

The Impact of Evidence-Based Parent Education in Organized Youth Sport: A Pilot Study

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Although existing literature in organized youth sport illuminates developmentally appropriate parent involvement behaviors, practitioners have yet to effectively disseminate evidence-based tools and strategies to parents. The purpose of the present pilot study was to design, implement, and assess an evidence-based education program for parents in organized youth sport. Thirty-nine fathers and 42 mothers from 7 youth soccer teams were assigned to full, partial, or nonimplementation conditions. Parents and their sport-participating children (41 boys, 40 girls) were administered surveys at pre- and postseason. Data reveal a positive impact of the implementation on aspects of parent involvement, the parent–child relationship, and salient child outcomes.

More than 90% of North American youth engage in organized sport at some point during childhood and/or adolescence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010; Jellinek & Durant, 2004). Parents are also immersed in this setting, exhibiting a range of involvement behaviors over the course of their children’s athletic development. As such, organized youth sport provides a common context for family interaction, whereby parent behavior can shape the child’s developmental experiences (Holt, 2008). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), adults are increasingly driving youth sport. It is important that, as parents continue to invest a growing percentage of family resources into the athletic development and success of their children (Dunn, Dorsch, King, & Rothlisberger, 2016), the appropriate level of parental involvement in youth sport has become a salient cultural debate.

Although researchers have an understanding of the developmental impact of parent involvement, and practitioners are quick to prescribe “fixes” for negative parent behavior (e.g., silent Saturdays, parent contracts, signs encouraging good behavior), the field has yet to offer an evidence-based parent education program that can be systematically implemented in organized youth sport. In addition, although there have been some attempts to implement educational programs for parents, these resources seem to be based on practical suggestions rather than empirical evidence (see Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes & Pennisi, 2008; Knight & Holt, 2014). Furthermore, whereas some programs have fostered good outcomes for children, many fail to show evidence for enhanced parent–child interaction (Gould et al., 2008), an outcome that could transfer beyond the sport setting. Last, the effectiveness of many existing

Received 24 October 2015; accepted 12 May 2016.

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programs is yet to be evaluated (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Providing parents with evidence-based tools and strategies for parenting in organized youth sport, and then evaluating the effectiveness of those tools, could move practitioners toward optimizing parental involvement, increasing the likelihood of enhanced developmental outcomes in the young athletes who participate.

To address this existing gap, it is first essential to understand parent involvement in organized youth sport. Simply, parent involvement has been operationalized as a multidimensional construct consisting of specific thoughts and emotions related to a child's activities that are often manifest as parent support and pressure behaviors (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999). Parent support is behavior (e.g., economic investment, the provision of information, transportation) aimed at facilitating a child's participation in sport and has been linked to adaptive outcomes such as child enjoyment (Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986), autonomy (Gagné, Ryan, & Bargmann, 2003), and physical self-worth (Fox & Corbin, 1989). Parent pressure is "directive and controlling parental behaviors designed to prompt athlete responses and outcomes that are important to the parent" (O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2011, p. 400) and has been linked to less adaptive outcomes, such as child perceptions of a more threatening sport performance environment (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2008), child discontent with sport performance (Smith, Smoll, & Passer, 2002) and performance anxiety and negative affect (Albrecht & Feltz, 1987; Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989).

In addition to the potential for parent involvement to impact child outcomes and experiences, it is also plausible that parent pressure and support behaviors could impact the overall parent-child relationship. Indeed, recent family scholars (e.g., Bremer, 2012) have called for an empirical focus on athlete families and their relationship dynamics. In an attempt to answer this call, it is essential for those designing and assessing evidence-based parent education to consider the potential bearing of parent sport involvement on the ongoing parent-child relationship. In the developmental literature, the parent-child relationship is conceptualized as a process-related factor marked by constant interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). These interactions occur on and off the field and are thought to evoke a variety of experiences such as intimacy, struggle, compassion, and authority (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). From this vantage, Laursen and Collins (2009) argued that researchers could gain a sharper portrait of the parent-child relationship by concurrently measuring individuals' perceptions of warmth and conflict. Warmth is the tendency for the parent-child relationship to be imbued by supportive, affectionate, and sensitive interactions, whereas conflict is the struggle for agency or power within the relationship (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In sport, the link between parent involvement behavior (e.g., support and pressure) and these aspects of the parent-child relationship is not well understood; however, a connection has been established between parent-child relationship quality and young athletes' sport enjoyment (Horn & Horn, 2007; Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006). Therefore, examining the potential impact of parent support and pressure on warmth and conflict could benefit present understanding of parenting, including sport parenting.

