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Factors Associated With Youth Athletes Discontinuing Vs. Staying In A Sport

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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH ATHLETES DISCONTINUING VS. STAYING IN
A SPORT

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Abstract

This study investigated the factors that go into youth athletes deciding to drop out of a sport versus staying in the sport. To test this, current Otterbein University athletes and non-athletes took an online questionnaire that asked specific questions pertaining to their experience in sport participation. We tested the hypotheses that (1) those who began specializing in sports at a younger age will be less likely to continue participation, (2) parental pressure would be a reason for dropout and parental support would influence the athletes to stay in, and (3) those who continued participation in sports would perceive a healthy lifestyle to be more important than those who are not currently involved. Results indicated partial support for these hypotheses. Supporting Hypothesis 1, specializing during younger vs. older years was associated with dropping out. Counter to Hypothesis 2, those who continued in their sport indicated having higher parental pressure than those who dropped out. In support of Hypothesis 2, however, those who continued participation indicated having higher parental support than those who dropped out. Finally, in support of Hypothesis 3, those who continued also indicated having increased perceptions of the value of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Factors Associated With Youth Athletes Discontinuing Vs. Staying In A Sport

Youth sport participation has become increasingly prevalent in recent years due to a shift in organized youth sports (Ferguson & Stern, 2014). With parental concerns about their young children freely playing on their own, organized sports for young children have become a popular demand (Neely & Holt, 2014). Young children are at an essential age for important and necessary physical, social, psychological and emotional development (McCarthy, Jones, Harwood & Olivier, 2010), and researchers have discovered the potential benefits of youth sport participation. In participating in sports at younger ages, this provides children with a unique opportunity to take advantage of the essential developmental experiences, explore their abilities, gain confidence and build relationships (Neely & Holt, 2014). In addition, positive youth sport experiences have also been associated with physical activity enjoyment as young adults, thus suggesting that youth sport participation potentially provides long-term and long-lasting effects on individuals' well-being (Russell & Limle, 2013).

While there has been an increase in the prevalence of organized youth sport participation, there has also been an increase in dropout rates among youth athletes (Russell & Limle, 2013). Considering the potential benefits of youth sport participation, this raises concerns worthy of further exploration. According to Russell and Limle (2013), in more recent years, the environment surrounding organized youth sports has become less fun-oriented and more encompassed by intense training and highly structured environments. With this intense training, there has been a newly coined term known as early sports specialization, which is the year-round training in one specific sport with the exclusion of other sports (Ferguson & Stern, 2014). This

level of intensity surrounding youth sport environments suggests that that the main concerns of youth sport participation has shifted to developing elite athletes and training them to excel.

According to Ericsson and colleagues, as cited in Ferguson and Stern (2014), highly intense and repetitive practice starting at a young age increases the likelihood of developing elite performance for musicians, mathematicians and chess players. This means that these researchers have discovered that the development of elite performance begins with deliberate practice at a younger age, as it is potentially difficult to attain later in life. With these findings, athletes' coaches and parents have been convinced that the intensity of training at younger ages might be useful for athletes as well. While coaches and parents have been convinced that this kind of training is also necessary for the development of elite performance in athletes, researchers are suggesting that this might be potentially detrimental for the athlete. According to Russell and Limle (2013), young athletes who specialized in a single sport and experienced this kind of intensity were found to be less likely to actively participate in the same sport as young adults in comparison to non-specializers.

Looking further into the effects of intense training, researchers have noted that age is an important determinant of whether youth athletes can adapt well to the demands of sport specialization. While young athletes are in important years of development, they might not acquire the ability to handle intense training during their younger years of sport involvement. According to DiFori, Benjamin, Brenner, Gregory, Landry and Luke (2014), in order to decrease the possibility of placing unrealistic goals and expectations on the youth athletes, parents and coaches need to understand that the development of motor, cognitive and social skills occur differently for everyone. This suggests that coaches and parents need to make sure they are focusing on the athlete's developmental needs in order to ensure they are not forming

unattainable goals. By placing unattainable goals on young athletes, parents and coaches are increasing the risk of the athlete experiencing overuse injuries. In terms of cognitive functioning, psychological skills have been deemed necessary for athletes as they potentially provide an increase in motivation and self-confidence (McCarthy, Jones, Harwood & Olivier, 2010).

