



Parental Involvement in Youth Sports: A Survey of 716 Athletes in Albania Scientific

Report 2025- START project

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between parents' prior involvement in sports and their children's current participation across four disciplines in Albania: basketball, football, volleyball, and taekwondo. A survey of 716 youth athletes (aged 8–19 years) was conducted, including representation of athlete's boys and girls. The results reveal significant differences in parental involvement by gender and sport.

General overview of parental participation in youth sports for fathers' participation show: boys: Fathers are significantly more involved in boys' sports across all disciplines. Their influence is most pronounced in basketball (31.3%) and football (27.3%), highlighting their active encouragement in popular team sports. Even in less common sports like Taekwondo, fathers' involvement remains notable at 33.3%. girls: Fathers also play a key role in encouraging girls' participation, with the highest rates in football (38.7%) and basketball (25%). However, their involvement slightly tapers off in other sports like volleyball (21.5%) and taekwondo (20%).

General overview of parental participation in youth sports for mothers' participation show: boys: Mothers show comparatively low involvement in boys' sports, with the highest participation in basketball (15.6%) and volleyball (12.5%). Their presence in other sports, such as football (2.5 %) and taekwondo (0%), is minimal or nonexistent. Girls: Maternal involvement in girls' sports is also limited, with the highest levels reported in volleyball (9.5%) and football (6.5%). However, there is no reported participation from mothers in basketball or taekwondo for girls.

Among boys, 31.3% reported that their fathers had participated in basketball during their youth, correlating with higher youth engagement in the sport, while football followed closely at 27.3%. Similarly, girls whose fathers had played football (38.7%) or volleyball (21.5%) demonstrated greater participation in these disciplines. Mothers' involvement was less pronounced; for boys, 15.6% of basketball players and 12.5% of volleyball players had mothers who participated in sports, while for girls, the highest maternal influence was seen in volleyball (9.5%) and football (6.5%).

Gender disparities were evident, with boys reporting higher overall parental sports involvement compared to girls. For example, no mothers of girls in basketball were reported to have participated in sports, while 25% of fathers of these athletes had done so. Additionally, sports like taekwondo showed minimal parental involvement, with only 33.3% of boys and 20% of girls having fathers who participated. These results underscore the influence of fathers, particularly in male-dominated sports, and highlight the need to increase maternal involvement to bridge the gender gap in youth sports participation. The findings emphasize the importance of targeted interventions to encourage balanced parental support, fostering equitable opportunities for young athletes.

Keywords: sports, parental, participation, football, basketball



About START project

The Albanian Sports Science Association (ASSA) has noticed that there is a significant lack of standardized and reliable measurements of athletes in Albania. Due to the lack of evidence, it is not possible to carry out even a genuine scientific analysis or study of Albanian sports.

Since 2017, the ASSA team has evaluated and undertaken an initiative to collect data on the general and specific bio-motor skills, parent involvement of athletes in various sports disciplines. ASSA specialists have compiled a set of measurements to assess these parameters of athletes. The new initiative is a project called “**START- SporT Assessment Report**” which will serve to conduct scientific research with data on Albanian sports. The athletes' data are part of a long-term multi-year study led by the "ASSA" team and relevant sports clubs as well as with other partners.

ASSA had lead this project as part of studies and research in the field of sports. The long-term multi-year study allows ASSA and related sports clubs to collect data on a wide range of athletes from different sports disciplines and to help establish bio-motor skills norms and athlete profiles.

Introduction

The role of parents in encouraging sports participation among youth has been well-documented in literature. This study investigates how the involvement of mothers and fathers in sports during their childhood influences the likelihood of their children participating in sports. The objective of this report is to analyze the responses from 716 youth athletes, aged 8 to 19 years, from different sport disciplines in Albania, with a focus on gender and sport type.

Methodology

Participants:

A total of 716 youth athletes participated in this study, with an equal distribution of boys and girls from various sports disciplines: basketball, football, volleyball, and taekwondo. Athletes were randomly selected, and each participant completed a questionnaire asking whether their mother and/or father had participated in sports during their youth. The data collected was categorized by the athlete's gender and sport discipline. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the frequency and percentage of responses for each sport and gender.

**Results****Parental Involvement in Sports During Their Childhood or Youth****Mothers’ Involvement (refer table 1)***Table 1 Parents involved in sports during their childhood or youth- Mothers*

Participating athlete		Mothers		
Gender	Sports		Frequency	Percent
Boy	Basketball	Yes	31	15.6
		No	168	84.4
		Total	199	
	Football	Yes	7	2.5
		No	275	97.5
		Total	282	
	Volleyball	Yes	3	12.5
		No	21	87.5
		Total	24	
Taekwondo	No	9		
Girl	Basketball	No	8	
	Football	Yes	2	6.45
		No	29	93.5
		Total	31	
	Volleyball	Yes	15	9.5
		No	143	90.5
		Total	158	
Taekwondo	No	5		

Fathers’ Involvement (refer table 2)*Table 2 Parents involved in sports during their childhood or youth- Fathers*

Participating athlete		Fathers		
Gender	Sports		Frequency	Percent
Boy	Basketball	Yes	62	31.3
		No	136	68.7
		Total	198	
	Football	Yes	77	27.3
		No	205	72.7
		Total	282	
	Volleyball	Yes	3	12.5
		No	21	87.5
		Total	24	
	Taekwondo	Yes	3	33.3
		No	6	66.7
		Total	9	



Girl	Basketball	Yes	2	25.0
		No	6	75.0
		Total	8	
	Football	Yes	12	38.7
		No	19	61.3
		Total	31	
	Volleyball	Yes	34	21.5
		No	124	78.5
		Total	158	
	Taekwondo	Yes	1	20.0
		No	4	80.0
		Total	5	

Gender-Based Differences

Boys generally report higher levels of parental involvement in sports than girls, particularly in basketball and football, where a larger proportion of fathers were involved. Girls tend to have lower rates of parental involvement, especially in basketball and volleyball. Fathers show higher involvement across all sports, particularly in football and basketball for both boys and girls. Maternal involvement is lower overall but more noticeable in boys' basketball (15.6%) and volleyball (12.5%). Boys generally report higher parental involvement than girls, reflecting potential cultural or societal biases.

Discussion

The results suggest that fathers are generally more involved in sports than mothers, especially in popular team sports like basketball and football. The significant gender disparity in parental involvement may reflect traditional gender roles, where sports are often perceived as more of a male-oriented activity. However, it is important to note that in certain sports such as volleyball and taekwondo, the rates of maternal involvement are more noticeable. The lack of involvement from mothers in some disciplines (e.g., basketball for boys) suggests a need for further investigation into societal factors, including cultural attitudes toward women's participation in sports.

Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight the varying levels of parental involvement in sports across different sports disciplines in Albania. The results underscore the importance of understanding the role of both mothers and fathers in encouraging youth participation in sports. These insights can inform future interventions and programs designed to promote greater parental support in youth sports, with particular emphasis on encouraging more maternal involvement. In light of the low parental involvement in sports during their youth as reflected in your study, there are several recommendations to encourage greater parental support for putting children in sports. These strategies aim to bridge the gap in parental engagement, particularly in cultures or settings where the role of parents in sports has traditionally been low. Here are additional recommendations:

Recommendations



Programs targeting mothers to increase their involvement in sports may help promote balanced gender participation. Further research could explore the reasons behind the gender-based disparities in parental involvement.