

Parental perspectives on mental skill development and sport-school balance in youth athletes: A cross-cultural study

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Abstract:

This study investigated gender and cross-national differences in parental perceptions regarding the dual role of education and sport, with particular attention to the importance of developing mental skills in adolescent athletes. Research in developmental sport psychology highlights that sports participation can result in both positive and negative outcomes, and that parents act as key socialization agents shaping children's motivation, persistence, and well-being. The study is grounded in the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective and Eccles' expectancy-value model, which both emphasize the role of parental expectations and support in sustaining youth participation. Additionally, the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP) points to adolescence as a critical stage where the balance between specialization, academic demands, and broader psychosocial development becomes decisive. Given that dropout rates in youth sport remain high across Europe, this study addresses an important gap by examining how parents perceive these challenges and the need for psychological resources to foster resilience and long-term engagement. The sample comprised 570 parents (238 fathers and 332 mothers) of basketball players aged 13–18 from Greece, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, and Serbia. Data were collected online using a 13-item questionnaire that assessed (1) the perceived importance of balancing academic and sport commitments, and (2) the necessity of developing mental skills such as self-confidence, emotional regulation, and social competence. Analyses included t-tests, ANOVA, and MANOVA. Results indicated significant gender differences: mothers consistently reported a stronger need for balancing school and sport ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .71$) than fathers ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .78$), $t(568) = 4.13$, $p = .043$. Mothers also rated psychological skills as more essential compared to fathers. Cross-national differences emerged as well: Serbian parents emphasized performance improvement more than parents from Spain and Ukraine, while Ukrainian parents expressed the lowest perceived need for balancing dual commitments. These findings highlight that both gender and cultural context shape parental perceptions. Mothers appear more attuned to academic and psychosocial demands, whereas fathers prioritize performance-related aspects. Cultural variations likely reflect differences in basketball traditions, competitive expectations, and social conditions. In conclusion, this study contributes to developmental sport psychology by integrating theoretical frameworks with cross-cultural evidence on parental roles. The results underscore the importance of tailored interventions that address gender- and culture-specific needs, enabling parents to support their children in managing dual careers and acquiring psychological skills that are vital for long-term well-being, resilience, and athletic success.

Key Words: Psychological support; Positive youth development; Dual career; Parental involvement; Cross-cultural differences; Sport dropout; Basketball

Introduction

Research on the relations between different aspects of personality and success in sports is a dominant area in sports psychology. There is ongoing interest in the social-emotional development of youth participating in organized sports, as well as the factors and mechanisms that contribute to this development. Numerous studies have found that sport participation can result in both positive and negative outcomes (Reverdito et al., 2020; Merkel, 2013; Holt & Neely, 2011).

Over the past two decades, research within developmental sport psychology has led to a paradigm shift from a *deficit-reduction* approach to a *Positive Youth Development (PYD)*. This framework emphasizes fostering holistic growth and a strength-based approach of youth. At the core of this framework is exploration of youth characteristics and characteristics of sport contexts, which together can guide the design of policies and programs supporting fostering positive development (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). This paradigm focuses on developing cognitive, social, and practical skills, while providing support to help youth succeed in life. Within this perspective, parents, alongside coaches, peers, and other adults, play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining their child's involvement and development in sports programs (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). A comprehensive list of developmental outcomes was created (e.g. external assets such family support, youth programs, school boundaries, etc. and internal assets such interpersonal competence, resistance skills, personal powers, etc.) based

on empirical evidences (Benson, 2006). Engaging in organized competitive sports from a young age and remaining active during adolescence can enhance physical, psychological, and social well-being. Also supporting the development of physical, academic, self-regulatory, and life skills (Snyder et al., 2010). Athletes who remained in team sports felt they received more support from significant others including their coach, parents, and peers than those who dropped out (Back et al., 2022).

