

‘The effects of parenting on psycho-social development in elite youth academy footballers.’

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Independent Study submitted as part requirement for the B.Sc (Hons) degree in Physical Education & Sports Coaching Science at the University of Worcester.

May 2011

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Abstract

I investigated the effects of parenting on psycho-social factors in elite youth academy footballers by questioning players and parents through a questionnaire using a Likert 1-5 bipolar scale. I hoped to: understand the positive and negative effects of sports parents on their elite athlete children, understand aspiring athlete's psycho-social factors and how they are affected by various parental behaviours, and finally discover whether parents understand their child's emotions and psycho-social development. Findings shown that: 37.5% of athletes perceived their parent's expectations of them to be higher than their own; 50% of athletes stated their parents play more of a coaching role than a parenting role; 25% of players agreed their parents offer more criticism than encouragement; 93.75% of parents admitted to speaking with their child regarding performance before training or competition; 62.5% of athletes admitted having a fear of failure; 31.25% agreed or strongly agreed that playing football at an elite level is emotionally stressful, however only 6.25% of parents thought their child found elite sport emotionally stressful; 62.5% of parents stated their sons football career gives them 'roller coaster' emotions; and 37.5% responded uncertain (25%) or disagree (12.5%) when asked if their parents positively affect their overall performance. My research hypothesis was accurate that 15-25% of players will highlight various negative parenting behaviours and experiences and 10-20% of parents will admit to implementing negative sports parenting methods. I concluded by stating that professional club's must educate parents on positive ways to parent and closely monitor the parent-athlete relationship to prevent negative parent methods occurring and help young athletes reach their full potential.

Introduction

The Football Association have outlined four key areas of development within the producing of elite youth football players; Technical, Physical, Psychological and Social (Simmons, 2010). Parents remain the most important social influence in the development of their children (Brewer, 2009). This suggests that parents of young football players have an essential role in the psychological and social development of their child. It is argued that the role of a football parent is arguably the most important in the game (Howie, 2004). Due to the psychological and social demands of performing at a professional level, it is vital that young aspiring elite footballers are developed correctly by their supporting network of parents, coaches and mentors (Kidman, 2010). Tenenbaum & Hackfort (2006) said that parents can

have a positive and negative effect on their children within sport. For example negative performance evaluations from parents have a major role in the development of competitive trait anxiety (Passer et. al, 1984 as cited in Murphy, 1995). Furthermore, Burton (1988) as cited in Papastergiou et. al (2010) proved that anxiety has a negative linear relationship with performance.

Youth football academies take various precautions and have systematic procedures in place to minimise the negative effects of parenting on their players; for example, parental codes of conduct, club policies and parental spectating areas. Although many of the precautions in place reduce negative parenting behaviours, players are still exploited by parents before or after training/competition and at home. Fish (2003) states that watching your child play sports, especially when the environment is competitive, can be nerve-racking and emotionally draining for moms and dads. However, the higher level of the player one coaches, the more demanding the parents (Lauer et. al, 1995). This suggests that elite young footballers who need a positive support network, possibly have the most emotionally unstable and demanding parents. This highlights an important issue within the development of players in elite football, therefore this study is significant and required to widen knowledge and improve current procedures.

On completion of this study I hope to: understand the positive and negative effects of sports parents on their elite athlete children, understand aspiring athlete's psycho-social factors and how they are affected by various parental behaviours, actions or support systems and finally discover whether parents understand their child's emotions and psycho-social development throughout their demanding sporting careers. My research hypothesis is that 15-25% of players will highlight various negative parenting behaviours and experiences within their sporting career to date. I also believe that 10-20% of parents will admit to implementing negative sports parenting methods as well as experiencing various negative emotions as a result of their child's sporting career. I also predict that many of the athlete's responses will not correspond with the parents responses, which may suggest poor communication between parents and athletes. The purpose of this study is to: investigate how many aspiring elite football players experience negative parenting methods; discover what affect this has on their performance; and also highlight variance of findings from the athletes and parents as this may be due to a lack of communication and understanding, or possibly a negative sports parent in denial.

Literature Review

Psychological and sociological player characteristics in addition to environmental and cultural considerations ought to be more readily recognised within the development and nurture of elite young soccer players. Personality (i.e. self-confidence, anxiety control, motivation, and attitude) has been identified as one of the most important yet complex components of the talent map (Stratton et. al, 2004). Interestingly, Cale (2004) states that one of the most influential sources of a child's psychological and sociological development is his or her parents.

In recent years the introduction of elite football academies have largely increased opportunities for talented young footballers, however this has resulted in parents making vast commitments to their child's sporting careers from an early age. Some theorists are against sports specialization for young children due to high emotional investment and other factors. For example the American Pediatric Association (2000) came out against sports specialization for young children because of the stress, overtraining, and burnout associated with playing one sport intensively. However, in order to achieve elite levels of sport performance, some researchers have estimated that athletes must accumulate ten thousand hours of "deliberate practice" over at least a ten-year period (Brewer, 2009). This type of environment creates high performance expectations from coaches, parents, and the athletes themselves (Farrow & Baker, 2008). They continue to say it is crucial that coaches of young athletes are sensitive to the psycho-social costs and health risks of high amounts of deliberate practice in childhood and implement appropriate support systems to minimize these costs. Lewis (2007) supports this stating that young player's mental tool kits must also be built up in their formative years if their decision making and ability to sustain the psychological demands of the professional game are to be secured. As a result of this a talented young player requires a supportive network of influence (i.e. parent, coach, teacher, Academy Director) to enable his/her potential to be realised (Stratton et. al, 2004); as parental pressure to achieve can be detrimental to some children, who respond more to a nurturing, indirect approach (Henry, 1996). This therefore highlights the importance of a sports parent's role in the development of their young child-athlete.

The following traits would be common among elite athletes: extreme self-confidence, low performance anxiety, and high motivation (Ivancevic et. al, 2011). Interestingly Hackfort & Tenenbaum (2006) stated that parents are the most important and influential agents during

childhood, and thus play a substantial role in structuring the motivational and volitional personality factors of their children. Many parents are equal to the challenge and give their children skills that help them cope with the problems they face (Murphy, 1999). On the other hand parents sometimes support their children in negative ways, including setting unrealistically high standards, expecting winning, criticizing performance, and comparing them with other children (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Many of the problems caused by adult-organised youth sport programs include; emotional abuse of children; increased risk of serious injury; exploitation of children; an increase in eating disorders among young athletes; burnout; family conflict; mistrust and miscommunication in families, schools, and communities; and much unhappiness for many young athletes (Murphy, 1999).

So what is best for an aspiring athlete; demanding or supportive parents? Gould, Dieffenbach, and Moffett (2002) completed a study as cited in Jowett et. al (2007) whereby they interviewed 10 Olympic champions and 10 significant others (including parents and siblings). They found that the development of psychological talent in these athletes was influenced by family dynamics. The influence of family dynamics included keeping success in perspective, objectively evaluating performance, having an overall understanding of the sport, intentionally teaching psychological techniques and characteristics, modelling and using motivational techniques. Moreover, the family also emphasized expectations and standards, hard work and discipline, the importance of following through, and the attitude that hard work pays off. At the same time, the family did not place undue pressure on the athlete but provided instead unconditional support and love. According to Elias (2005) if kids have critical parents who demand stellar performance every day; that approach can create nail-biting perfectionists who fear taking risks and fall short of their potential. In contrast, psychological control by parents of children has positive effects on academic success (Chung Wha, 1999 as cited in Urden & Uredi, 2008); however, it is arguable if this is transferrable to success in sport. He continues to state this is only possible if parents are reliable and flexible in their attitudes towards their children otherwise this can cause self-esteem to diminish and produce anxiety. Another study conducted by Kesend and Murphy (1999) with Olympic athletes and found that the emotional support factor was very important to elite athletes. They found that parents were a major source of encouragement to them in their persistent efforts to achieve success, however they also found that parents who were critical of their child's efforts, who reacted negatively to continued sporting participation, and who expressed doubts about the potential for success were seen as an obstacle by the elite athletes interviewed.

