

A study on parents' perceptions of urban sports

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Abstract:

The pivotal role of parents in encouraging physical activity among children is widely acknowledged, particularly given the growing preference of children for sedentary behaviours. This influence is especially significant during early childhood, when habits for an active lifestyle are formed, and the parental role model can be a decisive factor in a child's decision to engage in physical exercises. Existing literature highlights various parental roles that can substantially enhance a child's athletic experience. Moreover, parental involvement in urban sports includes fundraising, sponsorship, and participation in urban sports events as athletes, spectators, or facilitators of their children's social integration (including ethnic or cultural integration). Support from parents for urban sports is contingent upon a variety of factors, including the availability and quality of sports infrastructure, environmental safety, and proximity. While these aspects are thoroughly documented in international literature, there is a notable gap in knowledge within the Romanian context, as no significant studies on this topic have been identified. The present study, conducted by our research team, investigates multiple aspects of parents' perceptions regarding their children's participation in urban sports, exploring parental views on the benefits of urban sports, the motivational factors that influence parents to encourage them, the impact of financial considerations on urban sports participation, and parents' opinions on how urban sports influence children's behaviour. Our research utilized a questionnaire-based survey involving 269 parents of middle school students within the Romanian national education system. The findings indicate that parental involvement in urban sports - through volunteering, coaching, and event participation - significantly influences their perceptions of these activities and can enhance children's sports experiences by providing opportunities for socialization and skill development. The survey also revealed that parents want their children to be physically active, recognizing its contribution to harmonious physical and mental development. They also perceive it as a means to prevent juvenile delinquency and antisocial behaviour, thereby ensuring children's safety.

Keywords: physical activity, mental health, family, safety facilities

Introduction

The results of several studies indicate that low levels of physical activity among children and the excessive use of electronic devices negatively impact their development, thus emphasizing the role of parents in encouraging their physical activity, particularly in urban green spaces (Akpınar & Cankurt, 2015; Rakha et al., 2022). The complete configuration of outdoor play and available facilities in the physical environment play a significant role in children's motor development (Sääkslahti & Niemistö, 2021). Research has shown that over 50% of preschoolers and 40% of school-age children do not engage in daily physical activities. Only 32.7% of preschoolers and 22.8% of parents adhere to physical activity guidelines. The family plays a crucial role in shaping a child's active and healthy lifestyle (Turnbull et al., 2006; Rakha et al., 2022), but it seems that parents should also engage a certain level of competency in this field (Cherepov et al., 2021). A strong association between parents and children concerning physical activities was also confirmed in 78% of the studies included in a systematic review (2001-2020) that examined children aged 6 to 12 years and their parents (Sigmundová et al., 2024). This review demonstrated that both parents and children spend the majority of their day performing sedentary activities.

Parents play a crucial role in their children's engagement in athletic activities, influencing their motivation, concerns, and expectations regarding sports (Yukiohara et al., 2025). They perceive their involvement and support as crucial to their children's involvement in physical activity, recognizing the need for balance between encouragement and pressure, which significantly influences the motivation and enjoyment that children find in sports (Hernandez Guardiola et al., 2024). Parents' perception of physical activity significantly influences children's physical literacy development across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. (Long et al., 2025)

Some studies have highlighted a particularly strong bond between parents and children aged 10 to 12. The evidence from this research emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour within the entire family (Sigmundová et al., 2024). Although the family plays a vital role in fostering a child's active and healthy lifestyle, there is a need for greater awareness of the importance of involving children in physical activities, cultivating healthy eating and sleeping habits, and promoting the judicious use of electronic devices (Rakha et al., 2022). The use of a playground is therefore a potential opportunity for children who live in urban areas so that they become engaged in sports activities at the level and time length recommended by most scientific agencies and World Health Organisation (Tortella & Fumagalli, 2021). Parental sports culture and the physical literacy of children - including parental encouragement of physical activity, parental support, time spent outdoors, and the proximity of the environment (social spaces and the number of physical activity facilities near the child's home) - have been positively associated with physical activity among children during the transition from primary to secondary education (Barrachina et al., 2023).

Parental sports culture and the 'physical literacy' of children - including parental encouragement of physical activity, parental support, time spent outdoors, and the proximity of the environment (social spaces and the number of physical activity facilities near the child's home) - have been positively associated with physical activity among children during the transition from primary to secondary education (Barrachina et al., 2023). In this regard, families play a crucial role not only as companions and motivators but also as role models, transmitting the philosophy of "movement and interaction in the neighbourhood" and an active lifestyle that promotes engagement and participation within the community. In this regard, families serve not only as companions and motivators but also as role models, transmitting the philosophy of "movement and interaction in the neighbourhood" and an active lifestyle that promotes engagement and participation within the community. For instance, parents who model an active lifestyle and provide opportunities for their children to engage in physical activities can significantly influence their children's commitment to sports (Varela Arévalo et al., 2016). Additionally, parents who cultivate a positive and encouraging home environment can instil a lifelong passion for physical activity in their children.

Engaging in sports creates opportunities for dialogue within families, enhancing communication and relationships (Doum & Al-Momani, 2024). Parents who actively participate in their children's sports can create a supportive atmosphere that promotes psychological well-being and behavioural development (Doum & Al-Momani, 2024) and serve as role models, influencing their children's attitudes toward sports and physical activity (Chung & Green, 2021).

