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## ORIGINAL

# PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL STYLES AS A PREDICTOR OF SPORT SUCCESS AND SPORTS COMPETITION LEVEL

## ESTILOS EDUCATIVOS PARENTALES COMO PREDICTOR DEL ÉXITO Y NIVEL DE COMPETICIÓN DEPORTIVO

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### ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to check the differences in the level of sport competition depending on parental education styles, and to know what the differences are in parental education styles in terms of sport success. In order to measure the different variables an *ad hoc* socio-demographic questionnaire, the Multifactor Self-Assessment Test of Child Adjustment (TAMAI) and the Oviedo Scale of Infrequency of Response (INF-OV) were carried out. The sample consisted of 502 Spanish athletes. The results showed that athletes without international success obtained significant differences and higher results in mother's restriction. On the other hand, the fact that mothers educate their children towards protectionism showed significant differences in benefit of athletes who do not compete internationally. It was concluded that protective

mothers are not related to having children who compete internationally and restrictive mothers are not related to having children who achieve international success.

**KEYWORDS:** sports performance, parents, education, family support

## RESUMEN

Los objetivos de este trabajo fueron comprobar cuáles son las diferencias en el nivel de competición deportivo en función de los estilos educativos de los padres, y conocer cuáles son las diferencias en los éxitos deportivos en función de los estilos educativos de los padres. Se administró un Cuestionario Sociodemográfico *ad hoc*, el Test Autoevaluativo Multifactorial de Adaptación Infantil (TAMAI) y la Escala de Oviedo de Infrecuencia de Respuesta (INF-OV). La muestra se compuso de 502 deportistas españoles. Los resultados mostraron que los deportistas sin éxitos internacionales obtuvieron diferencias significativas y mayores puntuaciones de restricción de la madre. Por otro lado, la educación asistencial próxima al proteccionismo de la madre obtuvo diferencias significativas y mayores puntuaciones en los deportistas que no compiten a nivel internacional. Se concluyó que las madres protectoras no se relacionan con tener hijos que compiten a nivel internacional y las madres restrictivas no se relacionan con tener hijos con éxitos a nivel internacional.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** rendimiento deportivo, padres, educación, apoyo familiar.

## INTRODUCTION

The road to the high level of sports is filled with numerous variables that influence the athlete's performance and make it difficult to achieve success (Elferink-Gemser, 2013). In this sense, following Elferink-Gemser and Visscher (2012), the variables that affect sports performance are divided into: personal variables and environmental variables. Among the personal variables the following stand out: anthropometric, genetics, psychological skills, technical-tactical skills and personality (Elferink-Gemser & Visscher, 2012; Menéndez-Santurio & Fernández-Río, 2015; Robazza & Bortoli, 2007). On the other hand, the environmental variables include: parents, teachers, coaches, managers, talent development programs, competition, facilities in training and the characteristics of the country.

This research focuses on the environmental variable “parents”, but from the perspective of parental educational styles, which is different from previous studies that analyzed the influence of parents divided into several factors (support, involvement, role, feedback and motivational orientation) (Boiché & Sarrazin, 2009; Piéron & Ruiz-Juan, 2013; Wilson and Spink, 2010). In this sense, according to Aroca (2010) parental educational styles are understood as:

The set of guidelines and practices of parenting, whose objective is the socialization and education of children, where the personality features, past

experiences and genetic characteristics, both parental and filial, interact and are contextualized within an intra, meso and macrofamiliar also immersed within a specific transcultural and historical framework (p.84).

There are numerous groups of educational styles, although in this research only classical models of educational styles are used: authoritarian, permissive, democratic or authoritative (Baumrind, 1967, 1971). In this case, authoritarian parents value obedience as a virtue, as well as dedication to assigned tasks, tradition and the preservation of order. They favour measures of punishment or force and agree to keep children in a subordinate role and to restrict their autonomy (Baumrind, 1996; Belsky, Sligo, Jaffee, Woodward & Silva, 2005; Kaufmann et al., 2000). On the other hand, permissive parents provide great autonomy to the child as long as they do not jeopardize their physical survival. The permissive adult prototype behaves in an affirmative, accepting, and benign way towards the impulses and actions of the child. Its fundamental objective is to free him/her from control and avoid recourse to the authority. They are not demanding in maturity and responsibility in the execution of tasks (Banham, Hanson, Higgins & Jarrett, 2000). On the other hand, democratic parents try to direct the child's activity by imposing mature roles and behaviours, but they use reasoning and negotiation. These types of parents tend to direct the child's activities rationally. They start from an acceptance of their own rights and duties, as well as the rights and duties of children. It is a style that is characterized by two-way communication and a shared emphasis between the social responsibility of actions and the development of autonomy and independence in the child (Banham et al., 2000; García, Pelegrina & Lendínez, 2002; Gfroerer, Kern & Curlette, 2004; Kaufmann et al., 2000; Mansager & Volk, 2004; Warash & Markstrom, 2001; Winsler, Madigan & Aquilino, 2005).

