

ABSTRACT

WHITTINGTON, ELLIE MORGAN. Elements Influencing Parents' Decision Making in Allowing Children to Play or Discontinue Play Organized Sports. (Under the direction of Dr. Michael Kanters).

Organized youth sports participation has been associated with positive health and psychological developmental outcomes such as improved self-esteem, emotional regulation, problem-solving, goal attainment, better social skills, and academic performance. Sport participation during childhood can best be predicted by a combination of socioeconomic, cultural, and parental support variables. Parents are the gatekeepers and facilitators of children's initial sport involvement, persistent participation and the variables that affect the two. In recent years, dropout in youth organized sports has increased, especially among racial minority and economically disadvantaged populations. Specifically, there is a likelihood of children discontinuing sports in the middle school age range (11-14 years old). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors associated with sports dropout among middle school aged children. Using the Leisure Constraints Model as a framework, this study aims to examine factors constraining parent or guardian's support of their child's participation in sport. An online survey questionnaire was distributed to parents ($n = 570$) with a child of a middle school age (ages 8-14) that is currently or has recently participated in organized sports. Findings indicated that a parent or guardian's perception of their child's ability to play sports and interest in playing sports were significant constraints to sport participation. Recommendations were made for implementing strategies to increase enjoyment and skills to play in order to decrease organized sport dropout rates.

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Parental Perceived Constraints in Registering Children in Organized Sport

by
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BIOGRAPHY

Ellie Whittington grew up in the small town of Purlear in the foothills of North Carolina. From a young age, Ellie fell in love with being active and used sports as a way to do so. She grew up playing many sports before becoming a year-round soccer player and cheerleader in high school. She also found herself on the sidelines as a soccer referee as one of her first jobs. In 2013, Ellie worked with a local non-profit to create an afterschool program, “Work It Out” for underprivileged 5th grade girls to educate youth about the opportunities in organized sports.

Ellie majored in journalism and minored in sport management at Elon University graduating cum laude in December 2017. She also studied film abroad in Australia and New Zealand. During her time at Elon, Ellie was an anchor for an Emmy award winning television show, One-on-One Sports and Elon Phoenix Weekly, which broadcasts on ESPN3. She was called to travel to report on events from the inaugural Hall of Fame Induction ceremony at the University of Illinois to covering the president during the 2016 Presidential Election. She worked for the New York Yankees in sales, was a news intern for WXII 12 News and social media intern for Major League Baseball. These experiences inspired Ellie to gain a deeper knowledge of the sports industry and therefore, led her to pursue her master’s degree at North Carolina State University.

While at NC State, Ellie has worked with PNC Arena, NC State Athletics and the Atlantic Coast Conference. Ellie accepted a position in digital production with NBC Sports covering the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games before the postponement due to COVID-19.

Beyond academia, you can find Ellie traveling the world, teaching cycling at YMCA of the Triangle, attending sporting events, finding local coffee shops or outdoor exploring.

After graduating, Ellie plans to work in sports media.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Organized sport has been identified as providing myriad benefits for youth, including physical (Atsalakis & Sleaf, 2016), psychological (Dorsch et al., 2015), and social (Babey et al., 2016) benefits. In addition to the health-promoting physical benefits of sports participation for youth, sports participation has also been associated with positive psychological developmental outcomes such as improved self-esteem, emotional regulation, problem-solving, goal attainment, better social skills, and academic performance (Holt, 2011). These psychological health promoting benefits also extend to the prevention and reduction of psychological difficulties, including anxiety (Smith et al., 2007), shyness (Findlay & Coplan, 2008), depression (Gore et al., 2001), and hyperactivity (Griffiths et al., 2010). Furthermore, contrary to other forms of physical activity, sports provide unique social benefits by bringing children together on a scheduled consistent basis, providing more intense physical activity, coaching mentorship and teamwork/leadership skills (Rosewater, 2010). Indeed, one study examining the relationships between sport participation and social health risk behaviors of American high school students found that students who participated in organized sport were more likely to consume fruits and vegetables and to use condoms than non-organized sport participants, and that they were less likely to smoke (Taliaferro et al., 2020). The numerous benefits associated with encouraging youth participation in organized sport highlight the importance of sport participation to the short- and long-term health outcomes of the nation's children.

Despite a growing body of research linking sport participation to copious benefits for young people physical (Atsalakis & Sleaf, 2016), psychological (Dorsch et al., 2015), and social (Babey et al., 2016), participation in organized sports across the United States has been declining (Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018), especially among racial minority and

economically disadvantaged populations (Aspen Institute, 2019). Suggested factors contributing to declining rates of participation in organized sports include over sport specialization (Jayanthi et al., 2013), increasing evidence of injuries associated with popular sports, highly competitive program formats where only the best athletes get to play (Wendling et al., 2018), and “Pay-to-Play” laws in public schools (Snellman et al., 2014). Sport specialization and injury resulting from specializing in a single sport are evolving trends that researchers are identifying as factors related to the health of athletes later on in life (i.e. Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) surgery, Ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction (Tommy John) surgery, and concussion effects), but also are affecting the continuation of some children proceeding to play (i.e. burnout). From sport specialization or the need for some athletes to excel, elite sports clubs have evolved creating spaces where only the “best of the best” or those with financial means can participate. Consequently, children from families with limited financial resources have fewer opportunities for sport participation. Additionally, many public schools mitigate budget cuts by mandating participation fees for school sports (e.g., pay-to-play) resulting in potentially expanded displacement of children from sports (Eyler et al., 2019).

Vella et al. (2014) detected that children who dropped out of sports were less likely to have been taken to a sporting event in the last month, reside in a household with a lower socioeconomic status, have parents with lower educational attainment and notably non-English speakers at age 8. These factors all relate to the family dynamic based on the family’s community and cultural norms. It is also important to recognize these factors are not set by the child but rather a reflection of the environment provided by the parent(s). In most situations, a child can influence some aspects of the family but ultimately does not choose aspects like the income level of the family, the family extracurricular schedule or the communities in which the

family lives (McGoldrick, 2011). In the face of organized sports' many benefits, these structural barriers could help explain why more than 35% of children and adolescents drop out of organized sports annually in North America (Crane & Temple, 2015).

In addition to the environment of organized sport being conducive to health benefits among youth (CDC, 2019), it is one of the most popular leisure activities that, due to the varying levels of intensity and duration, can be one of the best ways for children and adolescents to meet recommended levels of physical activity (Malina et al., 2016). For example, in a study on youth physical activity in Australia, between 64% and 85% of Australians age 5-17 years participate in organized sports, a rate higher than alternate forms of physical activity such as active transportation (i.e. walking to school), active play and school based physical activity (Vella et al., 2016). According to the Aspen Institute in the United States, sports participation is a predictor of physical activity and a way to predict physical activity in adulthood. People who play sports in their youth are eight times more likely to be active at age 24 when compared to adolescents who do not play sports (Perkins, 2004).

Participation in organized sports provides an opportunity for children to increase physical activity levels. Currently in the United States, physical inactivity is increasingly prevalent among children and adolescents (Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018). *The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, recommends that children and adolescents ages 6 to 17 years spend 60 minutes participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily, however, less than 24% of children meet this recommendation every day (CDC, 2018). Children disengaging in organized sports (with the average age being 11) fall into this category of declining physical activity levels. Engaging in appropriate levels of physical activity for children is seen as a contributing factor for the development of skills, attitudes, values, and for

establishing active habits that likely expand into adulthood (Atsalakis & Sleaf, 2016). Benefits from physical activity also include health promotion and disease prevention (Malina et. al., 2016). Conversely, risks associated with physical inactivity during childhood include obesity, chronic illness, depression, diabetes and a pattern of sedentary living later in life (Pate et. al., 2002).

Among the overwhelming number of physically inactive children not participating in youth sports, a significant proportion are from racial minority and/or economically disadvantaged households. It is possible organized sports has a decline in registration for similar demographics (Dollman, 2010). For example, in 2017, 30.5% of 6-to-12-year-olds living in a household with an income of less than \$25,000 were physically inactive, compared to only 10.9% of 6-to-12-year-olds living in a household with an income over \$100,000 (Aspen Institute, 2019). Child and colleagues (2017) also found that low-income children in underserved communities have substantially lower physical activity levels and African-American populations were least likely to meet recommended activity guidelines.

Parents are a key factor in youth sport participation. Just as physical activity at a young age predicts physical activity at an older age, parent's involvement in the child's sport interest at a younger age also affects their physical activity level later (Vella et al., 2014). A child being taken to a sporting event at age 8 predicted participation and maintenance of sports participation at age 10. Parents' initial investment and continuance in adolescents sport interests has shown to be a predictive factor in if the child will drop out of organized sports later (Wilk et al., 2018). If parents provide unconditional support, encouragement, and praise, they are likely to have a positive impact on children's sport experiences, enjoyment, and potential continuation. On the contrary, if sport parents engage in pressuring, excessive expectations or criticizing play after

competition it can lead to a negative perception of sports from the child (Knight et al., 2018). To that end, Fraser-Thomas et al. (2008) found that adolescents felt pressure to succeed from their parents, citing an association between rates of dropout and adolescents' sentiments that their parents were overly involved (e.g., videotaping their games, critiquing their performance, etc.). The literature suggests that parental participation in their child's organized sport participation seems to be a delicate balance – on the one hand, it can contribute to their child's sport enjoyment and long-term participation (Patel et al., 2010), while on the other hand, it can contribute to attrition and dropout (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008).