The nature of parental interaction can significantly influence a child's engagement in physical activities. Research has demonstrated that democratic and permissive parenting styles are associated with self-determined motivations, which can enhance children's participation in sports (Vega-Díaz et al., 2023). Conversely, authoritarian and negligent parenting styles can lead to non-self-determined motivations, which may discourage children from engaging in physical activities (Vega-Díaz et al., 2023). Children who benefit from higher parental involvement exhibit greater striving for perfection and report higher levels of individual and collective sports performance (Teixeira et al., 2024). A balanced approach to parental involvement is essential for positively supporting the sports experiences of children, a principle that also applies to urban sports contexts (Bonavolonta et al., 2021).

Parental involvement can also influence the dynamics between coaches and athletes, highlighting the importance of collaboration in youth sports. The literature explores various themes concerning parental involvement in urban sports and the characteristics of successful parental involvement programs (Wallace, 2021). These contemporary urban sports are popular with children of all ages and therefore they are interested in practicing them more frequently (Dumitrache, 2023). Parents serve as primary supporters, providing the necessary resources and encouragement for children to participate in urban sports (Knight et al., 2020). Their involvement can increase a child's intrinsic motivation, fostering a more enjoyable and meaningful physical activity experience (Xie et al., 2021). Children's perceptions regarding their parents' (especially their father's) involvement, significantly influence their goal orientation and perception of performance, although this does not directly influence their objective performance. (Morais et al., 2021) Girls who benefit from the example set by their physically active mothers, especially when their mothers constantly practice organized physical activity (PA) were engaged in more sports and practiced specific activities more frequently. (Kessler et al., 2010) The research results show that parents' perception regarding children's engagement in sports are significantly influenced by traditional gender roles. Mothers seem to be more flexible than fathers and encourage their children to engage in sports in spite of gender-related norms (Levant et al., 2024).

It has become quite obvious that parents' involvement in urban sports enhances their children's social skills and integration in the existing community (Wallace et al., 2021). Mentorship and role modelling are other notable contributions, through which parents serve as positive influences, promoting values such as sportsmanship and teamwork.

Engagement in extracurricular activities and parental involvement in schooling both demonstrate positive results; however, these benefits are particularly noticeable when they align with the goals and activities of the school.

One prominent form is volunteer coaching, through which parents undertake coaching responsibilities, thereby fostering athletic development and creating quality time with their children. This involvement strengthens the parent-child bond and cultivates a sense of community among participating families.

Parents also play an essential role in the development of children's behavioural, social, and emotional skills (Sheridan et al., 2013). Therefore, a critical aspect is spectator support, where parents attend games to cheer for their children, providing crucial emotional support that boosts confidence and motivation. This form of support is particularly vital in urban settings, where community engagement is essential to the overall sports experience. Youth sports and exercise are generally considered insignificant by parents who live in rural and suburban areas. On the other hand, parents who live in urban areas perceive the high importance of physical activity. Therefore, the residential areas, alongside their geographic setting and development, also contribute to the perception and relevance of youth participation in sports (Wallace et al., 2021).

Fundraising and sponsorship efforts also constitute a significant form of involvement, as parents seek financial support to ensure all children have access to quality athletic opportunities, particularly in resource-limited urban environments (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Furthermore, parents often participate in the organization of sports events, assisting in the planning of competitions that foster community engagement and provide young athletes with valuable competitive experiences (Tafuri & Priore, 2020). Finally, advocacy for youth sports is crucial, as parents work to ensure that the needs of their children are represented at both local and national levels, thereby promoting the importance of youth sports in urban areas. Collectively, these forms of involvement enhance the athletic experience, strengthen community ties, and support the development of young athletes in urban settings (Johnson, 2017).

Other authors underscore the importance of parental roles in the sports participation of children and how these roles are influenced by ethnicity and immigration. This perspective highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of family dynamics to enhance children's experiences in sports (Chung & Green, 2021). In summary, parental influence on a child's sports practice in urban areas is primarily directed toward the following areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Parental Influence on Children's Sports Practice

Parental Role	Impact on Children
Modelling Behaviour	Parents who model an active lifestyle inspire their children to adopt similar behaviours.
Support and Communication	Parental support enhances children's intrinsic motivation and communication skills.
Influence on Physical Activity	Parents' active participation increases a child's physical activity levels.
Parental Involvement	Balanced parental involvement increases a child's commitment and motivation.
Parenting Styles	Democratic and permissive styles enhance self-determined motivations in children.
Fundraising and sponsorship efforts	Parents involvement enhances the athletic experience and also strengthens community ties and supports the development of young athletes in urban settings

Based on these facts, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How do demographic factors (age, profession, and gender) influence parental perceptions regarding the benefits of urban sports?

RQ2: What are the key motivators (e.g., health benefits, socialization, academic performance) for parents to encourage their children's participation in urban sports?

RQ3: Does the location of urban sports activities influence the financial support that parents provide for their children?

RQ4: What is the relationship between parental physical activity levels and their inclination to encourage their children to engage in urban sports?

