

The influential factors on parental behaviour on their sports-performing children in different socio-economic backgrounds

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Abstract

Parental behaviour towards children in youth sports impacts the enjoyment children have for that sport and can be an incentive for children to continue practicing sports. Sports are a form of physical activity, which is a key factor for children and their health. It is therefore in the interest of parents to ensure that children get enough exercise and do not stop playing sports, so that they stay healthy.

The research question in this study was: to what extent does socio-economic status influence parents in their behaviour towards youth sports? The question was aimed to be answered through 15 exploratory interviews with three overarching topics were treated during interviews, namely the parental roles, their parenting style and influencing factors, including personal, social, and environmental/contextual factors. This thesis aimed to create a first vision on the topic of parental behaviour in youth sports with relation to their socio-economic background. The results showed that every parent believe that the behaviour is important and acts accordingly, but the sample was too homogenic to draw conclusions based on the socio-economic background. Small differences were found in the freedom of personal factors and the value that high socio-economic oriented parents mentioned about the positive intention of their children during sports.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The importance of physical activity on physical and mental health of children

Physical activity is an important healthy behaviour (Ayubovna, 2023) for children, and it has been long known that sports is a means to achieve this physical activity (Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997; Bailey et al., 2015), as sports are multicomponent physical activity (Piercy et al., 2018). Physical activity can help to maintain a healthy lifestyle (Polero et al., 2021), and therefore the WHO recommends children to have 60 minutes of physical activity per day (World Health Organization: WHO, 2024). This recommendation for children is equal to the RIVM (Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu) guidelines in The Netherlands (*Bewegen, n.d.*). For children in the Netherlands between 12 and 17 years old, only 33% of the children complied with the guidelines for physical activity of the RIVM in 2022 (*CBS Statline, n.d.*). The guidelines for physical activity give the possibility to be achieved by walking, biking, swimming, and performing sports. A form of sports is the organised sport, for which children must be signed up by their parents. Parents, therefore, are the initiators (Bailey et al., 2015; Stefansen et al., 2018) and the basic motivation for children to continue playing their sports (Jeanfreau et al., 2020). Furthermore, parents often see the benefits of physical activity, since they believe it brings personal, social, and physical benefits to the children (Neely & Holt, 2014). The focus in this thesis is on team sports, as organised sports bring social benefits for children. An example of these personal benefits that parents believe their children gain is the boost of confidence (Eime et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 1985). The parental roles towards their children can range from role modelling the exercise habits (Laundry & Driscoll, 2012), providing for transport and payments (Knight et al., 2010), to influencing children in their expectations when aspiring to be a sport professional (Domingues & Gonçalves, 2013). Many parents feel a corresponding moral obligation to facilitate the right of the child to participate in sports (Stefansen et al., 2018), and parental involvement has been found to influence children's sports participation (Qunito Romani, 2020). Despite the many benefits that participation in organized sports offers children, there are still children who do not meet recommended activity levels and therefore miss out on the potential

benefits. Parental behaviour is an important aspect to make sure that children are able to perform their physical activity and gain the potential benefits towards, among other things, their health.

Apart from the physical health, the mental health for children is also influenced by the physical activity they perform. A lack of physical activity can lead to an increase in the number of depressive and anxiety symptoms (Samji et al., 2022). Physical activity can also help with mental health issues (Okuyama et al., 2021). Different meta-analysis studies found that physical activity leads, in the long-term, to a decrease in depressive symptoms (Eime et al., 2013; Schuch et al., 2016). Furthermore, Messner & Musto (2014) saw that teenagers performing sports were statistically less likely to commit suicide. Physical activity also improves the emotional well-being by preventing, for example, anxiety (disorders) (Gill et al., 2013; Lee & Russel, 2003; Lubans et al., 2012; Saxena et al., 2005; Wegner et al., 2014). Physical benefits for teenagers performing sports over teenagers that do not perform sports include a better control over the use of alcohol (Messner & Musto, 2014; Villalba et al., 2016), but also drugs and cigarettes (Messner & Musto, 2014). Physical activity is important in adulthood and starts in younger years. Adults have a reduced risk to develop cardiovascular diseases when engaging in sufficient physical activity (Stamatakis et al., 2019; Warburton et al., 2006), a decrease in number of chronic diseases (Booth et al., 2012; Sothorn et al., 1999), a lower risk to develop coronary heart diseases (Reiner et al., 2013; Sesso et al., 2000) and a lower chance to become obese (Reiner et al., 2013), as well as a reduction in the risk of dying pre-maturely (Kannel, 1979; Malm et al., 2019; Warburton et al., 2006). All benefits, both for mental and for physical health, show that physical activity is important for everybody, and sets the basis towards a healthier future. This means that this healthy lifestyle starts when people are just children, making it even more important to engage in enough physical activity starting from a young age.