Sports participation during childhood can best be predicted by a combination of socioeconomic, cultural, and parental support variables (Harrington et al., 2017). Parents are the gatekeepers and facilitators of children's initial sport involvement, persistent participation and the variables that affect the two. Parents serve as models, reinforcers, and advocates of both health enhancing and health compromising behaviors (Beets et al., 2010). The household decision-makers, who are most often the parents, influence the child via social support, but the child still has some autonomy in the decision to play sports or not. Social support represents the interactions between a parent and child in the context of intentionally participating in, prompting, discussing, or providing related opportunities. Social support can be defined as an umbrella term to describe various ways in which factors influence the activity behaviors of children (Beets et al., 2010). Social supportive behaviors may consist of both tangible (e.g. providing transportation to activities) and intangible behaviors (e.g. encouragement). These are often provided by the parent but not exclusively. Children may find the support they need to play sports elsewhere, therefore the decision to play sports and continuing to play is not always under the discretion solely of the parent (Gustafson et al., 2006).

Though there is expansive evidence to show that parents influence their child's sport participation, little is known about factors that constrain parental support for enduring participation in organized sports. Much of American youth spend roughly the first 18 years of their life in close relation to their parents/guardians, making these adults considerable influencers over health-related behaviors of children. They also play the role as "gatekeeper" to community organizations and sport programs and access to outdoor environments (Beets et al., 2010). The parental role in organized sport involvement has several layers which involve indirect verbal, nonverbal and direct tangible implications on a child's sport involvement (Knight et al., 2016). If a parent perceives to have more interest in sports, especially the one that the child is playing, then the child will view this excitement and channel that to the desire to play the sport (Child et al., 2017). Also, the level of support the parent plays in picking up/taking the child to practice, attending games and enthusiasm around sports affect the child's willingness to continue playing. The most obvious and important factor that a parent plays is the tangible implication like signing the child up for sports, buying the equipment to play and making it physically possible for the child to attend team events (Knight et al., 2016).

In the face of so many benefits associated with youth organized sport participation, studies citing dissatisfaction or negative experiences in sport (Anderson, 2013), decreased levels of physical activity (Malina et al., 2016), declining participation of youth in organized sport (Berger et al., 2008), and the potential for decreased health outcomes associated with youth choosing to dropout of sport participation (Crane & Temple, 2015), bring to light the essential need to examine factors related to dropout of organized sport participation among young people. Guided by leisure constraints theory (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Jackson et al., 1993), this research aims to better understand the relative importance of constraints to

parental support of their child's enduring involvement in organized sports. The rate in which children are dropping out of sports is one as researchers we aim to understand better.

Purpose of Study

Continued participation in organized sports during childhood and adolescence benefits children physically, psychologically and socially (Vella et al., 2014). However, children continue to dropout of youth sports with an average child spending less than three years playing a sport. Child are most notably quitting by age 11 due to lack of enjoyment (The Aspen Institute, 2019). Typically, an individual who participates in an activity will assess his or her experiences and then decide about future participation. Many factors are often associated with dropout including enjoyment, perception of ability, social pressures, competing priorities and physical factors (Crane & Temple, 2015).

Previous research points also to structural constraints such as lack of affordable opportunities, sport specialization, injury, and/or a lack of interest as contributing factors to declining rates of youth sport participation. Furthermore, it seems clear that parents play a dominant role in a child's initial sport involvement and in their ongoing sport participation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors associated with sports dropout among middle school aged children. Ultimately, parents are the gatekeepers who influence the age when their child/children start playing organized sport, if they ever do, and for how long they continue participation. It is unknown whether parents make this decision solely based on believes of the importance of sports or if it is influenced by the child showing interest in participating in sports. Because parents play a critical role in facilitating sports participation among 11-14-year-old children, it is important to examine the importance of factors that may be constraining a parents ongoing support. Parents of different demographics, race, socioeconomic status, with

children age 11 to 14 were participants of this study. This diversity is to aid in understanding broadly what influences parents from all backgrounds. This sample may include a range of sport participants from those who have played at a recreation level, those who are continuing to play at higher levels and those who have chosen to discontinue participation of any sort in youth sports. The middle school age group was determined by the average age of discontinuance being 11-years old (The Aspen Institute, 2019).

Crawford (2005) suggests constraints operate hierarchically on 3 levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints refer to psychological states such as perceived skill, abilities, and attitudes. Interpersonal constraints arise from interactions with peers, friends and family and potential participants. Structural constraints are externally imposed barriers that intervene between preference and participation such as unavailability of resources required to participate (e.g., finances, time, problems with facilities, and geographical location). Current theory also holds that individuals can negotiate perceived constraints using various coping strategies or available resources (Casper et al., 2011). This study uses the term “constraints” as a combination of intrapersonal, interpersonal or structural constraints.

The following research questions were used:

1. What are sport parents perceived constraints to their child’s continuing participation in organized sport?
2. Do sport parents perceived constraints to sport participation differ for children that continue and discontinue to participate?
 - a. Is the constraints-participation association influenced by race and gender of child and household income?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sports psychologists, youth development scholars, and practitioners have presented various reasons why children and youth drop out of sports (Crane & Temple, 2015; Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Witt & Dangi, 2018). Crane and Temple (2015) reviewed factors associated with children and adolescents dropping out of organized sports. Three sets of constraints (intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural) were offered for why youth drop out of sports. Intrapersonal constraints included lack of enjoyment (not having fun); low perceptions of physical competence; intrinsic pressures (e.g., stress); and perceptions of negative team dynamics. Interpersonal constraints concluded parental pressure and not having enough time to participate in other extracurricular activities. Lastly, structural constraints included time (for games, practice and travel), injuries, cost, and inadequate facilities (Crane & Temple 2015). The researchers then used a model of recreation and leisure constraints (Crawford, et al., 1991) to organize drop out reasons under the three headings in the model: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. Following the lead of Crane & Temple (2015), the implications for organized sports (Piche, 2014) and the state of youth sports in the United States which could be contributing to dropout factors are presented in this review. The hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Jackson et al., 1993), which drives intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints, will be used to frame a better understanding of parent's decision-making process in sporting their children in organized sports.

Lack of enjoyment is seen as a primary reason for dropping out of sports by several researchers (Crane & Temple, 2015; Kelley & Carchia, 2013; Witt & Dangi, 2018). Enjoyment, a term for positive affective responses such as fun and pleasure, has been previously associated with the motivation to participate in sports and a desire to continue participation (Crane &

Temple, 2015). According to Kelley and Carchia (2013), 38% of girls and 39% of boys suggest that lack of enjoyment is the biggest reason for dropping out of sports. Dropping out may be due to many factors that are common in youth sports in the United States including parents' involvement in the decision making of allowing children to participate in sports (Horn & Horn, 2007), sport specialization (Wendling et al., 2018), injury (Myer et al., 2015), exclusive athlete clubs (Chalk, 2018) and newer laws restricting play in some areas (Eyler et al., 2019).

Playing organized sports as a child has health (CDC, 2019), academic (Piche, 2014) and social benefits (Women's Sports Foundation, 2018). Being involved in sports also can help improve developmental and cognitive skills (Piche, 2014) with improved academic achievement. Adolescents are also less likely to engage in negative social behaviors like doing drugs or participating in organized crime. Organized sport has also been identified as an outlet to higher physical activity which helps with the nationwide obesity epidemic (CDC, 2019) and a prevention mechanism for chronic diseases. The need for children to participate in organized sports for their overall well-being is substantial and why it is important now, more than ever, to understand and mitigate the decline in participation.

It is also important to understand the atmosphere around youth sport and how it is ever changing with increased pressure from some to participate in elite clubs or specialize in order to be an athlete (Wendling et al., 2018). Also, changes in funding in public schools and those implementing "Pay to Play" fees are creating a different atmosphere for children of minority and socioeconomic disadvantaged communities (Snellman et al., 2014). As the sport industry is ever evolving, especially at the youth level, more research is needed to better understand what is encouraging or preventing parents from enrolling their children in the first place. It seems that the most disadvantaged when it comes to youth sports are the children from low income and

minority communities lacking the means to enroll their children (Child et al., 2017). It is essential to the betterment of children and their physical activity to understand how parental support is affecting the ability to participate in sports. Though there is a general understanding of components that are decreasing sport participation rates in youth, there is a gap in research to understand what is keeping parents from enrolling children. The following literature review dives more in-depth to parents' involvement in the decision making of allowing children to participate in sports, current trends in youth sports including sport specialization, overuse injury from specialization, exclusive athlete clubs and newer laws restricting play in some areas.

Family Structure and Relationship between Parent and Child

This section explores why parents are the decision makers in registering kids for youth sport. Parents often use their own experiences in sports to relay messages, often not consciously to their children about the importance of playing on a team. Also, parents can sometimes differentiate the level of prioritizing sports in a child's life depending on the child's gender.

Literature supporting these theories are following:

How Parents Are Gatekeepers to Organized Sport

Parental Beliefs

Personal characteristics and choices individuals make are a fluid development and can change over time. Horn & Horn (2007) suggest that it is important to recognize that the "degree to which an individual athlete or physical activity participant exhibits an intrinsic or extrinsic motivational orientation, a performance or task involved goal perspective, a high or low level of trait anxiety in the sport or physical activity context is a function of her or his interactions over the developmental years with individuals, groups, and organizations in her or his social environment." Therefore, from a practical perspective, the family environment may be the most

accessible and the most important of the influence of the child to examine. Though coaches, teammates, teachers, and peers play a role in children wanting to participate in organized sport, it is ultimately the parents influence that is the most valuable leading to the actual participation.

According to the expectancy-value model (Eccles, 2005) parents hold general beliefs (e.g., gender-role stereotypes, efficacy beliefs, general and specific values) which are generally shaped by the cultural surroundings in which they live. Also, demographic factors that are present in the family (e.g., education level, socioeconomic status, and number of children) are key components in forming these beliefs. In addition, parents also hold a set of principles that are specific to each child (e.g., gender, perceived interest) which are formed by parent's general beliefs as well as by the individual child's characteristics. The combination of how the parent views the individual child as well as demographic factors, affects their child's beliefs, values, goals, performance, and achievement-related behaviors.