In light of the near universality of youth sport participation, the broad aim of the present study was to design, implement, and assess an evidence-based education program for parents in organized youth sport. Based in Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological theory and the associated potential long-term impacts of sport participation on family relationships, our central hypothesis is that parents who are presented with evidence-based learning opportunities will modify their behavior so as to foster enhanced parent-child sport relationships and enhanced experiences for their children in sport. We base this hypothesis on past findings from the family and sport psychology literatures, as well as anecdotal reports in the popular media that convey

children's dissatisfaction with common parenting behaviors such as overinvolvement, negative communication, and pressuring behaviors. Moreover, in ongoing research being conducted by our lab, youth sport administrators, coaches, and parents have expressed a desire for an evidence-based approach to parenting children in organized youth sport settings. In light of this, the purpose of the present study was to design, implement, and assess an evidence-based education program for parents in organized youth sport. Such a program has the potential to enhance children's sport enjoyment and competence while reducing the feelings of stress that can be caused by pressuring parent behavior. Therefore, it holds the potential to enhance children's motivation to continue participation in youth sport, an outcome that could positively impact their health and well-being throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

METHOD

The first step in conducting this study was to design the evidence-based education program that would be implemented in the pilot study. The education program included (a) a 33-page *Sport Parent Guide* and (b) a 45-min Sport Parent Seminar, both of which were designed to offer tips and strategies for evidence-based parenting in organized youth sport.

Initially, the first and second researchers conducted independent literature searches in the fields of human development, family studies, interpersonal communication, and sport psychology. Ultimately, 89 empirical articles pertaining to organized youth sport parenting and/or parenting in other achievement domains were retained for closer examination. From the retained sources, the second author conducted an analysis of content that would ultimately inform our development of the evidence-based education program. This initial analysis afforded seven distinct categories, which became the framework for organizing sections of the educational program. The first section was *youth sport participation* and directed parents to the reasons children participate in sports and the reasons they drop out of sports (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Gould, Feltz, & Weiss, 1985). The second section oriented parents to a *developmental model* of sport participation (see Côté, 1999; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007) and focused on the developmental processes that children go through as they ascend through the various levels of youth sport. The third section highlighted *participation rates* in sport (Aspen Institute, 2015; National Council of Youth Sports, 2008; National Federation of State High School Associations, 2014) and was designed to underscore the unlikelihood of children participating in various sports in high school, college, and/or professionally. The fourth section was centered on *communication* (Dorsch, Smith, Wilson, & McDonough, 2015; Gershgoren, Tenenbaum, Gershgoren, & Eklund, 2011; Knight & Holt, 2014) and offered parents strategies for communicating with their children, other parents, and coaches in organized youth sport. Building from this, the fifth section focused on *working with coaches* (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, Pennisi, 2006; Hellstedt, 1987) and offered parents tips from athletes and coaches on how and when to communicate and offer feedback. The sixth section, *sport parent behavior*, provided parents with tools for becoming effectively involved in their children's sport experiences (Dorsch, Smith, Wilson, & McDonough, 2015; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). Specifically, it outlined a range of parent verbal sideline behaviors and their potential consequences and highlighted what children report wanting and not wanting from parents before, during, and after competitions. The final section left parents with tips for *positive sport parenting* and focused on supportive parenting strategies, meeting the emotional demands of sport, forging healthy relationships, and choosing appropriate sport settings for children (see Knight & Holt, 2014, for review).

The seven sections were used to construct the *Sport Parent Guide*, and after editing and finalizing its content, the material was migrated into a PowerPoint platform for presentation in the Sport Parent Seminar. Whereas the guide was constructed to offer parents a self-paced curriculum in which they could seek information at their own convenience, the seminar was designed to offer best practices to parents in a more directed, face-to-face setting.

Sample

Members of families involved in nine youth soccer teams in suburban northern Utah were recruited to participate in the present study. Inclusion criteria included being a family with a child participating on a U8 or U10 soccer team in the designated league, having at least one involved parent (as defined by the family), and being willing/able to participate in the parent education program. Parent and child participants were also required to be proficient in English, as all surveys and educational materials were presented in that language.