Parents can influence children's perceptions of their ability and sport involvement through their own beliefs and values (Fredericks & Eccles, 2004 as cited in Jowett et. al, 2007). Cale (2004) supports this stating it is primarily in the home that a child's beliefs, values, perceptions, attitudes and goals are shaped, continuing to say parents play a critical role in their child's motivational development. Furthermore, children's motivation for sport is affected by self-perceptions of their abilities in relation to the perceived difficulty of sport tasks (Brewer, 2009). This would suggest that ineffective parenting can negatively affect a child's motivation towards sport tasks which may lead to burnout. F.A. statistics show that 70% of young people are not playing football by the age of 21 and reasons include; lack of parental support; competitiveness; too much pressure and shattered dreams (Howie, 2004). In order for young players to reach 10,000 hours of deliberate practice without reaching burnout, self-motivation and a supportive network of parents and coaches is essential. Only an athlete who plays with an inner desire to keep improving, to keep pushing on, will have the emotional resources to handle the inevitable setbacks along the way (Murphy, 1999). On the other hand Rosemond (1990) argues that in order to equip a child with the skills he will need to pursue happiness on his own, the skills he will need to achieve success in life, parents must be courageous enough to make that child occasionally and temporarily unhappy. An example could be forcing the child to participate or complete extra-training. However, it is argued that if you try to force a kid to continue playing a sport, you may be setting up a power struggle that can shut down communication with your child and disrupt your entire family (Fish, 2003). Good communication helps both parents and children successfully negotiate the obstacles that can block development (Murphy, 1999).

A supporting and positive home environment provides an excellent launch pad for a child's involvement and enjoyment of the game (Howie, 2004). Interestingly, pressure from parents generally affects athletes' enjoyment and anxiety levels (Brustad, 1993, 1996, Weiss, Weise, & Klint, 1989) as cited in Schinke & Hanrahan (2009). There is a concern that excessive parental pressure may result in anxiety and parent-child conflict, which will subsequently result in burnout and eventual withdrawal from the competitive environment (Grolnick, 2003). Many authors believe pressure can affect and also increase stress levels in child athletes. Fish (2003) stated that when children do not know how to manage their stressful feelings, the stress can build up to a point where their ability to perform is impaired. He continues by saying some kids handle stress of competition better than others. A lot of it has to do with your child's athletic ability, self-esteem and confidence levels at the time (Fish,

2003). Coaches and parents play a significant role in developing the self-confidence of the player (Cale, 2004). Fish (2003) says that the mental anxiety connected to the fear of failure makes young athletes freeze up or try too hard. Through training a reduction of fear of failure and an increase in the hope for success can be obtained (Klein, 1980 and Wessling-Lunermann, 1985). This would suggest that parents play a huge role in developing confidence, reducing anxiety and also fear of failure in their children and these are undoubtedly three major factors effecting performance. Donald et. al (1995) supported this stating anxiety may have a major effect on efficiency of performance.

What proportion of sports parents are authoritarian and demanding? A study by Holt and Black (2007) investigated this by undertaking interviews and observations with parents of a U-14 female soccer team. Nine parents were coded as having an authoritative parenting style, which involved being demanding yet responsive, imposing, and monitoring clear standard's for their children's conduct, and being assertive but not intrusive. Four families were more authoritarian, which involved being demanding and directive but not responsive and expecting orders to be obeyed. One set of parents were more permissive, which involved being non-directive, lenient, and allowing their child considerable self-regulation. If these results represent the proportion of authoritarian sports parents across all sports teams, this would be considered a concerning stat in relation to the literature on sports parenting as many theorists suggest this type of parenting can have a detrimental effect on a child's psycho-social development. Hellstedt (1990) as cited in Grolnick (2003) examined the amount of pressure exerted by parents on children aged 13 and under who were involved in competitive ski racing. He found that a number of athletes (26%) felt their parents "forced" them to compete. It is interesting that (50%) of the children felt very pleased with their parents' attitudes, whereas the rest felt either neutral (26%) or unhappy (24%). This highlights the proportion of athletes who perceive their parents behaviours and attitudes in an either a positive or negative way, however this is arguably not transferrable to elite level youth football.

Studies such as Babkes & Weiss (1999) investigated children's and parent's perceptions of each party's affective reactions to performance and feedback. Results indicated that children's perceptions of the degree to which their parents provided such positive and contingent feedback was positively and significantly associated with children's perceptions of their soccer competence, their enjoyment of soccer, and their level of intrinsic motivation. This suggests that the more positive feedback a child receives from his parents, the greater

the perception of their soccer competence as well as enjoyment and intrinsic motivation. Interestingly, Grolnick (2003), drawing on propositions associated with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), suggested that children from autonomy-supportive families are more self-determined and intrinsically motivated than children from controlling families. In another study conducted by McCann (2005), he found that athletes, who perceived positive and instructional feedback from their parent, indicated they had heightened levels of self-perceptions as well as enjoyment and a desire to continue sport participation. For these athletes, a positive relationship developed with their parent that is maintained today. One athlete indicated that the experience was negative and feedback was perceived as pressuring and controlling, which resulted in lowered self-perceptions as well as enjoyment and a desire to continue in the sport. The child currently views the relationship as one-dimensional, existing through common sport interests only. This suggests that negative sports parenting can have an effect on life-time family relationships as well as the child's sporting development. McCann (2005) continues to state that the amount of praise should always exceed the amount of constructive criticism. Contrastingly, Burton and Raedeke (2008) stated that some researchers (Allen and How, 1998) have found that athletes who received the most praise and encouragement had lower confidence than those who received less praise but more corrective instruction. This could be due to parents or coaches offering praise when a player has not earned the positive feedback or offering constant positive feedback in a patronising way, in which the athlete perceives the parent or coach to be protecting his self-esteem and confidence within a sport. However, theorists suggest a 'praise sandwich' as an alternative whereby you can make a constructive point but in a subtle and positive way (Ripken & Wolff, 2003). A 'praise sandwich' gives your child two slices of positive feedback with an inner slice of constructive criticism (Ripken & Wolff, 2003). The praise sandwich theory mediates the opinions of many theorists as some believe increased praise is required. However, in contrast some authors believe a strict and more demanding approach is required to achieve results.

Parents are seen both as a source of tremendous support and as a source of great stress (Murphy, 1999). In one recent survey of junior tennis coaches, it was found that 3 out of 10 parents do things that interfere with their child's development (Weinberg et. al, 1995). Ripken (2006) stated that 'we all want only the best for our children, but when it comes to sports, you have to first understand the parameters of your child's development'. Because sport provides objective measures of success, parents invest tremendous amounts of time and

money in their child athletes (Coakley, 2006 cited in Weinberg et. al, 1995). This causes parents to become overly involved and do things that interfere with healthy development. Another factor that helps to explain emotional intensity created in parents by youth involvement in sports is the tendency to view the child's athletic success as a just reward for the parent's investment of time and energy (Murphy, 1999). These kinds of views result in parents becoming over-identified and therefore acting irresponsibly. The over identified parent mistakes his own feelings and goals for those of the child. Parents who act on their own feelings often end up helping themselves but ignoring, hurting, or frustrating the child (Murphy 1999). This can have a detrimental effect on vital areas of a young athlete's psychological state, negatively affecting areas such as self-esteem, confidence, enjoyment and motivation. Many sports parents assume that their children have the same passions, goals, and dreams that they do (Fish, 2003). Cale (2004) quoted that many problems arise because parents are unsure of the best way to help their child and so use their natural instincts, which can lead to ineffective and sometimes destructive solutions.

With the pressures sport-playing kids can face today, they truly need the help and guidance of their parents (Fish, 2003). Researchers found that parents can play a highly positive or a highly negative role in the youth sport experience (Weinberg et. al, 1995). Indeed, the positive and negative influences of parents often occur because most parents do what they think is best for their child. In many cases, these parents are not deliberately placing this pressure on their children, but rather are inadvertently saying and doing things that negatively impact upon their child's sporting experience (Brown, 1996). Langlois (2010) said it's difficult for parents to recognize that they sometimes take away from what should be a fun experience. Sports are supposed to be about fun, learning and developing a sense of 'team'. However, unintentional behaviours can often result in negative experiences for children within sport. Brown (1996) said as parents, we are sometimes responsible for these negative experiences in our pursuit of wanting what we think is best for our children.

Too often overenthusiastic parents can let their emotions about the game and their children's performance influence how they communicate and what they say to their children, the coach and the referee (Howie 2004). He continues to state that in a recent survey of 9-13 year olds, 54% felt there was too much pressure to win, 42% said coaches placed too much pressure on them, 36% said parents lessened the fun of the game. This indicates that parental involvement in youth sport isn't the problem and suggests that the issue is parental behaviours and attitudes. Tenenbaum & Eklund (2007) support this stating the degree or quantity of parental

involvement in their children's sporting activities may not be the issue as much as the quality of this parental involvement. There are many ways in which parents negatively affect their athlete children, for example regularly offering criticism, discouraging the athlete, comparing them to other athletes, encouraging a 'win at all costs' mentality and more. In contrast, Howie (2004) offers the following examples of how parents can positively support their child;

- Encourage, but don't force your child to take part.
- Understand what your child wants from football, and support this.
- Emphasize the enjoyment and fun of playing the game.
- Praise and reinforce effort and improvement.
- Be a constructive, positive and honest critic.
- Encourage your child to review their performance, and discuss ways for improvement.
- Keep winning in perspective.