Although, younger youth athletes may not be psychologically mature enough to understand the importance, responsibility and commitment necessary to handle the intensity of specializing in a single sport prior to age 10 (Ferguson & Stern, 2014). Yet despite consideration of these developmental issues, Russell (2014) found that a majority of athletes are beginning to specialize in a sport before age 10.

With that being said, young athletes who were involved in intense training were found to be at an increased risk of dropout (Wall & Côté, 2007). A common reason for discontinuation included the athletes feeling under too much pressure from their parents and coaches to perform well. Especially at younger ages, youths are looking up to their parents for guidance and want to meet their parent's expectations. When an athlete feels like they are not meeting these expectations, they become frustrated when they are experiencing too much pressure to perform well (Bremer, 2012). Also, athletes are experiencing pressure from coaches who are potentially providing athletes with an environment that mainly focuses on skill mastery and stressing over winning and losing (Neely & Holt, 2014). Similar findings suggest that athletes who dropped out did so due to the conditions associated with daily routine and training (Gonvalves, Coehlo, & Malina, 2009). Additionally, some athletes are also feeling as though coaches are not recognizing their efforts and not giving them the opportunity to participate (Russell, 2014). Keeping this in mind, this suggests that the intensity of specializing in one specific sport at younger ages may contribute to forming negative perceptions of the sport and making participation less enjoyable.

Since youth sport participation provides potential health benefits, McCarthy and colleagues (2010) proposed that prior to adolescence, athletes should sample multiple sports in order to develop their identities, motives, values & beliefs about sports. Due to this, participation in multiple sports during early and middle adolescent years may be most effective due to acquiring a diversity of skills, discovering strengths and weaknesses, and determine which sport the athlete enjoys the most (Blom, Bronk, Coakley, Lauer, & Sawyer, 2013). This is also important because researchers are suggesting that a majority of dropouts has been from one sport, not sports altogether (Butcher, Johns &, Lindner, 2002).

Since another common reason for discontinuation has been lack of enjoyment, participation in multiple sports provides young athletes with the ability to experiment with various activities. Researchers are discovering that by waiting until older years to specialize in a sport, athletes report on the importance of staying in shape, learning/improving skills and feeling competent about their physical abilities. These athletes now have the ability to acquire the mindset of competing at higher levels and invest a greater amount of time to a specific sport. Specializers may exhibit a higher need to stay involved in the sport because they want to stay conditioned, continuously improve skills and feel competent in their abilities to advance and compete with others (Russell, 2014).

Rather than pressuring young athletes to perform well, Neely and Holt (2014) suggests that providing adequate parental support may also be more beneficial for young athletes. In keeping with this proposal, Bremer (2012) found a positive linear relationship between parental involvement and positive sport experiences for children. Instead of placing an unnecessary amount of pressure on the athlete, adequate parental involvement includes providing emotional support, financial support and transportation for their young athlete (Jowett & Timson-Katchis,

2005; Siekanska, 2012). When a child feels like their parents are interested and actively involved in their sport participation, they are more likely to be happier and more motivated (Siekanska, 2012). Jowett & Timson-Katchis (2005) suggests that a positive parental support system is essential and increases the probability of a positive experience in the sport for young athletes. Additionally, young athletes with actively involved parents were found to have a more enjoyment in sports and physical activity than the young athletes who had inactive parents (Neely & Holt, 2014). This support was found to be especially effective if the parents were able to alter their mood and behavior in order to have good communication with their athlete (Bremer, 2012).