Extensive researches within the field of sport socialization have documented that parents are significant agents of sport socialization and have a key influence on shaping children's experience in sport (Knafo & Galansky 2008; D'Arripe-Longueville et al., 2006; Hellsted, 2005; Hellsted, 1987). According to empirically developed theoretical model by Eccles and collaborators (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005), is one of the frameworks most commonly applied in studies examining the significance of family factors and the mechanisms through which parents influence youth participation, behavior, motivation, goals, and achievements in sports. Within model three mechanisms of parental influence are proposed: perception of parental expectations and attitudes, interpretation of sports experiences and modeling behavior. These mechanisms collectively highlight the significant role parents play in shaping their children's sports experiences and outcomes. Until recently, the role of parents in sport from their own perspective had been overlooked. However, in recent years, researchers have shifted their focus to examining the crucial role of parents in youth sports participation from a their own standpoint (Liu et al., 2024).

Two more topics related to sport commitment are equally important for this study and should not be neglected. First, researchers have observed a concerning trend of increased dropout rates (Trbojević & Petrović, 2021). For example, a meta-analysis reveals that nearly a quarter of young people aged 10-19 years quit sports annually, a trend that has been reliably observed across multiple European countries (Møllerlækken et al., 2015; Wagnsson et al., 2013; Hellstedt, 1987). Second, the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP), that is grounded in both theoretical and empirical evidence, outlines the key processes, pathways, and outcomes shaping athletic growth from childhood through adolescence (Côté & Vierimaa, 2014). Two postulates of DMSP are important for transition from sampling to specialisation phase during sport career, which coincide with transition from childhood to adolescence. This period is a critical stage for decisions regarding sport participation. Around age 13, children should have the opportunity to either specialize in their preferred sport or continue participating at a recreational level; Around the age of 16, late adolescents have developed the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and motor skills necessary to transition into an intense period of focused, specialized training in a single sport. In summary, some young individuals move into the phase of sports specialization, while others stop participating in sports. At the same time, school pressures begin to increase. In some countries, basketball culture and motivational climate come with high expectations, creating intense pressure to achieve international success. Although many young talents emerge in basketball, not all reach the elite level for various reasons: selection of talents based on a small number of factors, lack of specific monitoring of each player individually, small number of members of national teams (Ibanez et al., 2010;), as well as early specialization (Malina, 2010), unlike some other sports, for example, artistic gymnastics (Pereira et al., 2014). It should be noted that the transition from junior to senior basketball itself, regardless of the quality of the player, is burdened by certain factors, primarily changes in demands, both in sport (high level of demands and seriousness in training, greater physical demands, and change in role and level of responsibility in the team) and in life outside of sport, social demands, demands on oneself, school, and planning that cause the greatest barriers during the transition, and other social factors (such as team cohesion) accompanied by individual factors (García-Santamaría et al., 2022; Lorenzo et al., 2009; Čačija & Stambulova, 2007).

There are researches on how young people balance academic and sports commitments, which has included student populations, but there is still a lack of available studies on balancing these dual tasks in younger age groups (Xerri & Muscat, 2025; Kristiansen, 2018). In a qualitative study author compare the characteristics of the family environments of average and highly successful athletes. It was reported that parents of highly successful athletes place a priority on sports, whereas parents of average athletes face a conflict between these two demanding achievement domains (Veskovic, 2012). More over, pressure from fans, the media, and clubs often leads to stress and anxiety about performance, but there is not enough empirical data on this and its impact on athletes, both within individual countries and in cross-cultural studies. In addition, data on the need for and availability of mental skills support services and the availability of services remain scarce.

Mental skills training has been shown to enhance performance and psychological skills in student-athletes both in the classroom and in their sport (Rose & Burton, 2024). However, limited research exists on cross-cultural studies investigating parental perceptions of the need for actively supporting development of mental skills and attributes that contribute to youth sports development outcomes and socialization. This study seeks to address this gap by identifying parental perceptions regarding the importance of applying additional resources that enhance youth development, socialization, and sustained commitment to sport participation. It should encourage parents to help children stay in sports as long as possible to be physically active, because it is noticeable that a large number of children leave sports at this age (Trbojević & Petrović, 2021). Furthermore, this study seeks to examine whether young basketball players require structured support in acquiring psychological skills that are transferable to broader life contexts, given that engagement in sport has been

demonstrated to exert beneficial effects on both mental and physical health, with consequent positive implications across diverse domains of functioning (Karakitsiou et al., 2025). The first aim of this research is to explore and compare mothers' and fathers' perceptions regarding the importance of supporting the achievement of balance between formal education and sports activities, as well as their perspectives on the need to additionally support their children's development of mental skills through sport. The second aim of this research is to explore and compare parents' perceptions from different countries regarding the importance of supporting the achievement of balance between formal education and sports activities, as well as their perspectives on the need to foster their children's development of mental skills through sport.

