

Parents as role models education essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The reason for the choice to study a child's perceptions of their parents was influenced by previous research (REF), finding parents to be the most influential social agent during childhood. This study attempts to contribute to knowledge by examining parental influence over a child's lifetime, as, to the authors knowledge, this has not been extensively analysed. Previous research (REF) has largely focused on the impact of parents during the early years of a child's lifetime sport involvement, as it is argued that other social agents (e. g. peers, teachers and coaches), are more influential during the later stages of a child's life.

In order to fulfil the current study's objectives the researcher conducted a study that assessed the way that parents' beliefs and the motivational climate that they create, can influence or affect their child's choices, attitudes and motivation towards sport and exercise. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding the perceived parent-created motivational climate, from an adult-child's perspective. Socialisation influences from parents, and social-cognitive perspectives were used to direct the research and ultimately influence the design for the interview guide.

Parents as Role Models

The first set of questions attempted to establish the degree of role modelling demonstrated by parents, and whether this had a positive or negative effect on their child's choices and attitudes towards sport and exercise. Questions such as " Does/did your mum and dad play any sports?" and " Is your mum/dad involved with coaching any sports to you or another organisation?"; were asked in order to establish the type of sport (if any) that

the child's parents were involved with, in order to ascertain any correlations between the child's chosen sport and that of their parents.

Responses to these questions were mixed, therefore finding little or no link between parent and child activity habits. CHANGE THIS TO MIXED BUT MORE SAID THAT PARENTS WERE ACTIVE?

The narratives below from Participants 3 and 4 respectively, reflect the range of opinions regarding parents as role models:

EL: Did your mum and dad play any sports from what you can remember?

P1: Um...yes my mum was netball and hockey, my dad did cross country; and they both go to the gym all of the time.

EL: Oh, so their quite athletic?

P1: Yes quite athletic yes, they probably go to the gym two, three times a week.

Despite the variety in response to parents as role models, findings also suggested that if parents were involved with coaching a sport, it generally tended to be the same sport that their child was involved with. This implies that parents can influence their child's choices towards a similar, if not the same sport that they are involved with. Additionally, in the instance where a parent took on the role of the sports coach; results demonstrated a strong trend, revealing that the father would be the parent who would take on this coaching role. The two examples below from participant 1 and participant 3 respectively, illustrate this point:

EL: Cool. Um...so is your mum and dad involved with coaching any sports to you or any other youngsters?

P1: Um...my mum isn't but when, well i used to play basketball a few years ago and my dad used to help coach the team so, when i was younger about 14/15.

EL: Ok. Um...are they involved, either of them involved in coaching any sports to you or anyone else?

P3: Um...my dad used to be a coach for; well he used to coach the swimming club that I used to swim for.

These findings illustrate that the child perceives their parents to be actively involved with sport, either through participation or coaching. Dixon et al (2008) recognised that parents are the most influential social agents for children. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that their role modelling behaviour would see them involved in sport by either competing or participating in physical activity themselves or by coaching, in order to lead by example and thus influence their child's choices towards sport and exercise.

Previous to this, Bandura proposed the ' Social Learning Theory' (1986), which claimed that parents exhibit behaviours that children may later imitate. In addition, Bandura maintained that the task of learning would be a most tedious task if there was reliance solely on the effects of the learner's own actions. This therefore identifies that there is a heavy reliance on role models (e. g. parent's) to demonstrate desirable behaviours, for example:

participating in regular physical activity, and finding enjoyment in sport. It is also important to stress to parents that they only have a limited time in which to demonstrate this role modelling behaviour, since that, as children grow older they spend the majority of their day outside of direct parental contact (Welk et al., 2003). Welk (2003) also recognised the need to distinguish between positive and negative forms of role modelling in order to better explain this construct. Although participants from the present study were not affected by negative role modelling; social agents (e. g. teachers, peers, sporting heroes and parents alike) will need to take this into consideration in practice, when conducting themselves as role models, so that children are not influenced by negative behaviours. For example, a sedentary parent may model inactive, unhealthy behaviours; therefore demonstrating to their child that this kind of lifestyle is acceptable.