During younger years, the communication between parents and coaches is of great importance as well in order to ensure the intentions are to benefit the athlete (Blom, Visek & Harris, 2013). Adequate communication between parents and coaches ensures that the athlete's needs are being met. According to Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005), parents are influential for the coach-athlete relationship as they can play an important role in the child's commitment to the sport. Additionally, Neely and Holt (2014) observe that the environment set by the coach is also important, as youth athletes need to be able to explore their abilities and build positive self-perceptions. These researchers further argue that coaches should be providing young athletes with an environment that allows for mistakes and learning, rather mainly focusing on the outcomes of competitions. This cannot be attained if the environment is mainly focused on skill mastery and stressing over winning and losing. In essence, young athletes gain the most benefit when coaches and parents recognize the athletes efforts, rather than punishing them for making mistakes. Although this support is important for young athletes, Jowett and Timson-Katchiss (2005) suggest that support becomes less important and necessary as the athlete gets older.

When youth athletes have positive and supportive relationships with their parents and coaches, these athletes are more likely to enjoy their participation; thus place a higher value on a healthy lifestyle (Bremer, 2013). Perceptions of positive youth sport experiences has provided athletes with more positive views of a healthy lifestyle and becoming more nutrition-conscious (Russell & Limle, 2013). These experiences have been known to teach the athletes to spend less time watching television and playing video games and more time being physically active.

Considering all of the potential health benefits that can come from youth sport participation, there has been question as to why there has been a recent increase youth athletes dropping out of sports. While parents and coaches believe that specialized training in a specific sport is necessary for developing elite athletes, researchers are suggesting that this may actually be detrimental. Parental influences have also been deemed important for the child's development, continuation in sports and overall views of a healthy lifestyle. The present study focuses on the factors associated with youth athletes discontinuing sports versus staying in by studying athletes who have maintained their specialized sports and those athletes who dropped out. This was done by looking at how many sports each athlete was involved in, age and duration of involvement and their parental involvement in their participation. We tested the hypotheses that (1) those who began specializing in sports at a younger age will be less likely to continue participation, (2) parental pressure would be a reason for dropout and parental support would influence the athletes to stay in, and (3) those who continued participation in sports would perceive a healthy lifestyle to be more important than those who are not currently involved.

Method

Participants

The participants consisted of 101 Otterbein University students (40 males and 61 females). Of these participants, 73 were involved in a sport (33 males, 40 females) and 28 were

not involved in a sport (7 males and 21 females). The athletes were selected from the following Otterbein sports teams: football, basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, lacrosse, soccer & cheerleading. The non-athletes consisted of students enrolled in lower-level psychology courses who participated to fulfill research credit. Data from an additional 18 participants were discarded due to lack of completion.

Materials

A sport participation questionnaire was created by the researcher using Qualtrics, an online questionnaire website. The questionnaire covered 3 different aspects: (1) past sport participation (the age range of participation of each sport, factors that went into the decision to discontinue each sport & parental participation), (2) current sport participation (age range of beginning the sport & parental participation) and (3) importance of healthy lifestyle.

To examine past sport participation, participants were to indicate all of the sports they were once involved in but are not currently involved in. Football, basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, lacrosse, soccer & cheerleading were all sports listed. There was an open-ended option to indicate other sports (of which were not used in the data) and an option for “not applicable”. Following the indication of each sport, participants were to indicate the age range of participation of each sport (2-6, 6-10, 10-14, 14-18 or 18- present), factors that went into the decision to discontinue each sport & describe parental participation.

Next, participants were to indicate their current participation in sports. Football, basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, lacrosse, soccer & cheerleading were all the sports listed. There was also an open-ended option to indicate other sports (of which were not used in the data) and an option for “not applicable”. Following the indication of the sport they were currently specializing in, they were to indicate the age range they began participating in that

sport (2-6, 6-10, 10-14, 14-18 or 18- present) and the parental participation of that sport. See Table 1 for age range of past and current sport participation.