Some theorists have suggested that parents roles within a child's career change or differ due to age of the child, and the different gender of parents. For example Woogler & Power (1993) stated that in both the academic and sports contexts, parents often initially assume an instructive role, which is gradually taken over by peers and/or adult experts as the child improves. Parents may continue, however, to play an active role in motivating their children's performance throughout childhood. In pre-adolescent years the parents are the primary influence, but as a child reaches adolescence the influence shifts from parent to coach (Higgenson, 1985 as cited in Murphy, 1995). Putnam (2001) says that depending on a child's age, parental participation and support are often crucial. Families can provide encouragement or discouragement either verbally or symbolically (Grolnick, 2003). This level of involvement, encouragement and discouragement can vary depending on the gender of the parent. For example Averill & Power (1995) conducted a study and findings suggest that fathers and mothers differ in the responsibility that they feel for helping the child who is experiencing difficulty in sport, and that, in some cases, fathers' attempts to help may actually undermine the child's effort and enjoyment. Another study by Wuerth et. al (2004) found that mothers see themselves primarily as a source of praise and understanding, fathers give a greater amount of directive behaviour than mothers. They also found that pressure is solely correlated with directive behaviour and that also corroborate the assumption that both parents play an important though slightly different role in an athlete's career development.

There are many reasons why parents behave erratically and irresponsibly within youth sport, and much of them are due to the high levels of stress experienced by parents when watching

their children compete. Dixon (2007) stated footie mad dads experience unrivalled levels of stress watching their child play. For example Wrigley's Extra undertaken research using heart rate monitors and skin conductance equipment to measure stress levels of football parents while watching their child compete; this shown an increases in heart rate over 20bpm and an increase in skin moisture by more than 50%. The way a mom or dad deals with their stress can have a huge effect on their kids (Redman, 2010). However, when a child-athlete is competing at an elite level and aiming to become a professional sportsman, the stress a parent experiences is likely to increase further. This theory is supported by Hawthorn (1995) who believes the families of elite athletes experience unique pressures that many other families do not. Harwood et. al (2010) conducted an investigation within youth football academies investigating parental stressors. Analysis led to four dimensions of parental stressor: academy processes and quality of communication, match-related factors, sport-family role conflict and school support and education issues. This shown that parents across the entire specialising phase identified uncertainty of their son's retention in the academy and quality of communication with staff as significant on-going stressors. It also showed unfamiliar coaching and match practices emerged as stressors for early stage parents, whereas the management of school and academy demands was most prominent for later stage parents. Their experiences suggested that the management of parents' expectations for their child in an academy and the ability for a professional club to communicate its 'developmental' and 'non-developmental' practices might be central to parental support and well-being. This highlights areas that may cause stress to the parents I hope to question during my investigation and also highlights many factors which may cause stress, and therefore result in stress being placed on the child-athlete.

An investigation into junior tennis attempted to underpin why parents behave in certain ways and during this investigation three core parenting categories emerged: (1) parents and their involvement in tennis, (2) factors influencing parental involvement and (3) parent-coach-player interaction (Lauer et. al, 1995). Category 1 refers to each child's parents being individual due to prior experiences. Lauer et. al (1995) stated that coaches talked about how the parent's goals and beliefs tie to their background, and that each parent has their own idea of how to use tennis to teach life lessons. He continues to state that a coach discussed the idea that because of these individual differences, parents treat tennis differently, and one should not assume that they are necessarily out of line (e.g., in some cultures it is normal to be boisterous and highly involved) if uncommon behaviours are exhibited. Category 2 referred

to financial factors and other factors that may influence parent's involvement within their child's sporting careers. A theme emerged in the focus groups, that a parent's financial status influences their child's tennis involvement (Lauer et. al, 1995). Specifically, one focus group discussed how less financially secure parents are less likely to change coaches, and consequently are more supportive of the coach. However it is arguable that this cannot be transferred to elite football. Finally, category 3 refers to the coach-parent-player relationship and Lauer et. al (1995) states this is vital and should involve reciprocal support, communication and understanding. Results indicated, coaches felt that parents must place trust in their child's coach and not be constantly second guessing him or her. Additionally, three focus groups reported that the parent needs to trust the coach to be a role model. If they do so, the child may feed off of that trust.

Lauer et. al (1995) also discovered that the higher level of the player one coaches, the more demanding the parents. Many authors refer to 'The Parent Trap'; for example parents experience a rush of positive emotions when their child triumphs and a deflating sense of emptiness when they lose (Murphy, 1995). This emotional process can become almost addicting. This 'parent trap' is referred to by various authors as an emotional state whereby parents lose control of their emotions and begin to act and behave autonomously which can have a detrimental effect on the child's development. When parents fall into the sports parenting trap, they want, often not consciously, the status, prestige, and bragging rights that come with having an athletically talented child (Fish, 2003). He continues to state that these parents turn up the pressure on the child.

As stated previously, researchers have found that parents can play a highly positive or a highly negative role in the youth sport experience (Weinberg et. al, 1995). This can have a positive or negative affect on many important areas therefore sports' parenting is a challenging, yet pivotal role. Parents play an essential role in the psychological development of young athletes (Lauer et. al, 2005). For instance, parental actions have been shown to positively or negatively influence enjoyment in sport, motivation, perceived competence, affect, and levels of stress. To conclude, much of the literature supports positive parenting methods as this is said to increase enjoyment, motivation, confidence and reduce anxiety. Positive parent behaviours included providing logistical, financial, social and emotional support, as well as opportunities and unconditional love (Green, 2010). Whereas Lauer et. al (2005) defined the sports' parent role as one of supporting and facilitating the child's progress through the obstacles and barriers of development. The role of a football parent is

arguably the most important in the game (Howie, 2004) and the above references to literature indicate the impact parents can have within their vital, yet specialist role.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, motivations, aspirations, culture and lifestyles (Ereaut, 2007). The methodology was undertaken from a phenomenological approach in order to examine the lived experiences of the academy footballer's players and their parents. Byrne (2001) stated that phenomenological researchers hope to gain understanding of the essential "truths" of the lived experience. Due to the aims of this investigation, stated in the introduction, I believed a phenomenological approach would be the most suitable in order to understand the essential truths of the lived experience and develop a broad understanding of the participants perspectives and experiences.

Design

This cross-sectional study was undertaken through a qualitative, phenomenological approach using a survey research design. Originally it was difficult to locate a club that would allow me to undertake this investigation and provide participants therefore I selected a survey design. I opted for this design over alternative research methods as it would be quick and simple for the players and parents to complete, giving me the opportunity to quickly and easily access the required data. Shuttleworth (2008) stated that the survey research design is often used because of the low cost and easy accessible information. However, he continues to state that you cannot accurately reflect the view of a genuine cross-section of the population as opinions, on all levels, are very fluid and can change on a daily or even hourly basis. Despite this, surveys remain a useful tool within research and I carefully planned my questionnaires to ensure an accurate replication of the sampling frames opinions. Survey questionnaire research designs have many advantages which include; accessibility, potential reduction in bias, anonymity, structured data and increased time for respondents (Gratton & Jones, 2010). In order to ensure valid data was collected it was vital that the answers recorded by players and parents were recorded anonymously. Due to these factors, I chose to implement a survey research design using questionnaires, adopting a psychometric Likert scale with a 1-5 bipolar scale.