MIGHT NEED A CONCLUDING SENTANCE HERE

Parents as Providers of the Experience

Parents can serve as role models not only by participating in the activity or sport themselves but also by providing the sports participation experiences for children through transport, funding and spectating at their sporting events. Results from this study regarding the participants' perceptions of their parents' sport involvement were mixed; with some viewing their parents as active, whereas others did not view their parents to be athletic at all. Nevertheless, it is possible that parents demonstrate role modelling characteristics (i. e. transmitting beliefs and values) through other means of support such as transport, funding and general encouragement to join clubs and become active. It is also possible that due to the amount of time parents

devote to their child's sport involvement (e. g. transporting them to and from events, and working in order to be able afford to invest in their child's sporting future through membership and equipment); that they actually have little time left for themselves in order to participate competitively. Thus, for this reason it is understandable that the majority of participants stated that their parents do not currently participate in physical activity and some who ascertain that their parents have never been overly athletics. With this in mind, the additional ways in which parents can demonstrate their role modelling behaviour, will be discussed under three separate headings: Game attendance, transport and funding, and encouragement/ importance placed on sport.

Game Attendance

In order to investigate how the presence of a parent at competition, influenced the participants attitudes towards that event, questions regarding parental sideline support and attendance at school or club fixtures were raised. Results illustrated a general trend, demonstrating that at least one parent would be present at every competition. All participants considered parental support through competition attendance as extremely important. The following narratives from participants 4 and 5 respectively, demonstrate the importance to those individuals.

EL: Ok. With regards to parental support now, and attendance. Did you mum or dad ever attend your school fixtures? After-school clubs....?

P4: Um...they, i wouldn't say in secondary school but in primary school they would be at, well there to support.

EL: Yea. Do you think, what do you think that is because of? Do you think maybe they thought you needed them?

P4: Um, i guess when your younger its nice to have your parent on the sideline, haha, sort of cheering you on.

EL: Yea ok. Um...in what ways was them being at your competitions important to you? Did you like having them there or not?

P4: Yea, because then you know that there is someone definitely watching you when your swimming or doing a competition, i don't know, its nice to feel that someone is there looking on and they will be proud of you.

EL: Ok. Um...was this important to you. Did you like having them there or?

P5: Um...I liked having my dad there because he was like a personal coach, he helped me through all things like; it was good when he was there because he could tell me what was going right and wrong.

Scanlan (1996) predicted that during the early years, parents are likely to be present at their children's games and sport fixtures; therefore giving them ample opportunity to express their values and beliefs of sport to their children. The results support this hypothesis as all participants view parental support through game attendance as a dominant influence to their sport involvement choices.

Transport and Funding

The next point of discussion relates to the degree of support that parent's demonstrate through the provision of transport and funding, in order for their

child to attend clubs and take part in sport. Findings generated a general concensus amongst the participant's, that financial parental support is imperative during the early stages of development; but drops off significantly when a child reaches adulthood, as they will usually find a part time job and begin to fund themselves. Participant's also identified parents as the key providers of support in the form of transport to and from training and competition. This type of support could also become less important to the child as they grow older; as the coming of age brings multiple oppourtunities for the child to become increasingly indepedant, for example learning to drive so that they could then transport themselves to their sporting fixtures. This was reflected through the responses given by participant 1 and participant 8, as shown below:

EL: Ok, and did that, did you find that changed when you got older at all?

P1: Um...well when i learnt to drive i started driving myself to training and things, so i paid for the petrol and stuff so that was like less money for them to spend but, they still paid for membership and things so.

EL: Ok, um, ok alrite with regards to transport and funding, um desbribe how your mum and dad supported you with regards to transport to and from training and matches?

P8: They took me to, obviously training before i could drive, um...to where i had to be picked up to go to matches and stuff, they took me everywhere.

EL: Ok, but um...once you started driving...