Parents Own Sport Involvement

Knight et al. (2016) suggests that a parent's own past sport involvement has an influence on the type or level of involvement due to what the parent's experiences in sport were/are. For example, it is common for parents to introduce their children to sports in which they played or competed (Knight, 2016). This parallel is associated with the notion that if the parent has played the sport and is more familiar with the rules, the parent is more likely to enroll the child in that particular sport. If the parent is not familiar with the particular activity, they are less likely to let their child play (Knight, 2016). Also, children's perceptions of their parent's goal orientations (or rather how strongly they feel they are being physically active) may exert the most influence on a child's own achievement goal orientations. This means if a parent seems to be pleased with the amount of physical activity they are exerting, the child will often believe the same (Roberts et

al., 1997). Often parents may be cognizant of this by giving false accounts of their own goal orientation for their children's sport participation (Duda & Hom, 1993). For example, if a child sees their parent prioritizing (or intending to prioritize) sport involvement, the child will be aware of this and want to follow suit.

Beets et al. (2010) suggests that support can be identified in two categories; tangible and intangible. Parents can influence decisions by purchasing equipment, paying participation fees, or by encouragement and praise. This research found that these attributes do contribute to the decision to enroll in extracurricular activities. In an earlier study, Trost et al. (2003) found that parental support was an important correlate to the child's self-efficacy (or how strongly the child felt confidence in the ability to participate). Their study also suggested evaluating strategies to promote and provide instrumental and motivational support to parents in order to increase participation of their children. However, there is a gap in the current literature regarding actual factors that influence a parent's decision to enroll their child in extracurricular activities, particularly in sports.

Gender

The gender of the child can often have an effect on whether the child is interested in sports or not. For example, if there is a lower socioeconomic family with 3 girls and 1 boy, it is likely the priority to play sports will be on the boy before the girls in the family. Boys (28%) are more likely than girls (20%) to meet the daily physical activity recommendations set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (The Aspen Institute, 2019).

According to McGoldrick (2011) parents have different values and views related to birth order of children and the gender of the child. These perceived roles from the parent's influence on an individual child may have an effect on whether the parent first of all sees value in enrolling

the child in sports. For example, the parent must first see a need for the child to participate in organized sport before even considering to enroll them.

Several researchers have reported that parents tend to 1) value sport and physical activity more for their sons than for their daughters; 2) provide more encouragement for their sons' participation than for their daughters'; and 3) perceive their sons to have higher sport competence than do their daughters (e.g., Brustad, 1993; Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). Also, parents seem to buy more athletic equipment, more encouragement to participate, and spend more time at sporting events with sons than daughters (Horn & Horn, 2007). It is important to recognize in this research that birth order, number of children and gender could play a role in overall importance to a parent registering their child or children in organized sport.

Current Trends in Youth Sport: Parental involvement

The following are current trends in youth sports that are affecting participation levels and further explain parent involvement in children in organized sport:

Sport Specialization

“Sport specialization, intense, year-round training in a single sport with the exclusion of other sports” (Jayanthi et al., 2013, p. 252), is a continuing trend among young athletes (Myer et al., 2015). This notion of sport specialization is encouraged by many coaches and parents. Sport specialization is often pushed to give the athlete a competitive advantage among peers, pursuit of college scholarships, attention for elite status at a young age, and hopes of eventual professional status (Feeley et al., 2015). Myer, Jayanthi, and Fifiore et al. (2015), showed there are a plethora of risk factors within specialization which has shown a pattern of increased injury. Sport specialization has also been associated with burnout (Malina et al., 2010). Burnout comes from

the perception that the athlete cannot meet the physical or psychological demands associated with the single sport. When a young athlete is burnt out, this can lead to a lack of participation over time with them eventually quitting (DiFiori et al., 2013). Over specializing in one sport can 1) decrease participation in other sports, 2) result in injury which leads to a lack of playing sports or 3) increase burnout which leads to youth being disengaged with wanting to continue in sport (Jayanthi et al., 2013).

It is important for this study to note that sport specialization and burnout are often a function of parental influence. Unrealistic parental expectations and the subsequent parental pressure to perform at high levels have been linked to high anxiety and stress on the part of the child as well as lower levels of sport enjoyment by the child (Horn & Horn, 2007). The of pressure put on children to perform well playing the sport can affect the child's enjoyment. This anxiety can lessen the child's interest and lead to early burnout. Though this study focuses on those discontinuing sport or lower levels of play, those who have played at higher competitive levels can also burnout and quit playing sports altogether.

Injury Related to Dropout

Sport participation is also declining due to injuries resulting from factors like sport specialization and overuse in youth sport (Hill, 2011). Recovering from a severe sports injury at a young age may deter youths from not only returning to the specific sport in which they were playing but back to sports in general (Myer et al., 2015). As of 2018, more than 3.5 million children under the age of 14 are seen annually for injuries related to organized sport (Bell et al., 2018). According to Post and colleagues (2017), highly specialized athletes were more likely to report an overuse injury in the previous year compared with athletes in the low specialization group. Bell and colleagues (2018), found that youth athletes specializing in soccer were 5.49

times more likely to report an overuse knee injury than those athletes who were not restricted to just playing soccer. The culprit for many of these early injuries point to the musculoskeletal and physiologic immaturity of muscles, ligaments, and bones of adolescents (Bell et al., 2018).

Previously, before the rapid emergence of sport specialization, athletes had time to allow parts of their body (i.e. pitching arm) to rest while playing other sports; which use different motions (Hill, 2011).

As children are growing, overuse in popular sports like ice hockey, swimming, gymnastics, soccer, and baseball can cause harmful injuries in youth and have an effect on the ability to continue play (Feeley et al., 2015). For example, in recent years, more Tommy John surgeries, a surgery done most commonly to restore elbows of pitchers in baseball, are being performed on younger and younger athletes (Hill, 2011). Fleisig et al. (2010) reported that over a sixteen-year evaluation there were approximately two Tommy John reconstructions performed per year on high-school-aged pitchers during the 1990s, stating during the five years between 1994 to 1998, only 7% of reconstructions were baseball pitchers high-school-aged or younger. At the end of the study (2004-2010), high-school-aged and younger patients accounted for 26% of all Tommy John surgeries. The trends shown in the study by Fleisig and colleagues suggest that if these tendencies have continued, even higher percentages of surgeries are performed on younger athletes.

For female athletes, overuse in sport specialization (i.e. soccer) is seen in the alarming increase rate of Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) surgeries (knee injury) (Bell et al., 2018). Beck and colleagues (2017) found that over the last 20 years, ACL tears have increased 2.3 percent per year. If a child is spending more than eight months annually in one particular sport, he or she is

nearly three times more likely to experience an overuse injury in their hip or knee (Bell et al., 2018).

The incline in percentage of injuries is a factor in the decrease in participation in youth sport (Meyer et al., 2015). Meyer and colleagues suggest that even the increased risk of injury from sport specialization could be a reason for withdrawal from sport. Many athletes recover from these injuries but that does not mean that they always return to the sport (Andrew et al., 2014). 65% of athletes returned to their previous level of sport activity but 20% of athletes report that injury is the reason for quitting their sport (Meyer et al., 2015). After the 12 months when most should be healthy enough to return back to sport, many reports significant reduction in physical activity and negative effects on mental health (Andrew et al. 2014). Though an athlete may be ready physically to return to play, often young athletes exhibit fear of reinjury (Andrew et al., 2014), which prevents them from returning. Fear of reinjury is noted as a reason athletes do not return to their sport and reduce levels of physical activity (Meyer et al., 2015).

Though there is evidence that overuse in a particular sport is an indicator of increased injury, findings from Bell and colleagues (2018) suggest that parents with children enrolled in organized sports have little knowledge on the likelihood of injury from overspecialization. In one study, 34% of parents indicated that they were concerned about the risk of injury in youth sports and 55% considered sport specialization a problem in youth sports (Bell et al., 2018). In this same group, 43.3% thought that playing a sport year-round increased the chances of sustaining an overuse injury. In the parent's survey, females were more likely to be concerned about overuse injury in year-round sport participation compared with men (Bell et al., 2018).

This study aims to determine if the fear of overuse injury or injury at all (i.e. as brain injury in football players has been more in the media in recent years) is preventing parents from

registering their child in organized sports or contributing to the child's motivation to continue play. Koukouris (2005) reported that elite gymnasts with injuries requiring medical treatment (e.g. surgery) lost interest in their sport because coaches and administrators showed indifference toward them when they were injured.

Elite Athlete Clubs

Youth that are viewed as gifted at their sport are often encouraged by coaches, teammates and/or parents to join more specific training clubs to continue advancing (Wendling et al., 2018). These clubs can provide avenues for obtaining elite status or future college scholarships. These clubs can provide new benefits to the child and family but elite athlete clubs could be a contributing factor to the increase in stress, decrease in enjoyment (Crane & Temple, 2015) and financial pressure on the family (Wendling et al., 2018).

Children can experience undue criticism and pressure from parents and coaches to perform their best and win every game, especially at the more elite level. They are also often taught to compete for honors and recognition and perhaps college scholarships. In these situations, children may find less enjoyment in the game and suffer anxiety due to the fear of making mistakes (Wilk & Dangi, 2018). They may feel disrespected in terms of being appreciated for their abilities and instead focus on mistakes they make. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt which often result in a lack of enjoyment playing (Crane & Temple, 2015). In many instances, the pressure to master the sport in elite athlete clubs can result in dropping the sport altogether (Wilk & Dangi, 2018).