1.2 Dropping out of organised sports

Children sometimes stop participating in organised sports. Within the Netherlands, children between the ages of 12 and 17 have the highest percentage of participation in team sports. The fact that participation is highest (and thus drops after these ages), indicates that children from this age

group are more likely to quit team sports at a certain point in time (*Sportdeelname Wekelijks*, n.d.). Reasons for quitting organised sports include injuries and a lack of playing time in case of competitive teams (Witt & Dangi, 2018b), financial issues (Espedalen & Seippel, 2022; Witt & Dangi, 2018b), and living distance from the sports location (Furusa et al., 2021). Furthermore, a lack of enjoyment (Crane & Temple, 2015; Gardner et al., 2017; Witt & Dangi, 2018b) and anxiety due to excessive criticism from parents or coaches were also found as reasons (Witt & Dangi, 2018b). Another motivation for children to quit sports is the pressure exerted by parents and/or coaches to perform (Crane & Temple, 2015; Witt & Dangi, 2018b). To improve the situation for the children, a pedagogical sports climate should be created (Jeugdsportkompas, n.d.), which can be defined as “an environment where autonomy, relatedness and competence are central, so that children can develop optimally in and through sports and experience their sports positively” (Nederlandse Sportraad, 2023, p.11). A pedagogical sports climate is important, as research reports in recent years show an increase of various experiences of violence against athletes who play sports (Aine et al., 2022). Recent research found that, out of sample of 3959 participants in the Netherlands, a total of 2837 (71.7%) experienced transgressive behaviour, and 1924 (48.6% of the total sample) experienced this transgressive behaviour with a significant impact on them (Schipper-van Veldhoven et al., 2022). A pedagogical sports climate is based on four pillars, namely caring, motivational, developmental oriented and socially safe (Jeugdsportkompas, n.d.; Schipper-van Veldhoven et al., 2021). Parents can develop intrapersonal (e.g. self-awareness), interpersonal (e.g. listening), and organisational skills to improve their way of stimulating their children (Harwood and Knight, 2015). There has not been enough research yet on the role that parents play in the creation of a pedagogical sports climate and the influence of, for example, their socio-economic status.

1.3 Socio-economic status

One of the topics that is hardly researched is the socio-economic status of parents, regarding the creation of a pedagogical sports climate. However, this is an important aspect, as children from a higher socio-economic background have been found to be more likely to engage in physical activity,

including sports (Fairclough et al., 2009; Piko & Fitzpatrick, 2007). A socio-economic status is defined as “the relative position of a person, family, or neighbourhood in a hierarchy” (Green, 1970, p. 2). According to the National Cancer Institute of the USA, a higher socio-economic status relates to an increased access to financial, educational, social, and health resources (NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms, n.d.), and in The Netherlands the lower socio-economic classes see less chances in their life (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2023). This increased access to different resources can make it easier for parents to facilitate their children’s sports and make it easier for children to focus on the sports, instead of being troubled by external factors that might increase the likelihood of dropping out of organised sports. As previously mentioned, parents are important in the creation of a pedagogical sports climate, by for example the amount of pressure they exert. Their socio-economic background therefore can possibly be linked to their impact on the climate, by for example the pressure they put on their children to perform. The socio-economic background of children’s parents can thus create an environment for the children which makes it easier or more difficult to start performing physical activity in the form of sports.

1.4 Thesis scope

In summary, children can benefit greatly from regular physical activity or sports, both in terms of physical and mental health aspects. Parents can play an important role in the enjoyment levels children experience when performing physical activity. Parents can be important in many aspects and roles, with their supportive behaviour, and, for example, by making sure it is possible for the child to perform physical activity. Coming from a higher socio-economic background can make it easier and more accessible to provide the required materials for the children to perform and enjoy sports. The central theme in this thesis is about the differences in behaviour from parents with a different socio-economic background, and finding the main topics around which these differences are based. The selected group are children from 12 to 17 years old, due to the increased likelihood of them participating in team sports at these ages yet have a great possibility of dropping out during or after these ages. The thesis consists of six chapters, where the relevance of the topic is discussed in

Chapter 1, the theoretical framework can be found in Chapter 2, and the methodology can be found in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the results in Chapter 4 are discussed in Chapter 5, and the conclusions can be found in Chapter 6.

1.5 Academic relevance

The field of parental behaviour towards their children regarding the children's physical activity has found little attention so far. Differences in parental behaviour depending on the situation, in relation to their socio-economic background has not been studied yet within a sport setting but can play a vital role in the motivation of children to perform physical activity, in, for example, the form of sports. Finding the ideal scenario of parental behaviour adds to the literature and can form a basis for future research toward children's (mental) health. By increasing the knowledge on the topic, theorists can build on this knowledge and develop advice in parental behaviour, explain best and worst practices and ensure children enjoy their sports more.

1.6 Practical relevance

Increasing the amount of academic/theoretical knowledge on the topic of parental behaviour in organised youth sports will allow practitioners to apply this knowledge and create targeted activity plans for parents, taking their background into account, to change their behaviour, to create the best plans for the benefit and enjoyment of the children. With the aim to find driving factors, this thesis contributes to the ability to develop such plans, which in turn are likely to increase physical activity levels for children and therefore contribute to their (mental) health and enjoyment in sports.

2. Theoretical framework

The parental roles and influences will be discussed further here. Starting with the determination of the parental roles, different parenting styles are discussed, followed by concrete parental behaviour and which behaviour is optimal for the development of the children. Finally, a search for

differences in behaviour will be conducted, in which multiple reasons for different behaviour are being considered.