Procedure

Following approval from a university board for the protection of human subjects, researchers contacted coaches about parents' and athletes' participation in the study. A quasi-experimental, blocked design was employed, whereby each girls team and each boys team was assigned to one of three implementation groups (full, partial, or nonimplementation). A self-selected sample of parents and children from these teams participated in the present study. Parents and athletes on participating teams were administered preseason surveys. Informed consent and assent were obtained, and the researcher present administered standardized instructions; then parents and athletes were directed to separate locations to complete surveys. Survey completion took approximately 5 min for parents and approximately 10 min for children. Parents ($n = 18$) assigned to the full-implementation condition then attended a 45-min Sport Parent Seminar and were given the *Sport Parent Guide*. Parents ($n = 36$) assigned to the partial-implementation condition were given only the guide. Parents ($n = 27$) assigned to the nonimplementation condition did not take part in the seminar and were not given the guide. At the conclusion of the league's season, parents and athletes on all seven teams were administered postseason surveys. No participants dropped out of the study after taking part in the preseason survey.

Measures

Parent support and pressure

Parent support and pressure were assessed via child reports of parent involvement using a sport-adapted version of the Parental Involvement in Activities Scale (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003). The support scale consisted of six items (e.g., "My father/mother tries to make sure I get what I need for soccer, like equipment."), and the pressure scale consisted of 10 items (e.g., "My father/mother would be upset if I dropped out of soccer."). Items were rated relative to the current season on a 4-point scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Internal consistency reliability of scores for the adapted support (six items) and pressure (10 items) scales, respectively, was .79 and .76.

Parent-child warmth

Parent-child warmth was assessed via child reports of the parent-child relationship using an eight-item modified version of the acceptance scale of the Child's Report of Parental

Behavior Inventory (Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). Items were adapted to reflect perceptions of warmth in the parent–child sport relationship during the current season (e.g., “My father/mother makes me feel better after talking over my sport-related worries with me.”) and were rated on a scale from 1 (*really unlike* the relationship) to 4 (*really like* the relationship). In the present study, internal consistency reliability of scores for the adapted measure was .80.

Parent–child conflict

Parent–child conflict was assessed via child reports of the parent–child relationship using a three-item modified version of the Conflict subscale from the Sport Friendship Quality Scale (Weiss & Smith, 1999). The Sport Friendship Quality Scale was previously contextualized to the parent–child relationship (Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006; e.g., “My father/mother and I get mad at each other about sport.”). Participants rated the accuracy of the statements on a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*really true*). In the present study, internal consistency reliability of scores for the adapted measure was .78.

Child enjoyment

Athlete perceptions of their own sport enjoyment was measured using the four-item Enjoyment subscale of the sport commitment model (Carpenter, Scanlan, Simons, & Lobel, 1993). The original subscale items were developed to measure the underlying concepts of positive affective response to sport and generalized feelings such as pleasure, liking, and fun (e.g., “I have fun playing sports.”). Athletes were asked to rate the extent to which the statement reflected their enjoyment of sport during the current season. Items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). In the present study, internal consistency reliability of scores for this measure was .94.

Child competence

Athlete perceptions of their own sport competence were measured using a five-item Sport Competence Scale created and validated by Fredricks and Eccles (2005). Items were adapted from Eccles and Harold’s (1991) examination of gender differences in sport involvement. The original items were developed to measure children’s perceptions of athletic ability and expectations for future success in this domain (e.g., “Compared to most of your other activities, how good are you at sports?”). Athletes were asked to relate each item to their perceptions of the current sport season, and items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very good*). In the present study, internal consistency reliability of scores for this measure was .89.

Child stress

Athlete perceptions of sport-related stress was measured using a sport-adapted version of the 14-item Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). In an effort to maintain a reasonable overall questionnaire length for the present study, five items were adapted for use in the present study. Items were chosen based on direction of wording (i.e., “reverse” items were not used) and ease of contextualization to soccer (e.g., “How often have you felt that you could not handle all the things you had to do in soccer?”). Athletes were asked to rate the extent to which the statement reflected the way they have felt during the current season. Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*very often*). In the present study, internal consistency reliability of scores for this measure was .84.