RQ5: How does a parent's opinion on urban sports influence their child's behaviour and potential for delinquency, and how does this correlate with their perception of the importance of sports in child development?

Research aim

This study aimed to identify parental perceptions of their children's leisure time, specifically through the practice of physical activities in general, and urban sports in particular.

Research hypothesis

H1: Higher parental education levels are positively associated with the perceived importance of urban sports for children.

H2: A parent's perception of the health benefits conferred by urban sports influences their financial investment in these activities.

H3: The location where urban sports are practiced influences a parent's willingness to support their children in these activities.

H4: Physically active parents are more likely to encourage their children to engage in urban sports.

H5: Parents who believe in the social benefits of sports are more likely to invest financially in their children's sports activities.

H6: Parental perceptions are based on the social benefits of practicing physical exercises.

Material and methods

Participants

This study included 269 parents ranging in age from 27 to 60 years. The participant sample consisted of 81% women and 19% men (Figure 1, a and b). The sample is disproportionately female. In terms of age, 35% of the parents were between 27 and 40 years old, while 65% were aged 41 to 60 years. While the sample is skewed towards older respondents, it is relatively balanced.



Figure 1.a) gender of parents b) age category of parents who participated in the study

Measures

This research employed a questionnaire-based survey to assess parental perceptions of their children's leisure time as it relates to urban sports. The questionnaire, which consisted of 14 questions, was designed to measure several key variables: the availability of urban sports, the reasons for parental encouragement, and the perceived appropriate location for sports practice. It also explored parental opinions on the role of sports activities in combating juvenile delinquency and antisocial behaviour. Answers for most questions were expressed on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 to 5), while two questions used a multiple-choice format to identify location and motivation.

Data analysis

For the initial stage of data analysis, descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were calculated for the 269 validated survey responses. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

To analyse the survey responses, we used different statistical measures based on the type of data for each variable. For variables measured on a proportional or ratio scale, the mean was calculated. For variables measured on an ordinal scale (Practice, Importance, Motivation, Interest, Skills, and Joint Activities), the median was calculated. Lastly, for variables on a nominal scale (Gender, Health Perception, Socialization, Financial, School, Park, House, and Dedicated Spaces), the mode was calculated (Table 2). To validate the relationships between all variables, we will use the Chi-square coefficient and the Correlation coefficient.

Table 2. The meaning of variables

Variables	Meaning
Age	What is your age category?
Gender	What is your gender?
Practice	Why are you encouraging your child to participate in sports?
Physical development	Physical development contributes to the development of a harmonious body, optimal organ function, muscle tone and bone health
Health Perception	Mental perception is an important factor in creating a positive mood, joy, increasing self-confidence, and eliminating depression and anxiety
Social	Human interaction is essential for a good state of mind. Socializing helps to form and strengthen bonds of friendship, fostering communication, exchange of values and increasing trust. It is vital to avoid isolation and loneliness which increase depression and negative thoughts.
Financial	The availability of a financial effort allocated to children for urban sports
School	Where do you think this category of sports should be practiced?
Park	Where do you think this category of sports should be practiced?
House	Where do you think this category of sports should be practiced?
Dedicated Spaces	Where do you think this category of sports should be practiced?
Importance SP	Do you think sport is important in young people's lives?
Motivation	Lack of skills is a barrier to exercise.
Interest	Interest of parents in physical activity
Skills	Sports help reduce delinquency and antisocial behaviour.
Joint activities	Do you play sports with your child?

Results

Parental participation and attitudes

For calculating the average, the age ranges were assigned numerical codes: parents aged 27-40 were coded with the number 1, and those aged 41-60 were coded with the number 2 (Table 3).

The data in Table 3 shows a strong willingness among parents to encourage sports, but the huge kurtosis (12.31) suggests that responses are concentrated around certain values (Practice—Mean = 1.68, Skew = -2.93, Kurt=12.31). Most parents strongly agree that sports benefit health. The negative skew and high kurtosis suggest a strong consensus on this point (Health Perception - Mean = 0.93, Skew = -3.26, Kurt=8.71). Most parents believe sport is important, with some extreme responses drawing the average downward (ImportanceSP - Mean = 1.47, Skew = -2.40, Kurt=4.56).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Variables	Average	Std Error	Median	Mode	Std Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis	Skew	Min	Max
Age	1.65	0.03	2	2	0.48	0.23	-1.61	-0.64	1	2
Gender	0.19	0.02	0	0	0.39	0.15	0.64	1.62	0	1
Practice	1.68	0.04	2	2	0.63	0.40	12.31	-2.93	-2	2
Physical development	0.59	0.03	1	1	0.49	0.24	-1.89	-0.36	0	1
Health Perception	0.93	0.02	1	1	0.26	0.07	8.71	-3.26	0	1
Social	0.49	0.03	0	0	0.50	0.25	-2.01	0.02	0	1
Financial	1.20	0.04	1	1	0.73	0.53	4.29	-1.37	-2	2
School	0.48	0.03	0	0	0.50	0.25	-2.01	0.08	0	1
Park	0.33	0.03	0	0	0.47	0.22	-1.51	0.71	0	1
House	0.32	0.03	0	0	0.47	0.22	-1.41	0.78	0	1
Dedicated Spaces	0.84	0.02	1	1	0.37	0.13	1.50	-1.87	0	1
ImportanceSP	1.47	0.07	2	2	1.14	1.30	4.56	-2.40	-2	2
Motivation	2.03	0.06	2	2	0.93	0.86	-0.01	0.36	0	4
Interest	0.50	0.07	1	2	1.22	1.50	-1.17	-0.21	-2	2
Skills	-0.70	0.06	-1	-1	1.06	1.11	-0.68	0.49	-2	2
Joint activities	1.93	0.05	2	2	0.84	0.71	0.33	0.10	0	4

