

PARENT'S EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS CHILDREN'S ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS EXERCISE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the reasons for referral of the child in gymnastics such as expectations of success in sport and parent's relation towards exercise. On the sample of 55 fathers and 60 mothers of children athletes, a questionnaire was applied to find out parent's attitudes and expectations for children achievements in artistic gymnastics. Descriptive statistics, correlation and chi-square test were used to get out results. Results of Chi-squared test showed that there is no statistically significant difference between mothers and fathers in reasons to involve their child in gymnastics nor expectations of child's achievements.

Key words: *children, attitudes, physical activities of parents, gymnastics.*

INTRODUCTION

Parental support is crucial in decision-making about starting children's sports activities (Howard & Madrigal 1990). Artistic gymnastics is a specific sport regarding child's age at the moment of involving in this activity. It's one of the few sports where child can join at the age of three, which is rare in other sports. Artistic gymnastics is quality basis for engaging in any other sport. Large number of top athletes were engaged in artistic gymnastics in the early age, and today we have some top athletes (like Ivica Kostelić, or once before his sister Janica (multiple Olympic, World and World Cup Champions in alpine skiing)) using gymnastic facilities as a means for additional preparation in their sports (Živčić Marković, Stibilj-Batinić, Gorišek & Šinkovec 2011).

Gymnastics is a combination of motor skills and abilities such as: coordination,

grace, agility, strength and flexibility. It is divided into male and female artistic gymnastics. There are six events in men's artistic gymnastics: floor, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and high bars and four events in woman's artistic gymnastics: vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor. Although the exercise itself, depending on the apparatus, can be relatively short, it is generally physically very demanding and require exerciser's strength, agility, endurance and coordination in space (Živčić 2007).

Attitude is mental readiness, acquired through individual experience, making the directive or dynamic influence on the response of individuals to objects and situations with which it comes to contact (Allport, 1935). Attitudes are primarily social learning outcomes (Baron and Byrne, 1994). Many of our attitudes are the result

of a situation in which we observe the behavior of others. Some studies have also shown that attitudes derived from the experience are less resistant to change (Baron and Byrne, 1994). Attitudes can be relatively easily measured, and by measuring them we can better understand human actions and explain and predict human behavior (Biletić, Benassi, Baić, Cvetković & Lukšić 2008).

Socialization comes down to individual's adjustment to community, which is a prerequisite for its integration and socialization. It is divided into primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization is realized in the first years of life and usually occurs within the family. Secondary socialization takes place in later years, and it is the most affected by school and peer groups (Leburić, Ljubetić & Radić, 2009).

Research of Lacković-Grgin (1982) shows that the relationship between parent and child is fundamental to the successful socialization of the child and healthy personality development. The family is an important factor in child's development.

Parental beliefs associated with sport are predominantly positive and mostly related to the positive impact of sport on health and abilities of their children, then the desired socialization of children in sport and experience of the sport as safe activity in which children avoid violence, alcohol and drugs (Townsend and Murphy, 2001).

According to research by Fišer (2007) conducted in Slovenia half of athletes were directed in the sport by professionals who have recognized their talent in the kindergarten or school and the other half by parents who directed them in a particular sport. Same was proved by Hahn (1982) in his research. Parents who direct their child into sport are athletes themselves or the child's brother or sister is already engaged in sport.

Parents are supposed to support their child in every way. The quality of children's involvement in sports is largely dependent on parental support for this activity (Brustard, 1993). Parents are expected to

positively encourage the activity of their children in sports. Support and realistic expectations play a crucial role in the child's continuous engagement in sport (Woolgar & Power, 1993), even if it's only on the level of recreational exercise. If parents themselves are not models for the "sporting life", they are supposed to show good benefits of sports (Bosnar, 2003). Parent's help in the whole system of child's athletic career is inevitable, especially for mental stability and health. Experience of success and personal efficiency are fundamental factors in the development of self-image and preventing unwanted behaviors (Wigfield and Eccles, 1992).

Nowadays, children start to play some sport very early. Artistic gymnastics is the sport in which you can start to train at the age of three. This is the age where parents make decisions about child's choice and staying in sport so is good to know the reasons for children's referral in gymnastics such as parent's relations regarding the child's success.

