

# Athlete-Perceived Parental Involvement and Self-Esteem Among Malaysian Junior Tennis Athletes

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## Abstract

Participation of young tennis athletes can be highly influenced by parents. There are times when the parents are over-involved in their children's sports career when their eagerness turns into obsession, especially among junior tennis athletes, in which may influence the psychological development of the athlete. This paper describes the relationship between parental involvement and their self-esteem as perceived by Malaysian junior tennis athletes. The Parental Involvement in Sports Questionnaire (PISQ) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) scale were used and filled by a total of 169 Malaysian junior tennis athletes aged between 11 to 16 years old. The participants were also categorized by age group of 11 to 12 years old, 13 to 14 years old, 15 to 16 years old. It was revealed that a significant difference between the component of the athlete-perceived parental involvement in sports on the combined dependent variable of the four components of Directive Behaviour, Praise and Understanding, Acting Involvement and Pressure among the three age groups. ANOVA test also indicated a statistically significant difference in the self-esteem scores for the three age groups. Correlation analysis showed a small but positive correlation between the Praise and Understanding component and the self-esteem. It can be concluded that age groups does significantly differ in both components of parental involvement and self-esteem among Malaysia junior tennis athletes. Praise and Understanding is also the only component of Parental Involvement that is positively related to the self-esteem of the Malaysian junior tennis athletes. The practical implications of these findings could serve to improve the experience of participants in youth sport.

**Keywords:** parent; praise; understanding; juniors; participation

## Introduction

As tennis is an individual sport, successes and failures of a tennis athlete can be observed clearly by parents. It was also stated that young tennis athletes can be highly influenced by parents who are usually present before, during and even after matches (Harwood & Swain, 2002). Apparently, tennis parents support their children not only financially but also emotionally and physically (Gould et al., 2006; Knight et al., 2016). Parents are the ones who are responsible to introduce the sports to their children (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010). In other words, children are often influenced by their parents to participate in a specific sport (Gardner, Magee, & Vella, 2016). According to Lee and Maclean (1997), the parental involvement in sports includes four components which are Directive Behaviour, Active Involvement, Praise and Understanding, and Pressure. Active involvement is when children consider their parents to be actively involved in their sport experience, is generally a parental behaviour to which young athletes react positively and about which they feel happy and satisfied (Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). Directive behaviour (Lee & MacLean, 1997), namely, the extent to which children feel controlled by their parents in sports, promotes instead the perception of parental pressure (Wuerth et al., 2004). Parental pressure towards children's sport can cause lowered self-esteem (McElroy, 1982), feelings of distress and guilt (Donnelly, 1993), a decrease of enjoyment (Anderson et al., 2003), and burnout (Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997) in young athletes. In contrast, parental participation characterized by praise and understanding (Lee & MacLean, 1997), which elicits parental encouragement characterized by children's perception of parental empathy displayed towards their sportive activity, promotes an increase of players' enjoyment of and motivation for sport (Sánchez-Miguel, Leo, Sánchez-Oliva, Amado, & García-Calvo, 2013).

Parents played an important part as the main source of support for successful athletes, although, parents were also perceived to be confounding, unsupportive, showing very low expectations and faith in their children's capability (Jowett & Lavallee, 2007). The intensity of their interest they have in getting their children to participate in the sports will determine their attitudes and behaviour towards their children sport's achievement and performance (Wilson, Spink, & Whittaker, 2007). The youth sport organization is largely driven by adults and less centred on youth athletes than it used to be (Alliance, 2005). This has led to more involvement by parents than ever before due to obligations and increased intensity level (Bremer, 2012). As parents are getting more involved in their children's sports, they tend to have unrealistic expectations of their children, thus, viewing their children's worth based on their children's success (Gould, 2009). In fact, it was reported that parents of most top tennis players have parents who are highly involved that imprinted in them the critical values needed to be successful in tennis (Gould et al., 2006). The specialization in sports can begin at a very early age where the early training load and efforts can have physical and psychological effects (Feeley, Agel, & Laprade, 2016). Schwebel, Smith, and Smoll (2016) stated that children could develop social skills, values and even self-esteem through sports. The development of the self-esteem majorly influenced by parenting (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Parental involvement can affect their child's level of self-esteem in both positive and negative ways (Gould et al., 2006; Koehn, 2017). Brustad (1988) and Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986) revealed that athletes found greater enjoyment in their sport provided there is less parental pressure. While parental support can affect the athlete's self-esteem positively, parental pressure affects the self-evaluation in a negative manner (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). This suggested that parental involvement in sports produce both immediate and long-term effect on attitude and self-esteem of the young athletes.

