coach pressure, parental pressure did not predict changes in sport specific perfectionism. Parent pressure may not be as important as coach pressure- this may be because parents are typically less involved than coach
Felton, Jowett (2013)	Attachment and well-being: the mediating effects of psychological needs satisfaction within the coach-athlete and parent athlete relational contexts	Journal of Psychology of Sport and Exercise	Aimed to examine whether basic needs satisfaction is a mechanism by which athletes insecure attachment styles are associated with levels of well being	<p>430 athletes (166 males and 264 females)</p> <p>Questionnaire – experiences in close relationships scale, needs satisfaction scale, subjective vitality scale, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, elite athlete self-description questionnaire, internal positive and negative affect schedule short form</p>	<p>Two sets of mediation analyses: avoidant attachment style &amp; anxious attachment style as independent variables</p> <p>BPNS-C, BPNS-P</p>	<p>Athletes perception of satisfaction of basic psychological needs generally mediated the association between their attachment styles and well being</p> <p>Athletes were securely attached</p>	<p>Integration of attachment and self-determination theory can promote understanding of relational process in sport</p> <p>Satisfaction of basic psychological needs within the parent athlete relationship can explain the association between athletes insecure attachment style and well being</p> <p>When basic psychological needs are satisfied within parent athlete relationship, athletes general self-esteem is positively affected</p>
Pulido (2018)	Parental Involvement in grassroots football: the opinion of	Journal of Physical Education and Health	Show the opinions of parents and their children concerning parental involvement in grassroots football	102 parents (63 fathers, 39 mothers) who's children (14-16) play football in Spain	Three factors of the PISQ-managerial behaviors, support and	Parents have high implication levels concerning their kids sport, parents are interested in maintaining a good parent	Athletes feel their parents involvement is not enough, parents believe it is a strength

	parents and their children			176 athletes also participated  Questionnaire completed before the start of the season	understanding, and active involvement	child relationship, parents don't agree with spectators during their kids contests	
Bois, Lalanne & Delforge (2009)	The influence of parenting practices and parental presence on children's and adolescents' pre competitive anxiety	Journal of Sports Sciences	Examine the influence of parental presence during competition, comparing parental influence between an individual sport and team sport and investigating the influence of various dimensions of parenting practices	201 basketball players- 99 boys, 102 girls (age 14.2)  Questionnaire that measured anxiety, parenting practices, parental presence and demographic information	ANOVA, descriptive stats, MANCOVA	Girls not more anxious than boys, individual sport not more anxious than team sport, all but male tennis players had more anxiety when both parents were present	Athletes are not less anxious when no parent is present, but significantly more anxious when both parents are present  Female tennis players at provincial and national have higher levels of pressure ( similar with other "elite" athletes)  Directive behaviors and pressure positively related to anxiety, praise and understanding negatively associated with anxiety (tennis only)
Watchman & Spencer-Cavaliere (2017)	Times have changed: Parent perspectives on children's free play and sport	Psychology of Sport and Exercise	Examine parents' perspective of children's free play and sport using a socioecological lens.	12 parents of children ages 8-10  Interviews	3 stages: 1. thoughts & impressions noted 2. reviewing transcripts / listening to audio recording 3. Impressions of data	Free play is not what it used to be.  Concept of "not so" free play- everything is so much more structured now-a-days  Less freedom and exploration for kids- no ability to experiment without pressure	How important is it for a parent to stop the "schedule" and allow free time- long term effects?  Kids want free time... parents feel at a "disadvantage" if they allow this
Tamminen, McEwen, & Crocker (2016)	Perceived parental support, pressure and the socialization of adolescent athletes' coping	International Journal of Sport Psychology	Examine the influence of perceived parental support and pressure as well as parents' socialization of coping on adolescent athletes' coping in sport	85 athletes and their parents  Online survey (cross sectional)	ANOVA  Screened for missing responses and outliers – tested the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity	Parents being active in supporting their child through coping was highly correlated to task oriented coping.  Perceived parental support > actual parental support	It is what the athlete perceives not what is actually happening that has the biggest impact.  Parent support and understanding while learning the process of coping is huge.

<p>Wendling, Flaherty, Sagas &amp; Kaplanidou (2018)</p>	<p>Youth athletes' sustained involvement in elite sport: An exploratory examination of elements affecting their athletic participation</p>	<p>International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching</p>	<p>To identify the underlying structure of components affecting sport participation.</p>	<p>1258 elite youth athletes (10-18)  Self-report questionnaire</p>	<p>Principal component analysis (PCA)  2x2x2 MANOVA</p>	<p>Low desires to quit, high enjoyment of sport, high wants to pursue elite sport at youth age  Obtaining a scholarship is a high motivational factor</p>	<p>Positives &amp; negatives of travel teams....  Youth success – how does that predict athletic success later?  What “status” is surrounded with this youth sport? Is that an extrinsic motivational factor?</p>
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