The aim of this study is to determine the reasons for referral of the child in gymnastics such as expectations of success in sport and parent's relations towards exercise. We were interested whether the aspects of mothers and fathers also differ.

METHODS

The research was conducted on the sample of 115 parents (55 fathers and 60 mothers) during March 2010. The parent's age were between 26 and 51 years old and the average age was 39.5 ± 9.8 s.d. The children were between 3 and 14 years old the average age was 7.1 ± 2.8 s.d. Differences in parent's expectations regarding the age of child were not statistically significant. Children trained artistic gymnastics in gymnastic club "Novi Zagreb" on the recreational level 2 hours per week.

The parents' participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. Questionnaires were distributed to parents during the training. Out of total of 115 parents (one parent from each child) in the

research, 26 were fathers with sons and 29 were fathers with daughters (a total of 55 fathers). There were also 35 mothers with sons and 25 mothers with daughters (a total of 60 mothers).

Table 1. *Description of the samples for parents, sons and daughters.*

		Child		Total
		Son	Daughter	
Parent	Father	26	29	55
	Mother	35	25	60
Total		61	54	155

The questionnaire, specially designed for this occasion, contained 13 particles which the parents could rate on the scale of 1-5.

Variable description:

1. Gymnastics help develop motor skills and are beneficial for the children's health (MSHB)

2. The child can meet new people and make friends in gymnastics training (NPMF)

3. Regular training develops work habits and helps learn proper time management (WHPTM)

4. Secures a drug and alcohol free environment to spend their free time in (DAFT)

5. Children can meet athletes who can be their role models (ARM)

6. Stops them from spending their time in front of the TV or computer (TTV)

7. Helps maintain optimal body weight (OBW)

8. They can develop confidence and self respect trough gymnastics training (DCSR)

9. They can learn enough about gymnastics to help them recreationally pursue any other sport (GPOS)

10. They can learn enough about gymnastics to help them competitively pursue any other sport (GCOS)

11. Master gymnastics to the degree that they can participate in amateur club competitions (GACC)

12. Master gymnastics to the degree that they can participate in international club competitions (GICC)

13. Master gymnastics to the degree that they have the opportunity to be called up in the national (GCUN)

Alongside the above mentioned particles the parents' achievements in sports were recorded on a six degree scale. The age of the parents (26-51) and the children (3-14) was registered.

The data analysis was conducted using the statistics program Statistics for Windows 8.0. Arithmetic means, standard deviations for each variable and the percentage of parents involved in sports are presented using descriptive statistics. The link between the particles, child age and the parents' achievements was obtained using correlation analysis. Chi-squared test was used for determining differences in expectations of achievements regarding parent's gender. Cronbach's alpha was used for proving reliability of questionnaire (Cronbach alfa=0.80) and factor analysis of principal components was used to validate questionnaire (67.39% variance was extracted and 1st factor explained 30.84 % of variance). According to criteria for social sciences questionnaire is reliably and valid.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first statement: it is very important to the parents that their child develop motor skills and remain healthy, has the highest mean value (4.88). The standard deviation is minor and shows that there are no significant divergences. The second statement (meeting new people) has a bit smaller value, but it is also important to parents. However, the standard deviation shows greater dispersion of results for these claims. From the data for the first two claims, we can conclude that it's more important to parents that the child develops physically, then to develop socially. Statements 3 (developing work habits), 4

(alcohol and drug free environment) and 8 (developing self-respect through training) have the same means (4.52) and we can conclude that it is very important for parents that their children acquire good work habits through gymnastics training, spend less time in places with drugs and also to develop self-esteem. The high value of claim 9 (4.62; gymnastics training helps to learn about other sports on recreational level)

shows that parents highly valued universality of gymnastics, as the base sport for further engaging in any other sport. On the other hand, statements 12 and 13 that are related to the child's participation in the national selections and international tournaments show that parents consider child's development of motor skills more important than performance in the team.