Though a child may show interest in pursuing elite clubs or continuing playing in these clubs, in some scenarios the financial pressure on the family is too overwhelming. Parents involved in these costly, elite and time-consuming travel and club team admit to spending \$500 a

month per child on elite sports clubs (Wendling et al., 2018). Wendling and colleagues identified that more than \$7 billion is spent annually on youth sport travel in the United States and that parents justify the financial sacrifice for the same reasons they encourage specialization, in hopes of elite status and college scholarships. Some parents indicated that the benefits of paying large out of pocket expenses for children to participate in these clubs outweighed potential loss of enjoyment, time commitment, and potential injuries (Wendling et al., 2018). The children who are viewed as average or less likely to pursue a college scholarship or play in the pros, those with parents who cannot afford expensive leagues, or those in areas with no access to these sorts of leagues, are left out. This gap in financial power is creating an even larger divide in those who are playing and those who are not. However, those who are lucky enough to be enrolled in these clubs can also experience similar effects as sport specialization like burnout and over use (Meyer et al., 2015). Though these clubs can have significant financial costs, the most notable is the cost in which children may discontinue playing. Competition in elite sports has been shown to produce anxiety and fear of failure which can contribute to the child's overall enjoyment of sport and their self-confidence (Crane & Temple, 2015).

It should be noted that community and club leagues have advantages over traditional physical education programs or often in school leagues because it can provide flexibility in scheduling, an added variety of sports (i.e. sports not offered in some schools), and interaction with different groups of children (Atsalakis & Sleaf, 2016). Club sports and more elite groups do have positive benefits to the level of play, athletic development and increasing physical activity but the issue is the gap in availability depending on socioeconomic status (Wendling et al., 2018). However, the access to these clubs is marginal, especially in lower socioeconomic or rural areas. Many areas fail to offer recreational leagues much less club level. In those areas that do

offer more elite clubs, a large population is left out of the option to participate due to high cost fees and travel obligations.

Parents have a huge influence over elite sports programs when it comes to financial support, travel availability and time (Wendling et al., 2018). Related to elite sports, we aim to determine if 1) elite sports lead to a lack of enjoyment or added stress on the child, 2) financial limitations to playing or continuing play in elite clubs or 3) time and travel are any indicators of limiting factors. Elite sports teams are a way for children to play organized sport (Wendling et al., 2018) but if this is the only access to sport in the area then this could be a barrier to entry. Also, societal pressures in certain demographic areas could aid or restrict a parent from registering their child in organized sports.

“Pay to Play” Laws

A structural constraint identified as a reason many families can not encourage initially enrolling or continuing enrolling their children in organized sport is the financial constraint (Witt & Dangi, 2018). Many sports require a considerable financial investment for on-going participation. Costs alone may lead children to not participate initially or cease participation if costs cannot be covered. Training, equipment costs, coaching fees, camps, tournament, and travel related costs can deplete a family’s budget and be a determining factor in whether some children can start or continue (Jayanthi et al., 2018).

Recreational teams and elite athlete clubs are known to come with fees to participate but the more reasonable organized sport (i.e. public-school teams) are also associated with increasing fees for participation. Middle and high school sports are now financially taxing on children (Snellman et al., 2015). To mitigate budget cuts, state and local governments are forced to focus more primarily on academics putting education in extracurricular activities (like sport) on the

backburner. In order to make up for this loss of funds, public schools in some states allow for the collection of fees from families in order to let children participate in sport (Eyler et al., 2019). This concept of paying to participate in sport teams at public schools is often referred to as “pay-to-play”. “Pay-to-Play” has caused an uproar due to even more children, especially those of minority groups, missing out on the opportunity to join sports teams (Hartman, 2015.)

It is important to recognize the issues with cost to participate in sports at every level of play, however, it is hypothesized in this study that being constrained by cost to play at a younger age will prevent children from feeling encouraged and motivated to participate. For example, if a child does not have the availability to play sports due to cost barriers in their youth, they are more likely to be constrained by the same financial barrier in high school or lack the appropriate sport skills to be competitive. The Aspen Institute (2019) reported that 42% of lower-income families cited cost as the reason their children do not play sports, compared to 26% for higher income families. Also, race can play a factor in sport participation with a declining rate from 39% in 2012 to 33% in 2018 of Hispanic children playing sports (The Aspen Institute, 2019). For many children of lower socio-economic status and minority background, school sports are the only option for organized sport participation (Eyler et al., 2019).

For this study, the socio-economic status of parents is suspected to play a role in determining whether or not a child is able to play organized sports and continue playing throughout adolescence.

Socio-Economic Status

Socio-economic status (SES) can be defined as variables that characterize the placement of persons, families, or neighborhoods with respect to the capacity to consume valued goods (Oakes & Rossi, 2003.) This means based on where a person or family lives, places them on a

sliding scale of socioeconomic status. The SES of a family is believed to be associated with the level of sport participation as it pertains to demographic location, access to sports facilities and leagues, and cost to play as some of the factors. A continuing trend is tightening budgets at the local government level which trickles down to public school budgets creating a decrease in school sports and a rise in club sport participation (Knight et al., 2016). This separation creates a gap in youth sport participation in families with lower socioeconomic status (SES). Children from lower-income homes face participation barriers. In 2018, 22% of children (aged 6 to 12) from a household with an income level under \$25,000 played sports. In comparison, 43% of children (aged 6 to 12) from a household earning more than \$1000,000 participated in sports (The Aspen Institute, 2019).

The degree to which parents are willing or able to rearrange family schedules to accommodate their children's sport participation will certainly affect the child's ability to participate in a sport and may convey to the child how much the parents value the child's sport participation (e.g., Coakley & White, 1992; M. R. Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). Unfortunately, families with lower socio-economic status often are working more non-traditional shifts, don't have the ability to take off from work, don't have transportation means or other factors that may operate as barriers to participation in organized sport.

Other factors that have been associated with sports participation include: educational attainment (Post et al., 2018), total household income and neighborhood safety (Appelhans & Li, 2016). Appelhans and Li (2016) reported better neighborhood safety reports were associated with family support for physical activity in both unstructured active play and participation in organized sports. Also, total household income (THI) and educational attainment are two components of SES (Post et al., 2018) have been associated with youth sport participation

(Knight et al., 2016). For example, in Post et al. (2018), almost 60% of parents reported a THI greater than 100,000 dollars per year and over 70% of parents reported having a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. Only around 8% of parents with children participating in club sports reported a THI of 50,000 USD per year or less. This study will use these theories regarding total household income and socioeconomic status to hypothesize income as a factor to quitting or enrolling in organized sports.

Parents Involvement Related to SES

The level of involvement a parent has with the child's team or league may have a correlation with socioeconomic status. Research suggests that parents who attend their children's games (or are perceived by their children to attend games) is associated with the child's enjoyment or perceptions of the child's psychosocial outcomes which could keep the child wanting to stay involved in organized sport. Due to the same reasons parents cannot rearrange family schedules, it is hypothesized that similar constraints keep parents from lower SES households from attending games or practices.

In many organized sport leagues, parents are expected to become involved with the team or league by volunteering their time to serve as coaches, officials, bookkeepers, administrative assistants, or team parents. This also creates an exemplified level of finances and time as a commitment for a parent to be involved in the child's sport league. For example, if you have a single mother trying to sign her up for soccer where she is expected to 1) rearrange a work schedule to take the child to practice, 2) attend games on weeknights when the mother is potentially working, 3) spend money on snacks and time volunteering than the mother may not be able to commit to this for her son whereas a parent from a middle to high income household may have the means to accommodate their child in different ways. Therefore, it is important to

explore if there are different decision-making processes for enrolling children from families of low, middle- and high-income households.

Theoretical Framework: Leisure Constraints Model

The hierarchical leisure constraints model explores personal behavior and beliefs involved in decision making when it comes to leisure activities (Jackson et al., 1993). This theory adapted by Jackson and colleagues (1993) is widely accepted as an important lens to view leisure behavior. The model posits that leisure constraints exist at three levels; intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural (Godbey et al., 2010). It is presented that these levels must be navigated sequentially for participation to take place or continue in leisure activities (Jackson et al., 1993).

The first level, intrapersonal factors, include personality, previous experiences and the individual's understanding of self-sufficiency. Interpersonal facilitators, the second level, regards the affirmations from people that are close to the individual like family members, friends and peers. Structural factors, the third level, the socio-cultural beliefs that determine the appropriate behavior types for the members of a society (Jackson et al., 1993).

Each level of constraints brings forth a different value to be interpreted and then overcome in order to see the need to participate. However, because the individual has some constraints does not mean that he or she will not participate.

Jackson and colleagues (1993) suggest that the type of negotiation strategy adopted by an individual would depend partly, if not entirely, on the problem encountered. In this case, the constraint could be a combination of attributes. Strategies used to negotiate could be cognitive (reduction of cognitive dissonance) or behavioral (an observable change in behavior) (Jackson et al., 1993). Some behavioral strategies might involve modifications to aspects of life in order to

accommodate leisure needs for the child (e.g., rearranging schedules for other activities, cutting back on expenses).

In this research, it is assumed that the individual's view of oneself and the constraints they may face, contributes to a decision as to whether or not their child will continue in youth sports. This constraints theory will be used as a basis for understanding the parent's behavior and decision-making process. Ultimately, the two groups of parents measured: those parents of children who have quit sports and the parents of children who are continuing participation are assumed to have some sort of constraint. Though some parents are choosing to acknowledge constraints and overcome them. Other parents are caving to constraints and allowing their child to discontinue participation. Though the ultimate decision is not entirely up to the parent, this constraints theory is a valid basis to interpret the role parents play in choosing to enroll their child or not in organized sports.