Methods

Participants

The sample included $N = 570$ parents, consisting of $n = 238$ fathers and $n = 332$ mothers, all of whom have children aged 13 to 18 involved in basketball. These parents are from five different countries: Greece, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, and Serbia.

Measures

The data were collected through a questionnaire specifically designed for this research. Initially, participants were asked to provide information regarding their gender and country of residence. The questionnaire consists of 13 items, organized into two sections. The first section includes items designed to assess the importance and need for additional support in balancing school and sport. The second section lists various mental skills, such as building self-confidence and emotional regulation. Respondents were asked to rate each statement based on their perceived need for applying additional resources to develop these skills, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not necessary) to 5 (very necessary). The score is calculated as the average of the responses to the items within each respective subscale, with a higher score indicating a greater level of the specific subdimension.

Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms, and participants provided their informed consent prior to completing the survey. Data were collected during September and October 2024.

Statistical analysis

Initially, descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, were computed for all variables in the study. A series of independent t-tests were conducted to compare the importance and need for balancing educational and sports commitments between mothers and fathers, with effect sizes calculated using Cohen's d . An one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine whether there is a difference between mothers' and fathers' perceptions on their children's need for support services. Next, univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were carried out to test for differences between mothers and fathers. Two independent repeated measures ANOVAs, followed by a series of paired t-tests with Cohen's d , were conducted to assess whether mothers and fathers, separately, prioritize different support services. All statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Results

Gender Differences in Parental Perceptions

The following results are related to the need to balance school and sport commitments and the need to support children and parents in achieving this balance. Descriptive statistics for parents' perceptions for the whole sample, separately for mothers and fathers, are presented in Table 1. Two-independent t-test were performed to compare importance and need for balancing educational and sport commitment between mothers and fathers. Firstly, parents evaluated the importance of balancing educational and sport commitments ($M=4.39$, $SD=.75$). Results of an independent samples t-test indicated a significant difference between the fathers and the mothers, $t_{(568)} = 4.13$, $p = .043$. Mothers ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .71$) reported a higher perceived need for balancing school and sports activities compared to fathers ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .78$). The effect size, as measured by Cohen's d , was 0.20, indicating a small difference.

Parents also assessed the need of their children to receive support in achieving a balance between school and sports commitments ($M=4.23$, $SD=.92$). Mothers ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .84$) reported a higher perceived need for balancing school and sports activities compared to fathers ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.00$). The effect size, as measured by Cohen's d , was 0.25, indicating a moderate difference.

Additionally, parents evaluated their own need for support in helping their children achieve a balance between school and sports commitments ($M=4.02$, $SD=1.04$). Mothers ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.00$) reported a higher perceived need for balancing school and sports activities compared to fathers ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.08$), but the effect size, measured by Cohen's d , was 0.09, indicating a small difference.

The subsequent group of results relates to mothers and fathers perceptions of children's need for support services in developing mental skills in the field of sports.

An one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine whether there is a difference between mothers' and fathers' perceptions on their children's need for support services aimed to develop these skills. Obtained results

indicated significant difference in scores based on parents gender $F_{(1,568)} = 8.12$, $p = 0.001$; *Wilk's lambda* = .959, $\eta^2 = 0.040$. As presented in Table 1, mothers demonstrated higher scores across all three dimensions. Further results indicated that a significant effect of parents' gender (on *Skills for performance improvement*, $F_{(1,568)} = 10.495$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.18$; on *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety*, $F_{(1,568)} = 24.418$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$; and on *Social skills* development, $F_{(1,568)} = 8.367$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .02$).