Within this social research, there were many variables that may have affected the validity and reliability of the investigation. Independent variables included; age of participants; if the

child is the parent's first sporting child; social class or financial background; family cultures and ethnicity; ability of player and form of player. Research suggests important ethnic differences in styles of parenting and the qualities characterizing the parent-adolescent relationship, however it is arguable that this is transferrable to parenting an elite academy footballer (Crocket & Chao, 2010). Middle-class children are frequently involved in a vast array of organised extra-curricular activities such as lessons, sports, and competitions (Adler, 1998 as cited in Ambert, 2001). Arguably, this suggests that working-class families may show less support to their children's sporting aspirations, and therefore affect my findings. Dependent variables included honesty and accuracy of answers given by participants, timing of the investigation, response rates and also who completed the parent questionnaire. For example due to confidentiality, measure of variable agreement, wanting to please other parties, human error, misunderstanding of the question and not being truthful with their self, participants may arrive at an invalid conclusion, which would in turn effect the reliability of the study. Langlois (2010) stated that while we can quickly identify negative behaviour in other parents, we cannot all in turn recognize it in ourselves. This would suggest that some parents may state they have a positive effect on their child, when in reality they have a negative effect. Response rates are a dependent variable as some negative sports parents may choose not to complete the questionnaire, which may affect my findings. Those people who refuse to answer questions are unlikely to be like those who agree, particularly in relation to child maltreatment (Wilson & James, 2002). If only half the people you approach agree to answer the questions, then a high rate among them is misleading. Furthermore, although there is no simple acceptable response rate, rates lower than 80% are considered undesirable (Markowe, 1991). The timing of this cross-sectional study can be considered a dependent variable as findings would arguably differ if the investigation was conducted during an off-season period, rather than a towards a stressful end to the season. Hacker & Graesser (2009) highlighted that a reason for inadequate reliability in research is the timing of assessment.

Participants

My sampling frame consisted of 28 male youth academy footballers and one of each player's parents. The parents recruited were highlighted by their children as the 'most involved parent' in their sporting career. The sampling frame was provided by a Premiership youth football academy in England and consisted of 14 members of the under 15's and 14 members of the under 16's. Players therefore ranged from 14 to 16 years of age and were in years 10 or 11 within the education system. I completed my investigation with this group of participants

due to these years being the most significant within football and education. This is due to players striving to be offered a full-time scholarship within football as well as attempting to gain high-quality exam results. Other reasons for using this sampling frame included; older age groups would understand the research and language used; and personal interest in working with older players. Interestingly, elite youth academy footballers are in the top 2.5% of footballers in the country according to the club's Trialist Handbook.

The parents used within the sampling frame were identified by their athlete children as the 'most involved' parent within their sporting career. Although this method was arguably not reliable as it was based upon the opinions of the athletes, I felt it was important to investigate the parents who are heavily involved in supporting their child's aspirations. Also, the club requested that I do not ask both parents to complete the questionnaires as they wished for my research to be simple and conducted quickly.

Ethical Implications

Prior to this investigation beginning I followed all procedures in line with ethical considerations. Firstly I contacted the club's Academy Manager with my research proposal, criminal records bureau disclosure and safe-guarding children certificate. Once given verbal permission to use the club's players and parents as my sampling frame I then edited informed consent forms and participant information sheets to be relevant to my study. Within these documents I included adequate information about my study as well as information regarding risks, benefits and confidentiality. I clearly stated the proposed procedures and detailed how each participant's confidentiality was to be protected throughout. As my investigation may have exposed private thoughts and feelings, it was vital that I protected participant's confidentiality and informed them of the procedure I was to follow. Also due to my research being conducted with vulnerable individuals (under 16's) it was important that I received informed consent from all parties, but vitally consent from the athlete's parents was needed before involving the young athletes in my investigation. Finally, I met with the Academy Manager once more to have my research materials and ethical documents approved and to acquire written consent to use the club's players and parents as my sampling frame.

Instrumentation

For this investigation I independently developed a psychometric survey questionnaire, adopting a Likert scale with a 1-5 bipolar scale and ordinal level of measurement. Likert scales were developed by Rensis Likert in 1932 (Salopek, 2004) and are the most widely used

scale in survey research. I used this specific form of questionnaire as I wished to make responses clear and significant as I believed players and parents would not write detailed answers to open-ended questions. This theory is supported by Stanton (2005) who states that questionnaire answers are often rushed and non-committal. Another reason for adopting this method was to directly compare the child's results to their parent's results in a measurable format. I developed the questionnaires independently, while making reference to previous questionnaires of this style. At the early development stages, I worded questions to probe the answers I was looking for from both parties. However, Charlton & Brien (2008) stated that wording of the stem of the question should not favour any of the response alternatives to the question. As a result of further reading, I edited my descriptive question stems in order to vary answer probes and not favour a particular answer trend. For example I worded questions in a positive and negative way alternatively (i.e. I feel my parents have a negative effect on my psychological development, followed by, I feel my parents have a positive effect on my overall performance). Each questionnaire consists of 27 question stems that investigate level of support, feedback given, parental expectations, confidence, anxiety, motivation and more. When developing the questionnaires for adolescent players and their parents I carefully took into consideration the use of language and their subject knowledge in order to ensure validity of my findings. I incorporated a bipolar subscale of 1-5; from strongly agree to strongly disagree and this was in order to ensure valid and reliable findings. During the development of the subscale, I began with a scale of 1-4 with no 'uncertain' value; however I adapted this to increase significance and precision of the results. For example my questionnaire included the following; my parent's offer more criticism than encouragement – strongly agree (1), agree (2), uncertain (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5). Considering reliability and validity, the best number of options for Likert scale is between 4 and 7 (Jamieson, 2004). She continued to say that it's important to note that a larger number of options will permit the respondents to more clearly express their point of view.

When developing the survey research questionnaire I carefully took into consideration structure, wording of questions and also how I would analyse the data once it was collected. I chose to adopt a constant structure throughout, including 27 basic descriptive questionnaire stems and five possible answers as previously stated. I was wary of including emotionally distressing questions or questions which may probe particular answers; therefore I ensured this did not happen. For example, Carol (2006) stated that you should avoid questions which will cause annoyance, frustration, offence, embarrassment or sadness. She continued to say

that you should never make someone feel uncomfortable, for whatever reason, as a result of filling in your questionnaire. Prior to reading this article I had planned to ask questions regarding blackmail and parents forcing their child-athlete to compete, however I chose to adapt the questions. For instance I reworded the question to 'My parents have expectations of me which must be met in order for them to fully support my football aspirations'. Some issues may be very sensitive and you might be better asking an indirect question rather than a direct question (Carol, 2006). In order to ensure the participants psychological well-being as well as their willingness to participate, I carefully took this into consideration and worded questions indirectly. Finally, I did not develop a summated scale or scoring system within this questionnaire. Alternatively, I chose to report my findings in export format through tables, bar charts and pie charts rather than a Mann-Whitney U test in a data format (SPSS).

Procedure

Firstly, I began the procedure process by independently developing my survey research questionnaire before meeting with the Academy Manager of the Premiership Youth Football Academy to seek approval of my research design and my research materials, i.e. consent forms and questionnaires. After a brief meeting I was then given approval to begin my research. Due to a shortage of time and resources, I did not complete a pilot study which was to my disadvantage as a pilot study may have indicated more necessary changes and improvements to my investigation.

Before beginning my investigation the club supplied me with a list of the players' names to be used in the forthcoming sampling frame. I numbered each player and allocated them numbered questionnaires for themselves and their parents in order to compare athlete and parent findings post investigation. It was vital that the player name and number sheet was destroyed once all research materials were collected (before data analysis began) in order to protect participants confidentiality.

On Tuesday the 22nd of February 2011 I attended school-release training in order to brief the players and begin my independent research. I formally briefed the players of my investigation, clearly outlining aims and benefits of the experiment, precisely stating how confidentiality would be maintained as well as accurately describing the procedure. All players within the sampling frame were given an envelope including the required consent forms, participation information sheet and the parent questionnaire. Players were informed that this parent pack was to be given to who they deemed to be the 'most involved' parent in

their sporting careers for completion, and it was to be sealed and returned to the coach, by the parent within 10 days. Adopting this household drop off approach, would increase the time parents were given to complete the questionnaire, therefore allowing them to complete the research instruments when it was convenient. However, as the parents were not formally briefed by the researcher, they may not be as willing to respond (Bryne, 2001). Response rates using group-administered questionnaires can be higher than those for mail surveys, as the group is often assembled specifically for the purpose of assisting with the research and the respondents feel personally involved with the work by being handed the questionnaire by a member of the research team (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003). This therefore could be a disadvantage to my research design, as my questionnaires may have experienced increased responses in a group-administered environment.

After ten days, 16 parents had returned the parent pack including parent questionnaires, participation information sheets and informed consent forms. This response rate of 16/28 is undesirable as the 12 parents who did not respond may parent their child athlete in a negative way and this may affect the reliability of the results. The responding parents within the sampling frame were 7 mothers and 9 fathers. Parents indicated their family's home status which shown that 8 of the athlete's parents were married/together, 2 were separated, 3 were from single parent families and 2 were from single parent families with a step parent involved in their upbringing. Parents also highlighted the distance they live from the club, in order to compare this to the results of the research and this shown that distances travelled ranged from 4 to 79 miles, however the average (mean) distance travelled was 20.4 miles. This information was all relevant within this investigation as Averill & Power (1995) found that fathers and mothers differ in the responsibility that they feel for helping the child who is experiencing difficulty in sport. Also, the family's home status or distance travelled to support their child may have affected the support network provided by parents.