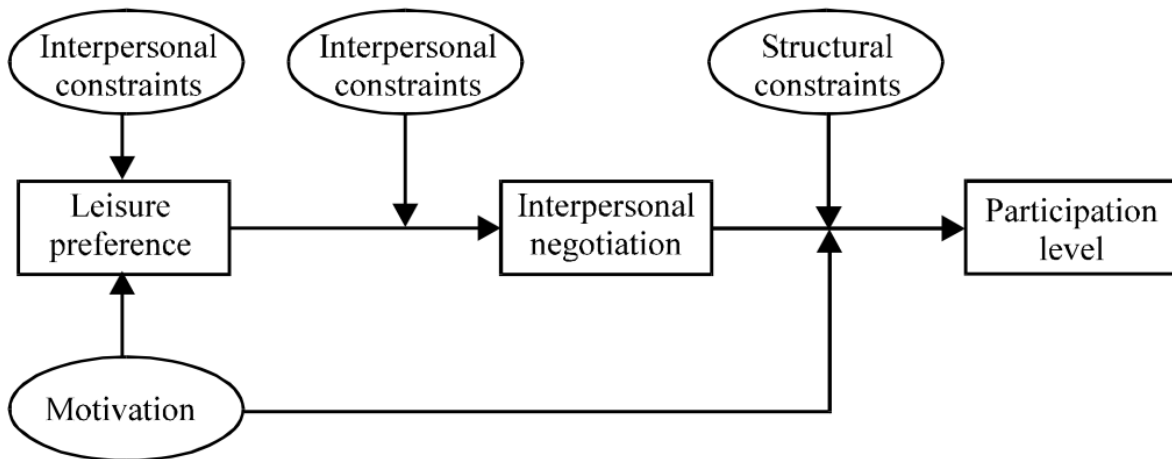


Figure 1: The hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Jackson et al., 1993)

In Figure 1, the three levels of constraints are presented with the negotiation process in which eventually leads to participation. Based on leisure constraints theory, parents will have

constraints at every level but this research attempts to conclude which factors are more prevalent and not being overcome by the parent.

Strategies to Mitigate Decline

Though there are many factors contributing to the decline of participation in youth sport, there are strategies to mitigate the declining involvement rates. In order to combat the current situation in youth sport, researchers have suggested increasing access to sporting teams, especially in rural areas with communities of high proportions of low income and racial minority populations (Bunds et al., 2018), edit school sport policies to emphasize a more inclusive participation model (Eyler, 2019), support non-governmental organizations that advocate for changes designed to reduce injury rates (Bell et al., 2018), and encourage sport diversification at younger ages to prevent injuries (Jayanthi et al., 2013).

Each of the above strategies seem to address factors impacting sport participation rates, however, little is known about factors that influence decisions to play or not to play sports. This study aims to address what factors are affecting a parent or guardian's decision to enroll their children in sport.

Current research on extracurricular activity participation, including sports, suggests that parents are the primary gatekeeper making initial decisions to enroll or not enroll their children in organized sports (Beets et al., 2010). Therefore, it seems prudent to examine factors that influence parent's decisions to enroll their children in sport before identifying programmatic or policy changes.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Using a non-experimental, cross-sectional design, this study examined the constraints parents face when enrolling their child in organized sports. Additionally, this study examined the effect of race and socio-economic status on parent's decisions to support their child's organized sports participation. The following chapter describes the research design and methods that were used for this study.

Research Design

Data for this study were collected using a quantitative survey developed from previous research on children's participation in extracurricular activities and the influence of parents (Casper et al., 2011). This survey was distributed using an online survey software that recruits participants from various sources like intercept recruiting, member referrals, targeted email list, gaming sites, customer loyalty portals and social media. Panel members' names, addresses, and dates of birth are typically validated via third-party verification measures prior to their joining a panel.

Specifically, the target population for the survey was parents over the age of 18 with children in the middle school age range that participated in organized sports prior to entering 6th grade, living in the United States. Study participants were also asked to indicate if their child was still participating in organized youth sports. Parents were all contacted digitally and active consent was obtained for each respondent before starting the survey. When participants are invited to take a survey, they are informed what they will be compensated. Once survey data was collected, the researchers received raw data and conducted analysis.

Survey Instrument and Procedures

A survey instrument was developed using literature in survey development (Dillman, 2007) and researchers at NC State University. Some questions in this survey are measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale (Likert, 1932). Responses range from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.” The Likert (1932) scale is used to evaluate items measuring parent’s sport socialization. Statements include things like, “It is important to me that I interact with other parents of children playing on the team/club.” and “It is important to me that I attend my child’s games.” These statements were derived from literature on early socialization of parents in organized sport (Dorsch, 2015) and are further explained in this chapter.

Parent constraints are measured by questions with multiple barriers adapted from Wilk et al., 2018. The objective is to study two groups of people, those whose children have continued to play organized sport and those who have elected to discontinue (i.e. quit.) The purpose of these two groups is to understand constraints to parents whether they have chosen to overcome those (allowing their child to continue play) or if they have not (allowed them to quit). It is important to examine the perspective of both parents to better understand the relative importance of different constraints to parental support of children’s’ participation in organized sport. A series of question blocks were created with a Likert scale (1932) responses. A description and justification for each question block follows:

Constraints to Sport Participation

In this section, parents were asked to indicate what factors commonly associated with facilitating or preventing sport participation were correlated with their decision to support their child’s sport participation. Items included the availability of sporting teams (access), sport facilities, cost, participation of friends, and the ability of the child to play sports. There are 19

items in this section (broken into two questions to minimize participant survey fatigue) were included to identify the importance of common constraints to playing or continuing to play sports. These were categorized as physical barriers (e.g. location, cost, transportation) or perceived constraints (e.g. the child not being confident enough to play sports). All parents surveyed answered this block of questions. Items were derived from a Casper et al. (2011) examination constraints that limit adolescent sport participation. Item wording was changed to the parent's perspective as original items were developed for adolescent age study participants. For example, in research conducted by Casper and colleagues (2011), children were asked how much they identified with the statement "The sport facilities are not good enough" and in this survey parents were asked how much they identified with "The places available for my child to play sports are poor quality." These questions were asked to answer the research question: "What are the constraints of children still playing sport or those who have discontinued?". The slight change of wording from a reliable and valid published article was used to create this question block to show potential constraints.

Reasons for Sport Dropout

Study participants who indicated their child was no longer playing sports were asked to indicate why they think their child had stopped participating. Those who completed this question block were parents who indicated that they had a child of middle school age that played at least one organized sport for at least one season before entering 6th grade. This time frame was determined by literature indicating that the timeframe in which most children discontinue play is in the middle school age range (Logan & Cuff, 2019). If the parent answered "yes" to this question, they were then asked if the child planned to continue to participate in at least one organized sport in the next season (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). If they answered "no",

they were taken to the question block to determine reasons for quitting. If the parent answered “no” to their child planning to continue participating, they were also taken to the reasons for discontinuing play. Therefore, the parents answering this question were those who had *never played* organized sport and those who had *quit* playing. If the parent answered “yes” to both they had a child that had played prior to 6th grade and continuing to play, they were then asked a set of questions regarding their level of involvement, perception of child’s ability, etc.

The reasons for quitting sports included statements like, “my child lost interest in playing sport, my child was injured playing sport, the sport cost too much...”. These reasons for quitting were derived from literature indicating common constraints to sport participation among children in this age range and their motivations to play in the first place (Vallerand, 2007). Survey questions were modified in consultation with researchers at NC State University to align with the study’s research questions.

Parent Involvement in Child’s Sport Participation

All parents completing the survey were asked to indicate their level of involvement with the child’s sporting events. These questions included, “I find myself critiquing my child’s performance to other peers, I find myself relying on social cues from other parents (i.e. cheering). Previous research indicates, parents who have a social connectedness to the sport or a relationship with other parents, are more likely to want their child to be involved in organized sport (Knight et al., 2016). It has also been suggested that parents who had little personal involvement in organized sport are less likely to facilitate or support their child’s involvement in sports (Trost et al., 2003). Additionally, parents who are more socially involved in their child’s sport experiences have a vested interest for their own personal gain to keep their child registered for organized sport (Horn & Horn, 2007). These statements were driven by studies by Gustafson

& Rhodes (2006) and Wilk et al. (2018) on parent's influence on physical activity. Both studies are journal published, with Wilk et al. (2018) referencing research from Gustafson & Rhodes (2006) making the research this section is based on reliable and valid indicators of parent's behavior and involvement related to their child's sport participation.

Sport Competence

Sport competence is a scale based on a concept from research by Wilk and colleagues (2018) that if a child is perceived as competent at playing organized sport, the less likely the child will be to quit playing. The sport competence model was created based parent's influence on physical activity (Wilk et al., 2018). The term "sport competence" is not an actual measurement of how able a child is to play sports but how capable the parent perceives the child is in playing sports. All parents surveyed completed these questions. The average response for the statement, "My child is good at sports," "My child is better at sports than other children their age," "My child does well at trying new sports," My child would rather watch sports (or play sports on video games) than actually play sports, "My child id skilled enough to be on a sports team." and "My child is in good enough shape to play sports." is "average". These statements were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale with "1" being very strongly disagree to "5" being very strongly agreed." Based on literature, if a child is perceived by the parent to be a good enough athlete or if the parents sees themselves in the child, they are more likely to play sports (Knight et al, 2016). Based on previous research, his concept is valid to continue studying in the context of sport participation (Knight et al., 2016).

Parent's Perception of Child's Sport Ability

Parents were also surveyed to determine their perception of the child's ability to play sports to determine if this was an association with parental facilitation and support of their

child's involvement in organized sport. Wendling et al. (2018) argues that if a parent perceives their child as good at sports then they will overcome constraints in order to let them play organized sports. This also connects to parents allowing their children to be involved in more elite clubs and exacerbated training. Statements in this question block included "my child is good at sports, my child is better at sports than other children their age, etc.). All parents who were taking the survey completed this question block to determine association between parent's perception of ability and registration. This was added in hopes of determining if perceived ability was a primary factor in quitting sport (or never registering to play).