Demographics

Parents were initially asked to respond to multiple demographic questions during the preseason data collection. Specifically, the questionnaire asked parents to report parent and child age and sex, child's grade, parent's relationship to the child, parent relationship status, parent education and employment, child's current and past sport participation, parent ethnicity and race, the family's annual household income and how much of that income was allocated to organized youth sport, the number of children in the home, and how many of those children are active participants in organized youth sport.

RESULTS

Participant Demographics

Parents and children from 81 families (from seven youth soccer teams) participated in this study. This resulted in a participation ratio of 77.1%. The participating parents (39 fathers, 42 mothers) ranged from 27 to 55 years of age ($M = 37.27$, $SD = 5.05$). Most of the parents were married (83.8%), identified as the athletes' biological parents (97.5%), and were of White race (93.8%). The majority of parents (68.0%) reported possessing at least one college degree, being employed for wages or self-employed (63.0%), and having annual household earnings between US\$50,000 and US\$99,999 (60.5%). The participating children (42 boys, 39 girls) ranged from 7 to 10 years of age ($M = 8.16$, $SD = .51$). In addition to participating in soccer, children also reported participating in basketball ($n = 30$), baseball ($n = 21$), gymnastics ($n = 10$), swimming ($n = 13$), football ($n = 11$), golf ($n = 9$), dance ($n = 7$), and tennis ($n = 2$). The majority of children (77.8%) had participated in organized sport for 3 years or less. Most children (95.1%) lived in a home with two or more adults (i.e., parents, grandparents, and/or adult children), and 86.4% of the sample lived in a household with at least one other child who participated in organized youth sport.

Descriptive Statistics

Data-screening procedures were conducted based on the recommendations of Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), and descriptive statistics were calculated on the sample of 81 families. Means and standard deviations for the seven study variables appear in Table 1. Overall, participants perceived moderate to high levels of parent support, parent-child warmth, child enjoyment, and child competence. Participants perceived relatively low levels of parent pressure, parent-child conflict, and child stress.

Group \times Time Results

Repeated measures analyses of variance were used to examine the equality of variable means for participants in each of the three conditions (full, partial, and nonimplementation) at two time points (preseason and postseason). Repeated measure designs possess three primary strengths: They (a) allow statistical inference to be made with fewer subjects by reducing the variance of estimates of treatment effects; (b) allow pilot work to be completed more quickly, as fewer groups need to be trained to complete an entire experiment; and (c) allow researchers to monitor how participants change over time.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables by Implementation Group and Time

	Range	Nonimplementation ^a		Partial implementation ^b		Full implementation ^c	
		Preseason	Postseason	Preseason	Postseason	Preseason	Postseason
		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Parent support	1-4	3.68 (0.46)	3.59 (0.53)	3.57 (0.50)	3.95 (0.37)	3.64 (0.74)	4.39 (0.47)
Parent pressure	1-4	1.68 (0.54)	2.34 (1.19)	1.72 (0.70)	1.62 (0.65)	1.91 (1.11)	1.40 (0.63)
Parent-child warmth	1-4	3.69 (0.53)	3.60 (0.54)	3.67 (0.32)	3.94 (0.58)	3.67 (0.49)	4.31 (0.39)
Parent-child conflict	1-5	1.22 (0.38)	1.47 (0.63)	1.37 (0.55)	1.38 (0.58)	1.36 (0.53)	1.03 (0.10)
Child enjoyment	1-5	4.83 (0.38)	4.72 (0.57)	4.68 (0.49)	4.71 (0.51)	4.73 (0.39)	4.97 (0.10)
Child competence	1-5	5.67 (1.07)	5.41 (0.98)	5.54 (0.93)	5.74 (0.72)	5.86 (0.89)	6.36 (0.53)
Child stress	1-7	2.12 (0.70)	2.60 (0.72)	2.21 (0.61)	1.97 (0.70)	2.31 (1.09)	1.95 (1.05)

^a*n* = 27. ^b*n* = 36. ^c*n* = 18.