The final part of the questionnaire consisted of questions pertaining to their perceptions of a healthy lifestyle. These questions were on a 5-point Likert scale and were reverse scored for analyses. See Appendix A for all questions provided by the questionnaire.

Procedure

After receiving IRB approval, Otterbein University athletes who are currently participating in football, basketball, baseball, volleyball, softball, soccer, lacrosse and cheerleading were contacted via e-mail with a link to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also provided online for Otterbein University students enrolled in lower-level psychology courses to complete for research credit. Once participants opened the link to the questionnaire, they were prompted to sign an informed consent form before they were able to continue on with completing the questionnaire.

Results

For each participant, the following variables expressing factors involved in discontinuation were created: (1) external social pressure (average of “parent pressured me to pursue another sport”, “parent pressured me to excel”, “parent pressured me to focus on academics”, “coach pressured me to excel”), (2) external non-social pressure (average of “too many financial concerns”, “needing to maintain a job”, “needing to focus on academics”), (3) external logistics (average of “receiving an injury”, “a health problem prevented continuation”), (4) intrinsic motivation (average of “loss of interest in the sport”, “sibling was better at the sport”, “realizing not as good as peers”). An additional four variables were created to further

examine parental pressure and support; (1) pressure for past sports (the item “parent pressured me to excel”), (2) support for past sports (average of “willingness to provide transportation”, “showed pride in achievements” and “showed interest in participation”), (3) pressure for current sports (item “parent pressures me to excel”), (4) support for current sport participation (average of “willingness to provide transportation”, “showed pride in achievements” and “showed interest in participation”).

Each sport was classified by whether the athlete dropped out or stayed in and at what age each sport was participated in, where any sport participated in prior to age 10 was considered young and any sport participated in after age 10 was considered old. A chi-square test for independence examining the association between age of specialization (old or young) and sport continuation status (staying in vs. dropping out) indicated a significant association between the variables, $X^2(1) = 17.64, p < .001$. In support of the hypothesis and indicated in Figure 1, sports specialized during younger years were more likely be dropped out of, whereas the opposite pattern was seen for sports specialized in during older years.

Next, participants were classified by their current sport participation: whether they were a drop out or non-dropout. Participants were considered to be a drop out if they used to participate in a sport(s) but are no longer participating in a sport and considered to be a non-drop out if they used to participate in a sport and are currently participating in a sport. In the current sample, 23 participants were considered to be dropouts and 66 participants were considered to be non-dropouts. Additionally, there were participants who have never participated in sports and athletes who never participated prior to college but began participation in college; however, for the following analyses, these groups were not considered. See Table 2 for details about past and current sport participation for both males and females.

In examining parental involvement, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare subjects' impressions of parental pressure, focusing on those who specialized in sports and continued versus those who specialized in sports and dropped out. Counter to hypothesis, parental pressure was marginally higher for those who continued sports ($M = 2.07, SD = 1.18$) than those who dropped out of sports ($M = 1.67, SD = .82$), $t(56.53) = 1.77, p = .08$. Another independent samples t-test was conducted to compare subjects' impressions of parental support, focusing on those who specialized in sports and continued versus those who specialized in sports and dropped out. Supporting the hypothesis, parental support was significantly higher for those who continued sports ($M = 4.79, SD = .41$) than those who dropped out ($M = 4.55, SD = .52$), $t(86) = 2.27, p = .03$.

A within-subjects ANOVA examined endorsement of the four main factors contributing to dropping out of a sport. Differences were significant, $F(3, 258) = 5.74, p = .001$. Three post-hoc paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare external non-social pressure against the other three variables (intrinsic motivation, external logistics and intrinsic motivation). Counter to hypothesis, external social pressure ($M = 1.41, SD = .47$) was significantly lower than external non-social pressure ($M = 1.55, SD = .67$); $t(84) = -1.98, p = .051$. Likewise, external social pressure ($M = 1.41, SD = .47$) was also significantly lower than internal motivation ($M = 1.67, SD = .60$); $t(87) = -3.48, p = .001$. There was not a significant difference between external social pressure ($M = 1.41, SD = .47$) and external logistics ($M = 1.37, SD = .61$); $t(87) = .68, p = .499$. See Figure 2 for details.

