

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS OF WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

### ENVOLVIMENTO DOS FAMILIARES NO PROCESSO DE FORMAÇÃO ESPORTIVA NO BASQUETEBOL FEMININO

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#### RESUMO

O desenvolvimento de uma carreira esportiva é influenciado, tanto por fatores pessoais, como motivação e objetivos no esporte, quanto por fatores contextuais, como exigências do treinamento e da competição, cobranças, acompanhamentos e incentivos advindos de dirigentes, treinadores, colegas e familiares. Ao considerar, em especial, a relevância e a influência da família no cenário esportivo competitivo de jovens atletas, este estudo teve como objetivo analisar o envolvimento dos familiares no processo de formação esportiva de 31 atletas de basquetebol feminino pertencentes a um clube esportivo catarinense. A coleta das informações foi realizada por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas com atletas, dirigentes e treinadores esportivos, as quais foram analisadas pela técnica de análise de conteúdo, com auxílio do *software* NVivo (versão 9,2). A maioria dos familiares das atletas praticou ou ainda pratica esportes, em especial, o basquetebol. Verificou-se predominância de envolvimento moderado dos familiares na carreira esportiva das jovens atletas, materializado especialmente pela presença nas competições e pelo fornecimento de apoio informativo, emocional e concreto. Além disso, constataram-se condutas positivas dos familiares em relação às cobranças ou às exigências de rendimento, por parte das atletas, na prática do basquetebol.

**Palavras-chave:** Relações familiares. Pais. Esportes.

#### ABSTRACT

The development of a sports career is influenced by personal factors such as motivation and goals in sport, as well as by contextual factors such as training and competition requirements, follow-ups and incentives from managers, coaches, colleagues and family members. In considering, in particular, the relevance and influence of the family in the competitive sports scenario of young athletes, this study had the objective of analyze the involvement of family members in the process of sports development of 31 women's basketball athletes belonging to a sports club in the state of Santa Catarina/Brazil. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with athletes, sports managers, and sports coaches, which were analyzed by content analysis technique in NVivo software (version 9.2). Most family members of the athletes practiced or is still practicing sports, especially basketball. There was predominance of family members' moderate involvement in the young athletes' sports career, which is embodied by the presence in the competitions and by providing informational, emotional, and concrete support. Moreover, there were found positive behaviors of family members regarding to the athletes' performance requirements in basketball practice.

**Keywords:** Family relations. Parents. Sports.

#### Introduction

The quality of a child athlete's relationships with other social actors such as family members, teachers, coaches and friends is very important for positive sport development<sup>1-3</sup>, in addition to being one of the main influences on engagement in sports programs<sup>4</sup>. Particularly, family participation in the athletic formation process of children and youths is deemed essential both during the initial years when they experiment with this practice and in career transition processes<sup>5,6</sup>.

The analysis of athletic formation and development, from a sporting trajectory, confirms that family members are the characters who most act with the athlete, being the main

coadjuvants, both in terms of guiding sports practice and of emotional and financial support<sup>7</sup>. By receiving proper family support and encouragement during their first contact with sports, athletes feel more motivated and confident to overcome any challenges and dilemmas<sup>8</sup> and mobilize more efforts to achieve their goals, which leads to the enrichment of individual experience and, in the long run, their permanence in sport<sup>6,9</sup>.

It should be emphasized that family influence on the progress of young athletes can be both positive and negative<sup>10,11</sup>, with family members being also capable of becoming the main source of demotivation, frustration and drop-out<sup>12</sup>. From this perspective, it is evident that parental involvement in sports is as a *continuum* that begins with under-involvement, goes through moderate involvement and ends up in over-involvement<sup>13</sup>.