Barriers and accessibility factors

Based on the data presented in Table 3, parents generally show a strong willingness to financially support their children's participation in sports, but there are some exceptions. The negative skew and high kurtosis suggest a strong consensus on this point (Financial - Mean = 1.20, Skew = -1.37, Kurt=4.29). Opinions are fairly evenly distributed about whether schools are a good place for sports (School - Mean = 0.48, Skew = 0.08, Kurt=-2.01). Parents are slightly more negative towards parks as sports locations (Park - Mean = 0.33, Skew = 0.71, Kurt=-1.51). Most parents strongly prefer dedicated sports spaces over other options (Dedicated Spaces - Mean = 0.84, Skew = -1.87, Kurt=-1.41).

Parental support and child participation

The data indicates that parental motivation to support sports is high, with a normal distribution for the Motivation variable (Mean = 2.03, Skewness = 0.36, Kurtosis = 0.01). Furthermore, most parents actively engage in sports with their children, as shown by the Joint Activities variable (Mean = 1.93, Skewness = 0.10, Kurtosis = 0.33). The accuracy of the calculations is supported by the relatively small standard errors, as values closer to zero indicate greater precision. However, the data source is not homogeneous, given the high values of the standard deviations and variances, which were reported relative to the mean/median and mode/median.

Parental attitudes strongly favour the role of sports in promoting health and child development. While opinions on financial investment and accessibility vary, there is a clear preference for dedicated sports spaces over parks or schools. The data for variables related to the importance of sports shows a strong left skew, indicating that most parents are in strong agreement with these statements. The high kurtosis values for certain variables, such as "Practice," suggest that responses are tightly clustered, reflecting a strong consensus within the group.

Parents in specific professions, such as Sales (19.33%), Economics/Financial Analysis (13.01%), or Civil Engineering (12.27%), perceive urban sports as very important for their children.

As shown in Figure 2, the primary motivation for parents to encourage their child to practice sports is the benefit to the child's physical and mental health. This reason was selected by 249 parents, representing 30.86% of the total responses. Other significant reasons included Harmonious Physical Development, chosen by 158 parents (19.58%), and Socialization, chosen by 133 parents (16.48%). The total number of answers was 807, because this was a question where parents could choose multiple answers. Overall, parents view sports as a

valuable means of improving a child's quality of life by enhancing their health and social integration. A further cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the financial support parents provide and their opinion on the positive effects of sports on physical and mental health (Figure 2, Table 4). Physical development contributes to a harmonious body, optimal organ function, muscle tone, and bone health. Mental perception is seen as essential for creating a positive mood, fostering joy, increasing self-confidence, and reducing depression and anxiety.

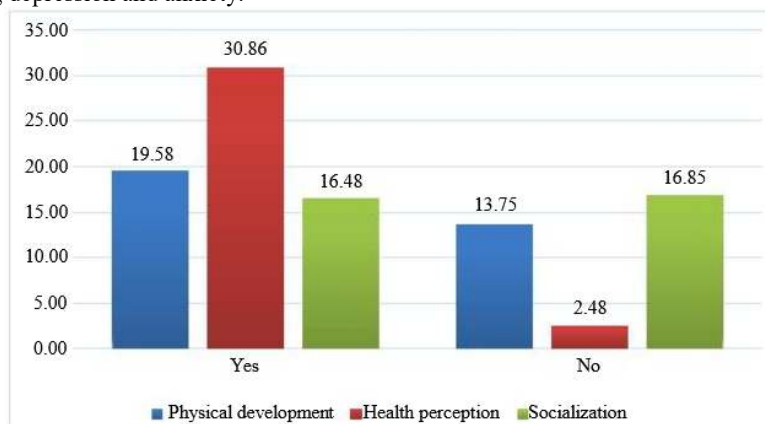


Fig. 2. Motivation for supporting children to practice urban sports

The analysis of the data shows a strong statistical significance for Hypothesis 2 (H2). (Table 4) With a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the standard $\alpha = 0.05$, we can reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This indicates a statistically significant relationship between the financial support parents provide for their children's sports activities and their perception of the physical and mental health benefits of those activities. The Linear-by-Linear Association value (19.734, $p = 0.000$) suggests a clear increasing trend: as parents increase their financial support, their belief in the health benefits of sports also increases. In other words, parents who invest more in sports are more likely to see significant health advantages for their children.