Table 2. *Arithmetic means and standard deviations.*

	Mean	Std. Dv.
1. Gymnastics help develop motor skills and are beneficial for the children's health (MSHB)	4.88	.325
2. The child can meet new people and make friends in gymnastics training (NPMF)	4.01	.699
3. Regular training develops work habits and helps learn proper time management (WHPTM).	4.52	.547
4. Secures a drug and alcohol free environment to spend their free time in (DAFT)	4.52	.517
5. Children can meet athletes who can be their role models (ARM)	3.71	.904
6. Stops them from spending their time in front of the TV or computer (TTV)	4.34	.524
7. Helps maintain optimal body weight (OBW)	4.24	.638
8. They can develop confidence and self respect through gymnastics training (DCSR)	4.52	.532
9. They can learn enough about gymnastics to help them recreationally pursue any other sport (GPOS)	4.62	.618
10. They can learn enough about gymnastics to help them competitively pursue any other sport (GCOS)	4.09	.963
11. Master gymnastics to the degree that they can participate in amateur club competitions (GACC)	3.43	.999
12. Master gymnastics to the degree that they can participate in international club competitions (GICC)	2.63	1.281
13. Master gymnastics to the degree that they have the opportunity to be called up in the national (GCUN)	2.55	1.294

Table 3. *Parent's sport achievement.*

ACHIEVEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	12	10.5
2	29	25.2
3	12	10.5
4	32	27.8
5	25	21.7
6	5	4.3
Total:	115	100.0

Table 4. *Pearson correlations of particles MSHB-DCUN, child's age (CA) and parent's achievement (PA).*

	MSH B	NPM F	WH PTM	DAF T	AR M	TTV	OB W	DCS R	GPO S	GCO S	GAC C	GIC C	GCU N	CA
NPMF	.039	--												
WHPTM	.078	.324	--											
DAFT	.184	.298	.507	--										
ARM	.071	.282	.389	.366	--									
TTV	-.041	.255	.330	.339	.517	--								
OBW	.022	.355	.333	.249	.441	.449	--							
DCSR	-.007	.182	.246	.042	.355	.386	.337	--						
GPOS	-.148	.137	.018	-.072	.070	.084	.374	.198	--					
GCOS	-.094	.094	.187	.020	.259	.099	.382	.253	.567	--				
GACC	-.088	.018	.163	-.051	.264	.161	.265	.146	.279	.526	--			
GICC	.048	-.024	.271	.134	.411	.318	.244	.259	.106	.344	.679	--		
GCUN	.042	-.058	.242	.130	.392	.312	.277	.242	.123	.366	.659	.966	--	
CA	.010	.095	-.071	-.151	-.019	.024	-.126	.023	-.239	-.248	.022	-.073	-.111	--
PA	.021	-.075	.105	.140	.222	.138	.118	.052	.142	.175	.118	.135	.116	-.259

Bolded are significant correlations $p < 0.05$

Table 5. Differences between expectations of mothers and fathers for child's achievement.

Statements	% answers of fathers	% answers of mothers	Chi-square test	Degrees of freedom (Df)	Sig. chi-square test
MSHB value					
4	10,9 %	13,3%	0,158	1	0,691
5	89,1 %	86,7%			
NPMF value					
2	1,8%	1,7%	1,787	3	0,618
3	20,0%	20,0%			
4	60,0%	50,0%			
5	18,2%	28,3%			
WHPTM value					
3	1,8%	3,3%	0,316	2	0,854
4	41,8%	43,3%			
5	56,4%	53,3%			
DAFT value					
3	1,8%	0,0%	1,120	2	0,571
4	45,5%	45,0%			
5	52,7%	55,0%			
ARM value					
2	3,6%	3,3%	0,723	3	0,868
3	49,1%	41,7%			
4	25,5%	28,3%			
5	21,8%	26,7%			
TTV value					
3	0,0%	3,3%	3,206	2	0,201
4	69,1%	56,7%			
5	30,9%	40,0%			
OBW value					
3	9,1%	11,7%	5,862	2	0,053
4	65,5%	43,3%			
5	25,5%	45,0%			
DCSR value					
3	1,8%	0,0%	1,608	2	0,448
4	49,1%	43,3%			
5	49,1%	56,7%			
GPOS value					
3	9,1%	5,0%	0,905	2	0,636
4	25,5%	23,3%			
5	65,5%	71,7%			
GCOS value					
1	3,6%	0,0%	4,982	4	0,289
2	3,6%	6,7%			
3	16,4%	13,3%			
4	41,8%	31,7%			
5	34,5%	48,3%			
GACC value					
1	1,8%	1,7%	3,475	4	0,482
2	14,5%	11,7%			
3	36,4%	43,3%			
4	32,7%	20,0%			
5	14,5%	23,3%			
GICC value					
1	18,2%	23,3%	3,848	4	0,427
2	30,9%	25,0%			
3	32,7%	25,0%			
4	9,1%	6,7%			
5	9,1%	20,0%			
GCUN value					
1	21,8%	26,7%	3,869	4	0,424
2	30,9%	25,0%			
3	32,7%	23,3%			
4	5,5%	5,0%			
5	9,1%	20,0%			