Under-involvement is marked by a relative lack of emotional and financial commitment, as well as lack of follow-up, little engagement in activities related to the young athlete's sports career, and lack of assistance in the establishment of realistic results and performance goals. Moderate involvement (healthier) is reflected by the presence of family members in the athletic life of children and adolescents, with guidance, support and help in the setting of realistic goals, without too much pressure, including financial and emotional participation to encourage sports practice. Over-involvement, in its turn, is characterized by excessive (unhealthy) participation of parents in the young player's athletic life, without separation of their desires, fantasies and needs from those of the future athlete. At this level of involvement, family activities change as a result of sports activities, and the pressure, more pronounced around individual and collective performance, is violated<sup>13</sup>. Thus, in the *continuum* of involvement, the provision of support from family members is worth highlighting, which may take a character that is emotional (concern about comfort and security in sport), informational (advice or guidance on possible solutions to problems faced in sport) and tangible (concrete assistance such as transport and financial help)<sup>14</sup>.

In this scenario, it is worth noting that in recent years research on the development of expertise has addressed family involvement, support from parents and coaches and also the influence of the environment on the future expert athlete's formation<sup>6,15</sup>. In this sense, some investigations in Brazil<sup>9,11,16-26</sup> and abroad<sup>5,10,13,27-29</sup> stand out presenting information about parental involvement in sports career, especially of professional and elite athletes.

The research proposals mentioned seek to understand the levels of and reasons for parental involvement in sports, elucidating how it can contribute positively to self-realization in sport<sup>30</sup>. However, in the specific field of basketball, there seems to be a lack of studies of this nature that analyze family involvement in the different stages of an athlete's formation in sport, and the few published studies have investigated professional and junior athletes<sup>24</sup> or children initiating in the modality<sup>31</sup>. Thus, considering that follow-up and encouragement from family members for the engagement of young athletes in sport are factors that bring pleasure and motivation, in addition to influencing permanence in sport and the construction of successful sports careers in the long term, the aim of this study was to analyze the involvement of family members in the formation process of female basketball athletes from a sports club in the state of Santa Catarina.

## Methods

### Study Type

The present study is characterized as descriptive<sup>32</sup>, with qualitative approach of information<sup>33</sup>.

### Participants

The participants were 31 female basketball players (11 to 18 years old) from a sports club in the state of Santa Catarina, belonging to the following categories: kids (up to 13 years old), junior (up to 14 years old), teen (up to 16 years old) and youth (up to 18 years old). In addition to the athletes, two sports officials (president and former sports director) and the three coaches working with beginners and female teams of the investigated club collaborated with the investigation.

The investigated club was selected due to its successful history in the formation of female basketball players in Santa Catarina, annually providing athletes to teams from the state that compete in junior Brazilian championships. It is located in a city in the western region of Santa Catarina and has approximately 200 children and adolescents playing basketball in its schools and competitive teams. It should be noted that all female athletes participating in state competitions (kids, junior, teen and youth) participated in the study (Table 1) and that younger athletes completed teams with few female players of the age of each competition.

**Table 1.** Profile of the investigated female basketball players

| Athletes     | n         | Age (years)               | Time playing basketball (years) |
|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
|              |           | Mean (standard deviation) | Mean (standard deviation)       |
| Kids         | 12        | 12.4 (0.79)               | 2.2 (1.19)                      |
| Junior       | 02        | 14.0 (0.00)               | 2.2 (2.12)                      |
| Teen         | 09        | 15.3 (0.50)               | 6.3 (2.18)                      |
| Youth        | 08        | 17.3 (0.46)               | 6.9 (1.36)                      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>14.6 (2.08)</b>        | <b>4.61 (2.70)</b>              |

Source: The authors

### Procedures

The research project was approved by the Ethics Committee on Research Involving Human Beings of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (process 1170/2010). Participation in the research was made possible through the signing of the Informed Consent Form by coaches, managers, athletes over 18 years old and parents or legal guardians of underage athletes. Information was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were performed individually, recorded, transcribed and then validated by the participants. All interviews were conducted by the same investigator. Interviews with athletes were conducted at training sites (court or gym), before or after sessions, as well as at the home of two athletes who lived in another city, while interviews with the coaches were conducted at the gym or at the sports department, and those with the managers took place at their respective workplaces.