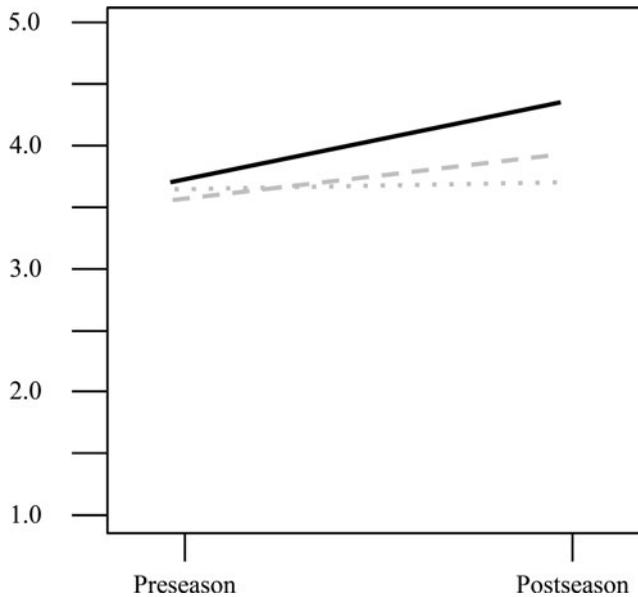


Figure 1. Children's perceptions of parent support. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

Preseason and postseason data depicting *parent support* are represented by implementation group in Figure 1. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of parent support, $F(2, 54) = 7.08$, $\alpha = .002$. Group membership explained 21% of the variance in parent support from preseason to postseason and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to enhance parent involvement in such a way that children feel more supported in this setting.

Preseason and postseason data depicting *parent pressure* are represented by implementation group in Figure 2. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of parent pressure, $F(2, 54) = 12.87$, $\alpha < .001$. Group membership explained 32% of the variance in parent pressure from preseason to postseason and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to mitigate or even reverse perceptions of parent pressure in organized youth sport settings.

Preseason and postseason data depicting *parent-child warmth* are represented by implementation group in Figure 3. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of parent-child warmth, $F(2, 54) = 4.99$, $\alpha = .010$. Group membership explained 16% of the variance in parent-child warmth from preseason to postseason and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to enhance parent-child relationships in organized youth sport settings.

Preseason and postseason data depicting *parent-child conflict* are represented by implementation group in Figure 4. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of parent-child conflict, $F(2, 54) = 3.27$, $\alpha = .046$. Group membership explained 11% of the variance in parent-child conflict from preseason to postseason

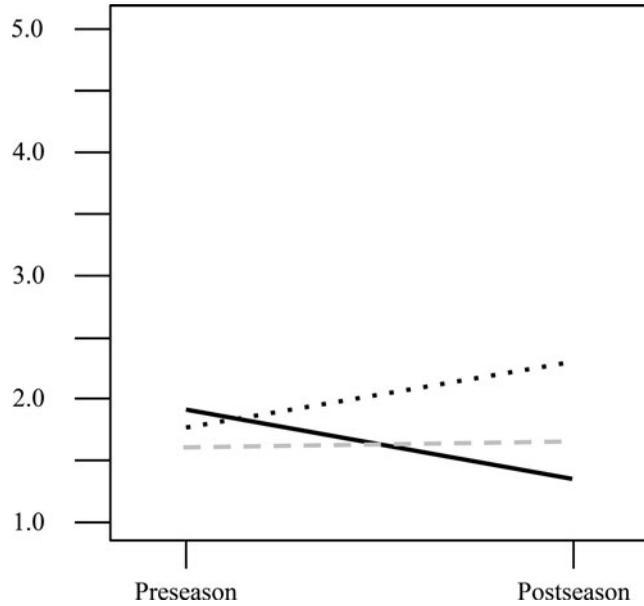


Figure 2. Children's perceptions of parent pressure. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

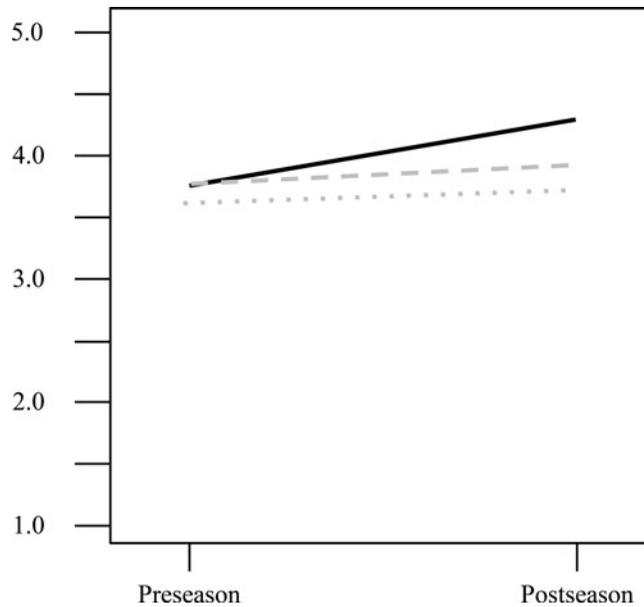


Figure 3. Children's perceptions of parent-child warmth. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