Due to this response rate, only 16 players could partake in the athlete questionnaire process as their parents had given them written consent. On Tuesday the 15th of March 2011 while at school-release training, athletes with parental consent were given 30 minutes to complete an informed consent form and also the athlete questionnaire through a group administered questionnaire process. An advantage of group administered questionnaires is they allow for a degree of contact and thus opportunity to correct misunderstandings and check for completeness (Nunn, 1998). However he continues to state that there might be additional problems with members of the group influencing each other and individual timing of

responses. Due to this, the u12's-u16's Academy Manager ensured that players did not confer and influence each other's responses in anyway. On completion of the research instruments, questionnaires were then compiled and matched with their parents numbered, sealed envelope. Once parent and athlete questionnaires were paired, the list of player's names and designated numbers was then destroyed to ensure protection of the participant's identities and confidentiality of data, before findings were analysed.

Data Analysis

On completion of the investigation, questionnaires including all findings were stored privately to ensure confidentiality. I intend to analyse the data using tables, pie charts and other forms of parametric data analysis in order to display and compare findings. I will highlight the average responses using the 'mode' and 'median' as I am conducting my study with interval data from a survey research design. Following this I will highlight differences between responses from the athlete and his parent. For example participant 14 agreed that his parent/s have a negative effect on his confidence, however participant 14's parent strongly disagreed that he had a negative effect on his son's confidence. The decision to analyse the data using this method was based on the independent development of the research questionnaire and the presentation of findings post-study. I specifically developed the research instruments in order to highlight both athletes and parents responses in a way which is measurable and comparable. Furthermore, I decided to adopt parametric data analysis as opposed to non-parametric tests (i.e. Mann-Whitney U test) as I intend to present my findings to the academy staff and others involved in football therefore results must be clear, understandable and useable within that environment. As a result of this data analysis method, I cannot establish the significance of my findings at alpha level using a P value which arguably puts my investigation at a disadvantage.

Results

Figure 1: A comparison between the level of support shown by parents, as perceived by parents and by players.

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
1. I offer a high level of support to my son's football aspirations (e.g. time, financially, general emotional support.)	13	3	0	0	0	1	1
	81.25%	18.75%	0%	0%	0%	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
1. My parent/s shows a high level of support to my sporting aspirations (e.g. time, financially, emotional support etc.)	13	3	0	0	0	1	1
	81.25%	18.75%	0%	0%	0%	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree

Figure 2: The effects of parental support level on parental views and behaviours towards their son's performance.

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
3. My level of support effects my views and behaviours towards my sons football career. (i.e. I give more feedback, increased pressure etc.)	0	7	1	5	3	2	3.5
	0%	43.75%	6.25%	31.25%	18.75%	Agree	Uncertain / Disagree

Figure 3: Parental expectations of players required in order for parents to fully support their child-athletes football aspirations.

QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
4. My parent/s have expectations of me which must be met in order for them to fully support my football aspirations.	2	6	2	4	2	2	2.5
	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	25%	12.5%	Agree	Agree / Uncertain

Figure 4: A comparison between parents expectations and players perceived parent expectations.

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
8. I have high expectations of my son as a footballer.	4	5	6	1	0	3	2
	25%	31.25%	37.5%	6.25%	0%	Uncertain	Agree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
21. I feel my parents have higher expectations of me as a footballer than I do of myself.	1	5	4	4	2	2	3
	6.25%	31.25%	25%	25%	12.5%	Agree	Uncertain

Figure 5: A comparison between parent and athlete's perceived behaviours of the sports parent - parenting role or coaching role?

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
5. I offer more coaching points and constructive criticism than praise and emotional support.	0	2	6	5	3	3	3.5
	0%	12.5%	37.5%	31.25%	18.75%	Uncertain	Uncertain / Disagree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
3. My parent/s play more of a parenting role than a coaching role. (e.g. regularly giving praise & encouragement, reinforcing positive actions, keeping expectations in perspective etc.)	1	5	2	8	0	4	3.5
	6.25%	31.25%	12.5%	50%	0%	Disagree	Uncertain / Disagree

Figure 6: A comparison between player and parent's responses when asked if parents conduct pre or post match/training talks regarding performance.

Q5 – I am spoken to before and/or after games and training regarding performance by my parents.

Q9. I talk to my son to prepare him for training and matches, offering tips and highlighting areas of improvement.

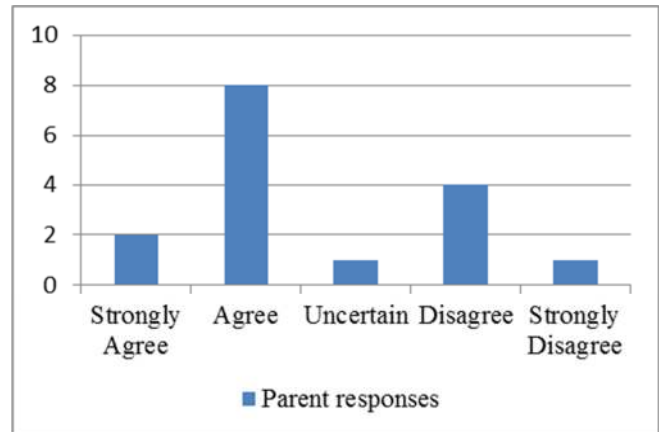
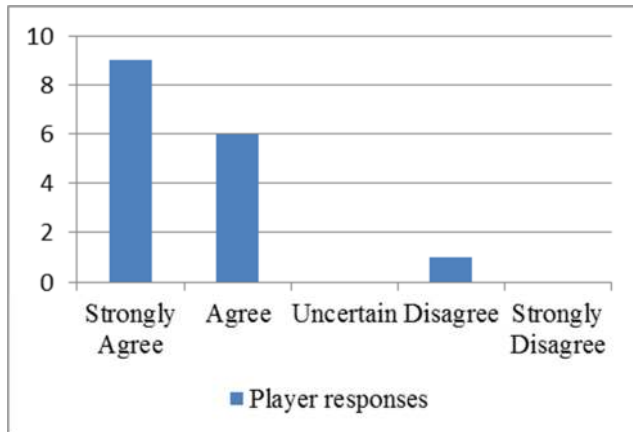


Figure 7: A comparison between parents and players views on parent feedback - encouragement vs. criticism

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
4. I offer more encouragement than criticism.	8	7	1	0	0	1	1.5
	50%	43.75%	6.25%	0%	0%	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
2. My parent/s offer more criticism than encouragement.	0	4	2	10	0	4	4
	0%	25%	12.5%	62.5%	0%	Disagree	Disagree

Figure 8: A comparison between player's confidence in their ability, parent's perception of the player's confidence and whether parent's affect the player's confidence

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
17. I believe I my son is highly confidence in his ability .	3	8	4	1	0	2	2
	18.75%	50%	25%	6.25%	0%	Agree	Agree
18. I believe I have a positive effect on my son's confidence in his ability .	2	10	4	0	0	2	2
	12.5%	62.5%	25%	0%	0%	Agree	Agree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
7. I am highly confident in my ability when training and competing.	4	8	2	2	0	2	2
	25%	50%	12.5%	12.5%	0%	Agree	Agree
8. I feel my parent/s have a negative effect on my overall confidence.	0	1	1	9	5	4	4
	0%	6.25%	6.25%	56.25%	31.25%	Disagree	Disagree

Figure 9: A comparison between player's fear of failure in their football career and worrying about making mistakes and performing badly.

QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
16. I have a fear of failure in my football career.	0	10	3	2	1	2	2
	0%	62.5%	18.75%	12.5%	6.25%	Agree	Agree
17. When playing I do not worry about making mistakes and performing badly.	0	6	1	8	1	4	4
	0%	37.5%	6.25%	50%	6.25%	Disagree	Disagree

Figure 10: A comparison between how parent's feel when spectating and feedback given, in relation to the quality of the player's performance.