Furthermore, a two independently perform repeated measures ANOVA with series of paired t-test were conducted to examine whether mothers and fathers separately prioritize certain support services for the development of mental skills over others. Results indicated that there are significant differences in perceived priority of supporting different mental skills for mothers, $F_{(1,331)} = 12.058$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Three paired sample t-tests were used for further comparison (means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1). The first t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between *Skills for performance improvement* and *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety* $t_{(331)} = 2.451$, $p = .015$, *Cohen's d* = 0.03, but this difference is small. The second t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between *Skills for performance improvement* and *Social skills* $t_{(331)} = 7.842$, $p = .000$, *Cohen's d* = 0.40, and this difference is moderate. The third t-test indicated that there wasn't a significant difference between *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety* and *Social skills* $t_{(331)} = 1.716$, $p = .087$.

Results indicated that there are significant differences in perceived priority of supporting different mental skills for fathers, $F_{(1,127)} = 12.388$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Three paired samples t-tests were used for further comparison (means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1). The first t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between *Skills for performance improvement* and *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety* $t_{(332)} = 4.732$, $p = .000$, *Cohen's d* = 0.26, but this difference is moderate. The second t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between *Skills for performance improvement* and *Social skills* $t_{(331)} = 3.220$, $p = .001$, *Cohen's d* = 0.14, and this difference is small. The third t-test indicated that there there was a significant difference between *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety* and *Social skills* $t_{(331)} = 2.100$, $p = .037$, *Cohen's d* = 0.14, and this difference is small.

Table 1. Mothers' and fathers' perceptions of athletes' need for support services for the development of mental skills.

	Parents		Fathers		Mothers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Skills for performance improvement	4.43	.69	4.32	.76	4.51	.63
Skills for managing emotions and anxiety	4.30	.79	4.11	.87	4.43	.70
Social skills	4.30	.69	4.21	.73	4.37	.65

Cross-Cultural Differences in Parental Perceptions

For testing differences in parental perceptions of athletes' need for support services for the development of mental skills (*Skills for performance improvement*, *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety*, and *Social skills*) between parents from different countries, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was applied followed by ANOVA with series of Bonferroni post hoc tests. MANOVA revealed significant effects of country residence, $F_{(4,565)} = 4.97$, $p = .00$; *Wilk's A* = .901, indicating that there are differences between parents' perceptions from different countries.

Furthermore ANOVAs indicated that these groups differ separately on the perceived needs. Obtained results indicated that there were differences on *Skills for performance improvement* $F_{(4,565)} = 8.789$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .059$. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for parent from Serbia (Table 2) was significantly different than the score from Greece, $p = .015$, from Spain, $p = .000$, and score from Ukraine, $p = .000$ and not from Italy, $p = .135$; Also, here were differences on skills on *Social skills* $F_{(4,565)} = 6.028$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .041$. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score for parent from Serbia was significantly different than the score from Spain, $p = .004$, from Italy, $p = .002$, and score from Ukraine, $p = .001$ and not from Greece, $p = .099$. There was no significant effect of country residence on *Skills for managing emotions and anxiety* $F_{(4,565)} = 1.675$, $p = .154$, $\eta^2 = .012$. Results indicated that there are significant differences in perceived need for balancing education and sports activities, $F_{(4,565)} = 3.510$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that the mean score of Ukraine (Table 2) was significantly different than the score from Spain, $p = .041$, from Italy, $p = .010$, and score from Serbia, $p = .026$ and not from Greece, $p = .396$.