The relationship between the practice of health-oriented physical activity and parents' educational styles has been tested in different scientific studies, but none of them related to high-performance sports practice (Borawski, Levers-Landis, Lovergreen & Trapl, 2003; Bumpus, Crouter & McHale, 2001; Kimiecik & Horn, 2012; Kristjansson, James, Allegrante, Sigfusdottir & Helgason, 2010; Pate, Mitchell, Byun & Dowda, 2011; Smetana & Daddis, 2002). Recent studies have shown that permissive mothers are associated with children with higher physical activity than the children of authoritarian mothers (Jago et al., 2011; Hennessy, Hughes, Goldberg, Hyatt & Economos, 2010). At the same time, other research projects have related permissive parents with children with more addictive behaviours and less related with health salud (Borawski et al., 2003; Bumpus et al., 2001; Kristjansson et al., 2010; Pate et al., 2011; Smetana & Daddis, 2002). However, other studies shown exactly the opposite (Kremers, Brug, De Vries & Engels, 2003; Wake, Nicholson, Hardy & Smith, 2007). Therefore, it is not clear which parents' educational style is related with higher levels of physical activity.

Studies which analyze the influence of the factor of parental control over children present controversy in their results. Thus, some authors affirm that parental control over what their children do is associated with a healthier and less sedentary leisure time of their children (Carlson et al., 2010; Lin, Lin & Wu, 2009). Other works show the opposite, detecting that the parents' vigilance

exerts a negative effect of their children's leisure time (Piéron & Ruiz-Juan, 2013; Sharp, Caldwell, Graham & Ridenour, 2006).

Studies that analyze the social support have found that the positive and collaborative influence of parents is related to physical activity on the children's behalf (Cohen, Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000, Holt & Hoar, 2006, Pugliese & Tinsley, 2007; Wilson & Spink, 2010). Collaborative influence is understood as paternal behavior to facilitate the practice of their children's sports practice (e.g., to take them to championships, trainings, etc.), and positive influence is explained as social support, positive stimulation of parents and positive social control. In this sense, Boiché and Sarrazin (2009) found that the factors that are most related to keep practicing sport, as opposed to abandonment, were parental support and the value of parents towards the practice of physical activity. In a review study examining the relationship between general parenting styles and child weight behaviors, it is suggested that the combination of parental demand and the ability to give children autonomy is associated with healthy weight, healthy dietary intake, higher levels of physical activity, and lower body mass index (Sleddens, Gerard, Thijs, De Vries & Kremer, 2011).

For all the above, the study of the influence of parental educational styles on sports performance is shown as something new that can help predict the adult performance of athletes. Therefore, the following research objectives were established: to verify the differences in the level of sports competition according to parental educational styles, and to know the differences in the sport successes according to parental educational styles.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### *Participants*

The final sample consisted of 502 athletes. 153 of the total number of athletes were women (30.5%) and 349 were men (69.5%), aged between 18 and 64 years old ( $M = 27.76$ ,  $SD = 9.11$ ). 282 were non-federated (56.2%), 220 were federated (43.8%) and 53 were professional athletes (10.6%). Of the total sample, 246 were individual sports athletes (67.21%) and 120 were collective sports athletes (32.79%). The sports or activities with the greatest number of participants were: bodybuilding ( $n = 77$ , 15.3%), cycling ( $n = 40$ , 8%), running ( $n = 39$ , 7.8%), table tennis = 35.7%) and football ( $n = 34$ , 6.8%).

### *Instruments*

Sociodemographic Questionnaire. In order to assess both factors sports success and level of competition, a socio-demographic questionnaire was created. The items used to assess were biological variables of the athlete (height, sex, age, etc.) labor and academic variables (level of education, employment status, etc.). Out of the total of 28 items, 5 assessed biological variables, other 5 assessed labor and academic variables, and 18 assessed sociodemographic variables. Most of the questions were closed-ended questions; particularly likert, dichotomous, and polytomous types. In the case of

questions examining the successes and the level of sport competition, they were categorized in a dichotomous way (Yes / No).