Interview scripts for athletes, coaches and managers were elaborated having as reference: parental involvement in sports<sup>13</sup> and provision of support<sup>14</sup>. The interviews with the athletes had the following generating themes: family members who play sports; family encouragement to sport engagement and permanence; family participation in the club's board; family presence at training sessions and matches; feelings about the presence of family members at training sessions and matches; pressure for results (individual and/or collective); support provided by family members for sports. The interview with the coaches and managers, in turn, was based on the following themes: characteristics of the members of the board and of the fiscal council; parental involvement in basketball and in the club's board; parental support for the athletes' sports careers.

### Information Analysis

The information obtained was analyzed through the content analysis technique, which consists of three phases: pre-exploration of the material; selection of units of analysis; categorization and subcategorization<sup>34</sup>. The process of organizing and analyzing the interviews was performed using NVivo software (version 9.2) in three stages: preparation; decoding; data analysis<sup>35</sup>. The categories and subcategories of analysis established a priori and non-a priori<sup>34</sup> were:

- Sports among family members: basketball, other modalities;
- Involvement of family members<sup>13</sup>: under-involvement (family absence); moderate involvement (family presence, provision of emotional, informational and concrete support<sup>14</sup>, behaviors, routine changes);
- Over-involvement: pressure for individual good performance and collective results, encouragement to sport drop-out.

## Results

### *Sports Practice: The Experience of the Athletes' Families*

Most of the basketball athletes investigated (table 2) reported that they have family members who play or who have played sports (n=84%), especially basketball (n=80%), and that their closest relatives (siblings, father and/or mother) are the most engaged with sports (n=73%).

**Table 2.** Sports practice among relatives of the investigated athletes

| Relatives (used to) play sports | n(%)        | Relatives that (used to) play sports | n(%)   |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes                             | 26(84)      | Sibling                              | 09(35) |
| No                              | 05(16)      | Father and/or mother and sibling     | 07(27) |
| <b>Modalities played</b>        | <b>n(%)</b> | Father and/or mother                 | 03(12) |
| Basketball                      | 08(32)      | Father, sibling, cousin, uncle/aunt  | 02(8)  |
| Basketball and other modalities | 12(48)      | Uncle/aunt or cousin                 | 04(15) |
| Other modalities                | 05(20)      | Sibling and cousin                   | 01(3)  |

**Source:** The authors

My whole family plays sports. I've always had a lot of experience in sports because of them [...] (Kids C)

My mom participates in inter-neighborhood games. She is the organizer of our neighborhood [...]. She always wants me to participate in some modality. [...] My sisters too participate in inter-neighborhood championships here in our city. (Kids F)

My mom was drafted to the Brazilian volleyball team. (Kids L).

My dad, because he played [...]. He encouraged me. (Junior A).

My younger sister is training with my coach. My brother trains with her too [...] (Youth D).

### *Involvement of Family Members in Sports: From Participation to Provision of Support*

The involvement of family members in the athletic formation process of the young female basketball players was analyzed through an under-involvement, moderate involvement and over-involvement *continuum*, based on the athletes' narratives about encouragement to sports, participation in the club's board and presence at matches, competitions and meetings.

Table 3 illustrates the players' perception of the involvement and encouragement received by their family members for basketball.