2.1 The different roles of parents in the sports context

Parental behaviour in sports sees many forms and is part of the basis in analysing what type of parental behaviour children prefer. Fredricks & Eccles (2004) introduced three roles that parents have. Each parent has all roles, but they might be interpreted and executed in different forms. The first role introduced is the modelling role, where parents are the role model and start to form the behaviour of their children. For example, active parents have active children, by following their example. Secondly, the role of interpreter, where the values and beliefs of parents are conveyed to children in a way they can understand and form their own values and beliefs. Parental pressure to motivate and ensure success is an example of how these values can be communicated. Thirdly, the role of provider, which includes the initiation of sports participation and encouragement, as well as providing opportunities by for example buying equipment and bringing their children to their sport. Bailey et al. (2015) introduced an alternative method, with five variables with similar division (initiate, encourage, involve, facilitate and be a role model). A certain overlap between these perspectives can be found, adding to the strength that the roles proposed by Fredricks & Eccles (2004) have. The overlap between the five variables from Bailey et al. (2015), and the roles stemming from the research from Fredricks & Eccles can be seen in multiple facets. For example, the role of being a role model coincides with the 'role model' variable, the role of interpreter can be seen to overlap with the 'involving' variable (through involving with the children's sport, they show their values and beliefs), and the provider role is corresponding to the 'facilitate, encouragement and initiation'. The three roles from the research of Fredricks & Eccles (2004) will be used, with the further detailing of Bailey et al. (2015). However, they will be slightly modified to have a clearer name for each specific role within the context of this thesis. The content of the roles will remain equal. The three roles will be named a supportive role, a modelling role, and a provider role. The supportive role includes the involvement and translation of values and beliefs, including pressure

exerted by parents. The modelling role includes being the (role) model for their children and the first example of what children find important. The provider role is a role that cares about providing opportunities, introducing children to the sport, and giving the opportunities to stay active in the sports. The further detailing of the research from Bailey et al. (2015) towards the roles found by Fredricks & Eccles (2004) results in a clear view on the parental roles in their youth sports. These roles will be further discussed on in the following paragraphs.

2.1.1 Parents in a supportive role

The supportive role in this thesis is important for the relationship between parental pressure and the enjoyment level of children in sports. Parental or familial support is necessary for children to perform physical activity (Kuhn et al., 2021), and it has also been shown that determinants of children's enjoyment in sports are the encouragement of parents (Shen et al., 2018; Wuerth et al., 2004), as well as the parental involvement and positive support (Kanters et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2018). Parental pressure can be defined as behaviour that is directive and controlling and aims to prompt responses and outcomes from the child that are of importance to the parent (O'Rourke et al., 2011). The parental pressure is an integral part of the supportive role, as the pressure put on children is a part of the support that parents give. A balance in the level of involvement should be found, since a too high involvement level can negatively impact the enjoyment levels of children (Dorsch et al., 2019). Also, a pressure level that is too high can have negative consequences for children, including a lack of enjoyment (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Witt & Dangi, 2018b), development of stress (Jayanthi et al., 2019) and anxiety (Witt & Dangi, 2018b). It was found that the increase in pressure levels can lead to a higher chance to drop out of a sport at a later age (Kanters et al., 2008; Temple & Crane, 2018; Witt & Dangi, 2018b). Lastly, parental values and beliefs are also transmitted through (appropriate) parental behaviour, such as the respect you should have to opponents, trainers, and referees, which can be created by focusing and commenting on the children's efforts and attitudes, not on their performance (Knight et al., 2010). Within this thesis, the supportive role is regarded as

the support from parents (both negative and positive), including pressure put on the children, and how this affects the enjoyment levels of children when performing sports or physical activity.

There is no step-by-step guide on the desired supportive behaviour of parents. However, there has been research on some concrete preferences of children. For example, children have indicated a preference for involvement and interest from their parents, but without them being prominently present (Schipper-van Veldhoven et al., 2021), since a feeling of a parent being overly involved can be perceived as pressurising by the children (Mastrorilli & Greco, 2020). Parents also can give tips and try to help, yet the actual coaching should be done by the trainers. Furthermore, debriefing after games with positive and supportive comments, including the amount of pressure in these comments, also impacts the enjoyment levels (Elliot & Drummond, 2017), with praise and understanding being two primary examples of this behaviour (Mastrorilli & Greco, 2020).

The supportive role is therefore important, since it can determine whether the child's enjoyment of physical activity rises, or declines. Parents have clear impact on their children with their comments, tips, and conversations. This can be before, during, and after their children's game.

2.1.2 Parents in a modelling role

The second role parents have is the modelling role, which is related to the observational learning of children. Parents are the primary example for children and their degree of physical activity therefore directly influences their children's degree of physical activity.

Previous research has shown that parents are important role models, being the foundation layer of competence beliefs (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006). Both the maternal and paternal role models had a positive correlation with the physical activity in leisure time of children (Schoeppe et al., 2016), showing that the more physical activity the mother and/or father performs, the more physical activity the child will perform. The effectiveness of role models can be seen by the transmission of values through behaviour (Knight et al., 2010). For example, it has been found that overweight in parents positively correlates with children's overweight (Muthuri et al., 2016) and television watch time increases if parents watch more television (Maitland et al., 2013; Schoeppe et al., 2017). In

order to motivate children to become more active, their parents should behave accordingly and therefore set the right example, in order for their children to follow it. Therefore, the likelihood of children having parents that are physically healthy by not being overweight and spend less time at home watching television can directly contribute to the children's own health, setting the parent as the primary example and reason of their child's behaviour in this case.