Acquiescence and dishonest participants. The Oviedo Response Infrequency Scale (INF-OV, Fonseca-Pedrero et al., 2009), is a self-report measure that is composed of 12 items consisting of a likert scale with 5 possible answers (1 = "Total disagreement" and 5 = "Total agreement"). The objective of this scale is to detect participants who respond in a random, pseudo-random or dishonest manner. When conducting the online questionnaire, this scale guarantees the reliability of participants' responses. Participants with more than 3 incorrect answers in this test were removed from the final sample. Through the Oviedo Scale, 25 participants who had answered the questionnaire in a dishonest way were removed from this study.

Evaluation of Parental Educational Styles. Parental educational styles were measured through the Scale of Father-Mother Adequate Education, from the Self-Assessment Multifactorial Childhood Adjustment Test (Hernández, 1998). This test is a questionnaire consisting of 175 propositions. It is a self-evaluation test on attitudes and behaviors about oneself (personal area), social relation, school and family environment, and relationships with siblings. As a slogan, athletes were told to respond to the items of parental educational styles, recalling the most frequent educational style perceived in their childhood. Therefore, the questions were asked retrospectively. Reliability studies, in university and adult samples, obtained Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.91 in the accomplishment of the test in its totality. Within this questionnaire, the Scale of Father-Mother Adequate Education was used in this study to evaluate parental educational practices according to the children's criteria. The scale is divided into the following factors, according to the scale chosen for the father's parenting style:

- Personalized Assistance Education. It is characterized by a type of education based on love, care and development of the child's autonomy and freedom, and on providing him/her with adequate rules.

- Protectionism. It is characterized by concerning and helping the children in an excessive way.

- Permissiveness. It is characterized by an excessive concession in the child's demands and in reinforcing behaviors of caprice: "He let me do everything I want; crying or getting angry, I always get what I want."

- Restriction. It is characterized by an educational style that is the opposite of personalized and permissive education.

The scale is divided into the following factors according to the scale chosen for the mother's parenting style:

- Assistance education towards protectionism. It is characterized by a type of education based on love, care and approaches to the excessive protection of children.

- Personalized education. It is characterized by the respect and appreciation as people from parents to their children.

- Permissiveness. It is characterized by an excessive concession in the child's demands and in reinforcing behaviors of caprice: "She let me do everything I want; crying or getting angry, I always get what I want."

- Restriction. It is characterized by an educational style that is the opposite of personalized and permissive education.

### *Procedure*

We contacted via online with Spanish sports federations, and physically with coaches and athletes. The federations announced on their website the conditions to participate in the study. In this way the interested athletes contacted the main researcher. Volunteer participants sent an email to the researchers, and once they showed their interest in participating, they received the link to the research questionnaire. On the other hand, with regards to the contact with the athletes and coaches on a face-to-face basis, the athletes gave their email to the researchers to receive the instructions and the research questionnaire in their email. In both cases, they could do the questionnaire freely on the internet in their spare time. Once the participants accessed the questionnaire, they signed an informed consent. Subsequently, they began to complete the research questionnaire through "Google Forms". After completing the questionnaire, the data were recorded through the "Google Forms" application, in which the research questionnaires were saved in Excel electronic format.

### *Data Analysis*

For the statistical treatment of the data the SPSS 19 program was used. In order to know the characteristics of the sample, the descriptive statistics of average, minimum, maximum, frequency, percentage and standard deviation were made. Average differences when the variables were quantitative were analyzed through the Student's *t*-test for independent samples, using a 95% confidence level. On the other hand, in order to estimate the predictive value of educational styles on the level of competition and sports success, binary logistic regression was used. In order to analyze the effect size and to know the magnitude of the differences found in the Student's *t*-test, Cohen's *d* was used. In this case, according to Cohen (1988), the results of effect size were considered as follows:  $0.20 \leq d \leq 0.49$  = small;  $0.50 \leq d \leq 0.80$  = moderate;  $d \geq 0.80$  = large size effect.