Table 2. Parents' perspectives from various countries on athletes' need for support services to develop mental skills and perceive need for balancing formal education and sports activities

	Greece		Italy		Spain		Ukraine		Serbia	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Skills for performance improvement	4.41	.58	4.66	.57	4.23	.81	4.14	.91	4.66	.57
Skills for managing emotions and anxiety	4.33	.71	4.38	.70	4.16	.90	4.13	.83	4.33	.85
Social skills	4.32	.60	4.21	.64	4.16	.86	4.13	.83	4.52	.60
Balancing formal education and sports activities	4.17	.91	4.35	.87	4.34	.95	3.89	1.06	4.30	.83

Discussion

This research contributes to the growing field of sports psychology by investigating the role of parents in supporting their children's dual commitments to education and sports. Specifically, it explores how parents perceive the need for balancing formal education and sports activities and their attitudes toward fostering mental skills in young basketball players. The findings contribute to existing literature by reinforcing the significant role that parents play in fostering their children's academic and athletic development. Given the increasing demands placed on young athletes, these findings highlight the need for structured parental support programs that address both educational and sports-related challenges.

Gender Differences in Parental Perceptions

A key finding of this study is that mothers consistently reported a higher perceive need for support in helping their children balance education and sports commitments compared to fathers. This aligns with prior research of Fredricks & Eccles (2005) indicating that mothers tend to take on a more active role in their children's day-to-day academic and extracurricular lives. The small to moderate effect sizes suggest that while both parents recognize the importance of maintaining this balance, mothers feel a greater responsibility in ensuring their children's success in both domains.

This gender difference could be influenced by various sociocultural factors. In many societies, if not in all, mothers are more likely to be involved in their children's education, while fathers may focus more on sports-related aspects (Hellstedt, 1987). Additionally, traditional gender norms may contribute to the higher emotional investment expressed by mothers in their children's well-being, leading them to perceive a stronger need for structured support services. Future research should explore whether these differences persist across different sports or change as children progress through their athletic careers.

The study also revealed significant differences between mothers and fathers in their perceptions of the importance of mental skill development. Mothers consistently rated mental skills – such as performance enhancement, emotional regulation, and social skills – as more necessary compared to fathers. These findings are in line with previous studies that suggest mothers tend to be more emotionally attuned to their children's psychological needs (Liu et al., 2024).

Interestingly, both mothers and fathers prioritized performance-related mental skills over emotional regulation and social skills. This suggests that parents view psychological training primarily as a means to enhance athletic success rather than as a holistic approach to personal and social development. This perspective may be influenced by the competitive nature in youth sports, where performance outcomes are often emphasized over well-being (Côté & Vierimaa, 2014). However, given that emotional regulation and social skills are crucial for long-term athletic and personal success, parental education initiatives should aim to broaden parent's understanding of the comprehensive benefits of mental skills training.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Parental Perceptions

The cross-country comparisons revealed notable differences in parental attitudes toward the importance of mental skills development. Parents from Serbia and Italy placed a higher emphasis on performance enhancement compared to those from Greece, Spain and Ukraine. We can speculate that these differences could be attributed to variations in national sports cultures, coaching philosophies, and expectations for young basketball players. For instance, in Italy and specially in Serbia, basketball is a highly competitive sport with strong national development programs, which may explain why parents in these countries prioritize performance improvement (Jakovljević & Mandić, 2021). On the other hand, in Greece, Spain and Ukraine, a more balanced approach that includes both competitive success and personal development may be emphasized. The absence of significant cross-cultural differences in the perceived need for emotional regulation skills suggests that psychological challenges in sports, such as anxiety and stress, are universally recognized among parents regardless of cultural background.

These findings have important implications for the design of support programs for parents. Given that different cultural contexts shape parental expectations and priorities, interventions should be tailored to address country-specific needs. For example, in highly competitive sports cultures, educational programs should emphasize the importance of emotional regulation and well-being, while in countries with a more holistic approach, additional emphasis could be placed on performance optimization.

The last but not the least important aspect of cross-cultural differences in parental perceptions is significant differences in perceived need for balancing education and sports activities. Parents from Ukraine showed the least intensity of that need. In absence of empirically based evidences which can explain these differences we can offer two different but complementary possible causes. First, Ukraine is the least successful in basketball compared to countries involved in this study. Thus, we could say that they do not put extra expectations of success to their youth basketball players. Because of that we can assume that they already have more balance between formal education and basketball activities than parents from other countries. Second, data were collected during the war days in Ukraine. The parent motivation for including their children in basketball activities is questionable. Maybe the dominant reason is not achieving the competitive success but to be include in healthy and structured activities at daily level which can support a *positive youth development (PYD)* within a war circumstances.