Parent's Perception of Importance of the Role of the Parent

Beets et al. (2010) found that a parent's level of involvement is positively associated with their child's enduring involvement in sports. Social support, or the functional characteristics associated with the interactions between a parent and their child such as prompting, discussing, and/or providing activity-related opportunities has been shown to positively impact sport participation (Beets et al., 2010). Questions regarding the parent's level of involvement were derived from this research in an effort to better understand the importance of parent-child interactions in predicting withdrawal from sport participation. It was hypothesized the child will be able to overcome constraints if the parent receives benefit from youth sport. If the parent is not involved in the child's participation, the child is more likely to quit or has already quit playing.

Demographics

A demographics section captured the respondent's primary language spoken in the household, number of decision makers in the household, gender of the parent, gender of the child, annual household income, level of education and race. These questions were asked to

identify possible moderators to constraints (e.g., gender, race, SES) and are consistent with previous research on sport participation (Holt, 2011).

Data Analysis

Prior to interpreting frequencies, we used descriptive statistics ($p < .05$) to better understand study participants. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were first used to describe the 570 respondents based on whether the child had quit sport or is continuing playing, gender of both the parent and child, race of the child, income level of the family, primary language spoken in the household, if the parent was the sole decision maker, education level of parent, number of parents in the household and number of guardians in the household.

In order to examine constraints of both children who are continuing to play from those who have discontinued play, factor analysis was used to determine how well each factor was impacted individually to create a scale based on sport competence of the child and a scale based on child constraints. These scales were then input into independent samples t-tests to compare sport competence and constraints to race, gender of child and income level of family to analyze if these demographics impacted sport competence or constraints.

To determine the primary factors in determining the reason for children quitting play resulting in lower rates of physical activity, a logistic regression model was used to examine the relative influence of various factors on children quitting playing sport. The dependent variable was if a child had quit playing sport or not. The independent variables were added sequentially in using the constraints scale and sport competence scales created using factor analysis in research question 2, loss of interest in playing sport (which will later be explained in the significance of), the child's gender, the child's race and income of the family. The model was assessed using factor analysis, creating scales, binary logistic regression and Nagelkerke R^2 .

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Participant Demographics

570 completed surveys were included in the study sample. Descriptive statistics of demographic question responses (Table 1, “Demographics of Study Participants”) indicated that 562 spoke English as the first language in the household with eight not speaking English as the first language. Of the households, 131 were only-child households, 250 with two children, 123 with three children, 45 with four children and 21 with five or more children. 145 participants were single parents, 391 identified as having a partner and 34 had a partner and other adults living in the household. Among responding parents, 218 identified as male, 351 as female and 1 other preferred not to respond or identify differently. These parents identified their children as 319 male, 248 female and three preferred not to respond or identified differently. 428 participants identified as white and 142 as non-white. When asked to identify if English was their first language, 562 answered that it was and 8 answered that it was not. In regards to the level of education of the parent, 12 responded they had less than high school, 90 had graduated high school, 104 had some college education, 74 obtained an associate’s degree, 164 a bachelor’s degree and 126 some level of graduate degree. 316 respondents identified themselves as the sole decision maker, 251 said they shared the decision-making process with someone else and 3 said they were not the decision maker in the household. Lower income (under \$49,999) was identified by 288 of the participants and higher income (above \$50,000) was identified by 262 of participants. Include summary data on responses to questions about sports participation prior to entering 6th grade and whether or not the child is still participating in sports.

Table 1. Demographics of Study Participants.

Demographics of Study Participants

Primary Language Spoken	Number	Percentage
English	562	98.6
Non-English	8	1.4
Number of Children in the Household		
Only child	131	23.0
2 children	250	43.9
3 children	123	21.6
4 children	45	7.9
5+ children	21	3.7
Gender of Parent		
Male	218	38.2
Female	351	61.6
Preferred not to respond	1	0.002
Gender of Child		
Male	319	56.0
Female	248	43.5
Preferred not to respond	3	.5
Race		
White	428	75.1
Non-White	142	24.9
Primary Language Spoken as First Language		
English	562	98.6
Non-English	8	1.4

Table 1. Demographics of Study Participants (Continued).

Education Level of Parent		
Less than high school	12	2.1
High school grad	90	15.8
Some college	104	18.2
Associate’s Degree	74	13.0
Bachelor’s Degree	164	28.8
Graduate Degree	126	22.1
Decision Maker		
Sole decision maker	316	55.4
Shares decision with someone else	251	44.0
Someone else is the decision maker	3	.5
Income Level		
Under \$49,999	288	52.4
Over \$50,000	262	47.6

Study participant responses to constraint survey questions were subject to factor analysis using Principal Component Factor Analysis and orthogonal varimax rotation. The factor analysis identified which components held together well and the strength of the scales. For constraints, or the parent’s perception of the ability of their child to play sports, each factor (5 items) strongly correlated with a scale Cronbach’s Alpha of .861. These statements were answered by both parents of children who have stopped participation in their sport and those that were still participating.

The child constraints scale is a combination of statements answered by both parents of children who have quit sports and those who are still participating. This was created to determine

perceived constraints of parents with a child currently participating in sports and for those who have chosen to discontinue play. Thee 19 components were factored into a scale with a Cronbach's Alpha of .960. See Table 1 and Table 2 for more detailed results of the factor analysis of both scales.

Research Question 1

What are sport parents perceived constraints to their child's participation in organized sports?

Table 2. Standard Deviation of Constraint Items Scale. 1 = very much disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = very much agree

Standard Deviation of Reasons for Quitting Sport

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
My child lost interest in playing sports.	3.25	1.22
My child was injured playing sports.	2.06	1.13
I feared my child being injured playing sport	2.46	1.17
My child had a bad experience playing sports.	2.39	1.15
The sport cost too much to play.	2.87	1.19
The sport isn't offered close to where we live.	2.36	1.14
There are no opportunities for his/her age group in the sport.	2.29	1.12
He/she didn't get picked for the team.	2.18	1.14
The sport took up too much time (practice, games, travel time, etc.)	2.66	1.18

The primary reasons for quitting sports identified by parents with a child that no longer participates are presented in Table 2. Results indicate that more pecuniary constraints of the parent than physical constraints of the child were associated with discontinuing participation in organized sports. The component with the highest level of agreement was “my child lost interest” (mean = 3.25, S.D. = 1.22) and “didn’t get picked for the team with the lowest mean level of agreement (mean = 2.18, S.D. = 1.18). Therefore, lack of interest was examined more throughout subsequent data analyses. From this model, “lack of interest” was viewed as the primary constraint. However, all statements in Table 2 had a low degree of association ($> S.D. = 3.00$). This aids in answering research question 1 because it indicates reasons children are quitting sports, which are constraints that have not been negotiated by the child or parents.

Results also indicated that gender (p-value = 0.25), race (p-value = 0.16) and income (p-value = 0.67) were not significant moderators of constraint perceptions of sport parents. If a parent perceives their child is both interested and has the ability to play sports, the parent is more likely to overcome the constraints of cost, time, travel to facilities, regardless of race or gender of the child or household income.

After analyzing Table 2, to determine constraints of parents who had children who had discontinued play, a factor analysis was done on question sets answered by all parents (those who had children who had quit and those who had children still playing). These components made up the Child Constraints Scale in Table 3.

Table 3. Child Constraints Scale.

Child Constraints

Item	Component 1	Component 2
My child is too busy with schoolwork to play sports.	.382	.659
I am afraid of my child getting hurt playing sports.	-.017	.788
Playing sports makes my child feel tired.	.214	.669
I do not want to interrupt my daily schedule for my child to play sports.	.384	.683
My child is too busy with schoolwork to play sports.	.556	.594
My child is too busy with friends to play sports.	.526	.616
My child is not confident enough to play sports.	.653	.439
The times sports programs are offered do not fit in with my life.	.511	.640
I do not know where my child can learn to play sports.	.559	.625
I do not know who could teach my child to play sports.	.544	.633
My child doesn't have anyone to play sports with.	.729	.427
It is too expensive for my child to play sports.	.574	.398
My child is not interested in playing sports.	.844	.098
My child's friends do not play sports.	.788	.289

Table 3. Child Constraints Scale (Continued).

It is too difficult to transport my child to play sports.	.704	.432
My child doesn't like the sports offered in our community.	.833	.282
My child played sports in the past and did not like them.	.826	.181
There are no sports near our home for my child to play.	.728	.441
I do not know where my child could play sports.	.703	.479
Cronbach's Alpha for Scale	.960	

The first four components (“my child is too busy with schoolwork to play sports”, “I am afraid of my child getting hurt playing sports”, “playing sports makes my child feel tired”, and “I do not want to interrupt my daily schedule for my child to play sports”) were removed when creating a constraints scale due to the dimensionality loading on factor 2 (children still playing) for these items. The item “my child is not interested in playing sports” was tested individually and not included in the constraints scale because interest was examined as an independent item due to its significance (mean = 3.25, S.D. = 1.22). Again, lack of interest shows to be the most significant predictor using both descriptive statistics and factor analysis loading (= .844) on component 1.

As presented in the literature review, the parents’ view of the child may play a role in the decision-making process. Table 4 presents the respondents viewpoint of their child’s ability to play organized sports.

Table 4. Perceived Child Ability Scale. A scale showing the level of parent’s confidence in their child’s ability to play sports.

Perceived Child Ability Scale

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
My child is good at sports.	4.06	.900	570
My child is better than other children their age.	3.50	1.043	570
My child does well at trying new sports.	3.88	.927	570
My child is skilled enough to play sports.	3.96	.913	570
My child is in good enough shape to play sports.	4.14	.846	570

Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of Items in Scale
.861	5

Item	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
My child is good at sports.	15.48	8.981	.750	.814

Table 4. Perceived Child Ability Scale (Continued).