Self-esteem among junior athletes is influenced by the involvement of their parents in their sports which is consistent with the findings by Qurban, Wang, Siddique, Morris, and Qiao (2019) who discovered that while parents can be very motivating and supportive of their children's success in sports, over-involved parents are the source of stress among youth athletes which later affect their self-confidence as well as their self-esteem. Koehn (2017) also discovered that the right amount of parental involvement led to high positive self-esteem among youth athletes but emphasized that more research with bigger sample size is needed to further explain the connection between the involvement of parents and youth athlete's self-esteem. Fredricks and Eccles (2005) claimed that the parents' attitude and behaviour perceived by the youth athletes towards their children's sport participation are associated with the positive and negative affectivity towards the children's sport participation. The association of both parental involvement and self-esteem was found to lead to enjoyment among the young athletes and prevent burnout (Wuerth et al., 2004). It was found out that positive sport experience due to different levels of components of the parental involvement, which are insufficient Directive Behaviour, and satisfac-

tory Praise and Understanding (Stroebel, 2006). However, a contradict result where Wuerth et al. (2004) claimed negative sports experience were due to high levels of Praise and Understanding, low to moderate levels of Directive Behaviour. Therefore, it was suggested more studies needed on different components of the parental involvement in sports (Ridley, 2013). There has been research done on young Malaysian tennis athletes by Ampofo-Boateng, Yusof, Abd. Rahim, and Suun (2007) who discovered that young Malaysians become tennis players partly due to excitement and enjoyment besides achievements and skills. As many studies have shown, there seem to be a dearth of research done in Malaysia on parental involvement and its influence on junior athletes.

## **Materials and Methods**

This causal-comparative research design involves determining the cause-and-effect relationship between the parental involvement perceived by the junior tennis athletes and their self-esteem. The quantitative responses were obtained from questionnaires distributed to participants. It also determined the difference of the components of parental involvement and the self-esteem between age groups individually.

### ***Sample and Procedure***

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), with a population of approximately 300 Malaysian junior tennis athletes, the sample size required for this study is 169 total of participants. The participants were tested on the perception of their parental involvement in sports as well as their self-esteem both by questionnaires. The inclusion criteria of the participants are that they need to be aged from 11 to 16 years old. They also must have participated in the Malaysian Junior Tennis tournaments and have collected points in the national junior ranking system. Hollins (2016) revealed that the athletes that are within the age range reported to have stronger relationship of their sport and family. Therefore, in this study the participants were categorized into 3 age groups based on their respective age. The groups are 11 to 12 years old age group, 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group.

### ***Parental Involvement in Sports Questionnaire (PISQ)***

Parental Involvement in Sports Questionnaire was originally created by Lee and Maclean (1997). The questionnaire was used to measure responses about the involvement of the parents perceived by the athletes themselves. The 20-item questionnaire consists of four multi-item scales which are Directive Behaviour, Praise and Understanding, Active Involvement, and Pressure. The PISQ implemented five-point Likert scale anchored by 1 as "Never" and 5 as "Always". These four subscales are the components used to measure the frequency of parental support and pressure perceived by the athletes. Directive Behaviour consisted of ten items in the questionnaire, Praise and Understanding consisted of four items, Active Involvement consisted of seven items whereas Pressure represented by only 1 item. Example of items that are measured in PISQ are "Do your parents tell you how they think you can improve your technique?". A test conducted revealed that the reliability for Directive Behaviour (0.86), Praise and Understanding (0.79), Active Involvement (0.70) and Pressure (0.79). Directive Behaviour was found to have 0.80 of Cronbach's Alpha value with good internal consistency. Praise and Understanding has the Cronbach's Alpha value at 0.74 whereas Active Involvement obtained 0.66 which indicated that the internal consistency for both components is acceptable. Pressure obtained 0.88 value of Cronbach's alpha which also indicated good consistency.

### ***Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)***

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is created by Rosenberg (1979) was used in this study with the purpose of measuring self-esteem of the Malaysia tennis junior athletes. The RSE implemented a four-point Guttman scale anchored by 1 as "Strongly agree" and 4 as "Strongly disagree". The scoring involves combined ratings which low self-esteem responses are either "Disagree" or "Strongly disagree" on each item. The questions asked were: (1) I feel that I am a person of worth, or at least on an equal plane with others. (2) I feel that I have a number of good qualities. (3) All in all, I'm inclined to feel that I am a failure. (4) I am able to do things as well as most other people. (5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (6) I take a positive attitude toward myself. (7) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. (8) I certainly feel useless at times. (9) I wish I could have more respect for myself. (10) At times, I think I am no good at all. A pilot study was conducted to determine the validity of the questionnaire. The RSE demonstrates a good internal consistency with

coefficient of 0.76. Test result suggests that the parental involvement in sports data has the value of Cronbach alpha at 0.86 with good internal consistency, whereas the self-esteem data obtained the Cronbach alpha value of 0.78, indicating that its internal consistency is acceptable, as stated by Pallant (2016).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In order to avoid any influence from the guardian or parents in answering the questionnaires, the participants were asked to answer the questionnaire away from the guardian or parents. Once the questionnaires were given, the guidelines on answering the questionnaire was explained to them verbally without explaining details on the purpose of the questionnaire to avoid dishonesty and bias. Then, they were asked to fill up a demographic questionnaire as well followed by PISQ and RSE questionnaires.