## **RESULTS**

Firstly, in order to verify the differences in the parental educational styles according to the level of competition, a *t*-test was performed for independent samples, in which the sample was subdivided into the following binary classification: international level competition (ILC) and other levels competition



(OLC). Subsequently, Cohen's *d* was calculated from those variables that had obtained significant differences.

**Table 1.** Educational styles and Competition level

<i>Educational Styles Variables</i>	<i>ILC</i> (N=45) <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>OLC</i> (N=457) <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t (p)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Mother's Assistance education towards protectionism	6.40 (1.69)	6.34 (1.71)	0.19 (0.84)	
Mother's personalized education	3.33 (.85)	3.13 (1.20)	1.07 (0.28)	
Mother's permissiveness	0.20 (0.45)	0.19 (0.46)	0.04 (0.96)	
Mother's restriction	0.73 (0.98)	1.67 (2.23)	-5.21 (0.001)**	1.05
Father's Personalized Assistance Education	6.31 (1.45)	5.89 (1.85)	1.78 (0.07)	
Father's protectionism	2.44 (1.63)	2.48 (1.60)	-0.16 (0.86)	
Father's permissiveness	0.20 (0.50)	0.18 (0.43)	0.23 (0.81)	
Father's restriction	1.02 (1.48)	1.43 (1.97)	-1.37 (0.16)	

*Note.* ILC = International Level Competition; OLC = Other Levels Competition.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

As it is shown in Table 1, mother's restriction ( $p < 0.01$ ) obtained significant differences and a large size effect in favor of the athletes competing to other levels who obtained higher results. The remaining variables did not report statistically significant differences.

Finally, to know the predictive value of each of the statistically significant variables in the *t*-test, which in this case was the restriction of the mother, a binary logistic regression was performed using the introducing method. The input method was used to know the classification power of the variables. In the omnibus test, a Chi square of  $X^2 = 408.39$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) was obtained. The value obtained in  $R^2$  was 0.742 and the model correctly classified 91% of the cases. The results show that the more restrictive the mother is ( $OR = 0.701$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), the more likely their children compete at other levels different from the international level.

**Table 2.** Binary logistic regression to predict the value of the Mother's Restriction on the Competition Level

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>E.T</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>CI 95% for OR</i>	
						<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
Mother's restriction	-0.35	0.13	6.54	0.011	0.70	0.53	0.92

Second of all, in order to verify the differences in the parental educational styles in terms of sporting successes, a *t*-test for independent samples was carried out, in which the sample was subdivided into the following dichotomous classification: international successes (IS) and other athletes (OA). In order to carry out this division, the answer to the questionnaire's question "Have you achieved international success?" was taken into account and, based on their answer, the subjects were classified in the corresponding group. Subsequently, Cohen's *d* was calculated from those variables that had obtained significant differences.

**Table 3.** Educational styles and sports successes

<i>Educational styles variables</i>	<i>IS</i> ( <i>N=38</i> ) <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>OA</i> ( <i>N=464</i> ) <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t (p)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Mother's assistance education towards protectionism	5.81 (1.78)	6.39 (1.70)	-2.01 (0.044)*	0.18
Mother's personalized education	3.26 (0.92)	3.14 (1.19)	0.59 (0.55)	
Mother's permissiveness	0.15 (0.43)	0.20 (0.46)	-0.54 (0.58)	
Mother's restriction	1.26 (2.06)	1.61 (2.17)	-0.96 (0.33)	
Father's Personalized Assistance Education	5.89 (1.79)	5.93 (1.82)	-0.12 (0.90)	
Father's protectionism	2.34 (1.71)	2.49 (1.59)	-0.56 (0.57)	
Father's permissiveness	0.26 (0.55)	0.17 (0.42)	0.91 (0.36)	
Father's restriction	1.23 (1.58)	1.41 (1.96)	-0.54 (0.58)	

*Note.* IS = International success; OA = Other athletes.  
\**p*<0.05.



As can be seen in Table 3, the mother's assistance parenting ( $p < 0.05$ ) showed significant differences and a small size effect. On the other hand, the other variables of educational styles did not report statistically significant results.

Finally, in order to know the predictive value of each of the statistically significant variables in the t-test, which in this case was the mother's assistance education, a binary logistic regression was performed using the introducing method. In the omnibus test a square Chi of  $X^2 = 426.66$  was obtained ( $p < 0.001$ ). The value obtained in  $R^2$  was 0.76 and the model correctly classified 92.4% of the cases. The results show that, the closer is the mother's assistance education towards protectionism ( $OR = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the greater is the possibility of not having international successes.