Finally, in examining views of a healthy lifestyle, an independent samples t-test was also conducted in order to assess those who continued and discontinued participation and their views of a healthy lifestyle. These questions were reverse scored such that higher numbers indicated

higher values of health and activity. Consistent with the hypothesis, views of healthy lifestyle were significantly higher for those who continued sports ($M = 4.61$, $SD = .42$) than those who dropped out ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .74$), $t(27.10) = 4.72$, $p < .01$. This indicates that individuals who continued participation in sports cared more about their healthy lifestyle.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore various potential factors that contribute to youth athletes deciding to discontinue participation in sports rather than stay in. First, it was hypothesized that sports in which people specialized early (vs. later) would be more likely to be discontinued. This hypothesis was supported as the results indicated that the sports athletes participated in during younger years were actually significantly more likely to be discontinued. This was also true for Russell and Limle (2013) as these authors also found that young athletes who specialized in a single sport were found to be less likely to actively participate in the same sport as a young adult. While researchers are unsure as to whether early sport specialization is beneficial or not, this suggests that intense, year-round training might not be the best way to develop elite athletes. According to Wall and Côté (2007), athletes have an increased tendency to excel in a sport when they sampled multiple sports during their youth years. What this suggests is that participation in multiple sports might actually be more beneficial for athletes because they need to be able to explore their abilities by acquiring a diverse array of skills. Although, Ferguson and Stern (2014) suggest that benefits and consequences of specializing in a sport depends on each sport separately, considering the age of usual peak performance and length of career. For example, gymnastics typically requires earlier peak performance, with a shorter career length and golf typically has peak performance later in life and tends to have a longer

career length. This places importance of understanding what training levels are necessary at different ages ranges for each sport.

In terms of parental involvement, it was hypothesized that the athletes who experienced higher perceptions of parental pressure from their parents would be less likely to continue participation. Counter to hypothesis, the results indicated that higher perceptions of parental pressure was actually marginally more prevalent for the individuals who continued participation versus the athletes who dropped out. This was unexpected, and seems to contradict other research; for example, Siekanska (2012) found that parental pressure tends to be detrimental to the athlete's enjoyment for the sport and also increases the risk for injuries and burnouts. However, Bremer (2012) suggests that some athletes may be able to tolerate parental pressure and perceive the pressure as motivational. This might suggest that the sample used for this study consisted of athletes who are able to tolerate parental pressure or perceptions of pressure were.

In addition to perceptions of parental involvement, it was also hypothesized that parental support would be more likely to result in continuation. In support of this hypothesis, parental support was significantly higher for those who continued participation than the athletes who discontinued. According to Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005), a positive parental support system is essential for positive youth sport experiences. When athletes feel like their parents show an interest in their participation, this tends to increase the overall enjoyment for the sport.

While perceptions of both parental pressure and parental support were higher among the athletes that continued, this suggests that parental support may be more important than pressure. These results of parental pressure and parental support are in congruence with Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Olivia, and García-Calvo (2013). The results from these researchers found that athlete's perception of parental support is of higher indication of enjoyment and continuation

than parental pressure. If the athlete perceives that their parent(s) are interested in their involvement, they might perceive the pressure as being motivational. This also suggests that parental support potentially overrides the perception of parental pressure, indicating higher importance for parental support than pressure.

In exploring several factors associated with discontinuation, it was hypothesized that perceptions of pressure from parents and coaches would be the highest indicator of discontinuation in comparison with the other factors. This hypothesis was not supported because lack of enjoyment for the sport, not as good as siblings/peers, financial issues, needing to maintaining a job and needing to focus on academics were significantly more important than perceptions of pressure. In keeping with these results, Russell (2014) also found that loss of enjoyment, not being as good as sibling(s) or peers and wanting more time for non-sport activities indicated significantly higher indications of discontinuation over parental and coach pressure. In addition, a main concern for Butcher, Johns and Lindner (2002) is that lack of enjoyment has been found to be prevalent during younger years due to the environment of the sport being too intense. This also suggests that the environment surrounding youth sports is too intense for young athletes enjoyment.

