

Parental sports experience and children's participation in after-school sports activities

 **Erjon Pegini**  . Department of Physical Education and Sports. Faculty Science of Education. University Luigj Gurakuqi. Shkoder, Albania.

Bardhyl Misja. Department of Education and Health. Faculty of Movement Sciences. Sports University of Tirana. Tirana, Albania.


ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of parents' sports experience on children's involvement in extracurricular sports activities. Children's participation in sports is influenced by a variety of factors, with the influence of parents identified as a key component. Previous studies have shown that parental support and the examples they set are important in the development of children's sports habits (Gould & Carson, 2008; Jackson & Johnson, 2013). Parents influence not only through practical and emotional support but also through role modelling, cultural beliefs, and economic resources (Tucker & Gill, 2016). The study was based on an analysis of data from a survey conducted with 265 elementary school students, assessing the connection between parents' sports experience and children's participation in after-school sports activities. The results showed that 54% of students engaged in extracurricular sports activities had parents with a sports background, compared to only 23% of those who were not involved. Statistical analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between parents' sports experience and children's sports participation, with a very low p-value ($p < .000001$). This indicates that parents play a significant role in the development of children's sports habits, while other factors such as family culture and financial support contribute to their motivation and involvement (Vella et al., 2017). This study suggests that improving participation in physical activities can be achieved through active parental involvement and the creation of equal opportunities for all children, regardless of socio-economic status.

Keywords: Education technology, Educational innovation, Survey, Pupils, Physical activities, Parents' sports history, Elementary schools.

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 **Corresponding author.** Department of Physical Education and Sports. Faculty Science of Education. University Luigj Gurakuqi. Shkoder, Albania.

E-mail: erjonpeginiust@hotmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Children's participation in extracurricular sports activities is influenced by a variety of factors, with parental influence emerging as a key component. Parents affect not only through practical and emotional support but also through their role modeling, cultural beliefs, and the economic resources they have available. This literature is supported by studies from the fields of sports psychology, sociology, and physical education. Research has shown that parental support, both emotional and practical, is a powerful factor that influences children's motivation to engage in and continue participating in sports outside of school (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Knight, Dorsch, Osai, Haderlie, & Sellars, 2016). Support includes providing logistics such as transportation, payment for equipment and registrations, as well as presence at sporting activities as spectators or supporters. Parents who show interest and communicate positively about sports directly influence children's self-confidence and enjoyment during participation (Babkes & Weiss, 1999). Support perceived as non-critical and consistent helps in creating a long-term connection between children and sports. According to Brustad (1993), children often model their parents' behaviors regarding physical activity. When parents are themselves involved in sports or regular physical activity, it sends a clear message about the importance of physical activity as part of daily life.

Scholars such as Pugliese and Tinsley (2007) have shown a strong positive correlation between parents' activity level and children's participation. Additionally, family cultures that prioritize physical well-being create an environment that supports active participation in sports (Wheeler, 2011; Moore et al., 1991). These influences are most pronounced in younger children who are still dependent on family values and routines. Direct parental involvement in sports (as volunteers, organizers, or coaches) has been identified as a factor that increases cohesion and satisfaction in sports activities (Holt et al., 2008). According to Dorsch, Smith, and Dotterer (2016), parental involvement can be positive when it focuses on the child's development rather than just sporting success. However, excessive involvement or high pressure can have negative effects, causing stress and lack of autonomy in children (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Therefore, a balanced approach to involvement is essential for a healthy sports experience. Accessibility to sports is often influenced by parents' socio-economic status. Families with higher incomes are more likely to afford the financial costs of sports activities, including memberships, travel, and equipment (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Eime et al., 2013). In contrast, children from lower-income families are often excluded due to economic barriers and lack of institutional support. Furthermore, the level of education of parents influences their awareness of the importance of participation in physical and sports activities, affecting the choices they make for their children (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007).

