



Parental and Grandparental Involvement in Sports: A Study of 716 Youth Sport Participants in Albania

Scientific Report 2025- START project

Muca., F1. Muca., G1. Nurja., A Bilali, B Hoxha, A Miraku, R Dervishi, A. Muca., K2. Jarani., J1 (2025). Albanian Sports Science Association. Scientific Report 2025- START project. Comparative analysis of parental sports participation and youth sports engagement in Albania

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Abstract:

This study explores the historical involvement of parents and grandparents in sports among 716 youth sport participants aged 8-19 years in Albania. Participants were asked about their parents' and grandparents' involvement in sports during their younger years. Results indicate varying levels of involvement, with fathers more likely to have participated in sports than mothers. The findings highlight a notable difference in sports participation between parents and grandparents. Fathers were far more likely to have participated in sports compared to their own parents, particularly paternal grandfathers (6%) and maternal grandfathers (3%). Similarly, mothers had a higher participation rate (9.1%) compared to both maternal (1%) and paternal grandmothers (1%). This suggests a generational shift where the level of sports participation among youth athletes' parents is higher than in the previous generation of grandparents. This could be attributed to increasing cultural emphasis on organized sports, physical activity, and wellness in modern society. The study also highlights the generational differences in sports participation, with paternal involvement being higher than maternal, and grandparental participation being minimal. The findings suggest the importance of family dynamics in shaping youth sports engagement.

Keywords: family, sport participating, youth, involvement

About START project



The Albanian Sports Science Association (ASSA) has noticed that there is a significant lack of standardized and reliable measurements of athletes in Albania. Due to the lack of evidence, it is not possible to carry out even a genuine scientific analysis or study of Albanian sports.

Since 2017, the ASSA team has evaluated and undertaken an initiative to collect data on the general and specific bio-motor skills, parent involvement of athletes in various sports disciplines. ASSA specialists have compiled a set of measurements to assess these parameters of athletes.

The new initiative is a project called “START- SporT Assesment ReporT” which will serve to conduct scientific research with data on Albanian sports. The athletes' data are part of a long-term multi-year study led by the "ASSA" team and relevant sports clubs as well as with other partners.

ASSA had lead this project as part of studies and research in the field of sports. The long-term multi-year study allows ASSA and related sports clubs to collect data on a wide range of athletes from different sports disciplines and to help establish bio-motor skills norms and athlete profiles.

Introduction

Physical activity and sports participation are critical factors in the development of youth, influencing both their physical and psychological well-being. Studies have shown that family involvement plays a pivotal role in fostering and encouraging youth participation in sports. Parental and grandparental involvement in sports during their youth could shape the attitudes and behaviors of younger generations toward physical activity. This study aims to explore the extent to which parents and grandparents were involved in sports when they were younger and how this may influence the sports participation of their children and grandchildren. The research focuses on a sample of youth sport participants in Albania, a context where family involvement in sports may differ from other countries due to cultural and historical factors. The main objective of this study is to assess the sports participation rates of parents (mothers and fathers) and grandparents (maternal and paternal) of youth athletes. Additionally, the study aims to compare generational differences in sports participation.

Methodology

The study sample consisted of 716 youth sport participants, aged 8-19 years, who were randomly selected from various sports disciplines in Albania. All participants were actively involved in organized sports programs. A questionnaire was distributed to the youth participants, asking them to report on the sports involvement of their parents (both mothers and fathers) and grandparents maternal and paternal) during their younger years. The specific question asked was whether each parent or grandparent participated in sports during their youth, with options for 'Yes' or 'No'. The data were analyzed using simple percentage calculations to determine the proportion of parents and grandparents involved in sports. The findings were then compared to assess differences between parental and grandparental involvement in sports.

Results

**Parental Involvement in Sports:**

Mothers: 9.1% of mothers participated in sports during their younger years while Fathers: 27.1% of fathers participated in sports during their younger years (table 1).

Table 1

Participating athlete N= 716	Mother		Father	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	9.1	194	27.1
No	651	90.9	521	72.9
Total	716		715	

Grandparental Involvement in Sports:

Maternal Grandmother: 1% of maternal grandmothers participated in sports while Maternal Grandfather: 3% of maternal grandfathers participated in sports (table 2).