Table 4 Chi-Square Tests

Health perception & financial	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.837a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.099	4	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.734	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	269		

Based on the data in Figure 3, most parents (226 parents - 21.01% answers from a total of 1076, and 4% are convinced) consider specially dedicated spaces as an appropriate location for practicing urban sports. 129 parents (11.99% answers from a total of 1076 and 13.01% are convinced) considered school, 90 (8.36% answers from a total of 1076 and 16.64% are convinced) the park, and 86 parents (7.99% answers from a total of 1076 and 17.01% are convinced) prioritized a location close to home. The total of 1076 answers indicates that parents were able to select multiple choices. The strong preference for dedicated sports spaces likely stems from parents' desire to ensure their children's safety.

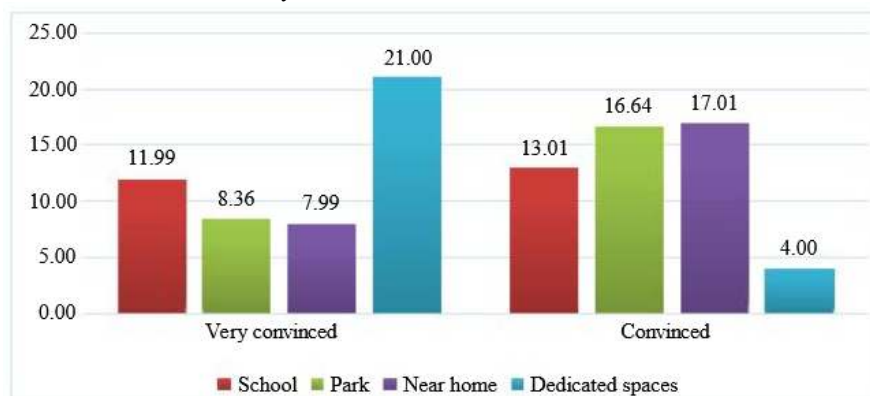


Fig.3. Location of sports practice

One may observe a strong statistical significance for H3. The p-value (0.048), which is slightly below the $\alpha = 0.05$ threshold, allows us to reject the null hypothesis (H_0). (Table 5) This result indicates that urban sports' location influences parental willingness to support the participation of their children, but the effect is weak. The Linear-by-Linear Association value ($p = 0.146$) suggests that the influence of location does not follow

a predictable, linear pattern, meaning the influence of location does not change smoothly, predictably. This aspect implies that some places (e.g., specialized sports centres vs parks/school) might be viewed differently by different groups of parents.

Table 5. Chi-Square Tests

Dedicated spaces & Practice	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.569 ^a	4	.048
Likelihood Ratio	11.036	4	.026
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.116	1	.146
N of Valid Cases	269		

In a nutshell, H3 is not fully supported as the opinions of parents are very different. When asked about their willingness to make a specific financial effort allocated to their children for practicing urban sports, most parents responded positively. 154 parents (57.25%) agreed, 89 parents (33.09%) totally agreed, and 20 parents (7.43%) were neutral. (Figure 4) The six parents who refused may be due to financial constraints or a lack of understanding regarding the benefits of sports, as suggested by responses to a subsequent question where 23 people (8.55%) indicated they do not believe sports are important for young people's lives.

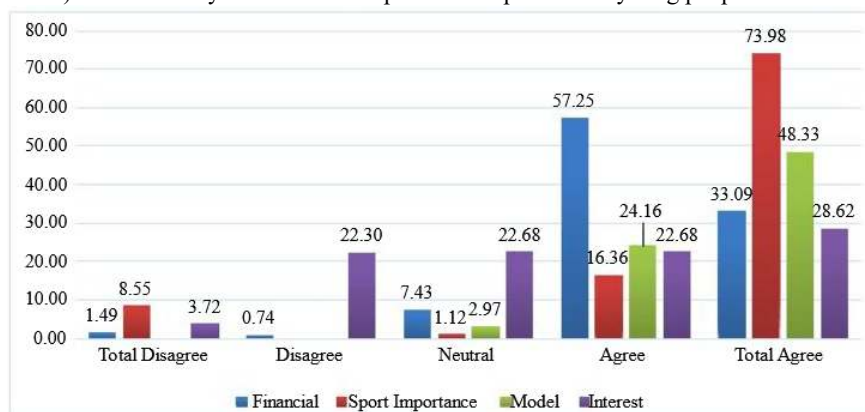


Fig. 4 Parents' opinion on playing sports

When asked if sport is essential in children's lives, a significant majority of parents expressed strong agreement, with 199 parents (73.98%) totally agreeing and 44 (16.36%) agreeing. (Figure 4) Asked if they practice physical exercise, only 130 parents (48.33%) said they exercise "all the time," with 65 parents (24.16%) exercising "often," and 8 parents (2.97%) exercising "sometimes". The potential for some parents to have provided dishonest answers is evident when comparing these responses to earlier questions where some respondents indicated they did not consider sports essential or would not allocate financial resources for them. Only 77 parents (28.62%) were "very interested" in engaging in sports, while a combined 35.7% were either "not interested" (22.3%) or "not interested at all" (3.72%). These findings once again highlight the presence of contradictory responses within the dataset. (Figure 4)

When asked if they participate in sports with their child, parents replied "sometimes" (141 parents, or 52.42%), 62 parents (23.05%) replied "rarely", 45 parents (17%) replied "often", and only 10 parents (4%) said they do so "all the time". (Figure 5) This result contrasts sharply with the answer to the question regarding the interest in practicing sports activities.