My child is better than other children their age.	16.04	8.687	.661	.839
My child does well at trying new sports.	15.66	9.056	.702	.826
My child is skilled enough to play sports.	15.58	8.961	.739	.817
My child is in good enough shape to play sports.	15.41	10.122	.557	.860

The sport competence scale was used to identify parent’s perception of their child’s ability to participate in sports where the constraints scale identifies parent’s perception of factors that prevent their child’s participation in sports. If a child has discontinued play, an item like “My child was injured playing sports” in Table 2 (mean = 2.06) is not relevant to a child who has never played sports. The child wasn’t injured playing if the child never played, as shown in the factor analysis presented in Table 3 Child Constraints. Of the components loading on component 1 in Table 3, “my child is not interested in playing sports” and “my child doesn’t like the sports offered” indicate similar findings to the exploratory statistics in Table 2.

Research Question 2

2. Do sport parents perceived constraints to sport participation differ for children that continue and discontinue to participate?

a) *Is the constraints-participation association influenced by race and gender of the child, and household income?*

After analyzing findings from research question 1, a binomial logistic regression was used to determine constraints that would predict a child discontinuing their participation in organized sports as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Binomial Logistic Regression Model

Variable in the Equation: Logistic Regression Model

Item	B	S.E.	Wald	dF	Sig.	Exp (B)
(1) Constraints Scale	-.266	.146	3.310	1	.069	.767
(2) Not interested in playing sports	.546	.110	24.474	1	.000	1.726
(3) Gender of Child	.270	.205	1.735	1	.188	1.310
(4) Race of Child	.307	.230	1.791	1	.181	1.360
(5) Income Level	.108	.207	.273	1	.601	1.114
(6) Perceived Ability of Child	-.700	.144	23.639	1	.000	.496
Constant	.903	.659	1.881	1	.170	2.468

The parents of children who were still participating in organized sports and those who had stopped participating were used as variables in this model. The first item in the logistic regression is the constraints scale presented in Table 3. The second item “not interested in playing sports” was the most significant finding in discontinuing play in the factor analysis. The third, fourth and fifth items: gender of child, race of child and income level were used to determine the level of significance demographics played. The sixth item is the sport competence

scale presented in Table 4. Results indicated that parents who reported their child was not interested in playing sports were more likely to quit playing sports (p-value = .00). In this model, the main factors associated with a child discontinuing sport participation were child's interest level and sport ability (p-value=.00) as shown in Table 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Organized sports provide many opportunities for positive development in youth by physically and mentally (Holt, 2011; Malina et. al., 2016; CDC, 2019). Sports provide physically more intense physical activity (Vella et al., 2014), provide leadership opportunities (Wendling et al., 2018), teamwork building (Rosewater, 2010); and mentally problem solving and self-esteem (Holt, 2011). The purpose of this study was to research factors contributing to children continuing to dropout of youth sports. Continued participation in organized sports during childhood and adolescence benefits children's development and continued well-being (Vella et al., 2014). However, children continue to dropout of youth sports with an average child spending less than three years playing a sport. Child are most notably quitting by age 11 due to lack of enjoyment (The Aspen Institute, 2019). The findings indicate a parent's perception of their child's interest level (i.e. child's enjoyment) and the perceived ability in sports (child's ability to play sports) were the most significant constraints to enduring participation in organized sports.

Three research questions guided this investigation. First, what are sport parents perceived constraints to their child's participation in organized sports? Previous research indicated that factors typically associated with discontinuing sport participation included injury or fear of reinjury (Myer et al., 2015), bad experience when playing or loss of access to play (Wendling et al., 2018), and lack of interest or interest in other extracurricular activities (e.g., Coakley & White, 1992; M. R. Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). This study's results showed that there were two significant factors associated with discontinuing sport participation. The highest rated factor was the parent's perception of their child's interest in playing sports. The second was the parent's perception of their child's ability to play sports. There were other factors such as the cost to play

and the amount of time (i.e. travel time to games, pick up from practices, time of games) that contributed to the results of this study but none of these constraints resulted in significant findings.

Second, do a sport parent's perceived constraints to sport participation differ for children that continue and discontinue to participate? The findings suggest that a lack of interest or perceived sport ability may be more relevant predictors of declining sport enrollment rates than structural or environmental factors such as injury or lack of available opportunities. Therefore, efforts should be made to increase a child's interest and ability before one endeavors to mitigate structural or environmental factors.

Third, is the constraints-participation association influenced by race and gender of the child, and household income? While the results indicated interest as a more likely predictor of participation in organized youth sports, a child's race, gender and family socioeconomic status were still studied to discover whether or not they would result in significant findings. Race (Liu et al., 2008), gender (Horn & Horn, 2007) and socioeconomic status (Dollman, 2010) were hypothesized to be associated for dropping out of sport (Crane & Temple, 2015). For example, this study expected to find that a child's gender would be associated with their continued participation in sports. For example, the 2018 United States Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth found that 6-to-17-year-old males have higher rates of physical activity than females. These differences in physical activity rates have been consistent for more than a decade (Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018). The parent's willingness to rearrange family schedules to accommodate their children's sport participation and ability to pay for extracurricular activities have also been shown to affect sport participation (e.g., Coakley & White, 1992; M. R. Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). Previous research indicated gender of the child,

race and socioeconomic status to be a potential factor in continuing sport participation. Findings, however, showed that gender, race, and family income level were not contributing factors according to parents perceived constraints to their child's sport participation.

Context for Findings

The findings, as extrapolated above, have been compared to previous similar studies in order to support the results of this study. The results contain similarities to previous studies but they also provide new perspectives regarding constraints.

Somerest & Hoarse (2018) conducted a study in the United Kingdom which concluded that frequent barriers to voluntary sport participation include time, cost, opportunity/accessibility, community participation, sport ability and a child's fear of judgement. These researchers surveyed children aged 4 to 19 from France, Australia, USA, Spain, Brazil, the United Kingdom and Canada. These conclusions show that children in many cultures find time, cost, accessibility and ability to be constraints against playing in an organized sport. In a similar study, Casper et al. (2011) concluded time to be the primary constraint to participation. They also found that non-sport participants had significantly higher constraints than those who previously participated in sport. These findings support and validate the claims of this study. Children who are already participating in a sport have the same constraints as non-sport participants, but because of the child's interest and ability, these limitations are conceived as less hindering to the child/family than for non-sport participants.

Crane & Temple (2015) concluded the two most dominant factors related to dropout in youth sports were participants' perceptions of their sport competence and their enjoyment of sport. In our study, the parent's perception of their child's ability to play sports and the child's level of interest were significant factor to enduring organized sports participation. Somerset &

Hoare (2018) also found child sport ability to be one of the most likely components among many cultures from the child's perspective as well. The relationship of similar constraints in other studies validates the association of a predictive relationship with the variable to participation in organized sports.

While these previous studies supported our claims in many ways, some constraints that we hypothesized and that were theorized in other studies were actually shown in our results to be of such slight variance that they are insignificant to our findings. For example, factors such as children being "too busy with schoolwork to play sports" or parents "not wanting to interrupt my daily schedule for my child to play sports" were not as significant as previously hypothesized.

Our study differs in concluding that one's ability to play sports and interest in participating are the most significant factors in a child's continued involvement. This could mean that if a child is perceived as skilled and interested in sports, then parents will overcome constraints. If the child is already involved, interested, and has the ability to play sports, the parent appears to be more likely to overcome the constraints.

It is possible that "interest" is a component we looked at in this study, but that others were not considering in their research. It is also likely that parent's perception of constraints differs from their child's perception. Casper et al. (2011) extracted their findings from their research on children's perspectives rather than their parental influences. This study focused on the parent's perceptions and took a child's interest into account, and as a result, came to different conclusions. Our findings show that even if constraints such time, cost and accessibility are overcome, participation in sports may continue to diminish if interest and ability are absent. If, however, parents see ability and/or interest in their child regarding playing sports, then the family will be more likely to continue participating. Therefore, those endorsing organized sports

need to generate interest and provide opportunities to learn how to play before figuring out ways to provide funds, more leagues, etc.

Practical Implications

This study has multiple implications for organized youth sports. First, it is important to redefine sports goals in order for children to perceive having fun while participating. While redefining the goal of sports, to increase interest, it is important to encourage sport sampling (or playing multiple sports). Lastly, evaluating the parent's role in participation may increase the perception of enjoyment and ability from the child.

As identified, there are three different sets of parents: those who have children who have never played, those who have children who have quit playing and those who have children that are continuing playing. For parents of children that have discontinued play, if lack of interest is the driving constraint, this would indicate organized sport needs to be more appealing to this child, parent and/or family. In order to mitigate this, it is recommended to increase accessible sporting teams and market organized sport in areas where there seems to be a lack of interest. If there is a lack of knowledge, this could also be a direct correlation with a lack of interest. The Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD) suggests a balanced training and competition program throughout childhood and adolescence (Ford et al., 2011). Using this theory, it is suggested that children need to first receive instruction in physical literacy followed by a comprehensive program of graduate and age appropriate progression to achieve both the physical skills to successfully compete and foundation for enduring interest in sports participation.

When a child has discontinued playing sports, we assume the parents were not able to overcome perceived constraints to participation. As physical activity researchers, understanding ways to keep children physically active is necessary. Parks and recreation departments can create

ways for community physical activity opportunities that do not involve organized sport or more opportunities for recreational sport sampling. Bridge and Toms (2013) performed a study in the United Kingdom, which promotes sport sampling at younger ages. This research emphasized increasing sport participation is strengthened by participation in three sports during the sport sampling years. This sport sampling led to significantly increasing the likelihood of later participation at a higher competitive standard (Bridge & Toms, 2013). Sport sampling can increase enjoyment for a longer period of time in hopes of the child continuing playing past the average age of dropout at 11.

If this child has quit playing organized sports, understanding the constraints involved creates insight to find ways to provide options for the child to return if interest of the child or family is present. Parents and coaches need to redefine success in terms of keeping participation as fun as possible. These leaders in the child's life can focus attention to enabling participants to develop lifetime skills as opposed to a win-at-all-costs philosophy (Witt & Dangi, 2018). Further, less emphasis should be placed on sports participation as a means for winning college scholarships in order to lessen the pressure to perform rather than enjoying play. Emphasis can also focus on enabling participants to have a sense of fun while trying their best in order to receive the benefits socially from playing sports.