P8: I drove myself

Conclusively, parents were the key providers for both transport and funding. The findings support the views of Eccles et al (1998), pronouncing that parent time and financial investment are positive predictors of children's achievements in academic and non-academic contexts. A reason for this may possibly be a matter of respect and appreciation from the children; wanting to give something back to their parents for all their devotion, hard work and investment that allowed them to participate in their chosen activities.

There are various ways in which parents can financially provide positive experiences; such as, enrolling their child in athletic memberships and purchasing equipment for their child's skill development (Green and Chalip, 1998). Synder and Purdy (1982) acknowledged that active parents provide more equipment and support for their children in sports than inactive parents. The current study presents conflicting evidence to reject such claims; indicating that despite the parents' varied sporting backgrounds and diverse physical activity levels, the support demonstrated to their child was not at a lesser degree just because the parents were not active themselves. For example, participant 2 described their parents as " Not very athletic"; however this child responded positively to the questions regarding their parental support through transport and funding, claiming that " They always used to take me" and " They still pay for me now". This demonstrates that the degree of parental support was just as strong regardless of the parents' activity levels.

NEED TO WRITE WHY I THINK THIS WAS FOUND?

In order to make a definitive conclusion with regards to this area; further studies will need to be conducted whereby an even split of participants with active and inactive parents are invited to take part in the study. This will then allow for two separate sets of data to be collected on the support that those with active parents receive and the support that those with inactive parents perceive to be available to them; thus allowing for a more succinct comparison in order to validate or decline previous literature. STAY HERE OR MOVE TO LIMITATIONS?

Encouragement/importance placed on sport

The third sub-category of questions concerning 'parents as providers of experience'; aimed to establish the degree of encouragement into sport that the participant's experienced by their parent's, and the perceived importance that their parents placed on participation in sport and exercise.

The discussion centred around the participants' description of how their parents first recognised their interest in sport; whilst also commenting on the degree of pressure placed on them by their parents, in order to compete.

The responses demonstrated an agreement between the participants' in that none of them felt pressured to compete by their parents, but they did experience pressure to train. Reasoning for this, suggests that; parents have invested their time and money into their child's sport involvement, therefore, in addition to supporting and encouraging their child they want to make sure that this is a worthwhile investment. Lavoie and Stellino (2008, p472) support this, believing that 'children maintain certain expectations of themselves based largely on the influence of their parents'. With reference to the current study, as a result of their parent's financial investments; participants have

perceived an expectation of them to train hard, in order to demonstrate to their parents that their money is well spent. Below, participant 2 and participant 8, account for the pressure that was placed upon them to perform due to the sacrifices that their parent's had made:

P2: i always felt the further we had to travel to get to a competition, because remember before i could drive she was the one who would always ferry me around the country...

EL: Yea

P2: ...the longer we had to drive, that was when she put most pressure on me.

EL: Ok, um...so did you ever feel pressured to compete by your mum and dad?

P8: Um, at school level i did because if i was training after school and they wanted me to play in the matches and the tournaments and things and then try and go on and play as well as you can.

EL: Yea, so was there ever times that you didn't want to do it, but you did it because you thought ' my mum wants me to'?

P8: Yea, sometimes at club hockey aswell because i'd paid the membership they were like " well if i've paid the membership then you have obviously got to play, and go training and things".

Regardless of the pressure that was experienced; findings recognized parents as valuable agents who will nurture their child's aspirations through

<https://assignbuster.com/parents-as-role-models-education-essay/>

the safeguarding and support of their choices. All participants agreed that their sports choices were supported by their parents, some even viewed the encouragement into sport by their parents as a reason for their continuation in sport. This confirms the role that parents play in introducing their child into sport; indicating that parents serve as an important motivational tool in their child's sport involvement, by initially encouraging them to attend a club and to maintain their training once they have established an interest in a specific sport.

Therefore, considering the participants' intrinsic interest in sport, it is not known how parents would have reacted to a drop out or withdrawal in sports participation, as all of the participants are still currently involved in sport. It is reasonable to assume that parents would not support their child's decision to drop out of sport due to their athletic ability and lifestyle they have developed. It is also possible that parents would object to a drop out from sport as they would feel that their efforts and sacrifices in order to support their child (e. g. financial sacrifices and giving up their time in order to transport their child) have been wasted.