### **Results**

Means and standard deviations for the four components of parental involvement collected by PISQ were indicated in Table 1. Athlete's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with any specific behaviour was indicated by significant differences from satisfaction value.

<b>Component of parental involvement in sports</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Directive Behaviour	15 to 16	55	32.45	7.66
	13 to 14	70	34.09	6.87
	11 to 12	44	34.70	6.88
Praise and Understanding	15 to 16	55	13.76	3.07
	13 to 14	70	14.20	4.04
	11 to 12	44	15.93	2.94
Active Involvement	15 to 16	55	13.82	4.20
	13 to 14	70	15.17	4.47
	11 to 12	44	15.93	2.94
Pressure	15 to 16	55	3.29	1.30
	13 to 14	70	3.00	1.50
	11 to 12	44	4.22	1.38

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of the Components of Parental Involvement in Sports.

Table 1 above shows the mean and standard deviation for each of the age groups for each component of parental involvement in sports. For the Directive Behaviour component, the table shows that the age group of 11 to 12 years old has the highest mean of compared the 13 to 14 years old age group with mean and 15 to 16 years old age group which makes the 15 to 16 years old age group has the lowest mean. For Praise and Understanding component, the age group of 11 to 12 years old also has the highest mean as compared to 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group which makes the 15 to 16 years old age group also the lowest age group. Same goes for Active Involvement component, 11 to 12 years old age group also has the highest mean compared to 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group with mean which makes 15 to 16 years old age group also the lowest mean group. For Pressure component, the 11 to 12 years old age group also has the highest mean as compared to 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group which makes 13 to 14 years old age group with the lowest mean group. Overall, 11 to 12 years old age group has the highest mean score compared to other age groups.

Age Group	Mean	SD
15 to 16	20.53	4.03
13 to 14	17.97	4.12
11 to 12	18.95	4.17

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics of Self-Esteem Mean Score Categorized by Age Group.

Table 2 shows the mean score of self-esteem for each age group and its percentage. The mean score for all age groups indicated that all three age groups are above half of total score of the self-esteem. However, the 15 to 16 years old age groups showed the highest mean score of self-esteem as compared to the other two age groups of 13 to 15 years old and 11 to 12 years old.

Component	Mean Square	F	df	p	eta
Directive Behaviour	70.04	1.38	2	.26	.02
Praise and Understanding	63.16	5.24	2	.01*	.06
Active Involvement	49.77	2.86	2	.06	.03
Pressure	1.31	.68	2	.51	.01

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 3:** Components of Athlete-Perceived Parental Involvement in Sports among the Age Groups.

A follow-up analysis was used to compare the score for 11 to 12 age group and 13 to 14 years old age group, 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group, and 11 to 12 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group. As shown in Table 3, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite small. However, Praise and Understanding appeared to show significant difference whereas the other components of Parental Involvement did not show any significant difference among the three age groups.

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance or ANOVA, was conducted to explore the impact of age group on self-esteem. Participants were divided into three groups according to their age group which are 11 to 12 years old age group, 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 years old age group. Table 4 below shows that there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.05$  level in the mean self-esteem scores for the three age groups:  $F(2, 166) = 5.99, p = .03$ .

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p	eta
Between group	201.85	2	100.92	5.99	.03*	.07
Within group	2795.56	166	16.84			
Total	2997.41	168				

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 4:** ANOVA Test Result of Self-Esteem between Age Group.

Age Group	Age Group	Mean Diff.	p	Std. Error
15 to 16	13 to 14	2.56	.00*	.74
	11 to 12	1.57	.14	.83
13 to 14	15 to 16	-2.56	.00*	.74
	11 to 12	-.98	.43	.79
11 to 12	15 to 16	-1.57	.14	.83
	13 to 14	.98	.43	.79

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 5:** Comparison of Self-Esteem between Age Group.

Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was 0.07. As shown in Table 5, post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for 13 to 14 years old age group ( $M = 17.97, SD = 4.12$ ) was significantly different from 15 to 16 years old age group ( $M = 20.53, SD = 4.03$ ). From the mean score of both age group, it was revealed that the 15 to 16 years old age group has the highest mean compared to other two age groups. However, 11 to 12 age group ( $M = 18.95, SD = 4.17$ ) did not differ significantly from neither both other age group. Therefore, there was a significant difference in the self-esteem between age groups among Malaysian junior tennis athletes, where only 13 to 14 years old age group was significantly difference from 15 to 16 years old age group. 11 to 12 years old age group was not significantly difference from the other two age groups.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Directive Behaviour	-				
Praise and Understanding	.46*	-			
3. Active Involvement	.59	.51	-		
4. Pressure	.56	-.01	.11	-	
5. Self-esteem	-.04	.17*	.09	-.12	-

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 6:** Pearson Correlation of Components Parental Involvement in Sports and Self-Esteem.