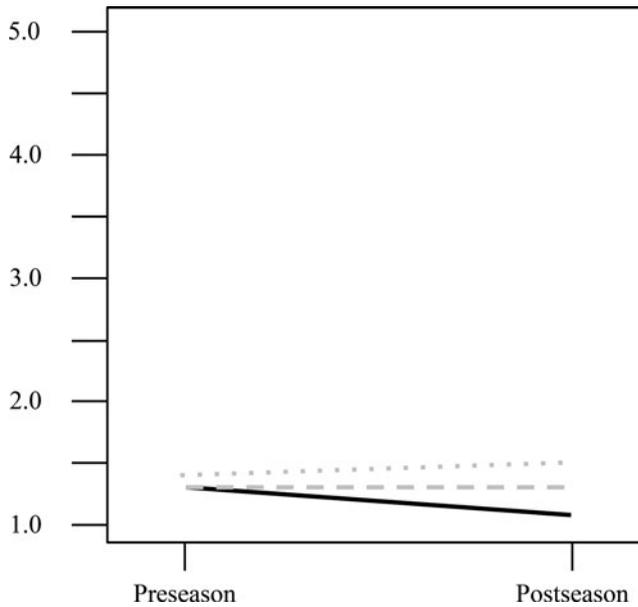


Figure 4. Children's perceptions of parent-child conflict. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to mitigate or even reverse perceptions of parent-child conflict in organized youth sport settings.

Preseason and postseason data depicting *child enjoyment* are represented by implementation group in Figure 5. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of enjoyment, $F(2, 54) = 4.40$, $\alpha = .017$. Group membership explained 14% of the variance in enjoyment from preseason to postseason and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to enhance children's enjoyment in organized youth sport settings.

Preseason and postseason data depicting *child competence* are represented by implementation group in Figure 6. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of sport competence, $F(2, 54) = 3.85$, $\alpha = .027$. Group membership explained 13% of the variance in sport competence from preseason to postseason and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to enhance children's competence in organized youth sport settings.

Preseason and postseason data depicting *child stress* are represented by implementation group in Figure 7. Data indicate that there was a significant Group \times Time interaction in children's perceptions of sport-related stress, $F(2, 54) = 6.66$, $\alpha = .003$. Group membership explained 20% of the variance in perceived stress from preseason to postseason and speaks to the potential efficacy of our program to mitigate or even reverse perceptions of sport-related stress in organized youth sport settings.

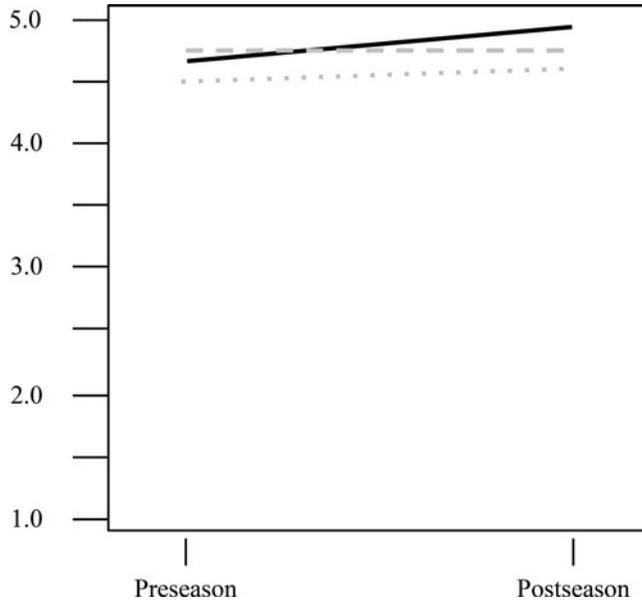


Figure 5. Children’s perceptions of enjoyment. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