Table 3 shows that 10,5% of the parents have never engaged in any sports and 25.2% of them are involved in recreational level. The 64,3% of parents have exercised actively and had great achievements on national and international competitions. Results show that parents understand the importance of sports. On the other hand, Petračić and Badrić (2005) proved in their research that parents of 13.7% examined pupils are involved in sports and the other 86.3% are not. The research was conducted among 284 participants age 12 to 15. By comparing these studies we can conclude that the athletes' parents better understand the importance of gymnastics as a basic sport.

The greatest correlation is between variables 12 and 13 (.966) which are almost collinear (Table 4). It shows that parents consider participation in international tournaments a reason for call up into the national selection. The correlation between variables 11 and 12 (.679) shows that parents who expect from their child to participate at national competitions, also expect to compete at international level. Correlation between variables 3 and 4 (.507) is related to parent's wish for their children to gain work habits and learn to organize their time and spend it in a safety place without drugs and alcohol. Croatia participated in the last European research about consuming cigarettes, alcohol and drugs among students (ESPAD), in 2007. The results showed that: 84% of young people in Croatia have consumed alcohol at least once in the last 12 months (European average is 84%); especially significant is the raise of alcohol abuse among girls; most common places for alcohol abuse are parks, school grounds, kid's playgrounds and places near night clubs (Sučić Vojnović, 2009). Interesting, but not surprising, is correlation between variables 6 and 7 (.449) which is related to parents wish for their child to spend less time in front of TV and maintain optimal body weight. Although statistics show that children are moving less (according to the WHO data: from 1990 to 1999 number of the obese, inactive children

in the world increased by 5.7% and from 2000 to 2009 was increased by 6.8%) parents from this sample are aware of risks that inactive lifestyle brings. Last correlation is child's age and parent's achievement in sports. We can see negative correlation (-.259) which is a sign of inverse proportionality. That means that parents with greater sports accomplishments enroll their children in gymnastics earlier. Variables related to maintaining optimal body weight and getting to know role models in life have the most important relationships with other variables.

Non significant differences were found in parent's relation to the exercise according to the gender (Table 6). We can conclude there is no difference in the expectations of fathers and mothers of children gymnasts.

CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this research was to determine a cause for referring a child into gymnastics and determine parent's relations towards children's artistic gymnastics exercise.

The results have shown that parents find most important for a child to develop motor skills and preserve health through gymnastics. Pearson's Chi-square test proved to be no differences in expectations regarding child's achievements in gymnastics between parent's genders and no differences regard the age of child. Artistic gymnastics is considered a basic sport for further engage in some other sport. Research showed that 80% of parents were involved in sports. Parents who are former athletes engage their children to gymnastics very early to develop into motor and psychological sense, and may later be directed to another sport. Individual competitive sports, such as artistic gymnastics, teach children good working habits, controlling errors, coping with stressful situations, planning and implementing strategies, taking responsibility and taking actions under pressure (Black, 2010). We could conclude

that mothers and fathers are homogenous group in terms of child and gymnastics.

A minority of parents (mothers) expect that their child should achieve great sport success, while the majority of parents expect positive development of motor, cognitive, affective and social skills. The generalization of results may be questionable due to the small number of participants (126).

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