

**SHORT COMMUNICATION****FAMILY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HOW ATHLETES FUNCTION****Ali Aziz Dawood Al Sudani<sup>1</sup>, Kamila Budzyńska<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>University of Misan, Iraq

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E – mail: [kamilabudzynska@wp.pl](mailto:kamilabudzynska@wp.pl)**Abstract**

*This article presents an application of attachment theory in understanding the quality of sport relationships, it describes types of motivational climate and the differences between performance and mastery in the family and also shows how the beliefs of parents can influence the beliefs of a young athlete. The high quality and positive relationships between athletes and their colleagues seems to reflect the early positive bond which they had with their parents. Children with insecure attachment styles more often have low quality relationships with teammates. Other factors important in the functioning of athletes are the two main types of motivational climate: the mastery/task climate and the performance/ego climate. Both kinds of motivational climate describe which values are the most important for parents and the different influence they have on athletes. Moreover the beliefs of parents have a big impact on the involvement in sport by children, their behaviour during and after sport competitions and what they think about their motor skills and abilities. Parents who care about the sport future of their children should be educated in how important it is to build positive relationships from early childhood, how their beliefs and values create a motivational climate which can support or harm an athletes participation in sport, and how their beliefs influence the involvement in sport of their children.*

**Introduction**

For long time it is known that the family is the basic unit of society. The family's influence begins with early childhood interactions and continues through adolescence and young adulthood. Parents are still likely to have the greatest single influence on the current and future behavior of their children. In this article a short review is presented of studies

concerning the most important factors connected with family and its influence on athletes.

*Attachment and qualities of relationships in sport.* The quality of relationships in the family influences children's development in various ways. The parent-child attachment style is a construct, which is a result of the initial attachment bond with the parent and can be a sort of template for future patterns of behavior, affect and cognition in other important and close relationships. In sport athletes are more likely to build relationships with coaches and each other, based on their attachment styles with parental caregivers. In young people good early experiences enable them to develop a secure attachment style which helps to build a positive, internal perception of themselves and facilitates positive relationships in sport. Moreover the way young people build relations with other teammates or coaches reflects the bond which they share with their parents. Young people can also internalize some strategies, for example coping with stress, developed in early relationships and reproduce them in relationships with friends from their team (Jowett & Wylleman, 2006).

According to Carr & Fitzpatrick (2011) children with an insecure attachment style in their bonding with parents are more likely to be viewed as difficult-to-like by players from their team and less likely to have high-quality and positive relationships with their best colleagues in sport. The quality of relationships in sport children and adolescents can have is a big influence on the motivation for being physically active and participating in sport, and in helping individuals to cope with stress, isolation and anxiety and development of low or high self-esteem (Carr, 2012). That's one of the reasons why the attachment style between parents and children is so important in their sports career.

The quality of parental attachment bond shows that sporting relations can't be developed in isolation from familial relationships. For improving and developing the secure attachment between sporting parents and their children, recommendations can be proposed to develop in children emotional and social capabilities which will be a benefit for their relationships and participation in sport.

*Motivational climate and quality of participation in sport.* Some values are more or less important for the person concerned. Motivational climate is related to the parents' own goals, the way parents evaluate and award their children and how they structure the task. There are two main types of motivational climate: mastery/task climate and performance/ego climate. Each of them reflect different values and belief systems (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

Comparison between performance and mastery climate

performance climate	mastery climate
demonstrates superiority in comparison to others	personal bests are here the main goal
the most important is winning	the most important is improvement and learning of new, useful abilities
children feel controlled by their parents	more authority is placed in hands of children
award pupils with material rewards for demonstrating superiority and punish them	reward their children for personal progress, learning and improving of their abilities

The performance climate is created when a parent shows to his/her child that the goal is to demonstrate superiority in comparison to others and winning. The level of ability demonstrated by the child is the most important. Such thinking is seen as the race of competition. The performance climate makes children feel controlled by their parents who chose which sport the child will get involved in, for how long, in what order etc. Children or adolescents are not involved in the decision making process and usually receive more controlling and negative feedback for example “you must”, “I told you not to do that” etc. This kind of motivational climate is characteristic for parents who for example award pupils with material rewards for demonstrating superiority and punish them (verbally or physically). Performance climate is also connected with dictating the timing required for children’s development in skills and progress. The mastery climate is created when parent suggests to the child that the most important reason for participation in sport is improvement and the learning of new, useful abilities. The personal bests are here the main goal. More authority is placed in the hands of children. They can say what they want to develop/practice and what not. They also decide which kind of sport they would like to participate in. Because of this they are more likely to learn about their sport discipline and themselves. In mastery climate parents reward their children for personal progress, learning and improving of their abilities. Children or adolescents can control how much time they will spend

on development of skills. This encourages important feeling of well-being such as autonomy and competence (Lorimer & Jowett, 2014).

*Beliefs of parents and involvement in sport.* The involvement of children in sport is determined by the parents beliefs and by how children perceive their parents beliefs. In longitudinal studies of children between 8 and 11 years researchers found that the mother and fathers beliefs about the value and utility of involvement in sport by the child explain beliefs about their children's competence and skills of sports. In other studies, it was observed that the beliefs of the parents were related to motivation for running in children and the level of performance during the running. In addition, children's beliefs, on how their parents approve of aggressive behavior in sport are associated with the intention of engaging in such aggressive behavior by children.

Parents' beliefs about gender roles determine involvement in sport among children. The gender of the child seems to be the most important moderator of these relationships. Generally parents value the commitment to sport higher in a son than a daughter. They give more support to the sport activity of a son than a daughter. They also evaluate the sport competence higher in a son than a daughter. A stronger effect of gender appeared in adolescents than children of school age and when player participates in sport on competitive level.

Beliefs of parents regarding the child's competence in sports are associated with the child's beliefs about his own skills and abilities and the level of sports performance sports. Beliefs of parents regarding the competence of children and adolescents connects with beliefs of children about their abilities. Stronger effects were found in fathers beliefs than mothers beliefs. Perhaps fathers beliefs are important because sports activity is classified as an activity for men. Studies conducted in children under 12 years of age showed that in this age group mothers play a key role in the beliefs about their sport competence (Łuszczynska, 2012).

## **Conclusions**

Taking everything into account to be a good athlete is seems to be useful to have in early childhood a positive bond with parents or caregivers, to grow up in a family where there is a mastery climate and there is personal development of motor skills and abilities and to have parents who believe in your competence and support your motivation for involvement in sport.

There is no clear answer what kind of motivational climate is more important to achieve high results in sport competition. Perhaps performance climate can support winning but in the same time it can bring a lot of

negative consequences for young athletes. Negative influence is also connected mainly with insecure attachment style and beliefs of parents that their child has low sport competence and is not good enough to participate in some kind of sport for example because of gender or low abilities. Parents' beliefs don't have to be real. The problem begins when the child's thinking also reflects the negative thinking of his/her parents. Sport psychologists and coaches should educate parents in how important a role they play in the life of young athletes and how they can support their sport achievements.

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