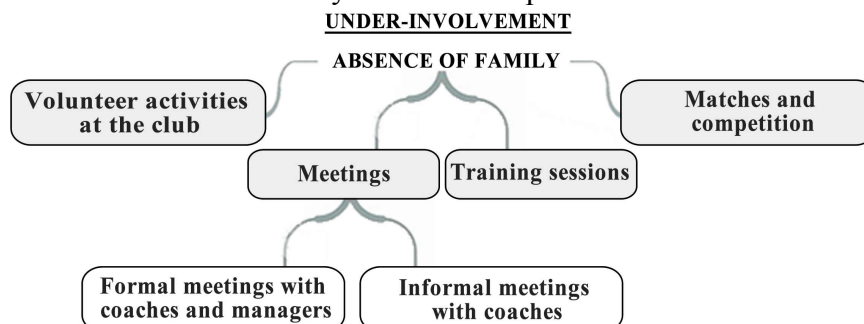
**Table 3.** Involvement of family members in the players' athletic formation process

| Encouragement to playing sports          | n(%)        | Members who encourage most         | n(%)        |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Yes                                      | 30(97)      | Father                             | 09(30)      |
| No                                       | 01(3)       | Mother                             | 08(27)      |
| <b>Participation in the club's board</b> | <b>n(%)</b> | Father and mother                  | 06(20)      |
| Yes                                      | 07(23)      | Sibling                            | 01(3)       |
| No                                       | 24(77)      | Mother and sibling                 | 02(7)       |
| <b>Presence at training sessions</b>     | <b>n(%)</b> | Father, mother and sibling         | 02(7)       |
| Yes                                      | 07(23)      | Grandfather or grandmother         | 02(7)       |
| No                                       | 19(61)      | <b>Attendance to club meetings</b> | <b>n(%)</b> |
| Sometimes                                | 05(16)      | Yes                                | 20(65)      |
| <b>Presence at matches</b>               | <b>n(%)</b> | No                                 | 04(13)      |
| Yes                                      | 24(77)      | Sometimes                          | 07(23)      |
| No                                       | 03(10)      |                                    |             |
| Sometimes                                | 04(13)      |                                    |             |

Source: The authors

In this scenario, the results obtained in the present study evidenced that few athletes from the studied sports club report the under-involvement of their family members as to their participation in sport, considering that only one of them informs not receiving any kind of encouragement from her family to play basketball (figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Under-involvement of family members in sport



Source: The authors

The absence of family members at meetings organized by the club's board and at training sessions is justified by lack of time, or work-related activities. The reasons mentioned for non-attendance at matches and competitions relate to work or the distance between the venue and the family's residence. In addition, some family members believe they will bring bad luck if they watch the games, and some athletes request their absence for not feeling comfortable playing with relatives and friends in the stands.

At matches sometimes, because I don't let her. [...]. My mom went to my first match and I have trouble breathing, she would go and keep yelling, 'Stand straight ... close your mouth'. I was a bit embarrassed and now I can't play with anyone watching me. (Kids C)

My mom came once to watch a match and we lost. She said that after this match she would never watch one again because she brought bad luck, so she does not come anymore (Teen G).

Complementarily, board members, and especially coaches, show concern about the absence of some family members (especially parents) in the players' athletic activities, particularly in activities related to collaboration with the club and in matches and competitions.

In management, participation is more for board members. Parents who are not involved in the board come and watch the matches, but helping the club is more for the board. [...] (Coach A).

It's strange. I have athletes who are 17 already and you still do not know their parents. They are not present and active people in their daughters' sports life. [...]. In women's basketball, when they are initiating, their parents participate, but then it's like: 'I've seen how it is, I will not leave the house to see my daughter play again'. They come until initiation, but then they grow and are left on their own (Coach B).

Over-involvement of family members in the athletic life of the female basketball player was rarely seen in the reports about the pressure from parents and siblings for both individual and collective sport performance (Figure 2). In some cases, this over-involvement occurs in the form of encouragement for the athletes to quit playing basketball, so they engage in other activities, or because family members believe that basketball will not provide a decent future for them.