**Table 4.** Binary logistic regression in order to predict the value of the mother's assistance education on sports successes

Variables	B	E.T	Wald	p	OR	CI 95% for OR	
						Lowest	Highest
Mother's assistance education	-0.26	0.08	11.37	0.001	0.76	0.65	0.89

## DISCUSSION

The first objective of this research was to know the differences in sports success according to parental educational styles. The results showed significant differences in the variable mother's assistance education towards protectionism, obtaining a positive relation with the children's lack of international successes. Thus, educational practices that protect athletes rather than develop their autonomy are related to lesser sports successes (Messer & Beidel, 1994; Spada et al., 2012). In the field of parental education, the negative relationship between father-mother protectionism and good adolescent socialization has been proven (Buschgens et al., 2010; Gol & Pettit, 2002; Mounts, 2008). At the same time, parental overprotection is related to anxiety problems, self-concept, poor behaviors and drug use (Clarke, Cooper & Creswell, 2013; Goldstein et al., 2005; Grolnick et al., 2008; Kiriakidis, 2006; Ladd & Pettit, 2002; Mounts, 2008; Spada et al., 2012). Therefore, after the findings of this study, maternal overprotection is shown to be unfavorable to achieve sporting success in adulthood.

The second objective was to verify the differences in the level of sports competition according to the educational styles of the parents. The results showed that restrictive mothers were not related to children competing at international level. These results are novel in the field of sports performance. However, in the field of health sports, studies have shown that children of authoritarian mothers show less sporting practice (Hennessy et al., 2010; Jago et al., 2011). On the other hand, in the field of education, the relationship between parental educational styles and educational success has been shown (Abar & Winsler, 2009; Chandler, 2006; Kim & Chung, 2003; Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009). Nevertheless, in this area there is controversy in the results,

since the various studies do not agree on establishing which parental educational style would be necessary to achieve success in academic results. These disparate results may be due to the diversity of classifications of parental educational styles used in each of the scientific studies and/or the cultural differences among the different populations they examine (Abar et al., 2009; Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000; Chandler, 2006; Fuentes, García, Gracia & Alarcón, 2015; Kim & Chung, 2003; Terwase et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2009). In any case, most studies agree that, in order to achieve a high educational and sports performance, support, affection, moderate control and good communication are necessary (Boiché & Sarrazin, 2009; Cohen et al., 2000; Fuentes et al., 2015; Holt & Hoar, 2006; Pugliese & Tinsley, 2007; Wilson & Spink, 2010). On the contrary, the characteristics of a restrictive mother are far away from support, affection, moderate control and good communication. This type of mother is characterized by an inadequate communication with her children, establishing excessively perfectionist rules, constant use of punishments and an incessant reassertion of power (Baumrind 1996; Kaufmann et al., 2000). On the other hand, children present emotional maladjustment, lower motivation for the sport, low autonomy, low self-confidence, aggressiveness and competitive anxiety (González-García, Pelegrín & Carballo, 2015). Therefore, the results seem to show that the restriction of the mother is not related to competing at international level.

The conclusions obtained in the present work are the following:

- The level of sports competition is influenced by the educational styles of the parents. Thus, the protective mother profile is not related to children competing at international level.

- Sports successes are influenced by educational styles. Thus, a more restrictive maternal educational profile is not related to children achieving success at international level.

- As a final conclusion, it is confirmed that parental educational styles are shown as variables that can predict success and the level of sports competition.

For future research it is suggested to expand knowledge in the field of parental educational styles and sports performance, since there is no bibliography prior to this work. In this sense, it would be interesting to replicate this study by separating educational styles into parental attitudes. In this way, the educational styles would be broken down to compile more information on each of the parental attitudes that can potentially influence on the sports performance.

The main limitations of this study are the following:

- The questionnaire used to measure the variable Parental Educational Styles (Self-Assessment Multifactorial Childhood Adjustment Test) is not adapted for the population over 18 years old. Therefore, the questions of the questionnaire were made referring to the most representative period of parenting.

- The classification used for the analysis of Parental Educational Styles only takes into account the influence of parental practices on children. There are numerous theories that measure Parental Educational Styles, but in this work the classification of the Self-Assessment Multifactorial Childhood Adjustment Test has been adopted (Hernández, 1998), which is based on Baumrind's works (1967, 1970).

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