

Who Benefits from Parental Intervention Programs in Youth Sport? A Systematic Review



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INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement is a recognized determinant of young athletes' well-being, motivation, and performance. Different types of parental support have been linked to more adaptive outcomes in youth sport, but excessive pressure and outcome-focused involvement have also been associated with anxiety, burnout, and dropout.

Despite a growing number of intervention programs designed to help parents adopt more supportive behaviors, evidence on their effectiveness **remains fragmented** and methodologically heterogeneous.

OBJECTIVES

This **systematic review** aimed to evaluate the effects of parental intervention programs on parental behavior, parental mental health, and athlete outcomes in youth sport, positioning athlete-level outcomes as a central endpoint alongside parental change.

METHODOLOGY

Three electronic **databases** (EBSCO, Scopus, and Web of Science) were searched following PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The protocol was registered in PROSPERO (CRD420250651529). From 2,188 identified records, 16 studies met the eligibility criteria ($\kappa = .696$); two were later excluded from the Level of Evidence Synthesis, resulting in **14 studies** in the final analysis. Quality was assessed with JBI Critical Appraisal Checklists; quantitative/mixed findings were synthesized via Level of Evidence (van Tulder et al., 2003), qualitative via Thematic Synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

RESULTS

Methodological quality was high across the 14 included studies (quantitative $M = 89\%$; qualitative $M = 88\%$; mixed-methods $M = 82\%/74\%$).

The Level of Evidence Synthesis reflected inconsistency across studies and the absence of RCTs, not an absence of positive effects.

Thematic Synthesis identified that programs involving athletes directly tended to produce a **broader range of outcomes** than parent-only programs.

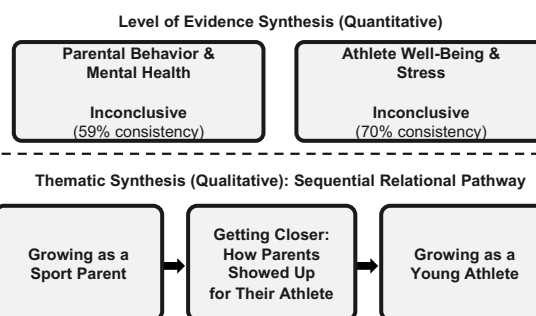


Figure 1. Level of Evidence Synthesis outcomes and sequential Thematic Synthesis pathway.

CONCLUSION

This review shows that parental intervention programs hold clear potential to **improve** the youth sport experience for parents and athletes alike. The field needs rigorous controlled trials, dyadic designs, and standardized measures in order to potentiate the found sequential pathway.

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