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
14. When my son is playing well I feel relaxed and happy when spectating.	2	11	1	2	0	2	2
	12.5%	68.75%	6.25%	12.5%	0%	Agree	Agree
15. When my son is playing badly I feel nervous, edgy and stressed when spectating.	0	5	7	3	1	3	3
	0%	31.25%	43.75%	18.75%	6.25%	Uncertain	Uncertain
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
14. If I am performing badly my parent/s offer more criticism of my performance.	2	6	4	4	0	2	2.5
	12.5%	37.5%	25%	25%	0%	Agree	Agree / Uncertain
15. If I am performing well my parents do not put pressure on me to perform.	3	9	2	2	0	2	2
	18.75%	56.25%	12.5%	12.5%	0%	Agree	Agree

Figure 11: A comparison between player emotional stress levels and parents perceptions of player emotional stress levels.

Q19 – My son finds the pressure of performing at an elite level emotionally stressful. (i.e. confidence, enjoyment, motivation, anxiety, relationships).

Q10 – I find the pressure of playing football at an elite level and working towards professional football emotionally stressful.

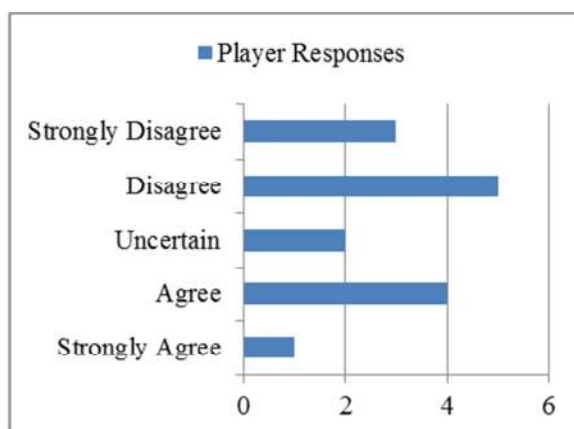
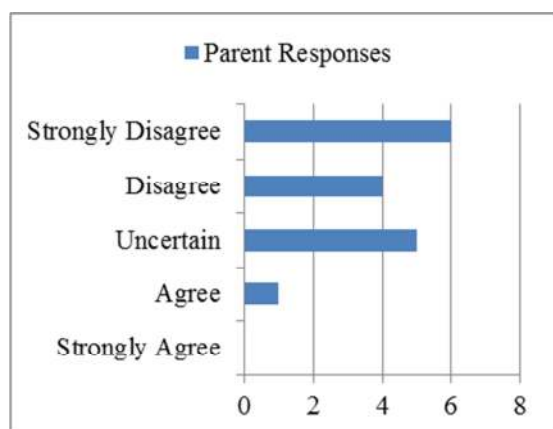


Figure 12: A comparison between parent's emotions throughout their son's successes and failures and the direct affect this has on their views or behaviours.

QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
13. My son's sporting career gives me 'roller coaster' emotions throughout successes and failures.	2	8	3	2	1	2	2
	12.5%	50%	18.75%	12.5%	6.25%	Agree	Agree
16. I allow emotions effected by my son's football career successes of failures to directly affect my views or behaviours.	0	0	3	8	5	4	4
	0%	0%	18.75%	50%	31.25%	Disagree	Disagree

Figure 13: A comparison between parent's and player's views on parental influence on goal orientation; are plavers encouraged to be better than their team mates or focus solely on individual improvement?

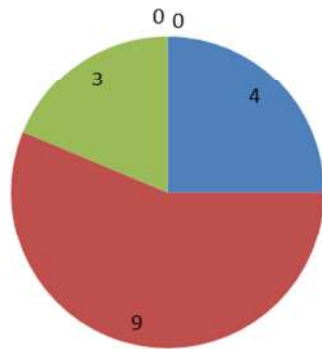
QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
23. I encourage my son to be better than his team mates rather than concentrate solely on personal improvement.	0	2	4	4	6	5	4
	0%	12.5%	25%	25%	37.5%	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
22. My parents encourage me to be better than my team mates.	6	5	0	4	1	1	2
	37.5%	31.25%	0%	25%	6.25%	Strongly Agree	Agree

Figure 14: A comparison between player and parent perceptions of the parents listening and approachability with regards to athlete-parent communication.

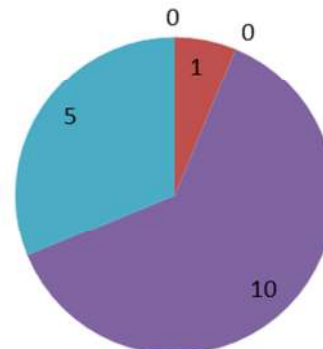
QUESTION TO PARENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
7. I listen to my son's thoughts and feelings regarding his football career and take this on board.	11	5	0	0	0	1	1
	68.75%	31.25%	0%	0%	0%	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
QUESTION TO PLAYERS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MODE	MEDIAN
24. I feel I can approach my parent/s about my thoughts and feelings and they will listen.	6	7	3	0	0	2	2
	37.5%	43.75%	18.75%	0%	0%	Agree	Agree

Figure 15: A comparison between player and parent perceptions of parent effect on enjoyment.

Parent Q25. I believe I have a positive effect on my son's enjoyment of football.



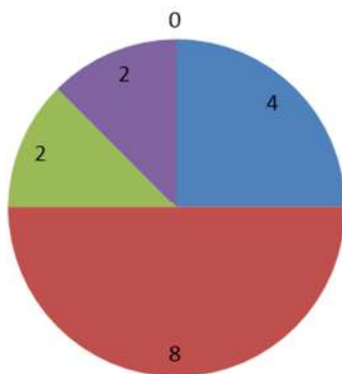
Player Q25. My parent/s negatively affect my enjoyment of the game.



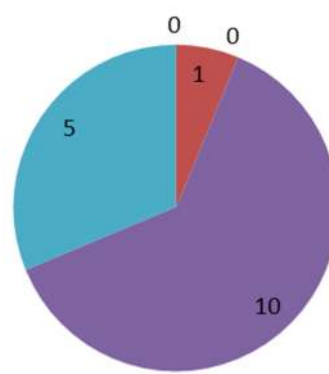
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Uncertain ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 16: A comparison between player and parent perceptions of parent effect on athlete motivation.

Parent Q26. I feel I have a positive effect on my son's motivation to participate in football.



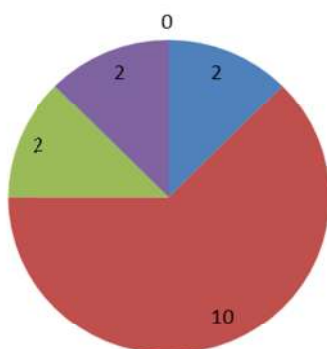
Player Q26. My parent/s have a negative effect on my motivation to participate in elite football by pressurizing me and causing stress/anxiety.



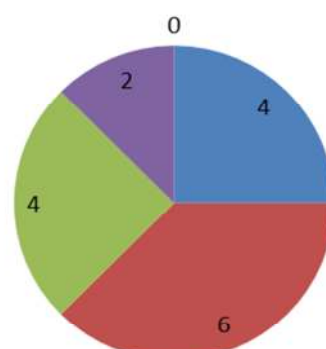
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Uncertain ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 17: A comparison between player and parent perceptions of parent effect on overall performance.

Parent Q27. I feel I have a positive effect on my son's overall performance in training and competition.



Player Q27. I feel my parent/s have a positive effect on my overall performance in training and competition.



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Uncertain ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Discussion

As sport provides objective measures of success, parents invest tremendous amounts of time and money in their child athletes (Coakley, 2006). Figure 1 indicates that parents within the sampling frame strongly agree (81.25%) or agree (18.75%) they offer a high level of support to their son's football aspirations. With players training and competing 4-6 times per week and the average (mean) travelling distance being 20.4 miles, this is evident. Interestingly, Figure 1 also shows that players recognise the high level of support offered by their parents. Player 13's parent travels 79 miles, 4-6 times per week to support her son's dreams; I'd argue that this level of support is likely to inadvertently affect parental views or behaviours in some way. Murphy (1999) supports this stating that investing large amounts of money and time into their child athletes can cause parents to become overly involved and do things that interfere with healthy development. Figure 2 shows that 7 parents (43.75%) agreed that their level of support affects their views or behaviours towards their son's football career. Parent 6 agreed and his son, player 6, also agreed that his parent has a negative effect on his psychological development. This indicates offering a high level of support to a child athlete can become detrimental to the child's development if parental emotions are incorrectly managed. Although support level may largely impact parental views, it is vital that parents control their emotions and act thoughtfully with the child's best interests in mind. Parents who act on their own feelings often end up helping themselves but ignoring, hurting, or frustrating the child (Murphy 1999). This parental attitude could result in setting unrealistically high standards, criticising performance and comparing them with other children (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009) which are proven to be detrimental to development and performance.