Gender stereotypes play an important role in how parents approach sports for boys and girls. Studies such as those by Coakley (2006) and Hardin & Greer (2009) show that in many cultures, boys are encouraged more for competitive and physical sports, while girls are directed towards "softer" or artistic activities. This gender influence is often unconscious and affects the selection of sports, self-confidence, and the sustainability of children's participation in physical activities.

A review of the literature indicates that parents play a multifaceted role in children's participation in extracurricular sports activities. This influence includes moral support, role modeling, financial assistance, active involvement, and cultural influences. Policies to increase children's participation in sports should include an inclusive approach to the family, helping parents to become aware and involved in a balanced and positive way.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through a structured survey aimed at identifying the impact of parents' sports experience on children's involvement in extracurricular sports activities. The survey was conducted among 265 pupils, aged 8-9, from elementary schools in Shkodër, enrolled in the 9-year cycle. They were asked about their participation in physical activities and their parents' sports history.

The survey questions included the following aspects:

1. Whether the pupils participates in sports or physical activities after school.
2. Whether the parents of students who participate in sports have a sports background.
3. Whether the parents of students who do not engage in sports have any experience with sports.
4. A comparison between parents with and without sports experience regarding their children's participation in extracurricular activities.

Data were collected manually and/or through an online form, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Statistical methods were used to analyze the results, comparing groups and identifying trends related to the family influence on children's physical activity habits.

RESULTS

The data collected from 265 students showed that 90 of them (34%) participate in sports or physical activities after school hours. Of these, 49 students (54%) have parents who have had a sports background, while 41 students (46%) have parents who have not been involved in sports activities in the past. Out of the 175 students who do not engage in extracurricular sports activities, 40 of them (23%) have parents with sports experience, while 135 (77%) have parents who have not practiced sports before.

Table 1. Data analysis.

Pupils Category	Number of pupils	Percentage of pupils	Parents with Sports Experience	Percentage of Parents with Sports Experience	Percentage of Parents with Sports Experience	Percentage of Parents Without Sports Experience
Pupils participating in sports activities after school	90	34%	49	54%	41	46%
Pupils who do not participate in sports activities after school	175	66%	40	23%	135	77%

To assess whether there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' sports experience and children's participation in sports, a p -value of .00000052 was obtained, which is much smaller than the significance level $\alpha = .05$. This indicates a highly statistically significant relationship between parents' sports experience and children's participation in physical activities.

This suggests a strong connection between parents' sports experience and children's involvement in extracurricular activities.

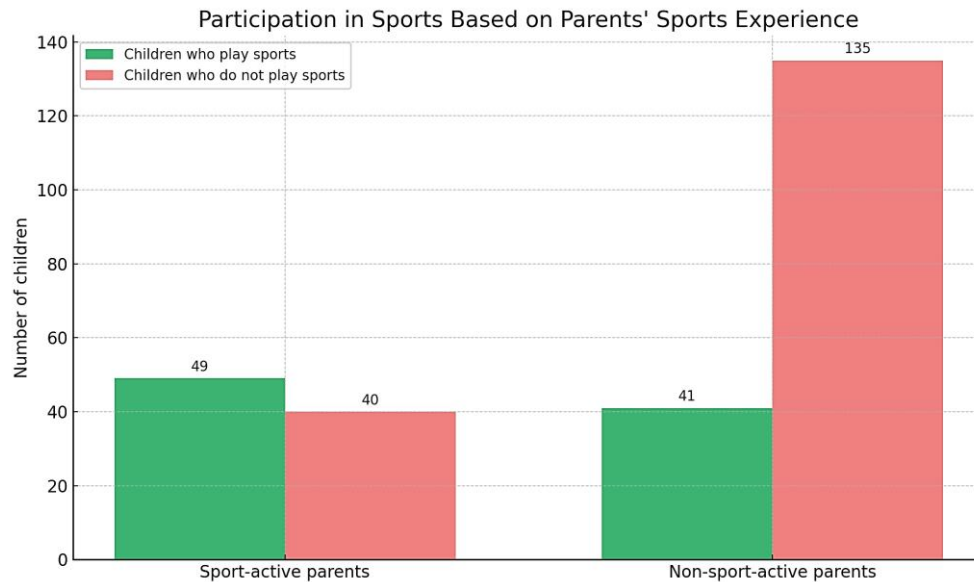


Figure 1. Children who do sports and children who do not do sports.