The modelling role is, like the other roles, critical. Children tend to copy their role models' behaviour, and with that, engagement about values, social aspects and healthy behaviour increase as more time is spent with the children. Giving the right example and being a good role model is therefore important for the development of the child towards the desired behaviour and can come from both paternal and maternal role models.

2.1.3 Parents in a provider role

The provider role is the third role parents have and it involves providing the necessary resources to perform physical activity in the form of sports. This is reflected in, among other things, the provision of equipment (e.g. football boots, clothes, and equipment) and the active involvement of parents as, for example, a coach. Some roles, such as a coach, can create overlap with the modelling role but are also part of the provider role since they enable training for the children.

The functional involvement of parents in their provider role can be seen when parents become active in for example coaching, organising, or refereeing (Knight et al., 2010). This way, the parents become a part of the sport experience they provide for their children. When becoming part of their children's sport, such as the coach, the parents have the benefit of knowing their child and their needs, and it can increase shared memories and experiences. On the other hand, children can lose interest in the sport and eventually drop out when parents become over-involved, which occurs when parents give the feeling that they are making the decision of the child playing sports, not the child itself. This can be due to conflicts created between the parents and the children, because of parents not having a single role (Witt & Dangi, 2018a). Other than becoming part of the sports, parents are often the means of transport to for example school (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020) and

sports (Knight et al., 2010), which otherwise could cause barriers for children to attend these activities. Furthermore, the living environment can be a factor in the engagement of physical activity, as was seen with adolescents living in environments that were favourable for physical activity (De Farias Júnior et al., 2014). Parents are important in the living environment choice, since the creation or finding of a living environment can be mainly attributed to them. This was reinforced by a study by Güneş et al. (2023), who saw that the availability of a playground and having a playmate increased physical activity levels, indicating that living location, whenever possible, should be carefully chosen to increase the physical activity levels. This is often not a conscious choice since socio-economic background can influence parents from having the option to carefully select a living location, and their preferences of areas to live in. One of the last provider roles of parents includes the payment of contribution fees (Knight et al., 2010), encouragement, and co-participation in physical activity with their child (Pyky et al., 2021). Encouraging children can be done in different forms, such as supporting your child (part of the supportive role) or introducing the sport to their children, being the first step for a child to start doing a team sport. The encouragement can therefore be divided into two parts, namely the encouragement on the pitch, during the sports (part of the supportive role), and the encouragement to start participating in sports, where parents act as initiators (part of the provider role). The overlap between parental roles can also be seen in the co-participation, which can be seen as part of the role-model, as well as part of the functional role since otherwise the children might not have a trainer/coach or someone driving them to the sports location. It is not always possible to financially cover all costs, which is why in many countries there is financial aid to help children perform sports. However, parents still have the responsibility to seek and find these possibilities. In the Netherlands that is 'het Jeugdfonds Sport & Cultuur' (Jeugdfonds Sport & Cultuur, 2023).

The provider role for parents is therefore crucial in the possibility for children to perform sports. Without the support of their parents in this aspect, they often cannot perform physical activity even if they want to. Financial help, creation of a supportive environment, transportation and even co-participation can all have a positive impact on the children. However, the co-participation should be

carefully considered to not harm the child, as being overinvolved might cause a deteriorating relationship between a parent and their child. Therefore, performing according to the children's needs in a provider role is the basis of parents to ensure that their children engage in physical activity.

2.1.4 Parental roles: summary

Three crucial roles have been identified for parents. The supportive role covers the fact that encouragement during sports can positively influence the enjoyment levels of children in that sport. However, the encouragement and support can turn into pressure, which can negatively impact the enjoyment levels when the pressure level is too high. Next, the modelling role covers the observational learning of children. Parents set an example for their children which can turn positively, or negatively. Lastly, the provider role covers the parents providing necessary resources for the children to perform sports, as well as parents being the initiators of sports. Although some roles see overlap, each role on its own is important to create an optimal situation for the child.

2.2 Parenting style

The parenting style is the way in which parents behave, which can influence the way in which children perceive the parental behaviour in other contexts. Uncovering the parenting style and the link to socio-economic background could indicate differences in perception on importance of for example personal factors, or roles as parents. The parental roles can therefore be altered and executed depending on the style parents maintain. Baumrind (1971) built upon three parenting styles, which were the authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Authoritarian parents attempt to shape, control, and evaluate the behaviour and attitudes of their children. Parents show little warmth and have high control, valuing rules, and obedience (Timpano et al., 2015). An authoritative parent aims to direct the child's activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner, and this parenting style sees parents having a high degree of control yet have reasonable guidelines and show affection and warmth to the child (Timpano et al., 2015). Lastly, a permissive parent tries to behave in a

nonpunitive, acceptant and affirmative manner to the impulses, desires, and actions children have. Permissive parents value control less and show a lot of warmth and affection (Timpano et al., 2015).