According to Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005), parents do play an important role in younger athlete's enjoyment and success in sports, but this influence shifts as the athlete gets older. This might be a reason for why these results suggest that perceptions of parental involvement are not the highest determinant for discontinuation. During younger years, an athlete depends on their parents for financial support since they are unable to maintain a job during younger ages. This dependency changes as the athlete gets older and becomes able to maintain a job and support themselves financially, suggesting they need to devote less time to

athletics. This is in keeping with Butcher, Johns and Lindner (2002) as these authors found that the presence of other obligations (i.e. needing to focus more on maintaining a job and focusing on academics) increases the likelihood of discontinuation and tends to be increasingly more prevalent during older years.

Finally, it was also hypothesized that the athletes that continued participation in sports would value a healthy lifestyle more than those who discontinued participation. This hypothesis was supported, suggesting that continued participation in sports does tend to result in a higher value of a healthy lifestyle. In keeping with these results, Russell (2014) noted that youth athletes did report about the importance of staying in shape, learning/improving skills and feeling competent about their physical abilities. This is important because today's youth are becoming less active with the availability of technology. By getting youth's involved in sports at a younger age, this means that more time is spent involved in physical activity and less time is being spent watching television, on the computer and playing videogames (Blom et al, 2013). Getting athletes involved in sports during younger years potentially teaches them the importance of a healthy lifestyle and gives them ability to become physically active. According to Russell and Limle (2013), these authors found that positive youth sport experiences have been associated with physical activity enjoyment as young adults, suggesting this participation provides long-term effects on individuals' well-being.

In sum, the findings suggest that youth sport participation may not be an accurate predictor of elite performance, contrary to what some individuals may believe. Since the athletes were less likely to continue the sports they were involved in during younger years, early sports specialization may not be necessary. In terms of parental involvement, athletes perceptions of parental support may be more important for youth athletes than their perceptions of parental

pressure. Feelings of not being good enough, siblings/peers being better at a sport, financial concerns, needing to maintain a job and focus on academics were of the highest indication of reasons for dropping out. Also, the athletes who continue participation in a sport did tend to value a healthy lifestyle more than those who discontinued participation.

There are several limitations to be considered. Only athletes involved in team sports were explored, which potentially limits how representative these results are. Also, since a majority of the participants were of those who are currently participating in a sport, they might be individuals who are better able to handle pressure than athletes who decided to discontinue. Also, there is a possibility of memory bias, where participants inaccurately recall their past experiences. One possibility is that participants are potentially referring to their current experiences rather than their past experiences; another possibility is that they are inaccurately remembering occurrences in the past. Considering these limitations, future research should explore youth athletes amongst a diverse array of sports to explore their experiences. Since all of the sports examined in this study were from team sports, individual sports might provide differing results. It is important to explore all sports independently to understand what is beneficial for each athlete and the sports they are involved in. In terms of pressure, there needs to be an understanding of what kinds of pressure is perceived as detrimental to athletes and what is perceived as potentially motivational. Future research should also examine different perceptions of pressure. In terms of parental involvement, there should also be a focus on mothers and fathers separately to determine which parent is providing what form of involvement. Bremer (2012) suggests that fathers potentially provide more pressure to their athletes and mothers tend to provide more emotional support. To address the issue of memory bias, future research should consider a longitudinal study to gather accurate information pertaining to youth athlete's

experiences. In exploring the congruency among these various dimensions, this can potentially increase the overall understanding of what helps and hinders athlete's perceptions and enjoyment in sport involvement.