If a child's interest is truly a significant factor contributing to enduring participation in youth sports then actions designed to enhance sport interest or mitigate a loss of interest may be effective. As noted, elite sports leagues and sport specialization can create burnout (Difiori et al., 2014) where the child loses interest in playing. Many children are introduced to sports by their parents, and often only continue participating because of pressure exerted by their parents

(Witt & Dangi, 2018). In some cases, children are pressured to participate because their parents are living out their own fantasies through their children, or the parents gain recognition (McGoldrick, 2011). Often children feel pressured to succeed because they do not want to let their parents down or disappoint them (Witt & Dangi, 2018). Parents applying too much pressure on the child to perform, can create too much stress and anxiety (Crane & Temple, 2015). This leads to the child no longer enjoying or being interested in that sport or sports in general. Parents need to be self-aware of the threshold of encouragement and pushing the child too far. It is encouraged parents reframe from overinvolvement such as instructing players from the sidelines, arguing with coaches and referees, and criticizing kids for mistakes has taken away the enjoyment of sports (Witt & Dangi, 2018). There has been a growing emphasis among parents, coaches, and youth participants on commodifying sport as an arena for winning, status, and living out parental and coaches' dreams (Jones et al., 2018). Children need to feel like they have ownership of the game and the game experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

The focus of this study was on general sports participation. It is possible that factors relating to participation vary depending on the sport in question. Organized sport was generalized in this study, and we recommend further research that focuses on specific sports to narrow findings. For example, children playing football could be influenced by possible CTE, but in soccer, ACL tears would be more of a factor. While looking more closely at different sports to see if there are variations across different sports, it is recommended to also examine if "level of play" is a contributing factor. Organized sports have been criticized for being too competitive, especially at an early age. Examining the differences between recreational and highly competitive sports could be quite informative to interest level.

It should also be noted that one set of parents with children of middle school age, those of children who have never played sports, were not analyzed. The barriers that we examined relate solely to those youth who at one time played sport and for whatever reason, made the decision to stop playing sport. Casper and colleagues (2011) presented a similar study in which they found that those who had never played had significantly more constraints. It is suggested that future research include the set of children who have never played organized sports in order to understand how their constraints differ or if they do.

We also recommend research regarding the level of knowledge parents have about sports and the parent's ability to facilitate teaching sport. If sport ability is known as an indicator of participation, understanding the level of competence a parent has to teach their child to play could also be a predictor. In this study, we asked parents about their perception of their child's ability to play but not the parent's ability to teach. There is a possibility of a correlation between lack of parent's ability to teach sports and perceived ability of their child to play. For example, could a parent's comfort level playing catch in the yard with their child also predict the likelihood of the parent perceiving their child as able to play a hand-eye coordination sport?

Our findings show that interest in playing sports is the significant indicator of a child's participation in sports. Children who show little or no interest, therefore, are very likely to remain outside the realm of physical activity gained from organized sports. If interest is significant to participation in sports, it is possible that other forms of physical activity will also be increased if a child shows interest. We recommend using these findings to support research into other ways children can participate in physical activity and how interest in these may be promoted.

Limitations

There are limitations within this study that need to be acknowledged. First, though the data collection was trustworthy and reliable due to random sampling via a Qualtrics panel, little is known about the actual geographic distribution of this survey. Time and data collection were limitations to a more in depth understanding of the sample.

Additionally, potential research bias could be a limitation of this study. As a former youth athlete involved in multiple sports, the researcher has a vested interest in promoting physical activity in youth through sports. However, these biases did not affect the survey or relationship with interviewees due to the quantitative study via an online distribution format.

Lastly, this study was constructed and surveys were conducted before the United States shut down due to COVID-19. It is recognized that these constraints were modeled around literature involving youth sport participation before the global pandemic. However, there will still be constraints to sports participation and having a better understanding of those primary constraints can be used in mitigating in the future. It is recommended that this research be used in understanding why parents are reentering youth sports leagues.

Conclusion

Driven by leisure constraints theory (Jackson et al., 1993), this study examined constraints associated with organized youth sports participation and factors contributing to youth dropout from organized sports. Specifically, this study explored constraints perceived by parents in why their children are dropping out of youth sports. Multiple family types were surveyed to explore these associations and draw comparisons across groups: (a) parents of children that played sports then quit and (b) parents of children who are still playing sports. Of those, two significant factors were found to be predictors of the child's dropout or the likelihood of a parent

enrolling their child from organized sport: (1) the parent's perception of the child's ability to play and (2) the interest of the child in playing sports.

Findings from our study both align with existing academic literature which suggests that intrapersonal constraints tend to be the most powerful predictors of youth participation (Crawford et al., 1991), and our results also contribute novel information to the field by demonstrating that these intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints may supersede structural constraints, as we did not detect that gender, race, or socioeconomic status had a correlation with participation rates. From a practical standpoint, results from our study may aide organizations that support the participation of youth in sports by influencing their approach towards organized sport interventions for both parents and children alike. For example, organizations may be able to prevent unnecessary sports dropout by youth by implementing strategies to target the intrapersonal constraints experienced by parents of youth sport participants. In an effort to address our findings, these types of interventions or strategies could seek to (1) provide educational sessions in-person or in-print for parents that highlight the extensive short- and long-term benefits of organized sport *despite* their child's talent or skill level, and/or (2) encourage an emphasis of enjoyment over competition for the children. Simple, practical steps such as these may help to decrease the dropout rate from organized sports among young people in the United States, thereby contributing to the longitudinal physical, psychological, and social benefits for today's youth and tomorrow's adults.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Sport Participation Parent Survey

By clicking 'I agree' you are verifying that you have read the Informed Consent Form and that you agree to participate. You also understand that your participation is completely voluntary.

Do you agree to participate?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Do you have a child of middle school age (grades 6th, 7th or 8th)?

We'd like to know a little about whether your child plays organized sports. If you have more than one child of middle school age, please think about the child with the closest birthday to today. *For the purpose of this study, we are defining "an organized sport" as any recreational or competitive sport whether played as part of a school team, a recreation department, or in a community program (for example, the YMCA or Little League). "Organized sport" DOES NOT include informal pick up sports or sports played as part of a school PE class.*

Yes (1)

No (2)

Did your child of middle school age play organized sport for at least one season before entering 6th grade?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Was your child still participating in at least one organized sport (or planning to participate in a sport currently not in season) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes (1)

No (2)

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about why your child no longer participates in organized sports?

	Very much disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Very much agree (5)
My child lost interest in playing sports. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child was injured playing sport. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feared my child being injured playing sport. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child had a bad experience playing sports. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The sport cost too much to play. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The sport isn't offered close to where we live. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are no opportunities for his/her age group in the sport. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

He/she didn't
get picked for
the team. (8)

The sport
took up too
much time
(practice,
games, travel
time, etc.) (9)

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about why your child no longer participates in organized sports?

	Very much disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Very much agree (5)
I find myself critiquing my child's performance to other peers. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find myself relying on social cues from other parents (i.e. cheering) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find myself comparing my child's sports skills to those of their teammates. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find myself becoming concerned about my own behavior/image as it relates to my child's sport involvement. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find myself comparing myself with other parents. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find myself considering my child's future in sport. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Very much disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Very much agree (5)
The places available for my child to play sports are poor quality. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid of my child getting hurt playing sports (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing sports makes my child feel tired. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not want to interrupt my daily schedule for my child to play sports. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is too busy with schoolwork to play sports. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is too busy with friends to play sports. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is not confident enough to play sports. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The times sports programs are offered do not fit in with my life. (8)

I do not know where my child can learn to play sports. (9)

I do not know who could teach my child to play sports. (10)

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your child?

	Very much disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Very much agree (5)
My child is good at sports. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is better at sports than other children their age. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child does well at trying new sports. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child would rather watch sports (or play sports on video games) than actually play sports. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is skilled enough to be on a sports team. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is in good enough shape to play sports. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Very much disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Very much agree (5)
It is important that children play sports. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important parents interact with the coach/coaches. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important parents interact with other parents of children playing on the team/club. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important for parents to attend their children's games. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children often play sports that the parents like. (i.e. a parent likes soccer, therefore their child plays soccer.) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important that sports teach life lessons. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

It is important for younger siblings to attend children's sporting events. (7)

Family routines often revolve around children's sport(s). (8)

Is English the primary language spoken in your household?

Yes (1)

No (2)

When it comes to choices about your child's extracurricular activities, which of the following best describes you?

I am the sole decision maker. (1)

I share decision making with someone else in our household. (2)

Someone else in our household is the sole decision maker. (3)

What is your highest level of education?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Some college (3)
- Associate's Degree (4)
- Bachelor's Degree (5)
- Post-college/Graduate Degree (6)

Which of the following best describes you?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native (1)
- Asian (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin (4)
- Middle Eastern or Northern African (5)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (6)
- White (7)
- Other (8) _____
- Prefer not to say (9)

With which gender do *you* identify?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Identify another way (3)

Prefer not to say (4)

With which gender does your *child* identify?

Male (1)

Female (2)

Identify another way (3)

Prefer not to say (4)

How many children are currently living in your household?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

5 or more (5)

How many parents/guardians live in your household?

- I am a single parent. (1)
- I have a partner also living in the household. (2)
- I have a partner also living in the household as well as other adults. (3)

What is your annual household income?

- Less than \$10,000 (1)
- \$10,000 - \$25,999 (2)
- \$26,000 - \$49,999 (3)
- \$50,000 - \$75,999 (4)
- \$76,000 - \$99,999 (8)
- More than \$100,000 (11)
- Prefer not to say (15)