The original three parenting styles from Baumrind (1971) with the explanation of Timpano et al. (2015) were further researched. The authoritative parenting style was found to yield a better psychological well-being (Lamborn et al., 1991) and life satisfaction (Lavrič & Naterer, 2020). Furthermore, the authoritative parenting style is associated with less anxiety sensitivity (Timpano et al., 2015), and gives an increased level of self-esteem, significant better mental health, and a significant better quality of life, as compared to the authoritarian and permissive parenting style (Rezai Niaraki & Rahimi, 2013). On top of that, the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles have been found to positively correlate with the level of anxiety sensitivity, indicating that these parenting styles increase the sensitivity of children towards anxiety (Timpano et al., 2015). In the classroom, the authoritative style was found to improve the attitude towards reading (Echedom et al., 2018) and increase academic outcomes in 5th grade (Walker, 2009) and at university (Bassett et al., 2013). In Japan, research showed that mothers were perceived as more authoritative than fathers (next to mother having been perceived as more permissive and authoritarian, yet these results were less significant), as well as older respondents finding their parents more authoritarian and less permissive (Uji et al., 2014). This study from Uji et al. (2014) also confirmed the previously mentioned increased mental health when parents are authoritative. The literature suggests that the authoritative parenting style creates the most benefits for children, both in the moment itself as the future. However, these studies could have cultural influences, since they have not been undertaken in the Netherlands, where the current research was carried out.

The parenting style depends on the parents themselves, and the parent's personality can therefore determine their parenting style, and thus be a determinant for their behaviour. Humans have different personalities, often measured by the big five personality traits: conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, and agreeableness (Digman, 1990; Costa & McCrae, 2008). It was found that extraversion and agreeableness are related to the level of supportiveness, as well as

neuroticism was associated with the exertion of strict control (Huver et al., 2010). The parents most likely to have an authoritative style were extraverted, agreeable, and less emotionally stable (Huver et al., 2010). The authoritative parenting style was found to have benefits for the children, as was seen previously. The different personalities will result in different parenting styles. A parenting style is the combination of attitudes toward the child, creating an emotional climate influencing the child's behaviour, due to the parent's behaviour (Wright et al., 2019). One negative characteristic mentioned by Wright et al. (2019) is perfectionism. This could lead to translation of the expectations and negatively impact the children by demanding too much. Grolnick (2003, as cited in Holt et al., 2009) also reported that parenting style can influence the development of a child by altering their environment, as for example autonomy-supported children can be more self-determined and intrinsically motivated than when being controlled.

2.3 Parental behaviour

Parental behaviour during youth sports consists of multiple facets. The behaviour before, during, and after matches can all be different, but still influence the enjoyment level (Furusa et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2017). Children also indicated to prefer different behaviours in the different situations (Knight et al., 2011). The parental behaviour is the basis of the research, as the behavioural differences are researched to find if there is a difference based on socio-economic background to be found. There are three discussed types of situations in which parents engage within the youth sports context, and these are also discussed within the questionnaire and the parental view on them.

One type of behaviour of parents is the sideline behaviour. Parents have shown to give a high number of comments during a match. These numbers have not yet been researched thoroughly in a Dutch youth football context, yet in other countries and different sports it has been studied. For example, Bowker et al. (2009) found that parents give over 100 comments during a single youth hockey game, of which nearly 63% positive, and less than 5% negative. Out of these comments, over half of all negative comments were directed towards referees, yet the highest portion of comments was positively indicated to the players (Bowker et al., 2009). Holt et al. (2008), at the same time,

found that a very low number of negative comments were directed towards the referees in an indoor youth football setting in Western Canada, which was thought to be due to an installed policy that teams can be penalised for crowd behaviour. The parental behaviour of making comments during matches can be seen as part of two different roles. First, their supportive role since they are supporting (or the contrary) by making multiple comments on the sideline during matches. Furthermore, the modelling role of parents sees them giving a bad example by making negative comments, which could make children more prone to also make comments.

A second parental behaviour is to engage in a discussion between parents and children. When discussing desired behaviour between parents and children, such behaviour can be stimulated (or improved). As discussed in the roles, the degree of active involvement of parents is important, but should be discussed with their children to find the right amount of active involvement. This can create alignment between actual and desired parental behaviour, since intended (positive) behaviour can be perceived negatively by the children (Bonavolontà et al., 2021). Active engagement of parents to aim to understand a child's needs, experiences, and interests can create an increase in enjoyment of children (Furusa et al., 2021).

A last discussed parental behaviour is the involvement degree. Active involvement has a positive correlation with praise and understanding (Marsh et al., 2015). This can create a higher feeling of encouragement and positive support, which were found previously to positively impact enjoyment levels (Kanters et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2018; Wuerth et al., 2004). The praise and understanding of parents do, however, not always have a positive relationship with active involvement (Mastrorilli & Greco, 2020). This could be due to the perceptual nature of the dynamic (Ede et al., 2012, as cited by Marsh et al., 2015). Active involvement should also be monitored, since it can turn into pressure, which can result in dropping out of the sport (Crane & Temple, 2015; Kanters et al., 2008; Witt & Dangi, 2018b). This positive support that parents should give can be done by taking an interest in the sport and providing social support.