Figure 1 clearly shows the difference in children's participation in extracurricular sports activities, depending on their parents' sports experience. As seen, children with sporty parents have a significantly higher level of involvement.

Correlation between parents' sports experience and children's participation in sports:

Table 2. Provide table title.

Pearson ® correlation coefficient	0.317
p-value = 1.38×10^{-7}	$p < .000001$

This result indicates a moderate and statistically significant positive correlation between whether parents have had sports experience and their children's participation in extracurricular sports. In other words, children are more likely to engage in sports if their parents were involved in sports in the past.

Further statistical analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient provided a value of $r = 0.317$, with a very low p-value ($p < .000001$), confirming that there is a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between parents' sports experience and their children's participation in extracurricular sports. This result suggests that family sports culture is a significant influencing factor in children's physical behavior.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with several previous works that emphasize the importance of parental influence in shaping children's physical behaviors.

Parental Modeling Influence: The results showed that children with parents who have a sports background are more likely to engage in sports activities. This aligns with Moore et al.'s (1991) study, which demonstrated a clear link between parents' physical activity levels and those of their children. Active parents serve as behavior models, encouraging imitation and adoption of a similar lifestyle by their children.

Sports Socialization in the Family: Fredricks & Eccles (2005) emphasize that family sports socialization, through emotional and logistical support, significantly affects children's motivation and participation in sports. Similarly, this study shows that parental support is a key factor in children's involvement in extracurricular physical activities.

Parental Pressure and Expectations: While this study did not directly measure parental pressure, it is important to mention the work of Dorsch et al. (2016) and Coakley (2006), who caution that parental involvement can sometimes take negative forms, such as performance pressure or high expectations, which in some cases may reduce children's enjoyment and motivation for sports.

Family Culture and Social Structure: Wheeler (2011) and Dagkas & Stathi (2007) highlight the significant role of family culture and social structure in creating an environment that either encourages or discourages physical activity. The data from this study suggest that a lack of sports experience in parents often coincides with a lack of children's involvement, indicating the impact of overall family culture and the social environment.

Psychological and Logistical Support: Harwood & Knight (2015) stress the importance of balancing practical and emotional support from parents. Although this study did not measure this aspect directly, it hypothesizes that parental involvement goes beyond just sports experience—it includes attitudes, emotional support, and logistical resources.

CONCLUSIONS

The Impact of Parental Sports Experience on Children's Activities: A significant portion of students (54%) involved in extracurricular sports have parents with a sports background. This provides strong evidence that parents' sports experience can influence children's participation in similar activities. Conversely, only 23% of students who do not engage in sports outside of school have parents with sports experience, suggesting that parental influence is stronger when parents have a history of involvement in sports.

Family Culture and Motivation for Sports: Family culture appears to play a significant role. Children whose parents are engaged in sports activities are more likely to be active after school, perhaps due to stronger and more encouraging attitudes from parents about engaging in physical activities. In contrast, children from families where parents have no sports experience are more likely to be disengaged from physical activities outside of school.

Participation Percentages: Data collected shows that 34% of students are active in extracurricular sports, a percentage that suggests there is still room to increase physical activity participation among children. This also suggests that, in addition to parental influence, other factors (such as opportunities provided by schools or communities) may also influence student participation in sports.

Improving Participation: The data suggests that to increase student participation in physical activities, initiatives may need to be taken to encourage parents to engage more in sports activities or to create more opportunities for children to connect with physical activities, regardless of their parents' sports experience.

In general, parental influence is evident in children's participation in extracurricular sports, and this could be used as a starting point for developing strategies to encourage higher participation in physical activities among students.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The contribution to this study is joint, where Erjon Peqini is a PhD candidate and Bardhyl Misja is his scientific leader.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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