**Figure 2.** Over-involvement of family members in sport



Source: The authors

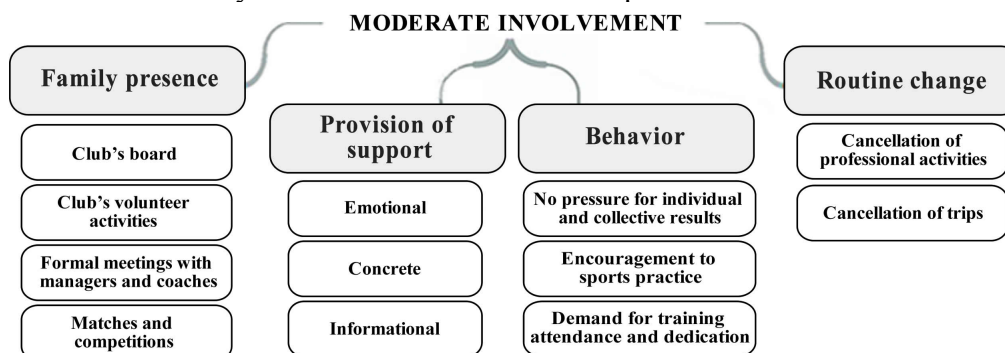
I think it's normal for both father and mother to argue with their children when they make a mistake. [...] They make me even more nervous than I already am during the match, so I can't play very well [...] it does not matter, if you are losing or winning, they are always yelling and swearing. If we do something, they swear, if we commit a foul they swear, if the judge does something, they swear. [...]. I wish they were there to cheer, without pressure, I feel very nervous during the game (Teen B).

My dad always wanted me to play volleyball and my mom wanted us to be a model, but I never liked it. So much so that I gave an interview yesterday with my sister talking about that. My little sister, I'm the middle one. She's in this model business. [...]. My dad says that basketball is not something that will give me a future, he always wanted us to play volleyball, because basketball is not as seen as volleyball (Youth C).

Despite reports of under and over-involvement, the information obtained from the athletes, coaches and managers revealed the prevalence of moderate forms of family involvement. This form of involvement is detailed in the participation of relatives in sports activities (volunteer work in the club's board, participation in meetings organized by the club, awareness of activities promoted to players; effective presence at matches and competitions), provision of support (emotional - encouragement, comfort and motivation to continue sports

practice, informational - tips on matches from parents and siblings, concrete - financial assistance, transport for training, organization of travel equipment) and positive behavior as to pressure.

**Figure 3.** Moderate family involvement of relatives in sport



Source: The authors

My dad is vice president and my mom handles the finances. They are always involved with issues related to all teams, for example, they organize documents, welcome rival teams that will play in the city, organize places for accommodation, gym, scoreboard, water for the athletes and referees, account settlements, among others. They are incredibly involved with the board (Youth A).

I really like it when my brother comes and watches me, because he stands in the middle of the bleachers helping me. I play a lot better when they come see me. They say the things I'm doing wrong, it's a lot better (Kids A).

Athletes whose parents participate perform better. It seems they have more encouragement: 'My dad is there'. They feel happy, cheerful. This is important to them, they get motivated, they feel valued (Former Sports Director).

Nowadays family interaction is significant, some mothers are extremely participative in our sports context, cooperating, helping in the best way possible [...] most are always present (Coach C).

An aspect to highlight is that the vast majority of family members usually come to matches in the city or nearby municipalities, while only a few, in major competitions, end up traveling around the state to follow them. The presence of relatives ends up generating both motivation (happiness) and demotivation (fear, anxiety) in the athletes, depending on the level of pressure from family members and on how the players receive this involvement. In addition, it is observed that, in many cases, the anxiety comes from the athletes' own self-pressure rather than from the actual pressure from their families.

I have to do everything right, I don't know, it seems like I have to do everything right when they're watching me. I feel some pressure, but nothing bad. I feel pressure without them pressuring me. It's for them to realize that I take training seriously (Teen D).

I like their presence at the match, my dad motivates me a lot. They watch me here and when I play in nearby cities. My dad even went to the OLESC last year, my father and a teammate's. I like it because it gives me more strength so I can show what I know to them, that I don't come and train for nothing (Teen F).