Elite academy youngsters are put through intense training in a demanding setting and this type of environment creates high performance expectations from coaches, parents, and the athletes themselves (Farrow & Baker, 2008). Figure 4 shows that 5 parents agreed (31.25%) and 4 strongly agreed (25%) they have high expectations of their son as a footballer. This is arguably understandable as players are signed by a Premiership club, however it is crucial parent's expectations are realistic and in line with the child's motivations. Figure 4 also shows that 1 player strongly agreed (6.25%) and 5 agreed (31.25%) that their parents had higher expectations of them, than they do of themselves. This is an issue as it may be due to low player confidence, questionable athlete motivation or unrealistic parent expectations; all of which negatively impact on performance and development. Also, figure 3 shows that 8

players agreed (37.5%) or strongly agreed (12.5%) their parents have expectations of them which must be met in order for them to fully support their career aspirations. These expectations could be harmless such as expecting hard work; however some parents may implement more harmful expectations such as extra-training which could lead to overuse injuries, burnout and family disagreements. Harwood et. al (2010) highlighted parents expectations as a potential barrier to development and suggested that the management of parents' expectations for their child might be central to parental support and well-being. It's fair to say that parents are currently not adequately educated by professional clubs into the positive and negative effects of sports parenting, resulting in issues such as this arising. Over 1/3 of players admitting their parents have higher expectations of them, than they do of themselves is an alarming statistic and it could be argued that a proportion of this 37.5% are parents with unrealistic expectations and who negatively affect their child's development. Unrealistic expectations can result in a perception of inability to cope and create an expectancy for failure (Klein, 2008). Debatably parent's expectations are influenced by possible future prospects when their child is recognised by a professional club as a potential star of the future, therefore effective child-parent-coach communication is pivotal.

Figure 5 indicates that only 2 parents (12.5%) agreed they offer more coaching points and constructive criticism than praise and emotional support. Contrastingly, when asked if their parents play more of a parenting role than a coaching role, 8 players (50%) disagreed. Half of the young players stating their parents play more of a coaching role than a parenting role is an issue as parental involvement may interfere with the coach's procedures and have an impact on player development and performance. Secondly, these findings highlight the matter of parent response reliability and indicate that parents may not have been completely honest with themselves when completing the research materials. Lauer et. al (2005) defined the sports' parent role as one of supporting and facilitating the child's progress through the obstacles and barriers of development. In order for parents to effectively support their child, encouragement, praise and emotional support must outweigh criticism and parent coaching. However, figure 7 shows 4 players (25%) agreed that their parents offer more criticism than encouragement, as I anticipated within my study hypothesis, stating 25% of players would highlight parents implementing negative behaviours. Current theory suggests this type of feedback can be detrimental to player development. McCann (2005) supports this stating the amount of praise should always exceed the amount of constructive criticism. When asked if they offered more encouragement than criticism 15 parents responded strongly agree (8) or

agree (7). Once again this highlights the possibility of parents being dishonest with themselves, but more importantly the fact some parents have different perceptions of their feedback than their children. This therefore suggests that a number of parents do not recognise the type of feedback they give and how it is received by the athlete. In order to overcome issues of this sort which may create barriers to development, good communication between parents and players is essential. Players 6 and 16 both agreed their parents offer more criticism than encouragement; interestingly, they both also agreed to feeling pressurized by parents to perform and agreed to having a fear of failure. This highlights a possible trend for future research, suggesting an imbalance of criticism and encouragement can lead to players feeling pressure when performing and a fear of failure.

Figure 6 indicates 15 players agreed (6) or strongly agreed (9) their parents speak to them before and/or after training and competition regarding performance. Dependent on conversation content, this could have a positive or negative influence on the athlete's psychological and social development as negative performance evaluations from parents have a major role in the development of competitive trait anxiety (Passer et. al, 1984 as cited in Murphy, 1995). Interestingly player 6 stated his parent speaks to him before and/or after training and competition regarding performance, and he also disagreed when asked if he does not worry about making mistakes when playing. This finding supports the literature, identifying negative performance evaluations from parents as an element contributing to competitive trait anxiety. Figure 6 also shows that only 10 parents agreed (8) or strongly agreed (2) that they talk to their son to prepare him for training and matches, offering tips and highlighting areas of improvement. This is a significantly lower figure than the player's response to a similar question. It is important that parents understand the future implications of the feedback they give, especially as my findings show a large percentage (93.75%) of parents speak with their child regarding performance. Elias (2005) states that if kids have critical parents who demand stellar performance every day; that approach can create nail-biting perfectionists who fear taking risks and fall short of their potential.

In figure 8, 12 players strongly agreed (4) or agreed (8) they are highly confident in their ability. Ivancevic et. al (2011) believes extreme self-confidence would be common in elite athletes, however 2 players (12.5%) responded 'uncertain' and 2 players (12.5%) responded 'disagree'. In order to meet the demands of professional football at the highest level, players must possess an increased level of self-confidence or external factors such as critical supporters could negatively impact on performance. Interestingly only 1 player (6.25%)

agreed their parent has a negative effect on their overall confidence. This is a lower figure than I previously predicted in my hypothesis therefore this is a positive finding, however it is still alarming that parents are affecting the confidence of their child-athletes and negatively impacting on their future development. Figure 8 also shows that when asked if they believe their son is highly confident in his ability, 4 parents (25%) responded uncertain and 1 parent (6.25%) responded disagree. A quarter of the sampling frame being uncertain if their son is highly confident or not is worrying as parents should be able to recognise this trait in their son if good communication is existent. Moreover, 0 parents disagreed to having a positive effect on their son's confidence. This suggests that parents may be acting autonomously and not realising the effects of their behaviours on their child as 1 player highlighted his confidence is negatively affected by his parent. When parents begin to act and behave autonomously, this can have a detrimental effect on the child's development (Fish, 2003).

10 players (62.5%) agreed to having a fear of failure in their football career; see figure 9. Ex-England manager, Sven Goran Eriksson said 'the greatest barrier to success is the fear of failure'. The FA believes we need coaches who can develop environments in which players are encouraged to be creative and expressive without the fear of failure (Simmons, 2010). However, if parents remain the most important social influence in the development of their children (Brewer, 2009), parents must also be educated and managed adequately in order to effectively create this environment and reduce fear of failure. Figure 9 also shows that 9 players (56.25%) disagreed (8) or strongly disagreed (1) they do not worry about making mistakes and performing badly. It is proved that anxiety has a negative linear relationship with performance (Burton, 1988) therefore this finding identifies an issue that is effected, and arguably caused, in some instances by parents. It is important that parents avoid negative parenting methods which can increase anxiety, such as negative performance evaluations.

Interestingly figure 10 shows a correlation between how parents feel during competition, feedback given and player performance. 13 parents agreed (11) or strongly agreed (2) they feel relaxed and happy when spectating. Also, 5 parents (31.25%) agreed to feeling nervous, stressed and edgy when their son is playing badly; 7 parents (43.75%) responded 'uncertain'. Moreover, 8 players agreed (6) or strongly agreed (2) their parents offer more criticism when they are playing badly, and 12 players agreed (9) or strongly agreed (3) their parents do not put pressure on them when they are performing well. Too often overenthusiastic parents can let their emotions about the game and their children's performance influence how they communicate and what they say to their children, the coach and the referee (Howie 2004).

Findings show performance affects parental emotions and these emotions largely impact the type and proportion of feedback given to players, resulting in future repercussions. The way a mom or dad deals with their stress can have a huge effect on their kids (Redman, 2010). Current procedures in place at football academies, such as the restriction of parental feedback during training and competition are arguably very effective; however players still identified these issues within this research which suggests feedback still occurs post-match resulting in possible negative consequences. Parents must be educated into the effects of their feedback and the importance of controlling their emotions.

Figure 11 shows 5 players agreed (4) or strongly agreed (1) they find the pressure of playing football at an elite level emotionally stressful. Contrastingly, only 1 parent (6.25%) agreed their son finds the pressures of performing at an elite level emotionally stressful. This highlights the issue that a large percentage of parents do not understand the emotional stress elite sport can have on young players and do not recognise it within their own child. The demands and pressures of elite sport can result in lives that become unbalanced or out of perspective (Brown, 2001). A number of players may find intense training schedules, pressure to perform and the effects on family and friend relationships, stressful and this could heavily impact on their emotions. Parents must communicate with their children to ensure they understand their emotions to overcome barriers to development. Parents showing empathy towards their child-athletes commitments and emotions can provide an effective support resource.