A longitudinal analysis of parental support and its impact

In addition to the current findings, an examination into the degree of parental support on a child's sport involvement over their life-course was conducted. The questions were specifically designed in order to obtain information from three key age ranges:

Primary Childhood Perceptions (earliest age of recall > age 11)

Adolescent Perceptions (age 11 > 18)

<https://assignbuster.com/parents-as-role-models-education-essay/>

Present Perceptions (where you are now)

The results obtained from Primary Childhood Perceptions indicate that parents play an important role in preparing their child for competition; by helping them to organise their equipment and provisions that they will need in order to compete. The majority of participants recognised that this role of support (in the form of preparing packed lunches and clean clothes for their child), was primarily adopted by their mother.

QUOTE HERE ?

A reason for this could be that; women have historically taken on the domestic role within the household, caring for their families needs on an everyday basis. Although nowadays, the domestic role appears to be shared more equally between mothers and fathers, therefore suggesting that either parent could be the provider of this type of support; many of women's occupations still see them demonstrating extensions of their early domestic roles, with traditional women's jobs originating from the tertiary sector and often involving nurturing, service and support roles: for example teachers of small children and nurses (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

In contrast, results reveal that during the adolescent stage of a child's development; participants commented that they were still provided for by their parents, however the task of preparing their equipment so that they were ready to compete, was now almost entirely the responsibility of the child. This is supported by the transition into secondary school that children experience during the adolescent stage of their development; as this too will increase a child's independence, for instance, increased management over <https://assignbuster.com/parents-as-role-models-education-essay/>

their school and homework tasks (Brannen, Heptinstall and Bhopal, 2000). This is reflected in practice, whereby coaches can give older children the responsibility over certain tasks during the training session; for example to organise a game or skill practice. Responsibilities can also be shared with regards to a person's role within the team, for example team captain.

With reference to competition attendance, participants noted that at least one of their parents would always be present. It was not found that one parent would be present more than the other; although it was noted that fathers tend to take on more of a coaching role, whereas, mothers (although still there to support), would socialise with other parents.

QUOTES AS EXAMPLES

The results also disclose that parents are not as vocal during the primary stage of their childhood competitions, compared to those events during the adolescent stage. Results established that during the primary age of childhood, parents would focus primarily upon the fun and enjoyment obtained from partaking in physical activity; whereas as their child got older, they would become more outcome focused. Nevertheless, participants still perceived their parents to adopt an enjoyment focused attitude, but their focus on winning was now much greater than the younger years.

SAY SOMETHING HERE ABOUT PARENTS KNOWING THAT THEIR CHILD ALREADY ENJOYS THE ACTIVITY BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT FROM WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG.

Conclusion

Parents are particularly influential in encouraging children to participate in sport and

physical activity.

Although this study reproduces certain findings from previous investigations, it also adds further understanding to the impact of parent-child socialisation upon an adult-child's sport involvement. The study differentiates itself from much of the previous studies by examining how early childhood socialisation experiences shape an adult's choices and behaviours towards sport.

Findings clearly indicate that parental influence through socialization is critical; as parents can communicate their beliefs about what is valued as important, and; as children are positively influenced by what their parents value, they are more likely to take steps in order to carry out such activities. This also confirms that socialisation is a two-way process between provider and recipient (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Nixon, 1990).

Welk et al., (2003) observed constant trends in their data; suggesting that active parents are more likely to be supportive and involved in their child's efforts at being physically active, compared to inactive parents. However, it is important to recognise that the individuals who took part in the current study were all sports students who naturally had an intrinsic interest in sport and an understanding and appreciation for the importance of regular physical activity. Thus, even though parental encouragement and support during their lifetime sport involvement has been proved to be indispensable, it was also recognised that for some, the interest may have already been

there due to the natural sporting tendencies that the participants' possessed.