[...] she goes to all matches she can, she brings my godmother, who is almost a mother. They participate a lot. I like it because it is a way for me to see that they are there for me, that whatever I do because of basketball, they will be by my side. I really like it when they come to see me. They cheer a lot (Youth D).

## Discussion

The involvement of family members in the athletic formation of the investigated players was deemed moderate, mainly considering participation in the sports activities of the latter, provision of support, and positive behavior in relation to pressure for performance. These findings reinforce the assumption that family plays important roles regarding the beginning and continuation of an individual's sports career and can contribute in a variety of ways to the development of youths in the competitive sports scene<sup>1,16</sup>. Moreover, values and behaviors, especially on the part of parents, have a strong influence on children being encouraged to play sports<sup>36</sup>.

Bloom<sup>36</sup> notes that the choice for a specific modality has more to do with the availability of specific facilities than with sports practice in the family, that is, the sport talent area (sports) is more encouraged by parents, while the specific talent field chosen by the athletes (modality) depends on the experiences of each individual. However, the evidence in the present study indicates that relatives' sport experience seems to have become a general motivating factor for the involvement of the young women in sport and, specifically, in basketball. Similarly, García-Moya et al.<sup>37</sup> and Serrano et al.<sup>26</sup>, when investigating Spanish adolescents and Portuguese children, respectively, also found that the presence of sports in the life of family members influences the regular participation of youths in sports activities. In these cases, parents with athletic experience often provide more support and engage more with their children's practice, frequently taking active roles in clubs with which the latter are affiliated<sup>26</sup>.

In this context, it is important to reflect that although children and adolescents engage with a given sport due to encouragement and example of family members, their wishes and desires when choosing and keeping this practice must be respected, since sport participation by imposition and not by will can cause discouragement and disinterest towards continuing it<sup>22</sup>.

When it comes to the level of family involvement in sports practice, it should be emphasized that over-appreciation of sport talent can impair competitive behavior, contributing to the appearance of problems that may affect how the athlete in formation relates to sports<sup>1</sup>. In this sense, parental involvement in sports can be drawn in a *continuum* that goes from under-involvement to moderate involvement and, finally, to over-involvement. Under-involvement is characterized by a lack of emotional, financial or functional commitment, as well as by absence at matches and sports events, in addition to little contact with coaches and participation in volunteer activities<sup>13</sup>.

Similarly to the results found in the present investigation, studies conducted with junior football and basketball players in Minas Gerais and football players in São Paulo<sup>9,23,24</sup>, as well as with children playing basketball in Rio Grande do Sul<sup>31</sup>, reported a lack of parental involvement in children's training, which can be attributed to poor knowledge and the limited perspectives they have about sports and their children to become professional athletes<sup>24</sup>, or even for believing they are already fully motivated to practice the modality<sup>9</sup>.

While under-involvement shows lack of initiative or interest from family members around the sports practice of the athletes, in over-involvement family members end up participating excessively in the athletes' sports life, not knowing how to separate their own desires and fantasies from the real needs of the latter<sup>13</sup>. This high level of demand from closer



relatives can create an atmosphere of rigid rules and unrealistic expectations around the sport phenomenon<sup>8</sup>, contributing to the athlete not feeling well while playing<sup>1</sup>.

Family over-involvement in sport matters has been reported by some investigations. In tennis<sup>10</sup>, promising athletes who did not reach elite status highlighted the negative influence of family members on their careers due to episodes of verbal violence, depreciation, exacerbated rigor and ambition of large dimensions. Likewise, gymnastics coaches<sup>20</sup> observed the negative influence that parents exert on their children, especially regarding the financial interest that surrounds the sports career, while Rio Grande do Sul's athletes beginning in football<sup>22</sup> evidenced that their parents usually participate in matches, giving information, shouting and gesticulating. However, such behavior eventually generates conflicts and tensions in the young player in relation to the tasks provided and instructed by his coach.