Parental behaviour requires different approaches in different situations; however, consistency is important. Children could find more enjoyment in their sports, depending on the behaviour of parents and therefore the parental behaviour plays a role towards the creation of a positive environment. Parental behaviour should be focused on making positive comments on the sidelines, but also have active involvement, as children positively value this. This active involvement should, however, be moderated and discussed with the children to not create an overwhelming feeling for them.

2.4 Influencing factors on parental behaviour

Parental behaviour and their ability to engage with children in their desired way is influenced by different factors, such as personal, social, and environmental/contextual factors (Furusa et al., 2021). The degree to which these factors influence parents could be dependent on their socio-economic background, but also the parenting style could determine the degree of importance they put on certain factors. Therefore, this chapter discusses these factors and how they look in practice for parents and their behaviour, and potential differences in socio-economic background.

2.4.1 Personal factors

Personal factors of parental behaviour include work commitments and knowledge of the sport (Furusa et al., 2021). Having to commit more time to their work was a limitation parents mentioned for involving themselves in their children's sports (Knight et al., 2016a; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008), and instigates a work-sport role conflict (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Children's participation is often dependent on money, time, and energy spent by parents (Coakley, 2006), but are often perceived by parents as being worth the effort (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). Past (personal) experiences of parents, including their knowledge of the sport, were reasons for parents to increase their involvement level in their children's sports (Knight et al., 2016a). Personal factors are in this thesis considered as those factors that are only of influence on the parent, such as work limitations, personal knowledge of the sport and personal experiences.

2.4.2 Social factors

Parents must deal with a social environment that can influence their perceptions of costs and benefits (Kroshus et al., 2021). The social factors with which parents must deal include the access to social support and the structure of a family. This includes limitations, such as being a single parent (Furusa et al., 2021) or having multiple children (Furusa et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2016a), and therefore shows the dependence of parents on their partner or extended family to meet the time demands that sports entails (Knight et al., 2017). It was argued by Harwood & Knight (2015) that parents should find a social network with other parents during the sports of the children. The creation of social ties between parents of children from the same team was also an observation by Brown (2016), who found that parents viewed themselves as part of a coherent group of parents. This was previously also found to be perceived as beneficial for themselves (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). The social factors in this thesis are defined as the factors influencing the behaviour of parents that are directly related to them in their nearby social environment, such as their household, close friends, and other family members.

2.4.3 Environmental or contextual factors

The environmental or contextual factors that were considered for parental behaviour include living distance and the nature of a child's sport (Furusa et al., 2021). Living further away from the sports' venue is a barrier (Furusa et al., 2021), as living closer to a sports' venue increases the participation in sports as shown for example by Reimers et al. (2014) in Germany for girls. Living location also influences sports participation of children since it can create an unsafe feeling or limit the social network (Kamphuis et al., 2008), although this effect was not found by Eime et al. (2015). Different sports can also bring different financial investments with it, resulting in a different sacrifice from parents (Knight et al., 2016b). The environmental or contextual factors in this thesis are those factors that physically play a role in the possibility of children practicing sports, such as living distance, costs of the sports, nature of a child's sport and the social trends considered with it.

2.5 Socio-economic background

As already stated in Chapter 1, a socio-economic status is defined as “the relative position of a person, family, or neighbourhood in a hierarchy” (Green, 1970, p. 2). If a household has a higher socio-economic status, they typically have more access to resources, such as financial, educational, social, and health (NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms, n.d.). A higher socio-economic background is also linked with a higher nonverbal ability index score of children (Vista & Granham, 2010) and better outcomes at school (Areepattamannil, 2010; Bellibas, 2016), which was hypothesized by Fairclough et al. (2009) to be due to an increased access to resources. Furthermore, coming from a higher socio-economic background can facilitate performing sports and increases the chances of performing physical activity, including sports (Piko & Fitzpatrick, 2007; Fairclough et al., 2009; Eime et al., 2015). This relationship was only found in metropolitan areas (Eime et al., 2017). Research in the United States saw children from households with an annual income of at least \$100,000 be almost twice as likely to perform sports than children coming from a family earning less than \$25,000 (Aspen, 2019). Furthermore, Dutch research also found that children from a higher socio-economic background are more likely to participate in sports (Wijtzes et al., 2014). A higher socio-economic background also tends to shift the concerns of parents, as the concern for money and obtaining a scholarship are more important for lower income families, and higher income families are more concerned about the time left for other activities (Kroshus et al., 2021).