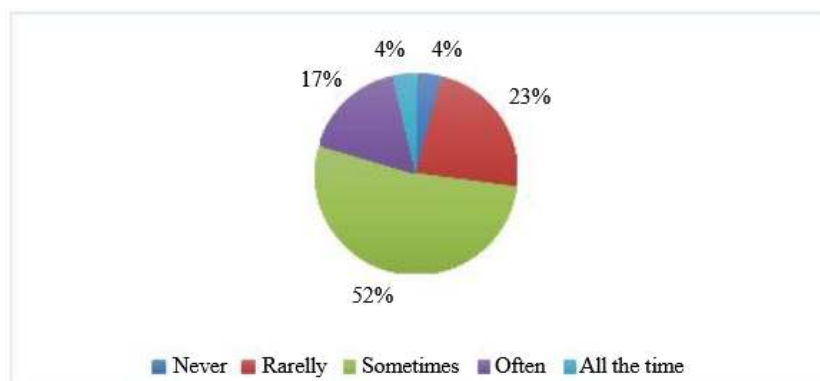


Fig. 5. The support parents offer to their kids to practice urban sports

The statistical analysis of the data provides strong support for H4 ($p = 0.000$). The Chi-Square test ($p = 0.000$) is highly significant, which allows for the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0). (Table 6) This result confirms that physically active parents are significantly more likely to encourage their children to engage in urban sports. The Linear-by-Linear Association test ($p = 0.000$) suggests a strong increasing trend. As the level of a parent's physical activity increases, so does their likelihood of encouraging their child to engage in urban sports.

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests

Joint activities & Practice	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.066 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	27.763	16	.034
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.065	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	269		

Thus, H4 is supported. Many parents (156) (57.99%) agree that sport helps control juvenile delinquency. 70 parents (26.02%) are in total agreement, 31 parents (11.52%) are neutral, and 12 parents (4.46%) disagree. (Figure 6) Similar proportions of parents agree that sport helps control antisocial behaviour (157 parents, representing 58.36%), 85 parents (31.6%) strongly agree, 18 parents (6.69%) are neutral, and 9 parents (3.35%) disagree.

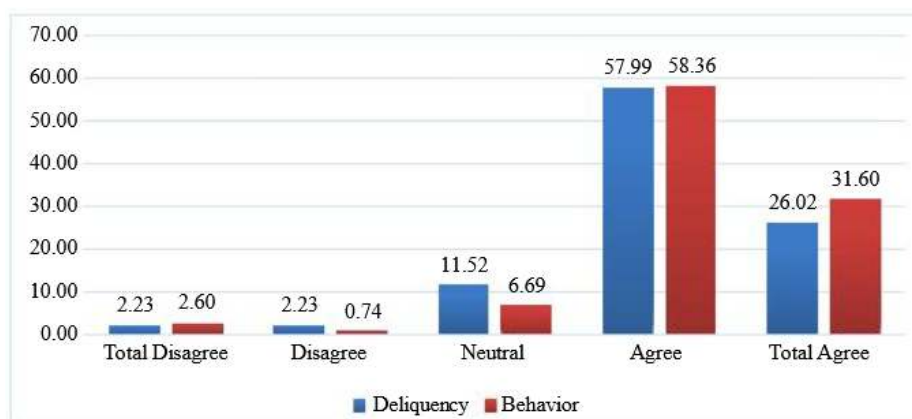


Fig. 6. Restrictions and advantages regarding the practice of sports

One may observe a strong statistical significance for H5 ($p = 0.000$). The Chi-Square test ($p = 0.000$) confirms a statistically significant association between parental agreement and the opinion that sports help control juvenile delinquency. (Table 7) The Likelihood Ratio ($p = 0.000$) further supports this strong relationship. The Linear-by-Linear Association test ($p = 0.019$) suggests a clear positive trend. As parental agreement increases, so does the belief in sports as a tool for reducing delinquency.

Table 7. Chi-Square Tests

ImportanceSP & Delinquency	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	47.354 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.057	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.492	1	.019
N of Valid Cases	269		

One may observe a strong statistical significance for H5 ($p = 0.000$). The Pearson Chi-Square test ($p = 0.000$) confirms a statistically significant association between parental agreement and the opinion that sports help control antisocial behaviour. (Table 8)

The Likelihood Ratio ($p = 0.000$) further supports this strong relationship. The Linear-by-Linear Association test ($p = 0.000$) suggests a clear, increasing trend. As parental agreement increases, so does the belief in sports as a tool for reducing antisocial behaviour.