Table 6 indicated that there was a small positive correlation only between the Praise and Understanding component and the self-esteem level,  $r = .17, n = 169, p < .05$ , with high Praise and Understanding scores associated with high self-esteem as well. Therefore, it was reported there was a weak but positive significant relationship between only Praise and Understanding component and self-esteem among the Malaysian junior tennis athletes.

The statistical analysis revealed that the age groups differences in both components of parental involvement in sports and self-esteem showed a significant difference. Praise and Understanding is the only component that was significantly differ in the age groups, which showed that 11 to 12 years old age group have the highest mean score for Praise and Understanding compared to other age groups. The self-esteem was also revealed to differ between the age groups, which showed that the 15 to 16 years old age group is higher than the 13 to 14 years old age group. Pearson Correlation test also revealed a weak but positive significant relationship in only one of the components of parental involvement with the self-esteem of Malaysia junior tennis athletes, which is the Praise and Understanding. The results also indicated non-significant relationship between the Directive Behaviour, Active Involvement and Pressure with self-esteem.

## Discussion

There are a few conclusions that were drawn based on the findings. It can be concluded that the components of parental involvement in sports are significantly difference among the age group of junior tennis athletes, specifically the Praise and Understanding component. Results indicated that the mean score of Praise and Understanding for 11 to 12 years old age group significantly different from 13 to 14 years old age group and 15 to 16 age group. This suggested that the 11 to 12 years old age group has the highest mean score of Praise and Understanding as compared to the other two age groups. These results are on the contrary with previous findings by Ede, Kamphoff, Mackey and Mork Armentrout (2012) that used PISQ and reported that amateur hockey players aged 13 to 15 perceived more praise and understanding from their parents. The result in this study also revealed that only the 11 to 12 years old group is significantly difference among the age group of 13 to 14 years old and 15 to 16 years old age group tennis athletes. This is in line with a study by Strandbu, Stefansen, Smette and Sandvik (2019) which reported that parental involvement is perceived differently by the athletes in each athletic development phase. This study also concluded that self-esteem is significantly difference among the age groups, specifically 15 to 16 years old age group and 13 to 14 years old age group only. The findings also revealed that the 15 to 16 years old age group has the highest self-esteem among the age groups. The results reflect the study conducted by Kushwah (2014)

which indicate that competitive advantage and self-esteem is more in tennis players of 15 to 16 years old who travel with their parents than the players who travel without their parents in the competition.

Lastly, it was concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between the Praise and Understanding and the self-esteem among the Malaysia junior tennis athletes. This indicates that a higher score of Praise and Understanding is associated with higher self-esteem. This finding was supported by Knight, Boden and Holt (2010) that tennis athletes prefer supportive comments on effort from the parents. This may be the plausible reason why Praise and Understanding is the only component that is relating to the self-esteem of the athletes. The young athletes perceived that praise and encouragement as well as empathetic comments from the parents enable them to share emotion felt in sports by both parents and athletes. This suggested that the praise and understanding from parents lead the athletes to positive psychological development (Wylleman et al., 2003). The practical implications of these findings could serve to improve the experience of young tennis players in sport's participation. Stroebel (2006) also reported that the amount of praise and understanding was at the satisfactory levels among the adolescent swimmers in which indicated that adequate amount of Praise and Understanding from the parents are essential for the young athletes' sports experience, thus, determining the self-esteem. Aihie (2016) also suggested that authoritative parents that give a lot of care towards the children also positively correlates with the children's self-esteem. The results from this study also indicated non-significant relationship between the Directive Behaviour, Active Involvement and Pressure with the self-esteem. This might be due to the different age which implied that the involvement changes throughout the adolescent phase (Wuerth et al., 2004).

## Conclusion

Based on the current study, the result showed a significant difference in both components of parental involvement and self-esteem between age group. As sports career has its stages, different stages indicated different degree of the parental involvement where it changes based on the commitment and focus in improving to compete better in higher level of competition. Previous studies revealed that the components of the parental involvement may vary by the gendered differences of the parents. It has been investigated the difference of father and mother's involvement in sports and was revealed that each component of the parental involvement differs between fathers and mothers and even alter throughout the sports career development stages. In addition, the father and mother's involvement in sports also alter depending on the lifespan of the child in the sports participation. Therefore, for future recommendation, investigation the components of parental involvement in sports and self-esteem should include the father and mother involvement differences.

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