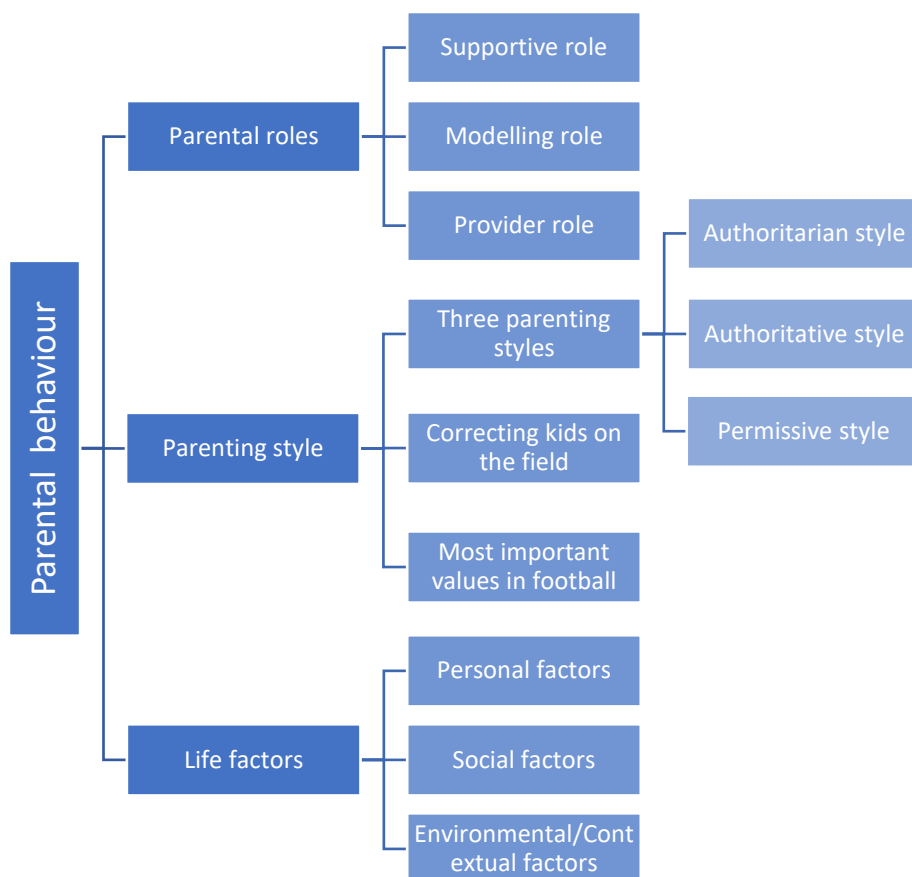
2.6 Theoretical framework

The previous chapters result in the theoretical framework shown in Figure 1. As shown, the overarching concept of interest is the parental behaviour. Within this thesis, the parental behaviour consists of three aspects. The first aspect, parental roles, includes three different roles parents have and the execution of these roles influences the parental behaviour. The second aspect, the parenting style, consists of three parts. The first part is the parenting style, consisting of three types. The other parts are the correction of their kids on the field, which could be embedded in the parenting style, but was seen as separate behaviour, and the most important values that parents believe exist in

sports. The last aspect that influences the parental behaviour are the life factors, consisting of personal factors, social factors, and environmental/contextual factors.

Figure 1

Theoretical framework



2.7 Defining the research gap.

Research has found that multiple factors may affect the behaviour of parents towards their children in sports. These factors include the execution of roles parents have, their parenting style, and their personal, social, and environmental factors. However, there has been no research to find out if there is a difference to be found related to the socio-economic status of the parents. How does the socio-economic status of parents affect the knowledge parents have about their roles? How does the socio-economic status of parents affect the degree of importance they lay on their roles? Is there a noticeable difference within parenting styles, depending on the socio-economic status? And to

what degree do personal, social, and environmental/contextual factors play a role in parents' behaviour, depending on their socio-economic status? The behaviour of parents, in this context, is the behaviour they show towards their children regarding sports. For example, the importance they put on the sports, the degree to which they feel responsible for their children to exercise or the way in which they make changes and decisions in their life that alter their possibilities towards their children's sports.

This thesis aims to answer the research question that fills this research gap: To what extent does socio-economic status influence parents in their behaviour towards youth sports?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The interviews were conducted with a total of 15 parents who at the time of the interview had a football-playing child between the age of 12 and 17 years old. This was the previously discussed target group, since this group had the highest likelihood to perform a team sport but drop out at a later stage. The parents were found through personal contacts, football clubs in Enschede and the snowball effect through interviewees finding more interviewees. Participants were given the possibility to sign up through a provided web-link with contact details. One participant was approached through a personal connection of the researcher without forcing participation. One participant shared the research among the parents of their children's team. This created a sample that had a relatively high number of parents with girls playing football.

There was no differentiation made within participants, as they all received the same interview and there was no control group or test group. For the interview to be used, consent had to be given beforehand. No exclusions were made, since all participants willing to participate met the requirements of having a child in the age group of 12 to 17 years old and agreed upon having their

data and interview used for this thesis. The interview duration ranged from 21 to 80 minutes with an average just over 36 minutes.

Participants were categorised on their socio-economic status. This status was calculated using the method for 2023 of the CBS (Centraal Bureau Statistiek) in The Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, n.d.). This calculation used the income before taxes, highest obtained degree, and employment status. Each variable gave a score, which were added together to create the socio-economic status score. This score was compared to the average score of zero in The Netherlands. A score higher than 0.3 was seen as a high socio-economic status, a score of lower than -0.3 was seen as a low socio-economic status and a score between -0.3 and 0.3 was a middle socio-economic status. Out of the participants, 11 had a high socio-economic status, two had a middle socio-economic status, and two had a low socio-economic status.