Implications of the study

The findings of this study underscore the need for structured interventions that equip parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to support their children's development in both sports and academics. Youth athletes often face significant pressures from multiple sources, including coaches, peers, and academic institutions, which can lead to stress and burnout if not properly managed (Kristiansen, 2018). Parental involvement, when well-informed and appropriately balanced, can mitigate these challenges and contribute to positive developmental outcomes. To address the challenges identified in this study, several key recommendations can be made:

- Given the gender differences in perceptions, workshops and seminars should be designed to educate both mothers and fathers about the importance of mental skills development. Fathers, in particular, may benefit from programs that highlight the role of emotional regulation and social skills in athletic success.
- Basketball clubs or academies and policymakers should take cultural differences into account when designing support services for parents. For example, countries with a strong emphasis on competition may need to integrate more well-being-focused interventions into their youth sports programs.
- Coaches and sports psychologists should work closely with parents to ensure that mental skills training is incorporated into youth sports programs. This would help shift the focus from purely performance-driven approaches to a more balanced development model.
- Since the transition from childhood to adolescence is a critical period in an athlete's career, interventions should be introduced at an early age and continue through key developmental stages. Providing sustained support can help young basketball players navigate the increasing demands of both school and sports.

Limitations and Future directions of the study

While this study provide important insights, it also has certain limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases related to social desirability, as parents may overestimate their level of support or prioritize certain responses based on perceived expectations. Future research should complement self-reported surveys with qualitative interviews or observational studies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of parental involvement in youth sports.

Additionally, this study focuses specifically on basketball, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sports. Different sports have unique developmental pathways and parental expectations, so future studies should explore whether similar trends exist in sports such as soccer, gymnastics, or swimming.

Furthermore, while this study highlights parental perspectives, it does not incorporate the viewpoints of young basketball players themselves. Understanding how they perceive parental support and the impact it has on their motivation, stress levels, and long-term engagement in sports would provide a more holistic picture. Longitudinal studies tracking the relationship between parental involvement and athlete success over time would be valuable in identifying best practices for sustaining youth participation in sports.

Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial role of parents in supporting young basketball players dual commitments to education and sports while emphasizing the importance of mental skills development. Gender differences indicate that mothers perceive a greater need for structured support, while cross-country variations suggest that cultural factors influence parental attitudes toward sports participation. These findings underscore the necessity for tailored parental education programs that equip families with the tools needed to foster both athletic and academic success. By integrating psychological training and emotional support into youth basketball

programs, parents, coaches, and policymakers can create an environment that promotes long-term well-being and sustainable athletic achievement.

From a *theoretical perspective*, the study contributes to developmental sport psychology by expanding the understanding of how parental perceptions shape the balance between sport and education and the cultivation of mental skills in youth athletes. It enriches existing models of parental influence (e.g., Eccles' expectancy-value model, the Developmental Model of Sport Participation, and the Positive Youth Development framework) by providing cross-cultural evidence that maternal and paternal roles, as well as national sport cultures, distinctly influence parental expectations and perceived needs. Furthermore, it extends the literature by addressing the underexplored domain of parental perspectives on mental skill development in adolescence, thereby offering a more nuanced conceptualization of the social-psychological ecology of youth sport.

From a *practical perspective*, the findings provide actionable insights for sports organizations, schools, and policymakers. The evidence highlights the importance of designing parent-focused workshops that not only emphasize performance enhancement but also raise awareness of the long-term value of emotional regulation and social skill development. Tailored interventions should reflect gender-sensitive approaches, ensuring that both fathers and mothers are equally engaged in supporting their children's academic and athletic obligations. Additionally, cultural differences point to the need for country-specific strategies: in highly competitive basketball environments, support services should place stronger emphasis on psychological well-being, whereas in contexts with lower competitive pressure, greater focus could be directed toward optimizing performance outcomes. Implementing such targeted parental support systems has the potential to reduce youth dropout rates, improve dual career management, and enhance both athletic success and personal growth.

Conflicts of interest - The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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