Merit recognition by family can be based on the financial compensation received by the athletes, reinforcing the understanding that they could have significant returns on investments made in their children's career<sup>20</sup>. This comprehension reinforces the importance of family members challenging themselves to find the right balance between their interest in sports practice and the interference with the coach's job so as to avoid projecting their personal goals into the athletic success of young athletes<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, in the over-development context, it is reflected that family pressure can negatively affect basic psychological needs and the motivation of developing athletes<sup>29</sup>. In addition, it is recognized, in regard to family orientation, especially from parents, that it is of fundamental importance that the latter are aware of their actions and attitudes, because at the same time that their participation can help, it can also hamper the sports development of young athletes. Although in most cases parents have positive intentions, certain attitudes can often lead to excessive consequences and overwhelming demands that will leave negative marks on the future of their children's sports career<sup>25</sup>.

Moderate involvement of family members, predominant in the present study, is seen as the most adequate one, especially when the athletes are in formation categories. This level of involvement is characterized by firmness and balance in their orientation to the athletes, as well as by providing emotional and financial support and by helping to set realistic goals<sup>13</sup>. Similar evidence of moderate involvement was found in studies conducted with athletes in formation: basketball players from Rio Grande do Sul<sup>31</sup>, football players from Minas Gerais<sup>9</sup>, indoor football players from Paraná<sup>19</sup> and tennis players from São Paulo<sup>38</sup>. Though not very active in training sessions, parents of basketball players from Rio Grande do Sul and football players from Minas Gerais were highly involved with their children's competitions, either at competition venues or on TV. Parents of indoor football female players from Paraná and tennis players from São Paulo also participated actively in their athletic formation process, keeping up with their matches regularly and helping in the development of their sports career and in their human formation. On the other hand, in the investigation with football athletes<sup>4</sup>, most parents did not go to or rarely were present in their children's matches, failing to encourage them to sports practice.

Such information reinforces the importance of family participation in the competitive life of young athletes. Considering that children and adolescents value matches, encouragement and follow-up on the part of family members at these moments can represent security and self-affirmation factors for athletes<sup>4,6</sup>. Complementarily, the adoption of positive behaviors by family members in relation to victories and defeats, as well as polite treatment of sports actors (athletes, coaches, referees, heads), makes it more likely that young athletes act in a similar way both in situations of success as well as failure<sup>27</sup>.

Provision of support, be it financial, emotional or concrete<sup>14</sup>, has also been seen in the literature on Sports Science. Investigating tennis and swimming talents, Bloom<sup>36</sup> found that

parents were willing to devote their time, resources and energy to give each of their children the best possible conditions. In that study, the author observed that the parents of the athletes were interested in sport and encouraged their children to play one or more sports, in addition to believing in the benefits of sport participation. Similarly, research in gymnastics<sup>20</sup>, tennis<sup>38</sup> and basketball<sup>24</sup> found that children received significant financial support from family members. On the other hand, the parents of gymnasts<sup>20,12</sup>, baseball players<sup>39</sup>, tennis players<sup>38</sup> and football players<sup>18</sup> sought to provide emotional support to their children in their sport participation, through approval, recognition, encouragement and setting of realistic expectations on their athletic abilities<sup>17</sup>, which significantly interferes with the motivational level of young athletes for sports practice<sup>18,39</sup>.

Families that are committed to their children's participation in sports somehow end up finding the necessary financial resources, which may lead to sacrifices in their own social or leisure life<sup>5</sup>. Thus, it is of fundamental importance that encouragement and support from family members are accompanied by the players' favorable perception, so as to harmonize both the concrete involvement of parents/siblings and the level of involvement that the athletes themselves wish their families to have<sup>16</sup>.