When asked if their son's football career gives them roller coaster emotions throughout successes and failures 2 parents (12.5%) responded strongly agree and 8 parents (50%) responded agree. This finding supports Murphy's (1995) quote that parents experience a rush of positive emotions when their child triumphs and a deflating sense of emptiness when they lose. However, when asked if they allow these roller coaster emotions to directly affect their views or behaviours 8 parents (50%) responded disagree and 5 parents (31.25%) responded strongly disagree. Parents may be reluctant to recognise their own negative parenting methods. On the other hand, responses given could be accurate and genuinely true, however I'd argue that parents often do not realise their emotions are negatively affecting their views or behaviours and their child. Brown (1996) stated in many cases, parents are not deliberately placing pressure on their children, but rather are inadvertently saying and doing things that negatively impact upon their child's sporting experience.

Figure 13 shows 6 players (37.5%) strongly agreed and 5 players (31.25%) agreed that their parents encourage them to be better than their team mates. Schinke & Hanrahan (2009) state that comparing your child with other children is a negative parenting method and this encourages ego goal orientation. Highly ego-involved athletes allocate mental resources to how they compare and what the consequences are, leaving little capacity to allocate to how to improve on a task and learn (Thill & Brunel, 1995) which suggests ego goal orientation has a negative effect on player development. Players must recognise that their long-term goal is to play professional football; therefore constant improvement must be the main focus to reach that standard, not short term egotistical achievements. In contrast, only 2 parents (12.5%) agreed they encourage their son to be better than his team mates; this vast difference in results could be due to differences in question stem wording or an issue with the reliability of participant responses. 4 parents (25%) responded uncertain when asked if they encourage their son to be better than his team mates, rather than solely focus on individual improvement. Interestingly, during this experiment many parents have responded ‘uncertain’ to questions which probe parents to admit negative parenting methods (e.g. figure 4 and figure 5). This could be due to parents recognising their actions and behaviours as inappropriate or ineffective, however, they may be reluctant to openly admit their parenting flaws.

Figure 14 indicates all parents agree (31.25%) or strongly agree (68.75%) that they listen to their child’s thoughts and feelings regarding his football career and take this on board. Interestingly, 81.25% of players agreed (43.75%) or strongly agreed (37.5%) they can approach their parents about thoughts and feelings and will be listened to. These findings are positive as they indicate that parent-child communication channels are open and available to overcome barriers to development. However, 3 players responded ‘uncertain’, therefore this suggests they do not have a parental support network currently in place to help them overcome problems. Good communication helps both parents and children successfully negotiate the obstacles that can block development (Murphy, 1999). Players and parents both likely experience emotional ‘roller coaster rides’ throughout the elite player development process, therefore good communication can allow both parties to understand each other’s emotions and ensure they do not negatively affect performance or development.

Figure 15 shows only 1 player (6.25%) agreed their parent has a negative effect on their enjoyment of football. A reason for this may be due to parents applying pressure to perform as pressure from parents generally affects athletes’ enjoyment and anxiety levels (Brustad,

1993, 1996, Weiss, Weise, & Klint, 1989 as cited in Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Findings support this as player 6 who agreed to parents having a negative effect on his enjoyment, also responded strongly disagree when asked if he does not feel pressure from parents to perform. Results show the impact of uneducated, autonomous parental feedback and pressure placed upon young athletes. I personally believe no adult has the right to take enjoyment and fun out of a young athletes sport experience. Intense training schedules and pressure to improve can often reduce fun and enjoyment within elite sport; future procedures could include increased focus on learning through fun activities in order for children to maintain enjoyment and motivation, reducing burnout. Figure 15 indicated that 3 parents (18.75%) were 'uncertain' whether they negatively impacted on their child's enjoyment. It's arguable that parents who communicate well with their child and aim to provide positive sports parenting would not respond 'uncertain'. A reason for these responses may be that parents implement negative parenting methods such as offering increased negative feedback and are unsure how this affects their child. Research by Babkes & Weiss (1999) suggests that the more positive feedback a child receives from his parents, the greater the perception of their soccer competence as well as enjoyment and intrinsic motivation therefore parents should aim to offer positive feedback.

High motivation should be common among elite athletes (Ivancevic et. al, 2011) however parent's methods can positively or negatively impact upon motivation. Figure 16 shows 1 player (player 6) agreed their parent has a negative effect on their motivation to participate in elite football. Parents play a critical role in their child's motivational development (Cale, 2004) therefore it is imperative parents are thoughtful when parenting their child-athlete. Howie (2004) states that the job of a football parent is to support, guide and develop a lifelong love and passion of this great sport in their child. Parents developing a love and passion for football in their children will give them the necessary intrinsic motivation to reach 10,000 hours of practice and ensure long-term participation, therefore aiding player's development and increasing chances of success. Figure 16 shows 2 parents (12.5%) disagreed they had a positive effect on their son's motivation to participate in football; 2 more parents (12.5%) replied 'uncertain'. If children are to specialize in one sport from an early age, intrinsic motivation is vital as stress and burnout are associated with playing one sport intensively (American Pediatric Association, 2000). As a result, parents must be sensitive to these effects and aim to aid the development of their child's motivation. If parents do not

understand and consider how their behaviours can negatively impact upon motivation, child-athletes can be exploited and reduced motivation is likely which may result in burnout.

Finally, figure 17 shows 37.5% of the players questioned responded uncertain (25%) or disagree (12.5%) when asked if their parents positively affected their overall performance in training and competition. This suggests that parents are implementing some of the negative parenting methods previously mentioned such as setting unrealistically high standards, expecting winning, criticizing performance, and comparing their child-athlete with other children (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Interestingly, 3 of the 4 players who answered 'uncertain' or 'disagree' also answered 'uncertain' when asked if they could approach their parents about their thoughts and feelings, and be listened to. This suggests that a lack of communication between parents and players can result in parents having a negative impact upon performance which creates an issue for possible future research. Lauer et. al (1995) states the coach-parent-player relationship is vital and should involve reciprocal support, communication and understanding. Previously I predicted 15-25% of players will highlight various negative parenting behaviours and experiences within their sporting career, therefore my hypothesis was relatively close. On the other hand, 2 parents (12.5%) responded uncertain and 2 parents (12.5%) responded disagree when asked if they have a positive effect on their son's overall performance in training and competition. A quarter of the parents questioned either negatively impacting performance or being unsure how they affect their son's performance is an alarming statistic. Elite academy football has a demanding environment whereby constant improvement and consistent high-quality performances are required if players are to be successful, therefore parents must ensure they positively impact upon their son's performance. I predicted 10%-20% of parents would admit they apply negative parenting methods and experience negative emotions as a result of their son's football career which has proved to be accurate.

Conclusion

Throughout the review of literature, many positive and negative parental behaviours have been highlighted, and several are supported by my findings. For example a lack of athlete-parent communication has been linked with negative effects on overall performance, and criticism from parents has been linked with anxiety and fear of failure. Results suggest that parents do not understand their child-athlete's demanding lives and psycho-social factors. Good communication between athlete and parent is vital to overcome obstacles but to also

help develop an understanding between both parties as findings also suggest parents do not understand the effects of their feedback and support. Parents must understand the challenging lives their children live through sport and education, and assist them with a positive support network to maximise the possibility of success in both fields. Furthermore, results also suggest many parents allow their high level of support to affect their attitudes and behaviours therefore it is pivotal parent's do not allow their personal emotions to negatively impact upon the child and this starts by recognising the barriers to their child's development. Parents must act thoughtfully with the child's best interests at heart, as they may not realise the effects of their autonomous behaviour.

To ensure young players reach their full potential, I believe parents must be educated by professional football clubs and coaches must be vigilant to recognise when negative parenting may be occurring. Current club procedures, such as banning parental feedback during competition, are arguably effective however parents must understand the implications of their attitudes, behaviours and feedback. For example, many players agreed their parents have higher expectations of them than they do of themselves and this is an issue which could arguably be avoided if parents were educated. Robinson (2009) when discussing coaches creating an environment that allows for success suggested setting realistic goals, focusing on the positives and not the negatives of performance, and understanding that the performer can only control the controllable, not the uncontrollable. These three areas are transferable to sports parenting and would arguably help develop a positive parenting environment that allows for success also.

To conclude, young elite footballers rely on their parents to maximise their opportunities and maximise their possibilities of achieving, therefore it is imperative parents are supportive but recognise the barriers to development and performance. To improve current procedures within professional club's I suggest educating parents and monitoring the athlete-parent relationship to hopefully prevent negative parenting methods effecting child-athlete's futures. I believe parents should aim to offer logistical, financial, social and emotional support as well as unconditional love as Green (2010) previously stated.

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