Table 2

	Maternal			
	grandmother		grandfather	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	10	1	22	3
No	703	99	692	97

Paternal Grandmother: 1% of paternal grandmothers participated in sports while Paternal Grandfather: 6% of paternal grandfathers participated in sports (table 3).

Table 3

	Paternal			
	grandmother		grandfather	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	10	1	44	6
No	704	99	670	94

Comparison Between Parental and Grandparental Involvement:

Fathers exhibited the highest rate of participation in sports, with 27.1% of fathers reporting sports involvement, followed by mothers at 9.1%. This indicates that fathers were significantly more likely to have participated in sports than mothers. When comparing grandparental involvement, the data show that paternal grandparents (6% paternal grandfather and 1% paternal grandmother) had higher participation rates than maternal grandparents (3% maternal grandfather and 1% maternal grandmother).

Discussion



Parental vs Grandparental Involvement: The findings highlight a notable difference in sports participation between parents and grandparents. Fathers were far more likely to have participated in sports compared to their own parents, particularly paternal grandfathers (6%) and maternal grandfathers (3%). Similarly, mothers had a higher participation rate (9.1%) compared to both maternal (1%) and paternal grandmothers (1%). This suggests a generational shift where the level of sports participation among youth athletes' parents is higher than in the previous generation of grandparents. This could be attributed to increasing cultural emphasis on organized sports, physical activity, and wellness in modern society.

Comparison to Previous Research: Previous studies have often found that fathers tend to be more involved in sports than mothers. Additionally, generational trends typically show that the level of sports participation decreases as you move further back in the family lineage. The findings of this study align with such patterns, confirming the hypothesis that parental involvement in sports has increased over time, particularly for fathers.

Implications of the Findings: The results suggest that fathers' higher sports participation rates may play a crucial role in influencing the sports involvement of their children. The generational differences observed also underscore the importance of promoting sports among families, not only for children but also for parents and grandparents. The minimal involvement of grandparents, especially maternal grandparents, suggests that cultural or historical factors may have limited the participation of older generations in sports. These findings could have important implications for developing programs that encourage greater family-wide participation in physical activities, potentially addressing gaps in engagement across generations. The higher involvement of parents, especially fathers, in sports may have implications for youth sport participation today. The fact that grandparents, particularly maternal grandparents, had minimal involvement in sports could suggest that older generations were less likely to participate in physical activities, possibly due to historical or cultural factors, such as less emphasis on organized sports in their time. The findings suggest that promoting sports in families—by encouraging both mothers and fathers to be role models for their children—could be crucial in sustaining and increasing youth participation in sports. Understanding these generational trends can help shape interventions that support the inclusion of all family members in encouraging active lifestyles.

Conclusion: This study provides valuable insights into the generational differences in sports participation among youth sport participants and their families in Albania. The findings reveal that fathers have significantly higher participation rates in sports compared to both mothers and grandparents, while grandparental involvement is notably low. 27.1% of fathers participated in sports, while 9.1% of mothers did while 1% of maternal grandmothers and 3% of maternal grandfathers participated in sports, while 1% of paternal grandmothers and 6% of paternal grandfathers did. Parental involvement, particularly among fathers, is much higher than grandparental involvement. This trend suggests a generational increase in sports participation, with parents being more active than grandparents.

Interpretation and Implications: The higher level of sports participation among fathers may serve as an important influence on the athletic engagement of youth, while the minimal involvement of grandparents highlights a shift in societal norms regarding sports across generations. These generational differences provide an opportunity to explore how family involvement in sports can be enhanced to promote physical activity among youth.

Suggestions for Future Research:

Further studies could examine the cultural, social, and historical factors that influence sports participation across generations. Understanding the reasons behind the low involvement of grandparents in sports, particularly maternal grandparents, could help shape more inclusive programs aimed at engaging all



family members in physical activity. In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of family involvement, especially parental, in promoting youth sports participation. Efforts to engage both parents and grandparents in physical activities could enhance the overall sports culture and physical well-being of future generations.