Besides the participation of family members as spectators of training sessions and matches, another relevant factor identified in the present study concerns their involvement in the club's board. The formation of parental associations is vital, as it assists in administrative, pedagogical and social activities, as well as in the raising of funds for the constitution and maintenance of competitive teams. Furthermore, this positive participation of family members often allows the establishment of communication channels that are more open and closer to the coaches<sup>20</sup>.

From this perspective, it is highlighted that family encouragement can be the main pillar to a healthy and secure environment for the athletes to develop and to expand their potentialities, besides acquiring greater security and motivation to continue their sports career<sup>21</sup>. In this case, the parents themselves acknowledge that sports provide athletes in formation the development of positive self-perceptions, personal responsibility (ethics, commitment) and positive values, as well as the construction of friendships, teamwork and cooperation, learning to respect the authorities and to increase their dedication in school<sup>28</sup>.

Despite exploring the level of involvement of family members in the athletic formation process of basketball athletes from different categories, a subject little investigated in the Brazilian literature on Sports Sciences, the present study presented as main limitations the fact of not comprehending all athletes and the investigated club's board members and not examining the perceptions the relatives themselves have of their involvement in the young female players' athletic formation process, in addition to not considering other socioeconomic conditions of the families, which certainly influence, positively or negatively, their level of involvement in the basketball played by the athletes.

Considering the proposal of this study of analyzing, exclusively, athletes participating in a certain sports competition, the selection of a larger group of athletes can be explored in future investigations so that one understands how the result of the selective process for participation in competitions influences the involvement of families in the athletic practice of young athletes. Another topic, still little discussed and that can be investigated from the evidence in the present study, concerns the strategies that have been used by sports clubs to increase the integration and participation of athletes' families in the administrative and competitive routine, in order to stimulate the constant exchange of knowledge between all the agents involved and to build collectively long-term athletic formation projects. In this sense, further investigation on this theme is recommended, not only for its potential contribution to the formation of professional athletes, but mainly for its important role in the development of

values and life principles, as well as of positive perceptions and behaviors of the athlete in his or her relationship with sport throughout his or her life. Thus, it is believed that the increasing production of evidence in this respect will aid in the construction of more and more welcoming sports practice environments, in which family members, coaches and sports club heads are able to work collaboratively to empower athletes to develop positively and pleasantly through sport.

## Conclusions

This study aimed to analyze the involvement of family members in the athletic formation process of female basketball players from a sports club in the state of Santa Catarina. It revealed predominance, in the athletes' perception, of moderate family involvement in their athletic formation, which is based on family presence, provision of support and positive behaviors in relation to sports practice.

The evidence found in the study allowed identifying predominantly positive consequences of family involvement in the formation process of the investigated athletes. In fact, family encouragement can boost the athletes' confidence in their own abilities, especially when they are not skilled or mature enough to make autonomous decisions in their personal and athletic lives.

This research emphasized that the athletes were born in families in which practice of different sport modalities (and especially basketball) played an important role in their individual personal trajectories, which was unveiled as a motivating factor for the entry and permanence of the athletes in the activities promoted by the investigated basketball club. Regarding the level of family involvement in the teaching-learning-training process experienced by the athletes, it was verified that parents and/or closer relatives participated moderately in the sports routine of the girls, either by presence in matches, emotional encouragement, financial support, or even by pressure for certain attitudes during training sessions and matches. This moderate level of involvement, in turn, has contributed to the construction of an environment that is favorable to the positive development of the investigated basketball athletes.

So a more in-depth analysis of family involvement in the sport development process of athletes, it would be necessary to consider as well the presence of other mediating variables in this process, such as educational values cultivated at home, number of members, family members' socioeconomic and educational levels, besides the quality of sport experiences in the past, which may influence the construction of certain conceptions about the meaning and the role that sport should play in the lives of young athletes in formation. Thus, considering that these aspects were not possible to be contemplated in the investigation, the analysis of found evidence was performed with caution.

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