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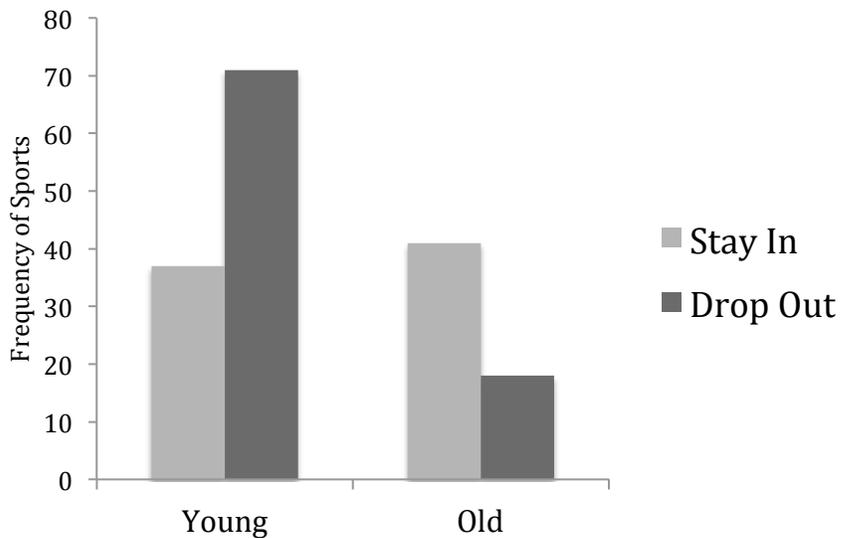


Figure 1. Association between the age of participation in each sport and the sport continuation status. Age of participation was separated by young and old—where any sport participated in prior to age 10 was considered young and participation after age 10 was considered old. Continuation status was separated by whether the athletes dropped out of a sport they used to participate in or continued a sport they used to participate in.

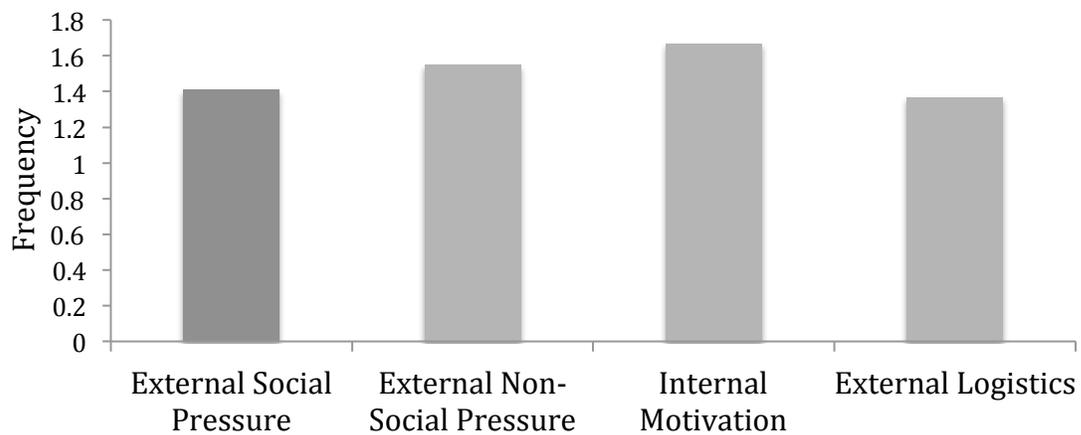


Figure 2. Association of external social pressure, external non-social pressure, internal motivation and external logistics.

Table 1

Age range of past sport participation and age range of beginning current sport participation

	Football	Basketball	Baseball	Softball	Volleyball	Soccer	Lacrosse	Cheerleading
2-6 <i>(Past)</i>	3	5	10	4	0	17	1	1
6-10 <i>(Past)</i>	7	24	13	11	5	23	2	8
10-14 <i>(Past)</i>	12	24	15	13	14	17	2	6
14-18 <i>(Past)</i>	12	14	15	10	9	10	6	5
2-6 <i>(Current)</i>	1	2	3	0	0	4	0	1
6-10 <i>(Current)</i>	6	3	2	1	1	3	1	4
10-14 <i>(Current)</i>	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
14-18 <i>(Current)</i>	0	1	2	0	2	2	1	1
18-22 <i>(Current)</i>	6	1	2	0	0	1	0	2

Table 2

Past and current sport participation amongst both males and females.