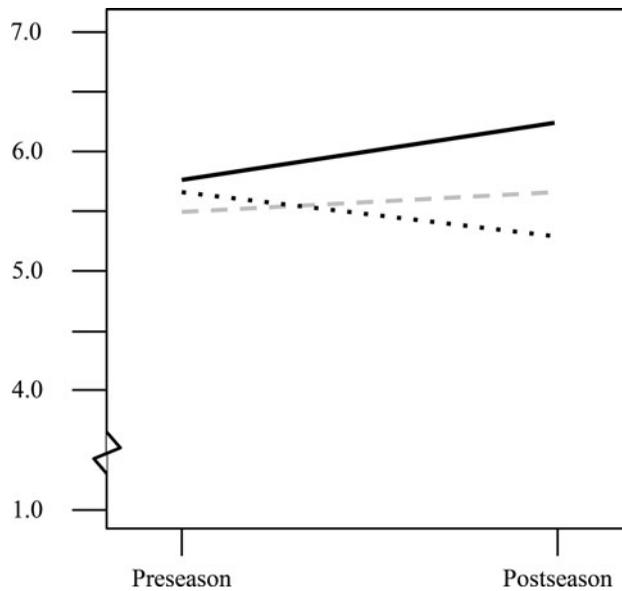


Figure 6. Children’s perceptions of competence. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

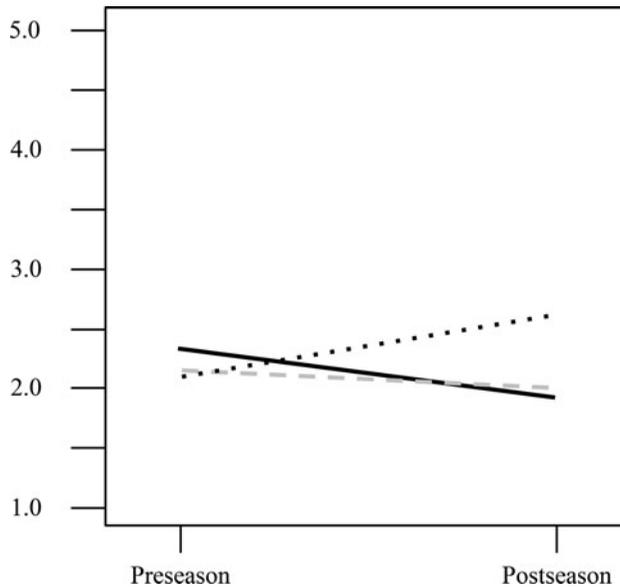


Figure 7. Children's perceptions of stress. *Note.* Solid lines depict parents in the full-implementation condition, dashed lines depict parents in the partial-implementation condition, and dotted lines depict parents in the nonimplementation condition. Black (solid, dashed, or dotted) lines represent a significant change from preseason to postseason ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to design, implement, and assess an evidence-based education program for parents in organized youth sport. The impetus for this study stems from anecdotal reports in the popular media that convey children's dissatisfaction with common parenting behaviors such as overinvolvement, negative communication, and pressuring behaviors (e.g., Bigelow, Moroney, & Hall, 2001; Nack & Munson, 2000). Moreover, our own ongoing research suggests that youth sport administrators, coaches, and parents all feel the need for research-informed strategies that parents can adopt in organized youth sport settings. Of importance, creating such a program also holds the potential to enhance children's motivation to continue participation in youth sport, an outcome that could positively impact their health and well-being throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

Our guiding hypothesis was that parents who were presented with evidence-based learning opportunities would modify their behavior so as to foster enhanced parent-child sport relationships and enhanced experiences for their children in sport. Indeed, our data suggest that the educational programming enhanced parent involvement, the parent-child relationship, and children's developmental outcomes in sport. Specifically, parents who took part in our Sport Parent Seminar and were provided with our *Sport Parent Guide* demonstrated more support and less pressure, and more warmth and less conflict, than parents in the partial- and nonimplementation groups. Moreover, parents in the full-implementation group had children who reported more enjoyment, higher perceptions of competence, and lower levels of stress at postseason than their counterparts. Collectively, these findings suggest that the pilot version of our parent education program may demonstrate merit in organized youth sport.