Table 8. Chi-Square Tests

Importance SP & Behavior	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	53.490 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	46.318	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.958	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	269		

Relationships between variables

Table 9. Correlation coefficient

	Practice	Dezv Made	Health	Social	School	Park	Reason
Age							
Gender							
Practice							
DezvFiz	0.11						
Health	0.30	-0.04					
Social	0.11	0.56	0.14				
Financial	0.58	0.07	0.27	0.12			
School	0.09	0.25	0.07	0.36			
Park	0.09	0.23	0.14	0.20	0.39		
House	0.07	0.01	0.10	0.09	0.32	0.38	
Reason	0.23	0.14	0.09	0.06	0.06	0.10	
Interest	0.12	0.08	0.09	0.21	0.09	0.03	0.26
Skills	-0.18	-0.10	-0.12	0.02	-0.06	0.09	-0.32
Activ_com	0.24	0.15	0.11	0.08	0.01	0.14	0.45

A positive mean correlation is observed between the variables Practice and Financial (0.58), between Disengagement and Socialization (0.56), as detailed in Table 9. These findings indicate that parents who are willing to encourage their child to practice a sport are also willing to make a specific financial commitment to support their children's participation in urban sports. Furthermore, parents who consider harmonious physical development to be a primary reason for encouraging sports also view socialization as a necessary benefit.

A small positive correlation is observed (Table 9) between Practice and Health (0.3), Socialization and School (0.36), School and Park (0.39), School and Home (0.32), and Common Activities and Reason (0.45). These results suggest that parents who encourage their children's sports participation are also motivated by their physical and mental health benefits. Additionally, parents who consider schools to be an ideal location for urban sports also view these activities as an effective means of promoting socialization and reducing tensions among children. They also consider parks and areas near their homes suitable for practicing urban sports. Parents who engage in sports themselves also, to a certain extent, participate in sports activities with their children.

Higher levels of perceived physical development are strongly associated with improved social interactions, suggesting that parents believe sports contribute to both physical fitness and social skills.

Parents who financially support sports tend to be physically active themselves, and conversely, parents who are interested in sports are more willing to invest financially. Financial investment is thus linked to parental involvement in physical activity. Parents who practice sports and who engage in sports with their children are also more likely to believe in their health benefits and may encourage children to socialize through these activities. Parents who think sports require strong skills may have weaker motivation to encourage their children and those who perceive sports as skill-based may be less personally interested in them. Older parents are slightly less likely to participate in sports with children. Mothers, however, are more likely than fathers to have strong reasons for supporting sports and are also more likely to prefer parks for sports than fathers.

Thus, parental sports participation is strongly linked to their financial support and their belief in the health benefits of sports. Parents who value socialization also prioritize physical development, viewing sports as a tool for both physical health and social well-being. The perception that sports require a high level of skill negatively affects parental involvement and encouragement, particularly among older parents and those who see sports as skill dependent.

Path analysis

Our model comprises two variables: a formative construct, Perceptions, and a reflective construct, Social Benefits. (Figure 7)

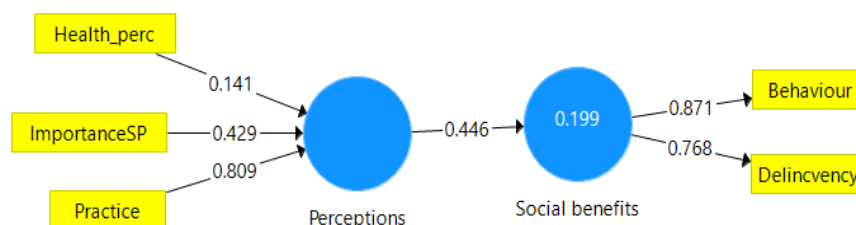


Fig.7. Path analysis

The Social Benefits construct consists of two dimensions: Delinquency (parents believe that sports can serve as a tool for reducing delinquency) and Behaviour (parents believe that sports contribute to controlling antisocial behaviour). Social benefits have a very high Cronbach's Alpha (CA = 0.801), indicating good internal consistency (above the 0.7 threshold). In addition, the correlation coefficient rho_A has a high value of 0.810, which confirms the construct reliability, thus reinforcing the alpha value. Composite Reliability (CR = 0.804) indicates satisfactory construct reliability (above the recommended 0.7 threshold), while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE = 0.674) demonstrates good convergent validity (above the 0.5 threshold).

The Perception construct is composed of Health_Perc (parents' perception of the health benefits associated with urban sports), ImportanceSP (parents perceived importance of urban sports for children), and Practice (parents' willingness to support their children in engaging in urban sports). As this is a formative construct, no values are reported for CA, CR, or AVE (Table 10)

Table 10. Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceptions		1.000		
Social benefits	0.801	0.810	0.804	0.674

The Fornell–Larcker criterion is used to assess discriminant validity, ensuring that the constructs are distinct. According to this criterion, the square root of the AVE for each construct should exceed its correlations with other constructs. The diagonal value is 0.821 (square root of AVE, previously 0.674; $\sqrt{0.674} \approx 0.821$). (Table 11) Its correlation with Perceptions is 0.446, which represents a medium association. This finding indicates the presence of a relationship without redundancy. Since $0.821 > 0.446$, the Social Benefits construct demonstrates good discriminant validity. Social Benefits: Clear discriminant validity.

Table 11. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Perceptions	Social benefits
Perceptions		
Social benefits	0.446	0.821

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) assesses collinearity among indicators. A VIF > 5 suggests high collinearity, while VIF < 3 is generally acceptable. In PLS-SEM, collinearity issues are a concern if VIF exceeds 3–5. All VIF values are well below 3, indicating the absence of collinearity issues. (Table 12) Behaviour and Delinquency have slightly higher VIF values (1.807) than the other indicators but are still comfortably within the safe range. Perceptions Construct (Health_perc, ImportanceSP, Practice): Good indicator independence. Social Benefits Construct (Behaviour, Delinquency): No collinearity but still acceptable. Both indicators contribute uniquely to the construct. No collinearity concerns were identified, confirming that the measurement model is stable and that the indicators are suitable for building reliable constructs.