	Football	Basketball	Baseball	Softball	Volleyball	Soccer	Lacrosse	Cheerleading
Male <i>(Past)</i>	16	18	15	0	0	9	3	0
Male <i>(Current)</i>	16	1	9	0	0	3	2	1
Female <i>(Past)</i>	0	14	0	16	16	19	4	9
Female <i>(Current)</i>	0	6	0	1	4	7	1	11

Appendix

Informed Consent:

The Department of Psychology at Otterbein University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty, and you are free to skip any individual question that you do not wish to answer.

We are interested in studying the factors that predict youth discontinuation in sports and how youth experiences relate to perceptions later on in life. You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire that covers several factors pertaining to your experiences. This questionnaire is expected to take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. Although it is not likely, there is a chance that you might feel slightly uncomfortable with some of the questions. Although your participation will not directly benefit you, we believe that the information will be useful in evaluating the factors that affect youth discontinuation in youth sports.

Your participation is solicited although strictly voluntary. We assure that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. The information will be identified only by a code number.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is complete, please feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Past Sport Participation:

Please think about the sports in which you used to *specialize* in, but no longer specialize. To *Specialize* means you were regularly participating in and devoting time to only that sport. Check all sports in which you used to specialize but in which you no longer participate. I used to specialize in:

- Football
- Basketball
- Baseball
- Softball
- Volleyball
- Soccer
- Lacrosse
- Cheerleading
- Other
- Not applicable: There is no sport in which I once specialized.

**For each sport X checked off above, the following question appears*:* During which age range did you specialize in [sport X]?

- 2-6
- 6-10
- 10-14
- 14-18

Current Sport Participation:

Now we want to know what sport/s you *currently* specialize. I *currently* specialize in:

- Football
- Basketball
- Baseball
- Softball
- Volleyball
- Soccer
- Lacrosse
- Cheerleading
- Other
- Not applicable: there is no sport in which I currently specialize.

**For each sport X checked off above, the following question appears*:* During which age range did you start specializing in sport [X]?

- 2-6
- 6-10
- 10-14
- 14-18
- 18- present

Reasons for Discontinuation:

How much did each of the following factors go into your decision to discontinue?

	Not at all	Not Very much	Some	A lot
Too much pressure from parent/s to excel in that sport				
Too much pressure from parent/s to pursue another sport				
Too much pressure from parent/s to focus on academics				
Participation in this sport resulted in too many financial concerns				
Pressure from coaches to excel in that sport				
Lack of parental support				
I had a job that took up too much time				
I decided to focus more on academics				
I lost interest in participating				
Injury prevented me from continuing				
A health problem prevented me from continuing				
Sibling was better at a sport than I was				
Realized I wasn't as good at a sport as my peers				

Perceptions of Past and Current Parental Pressure and Parental Support:

Now think about the parental figure you would consider most primarily involved in your participation of *Sport X*. How much would you say this person...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Can't Remember
Pressured me too much to excel						
Was willing to help with transportation and travel						
Showed pride in my achievements						
Showed interest in my participation						
Attended sporting events						

Value of Healthy Lifestyle:

How healthy do you consider your lifestyle to be?

1. Very healthy 2. Somewhat healthy 3. Neutral 4. Not very healthy 5. Not healthy at all

How physically active do you consider your lifestyle to be?

1. Very active 2. Somewhat active 3. Neutral 4. Not very active 5. Not active at all

How important is health and wellness to you?

1. Very important 2. Somewhat important 3. Neutral 4. Not very important 5. Not important at all