Relevance

The present study is potentially transformative because it assesses the direct impact of evidence-based parent education in a pilot sample of organized youth sport parents. Ultimately, replication of these findings in diverse youth sport samples and contexts has the potential to inform educational and leadership opportunities for organizations (e.g., Little League Baseball, Pop Warner Football) at the community, regional, and national level. Of importance, this would unencumber coaches and league directors who currently carry the fiduciary burden of controlling parent behavior in youth sport. Ultimately, it is a viable expectation that future iterations of our parent education program would involve industry partners or technology commercialization. Although the present study utilized face-to-face interactions between researchers and parents, future work could be designed to incorporate digital media programming or Internet-based learning modules.

Limitations and Strengths

Despite the present findings, researchers can build upon this work by addressing study limitations. A primary limitation ties to the sample of sport families examined in the present study. Participants were drawn largely from a middle-class to upper middle-class cohort of families who had children participating in a competitive youth soccer league. Parents also reported being highly involved in their children's sporting endeavors and possessed educational backgrounds that may have made our evidence-based programming more accessible. Because present understanding of parent involvement in organized youth sport is largely grounded in middle class ideals (see Lightfoot, 2004), future work should attempt to replicate our findings in diverse samples of families and sport organizations. Indeed, it is plausible that the expression of parent involvement and/or parent receptivity to educational programming is distinct in alternate family structures (see Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Moreover, given the changing demographics of U.S. families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), subsequent studies are needed that explore how different types of parents learn to become involved, and thus shape the experiences of their young athletes in organized youth sport.

A second important consideration is that the present sample was delimited to parents of soccer athletes at a single developmental level (i.e., 7–10 years). We chose this direction because this context represents an initial period of sport sampling where emerging dynamics in parent involvement and the parent–child relationship may impact children's early sport experiences. Future attempts to replicate this work should be guided by the knowledge that the developmental level of the child and the child's stage in youth sport (i.e., sampling, specialization, investment) have been shown to play a role in the manifestation of sport parenting roles (Côté, 1999; Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandingo, & Fox, 2009; Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, & Power, 2005). To account for the potential impact of these factors, future work should address the biopsychosocial and sport-specific development of athletes, as well as the life stage of their parents.

A third limitation of the present work lies in the fact that parents self-select the extent to which they engage in the parent education programming. For instance, parents whose teams agreed to take part in the full-implementation group may not have chosen to attend the Sport Parent Seminar. In these cases, we still provided parents with the *Sport Parent Guide* and clustered them with parents from the partial-implementation group. Similarly, we have no data to account for the depth of engagement of parents in the full- or partial-implementation groups. Whereas some parents may have taken many of our strategies and suggestions to heart, other parents may have lacked focus during the Sport Parent Seminar and/or not read the *Sport Parent Guide* at all. Future studies designed to replicate this work should incorporate

manipulation check to address the varying levels of parent engagement with the evidence-based programming. Such a strategy would allow for a more nuanced interpretation of the impact of the implementation.

Conclusion

Despite potential restrictions to the external validity of the present work that are inherent in these (de)limitations, this study meaningfully extends the sport parenting literature. Specifically, by answering calls for an empirical focus on parent–child relationship dynamics (Bremer, 2012) and parental involvement (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2015; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005) in youth sport, the present study builds a strengths-based approach to parenting in this setting. It is important that the present study demonstrates the potential impact of evidence-based educational programming for parents in a fairly ubiquitous family context. Furthermore, it deepens knowledge of parent involvement factors and parent–child relationship factors that may contribute to children’s perceptions of enjoyment, competence, and the reduction of stress in organized youth sport. The present findings suggest that parents who took part in our Sport Parent Seminar and read our *Sport Parent Guide* demonstrated more support and less pressure, and more warmth and less conflict, than parents who did not. Children who had parents in the full-implementation group also reported more enjoyment, higher perceptions of competence, and lower levels of stress at postseason than those who did not. This builds on previous work examining parent involvement behavior (Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999) and affirms that the potential efficacy of parent educational programming in youth sport warrants further attention by researchers and practitioners. Subsequent studies will allow for a more rigorous understanding of whether findings from the pilot work translate to a broader sample of American families, potentially setting the table for a larger grassroots movement toward systematic, evidence-based parent education in organized youth sport.

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