Table 12. Collinearity

	VIF
Behaviour	1.807
Delinquency	1.807
Health_perc	1.107
ImportanceSP	1.013
Practice	1.106

The model fit summary compares the Saturated Model (which evaluates all possible relationships) with the Estimated Model (the hypothesized relationships). (Table 13)

Table 13. Fit Summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.014	0.014
d_ULS	0.003	0.003
d_G	0.002	0.002
Chi-Square	2.588	2.588
NFI	0.989	0.989

In Table 13, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value 0.014, excellent fit (threshold: < 0.08, ideally < 0.05), indicates that the model residuals are very small. Unweighted Least Squares Discrepancy (d_ULS) value 0.003, Perfect fit (Should be as low as possible), suggests the model's approximation error is minimal. Geodesic Discrepancy (d_G) value 0.002, Excellent fit (should be as low as possible), indicates minimal geodesic distance error. Chi-Square value 2.588 in PLS-SEM is less critical but low values indicate a

good fit. Normed Fit Index (NFI) value 0.989, excellent fit (threshold > 0.9 , ideally > 0.95), shows that the proposed model explains the data very well.

All fit indices show that the model perfectly represents the data. The Saturated and Estimated models match, indicating that the hypothesized relationships are well-specified. All reliability and validity indicators meet the accepted standards. Thus, H6 is accepted.

Discussions

This study highlights that most parents encourage their children to engage in sports for the physical and mental health benefits they provide. These findings confirm previous literature emphasizing the important role parents play in shaping children's active lifestyles (Sheridan et al., 2013; Sigmundova et al., 2024). Parents also expressed the belief that urban sports are best practiced in specially designated spaces, likely due to the perception that such environments offer greater safety for their children. This result is consistent with the conclusions of Barrachina et al. (2023), who reported parents' preference for children to spend their free time in arranged spaces close to home.

Parents play an essential role and encourage their children to engage in urban sports. They design an active and healthy lifestyle for the young generation. Cited sources confirm a significant connection between parents' and children's physical activity (Sigmundová et al., 2024). Parents play a crucial role in their children's healthy development, while also considering the existence of external barriers such as infrastructure and financial constraints

(Telford et al., 2023). To establish lifestyle routines that persist throughout life, alongside proper nutrition and adequate rest, it is essential to ensure access for all groups -regardless of socioeconomic status, age, gender, cultural background, or physical ability - to urban public spaces that facilitate safe and accessible physical activity. ,

The influence of parents on children's engagement in urban sports is complex and multifaceted. Parents support their children's participation by offering encouragement, modelling active behaviour, and providing a positive environment. While excessive involvement may have adverse effects, a balanced approach that prioritizes children's autonomy and enjoyment is essential for cultivating lifelong commitment to physical activity. By understanding the diverse dimensions of parental involvement, parents can play a constructive role in their children's sports experiences, contributing to their overall development and well-being. At the same time, parents are willing to allocate specific financial resources to support their children's physical activities, confirming the trend identified by other authors (Rodrigues et al., 2018). However, the present study did not establish a consistent trend regarding parental participation in children's physical activities at the sample level. Although parents are positive influences (Tafari & Priore, 2020), further research should use sample segmentation and refined hypotheses.

We have also identified some limitations. For instance, parents generally support sports, but their direct participation in sports activities alongside their children is inconsistent (52.42% participate occasionally in physical activities, while 23.05% only rarely). These percentages suggest a discrepancy between positive attitudes and practical involvement. The lack of a clear trend in parental participation in sports indicates the need for further studies with segmented samples.

Conclusions

Based on this survey, we conclude that parents demonstrate openness to involving their children in sports activities to enhance their quality of life, even when this requires financial effort. Such involvement supports the child's psycho-emotional balance, physical health, and harmonious development of the body. This information is of particular importance not only for local administrations but also for potential partnerships between schools, families, and local authorities, all of which share responsibility in promoting children's education for a healthy lifestyle.

The findings highlight the need for collaboration among schools, local authorities, and families in order to promote a healthy lifestyle that includes urban sports. Safe and accessible sports infrastructure is crucial to encourage children's participation in specific activities, particularly when it comes to urban environments. Parents can become engaged in various roles (volunteer coaches, spectators, event organizers) to enhance children's sports experience and strengthen community ties.

As a final remark, the study reveals that parents' awareness regarding the importance of youth sports is essential for the development of urban sports, as well as their children's physical and mental health. Similarly, the development of dedicated, safe sports facilities in urban areas - ideally near residential zones - are essential when the goal is to improve access and promote programs that involve parents in joint sports activities alongside their children. In this way, we can strengthen parent-child bonds and encourage an active lifestyle. These conclusions highlight the importance of parental involvement in urban sports and the need for integrated strategies to support children's healthy development in urban settings.

The Authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution. All authors contributed equally to this study.

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