Table 1

Demographics of the respondents

Participant	Gender	Cultural background	Marital status	Responsibility for the kids	Highest education	Current employment	Annual income	Son / Daughter (age/team)
1	Male	Dutch	Living together	Together with the mother/father of the kids AND me with my new partner	MBO diploma	Full-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (17)
2	Male	Dutch	Living together	Together with the mother/father of the kids	MBO diploma	Other: Entrepreneur	Over €65.000	Son (13)
3	Female	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Full-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (17) & daughter (14)

4	Female	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Master HBO/WO	Part-time employee AND student	Between €15.000 & €35.000	Son (12)
5	Male	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	MBO diploma	Full-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (12)
6	Female	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Part-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (14)
7	Female	Dutch	Living together	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Part-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (12) & son (15)
8	Female	Dutch	Never married	Me alone	Master HBO/WO	Full-time employee	Between €45.000 & €65.000	Daughter (U15)
9	Male	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Full-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (U19)
10	Female	Dutch	Living together	Together with the mother/father of the kids	MBO diploma	Part-time employee	Between €30.000 & €45.000	Son (U13)
11	Male	Dutch	Living together & divorced	Together with the mother/father of the kids	MBO diploma	Full-time employee	Between €30.000 & €45.000	Son (15) & son (18)

12	Male	Dutch	Living together	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Master HBO/WO	Full-time employee	Over €65.000	Son (12)
13	Female	Dutch	Divorced	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Part-time employee	Between €45.000 & €65.000	Son (9) & son (13)
14	Male	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Other: entrepreneur	Over €65.000	Son (17), daughter (12), daughter (10), daughter (9)
15	Male	Dutch	Married	Together with the mother/father of the kids	Bachelor HBO/WO	Full-time employee	Rather not say	Son (12) & son (15)

3.2 Materials

The research was ethically reviewed and approved by the BMS ethical committee / Domain Humanities & Social Sciences, following a request filed at the University of Twente, with request number 240223. All participants received an informed consent and demographics sheet to be filled out. This sheet can be found in Appendix A. All participants were subjected to an interview, due to the explorative nature of the research.

There was no preparation needed by the participants. A topic list, based on the existing literature and research gap, was prepared, which created the basis for the interviews that aimed for obtaining answers relevant to the research gap, as well as general information from the parents. The interview materials were in Dutch. The interview consisted of four topics, aiming to create a funnel towards the more specific questions, which means they were also asked in this order, yet as it was a semi-structured interview, deviations and follow-up questions could happen. The topics were general information, parental roles, parenting style, and the most important norms and values in football.

The general information included information like age, football club, reasons for choosing that football club, and the climate at the club and the parent's view. The second topic, parental roles, consisted of one question with four sub-questions. The parents were asked the open question about parental roles and which roles existed, which led to corrections and supplementations from the interviewer's side. Next, the parents would be asked to explain their view and execution of these roles. The third topic aimed to look at the parenting style. It investigated the parenting style and the application to sports, such as direct action when perceived negative behaviour was seen. Lastly, the finishing question was about the norms and values that parents have in football. The full question list can be found in Appendix B.

3.3 Procedure

Parents were approached through their football club, a personal connection, or a previous participant. After indicating to be open for an interview, an e-mail was sent with an invitation to have the interview at a location of their choice, either online or physically. Of these 15 interviews, 12 were done physically and three were done online. Interviews took place in either a room at the University of Twente, or at a location chosen by the participant, such as their home or their work. All interviews were performed in Dutch. During physical interviews, the interviewees received a page for informed consent, as well as a document to fill in their demographics. For the online interviews, this paper was sent through the mail upfront. The interview itself was a semi-structured interview, during which rapport was built between interviewer and interviewee, and the questions were then discussed in an open conversation with the possibility to ask for elaboration on questions. All interviews were recorded.

3.4 Analysis

The interviews were transcribed using Amberscript, a software provided by the University of Twente, that automatically transcribes audio. After the initial, machine-made transcription, every transcription was checked for machine-made errors and corrected by hand. The transcripts were then exported to Word, where all demographic data was matched to the interviews. All documents

were then merged into a single document, which was uploaded to Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, in which the transcripts were analysed by coding each relevant statement to the topic to which they were relevant. After this, a report was generated with the collected coded data which will lead to discovering a number of results (see Chapter 5) and drawing conclusions (see Chapter 6). The analysis was done through the structure of the theoretical framework from Figure 1 in Chapter 2.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results are presented following the structure of the code tree in Figure 1, which is based on the theory of Chapter 2. The results are presented as they were found, following the analysis discussed in Chapter 3.

4.1 Execution of parental roles

4.1.1 Parents in a supportive role

The encouragement parents gave to their children was the most often reported part with 13 out of 15 parents explicitly mentioning this. It was mentioned that coaching should always be done in a positive way, such as participant 7 mentioning that *“Yes, the kids do it better with that, when there is positive coaching”*. Explicit examples of this positive coaching were mentioned by participant 13 saying *“He wants to go to the selection teams, so I explain to him: what can you do yourself to make this happen?”*. Furthermore, there should be no negativity towards the children if they performed poorly and many parents also enjoyed watching their child play. For example, participant 2 mentioned that *“I enjoy it when I see him play, I can grumble but I can also motivate them positively”*. The stimulation can come from many aspects, as was mentioned by the participants, and ranges from being a fan on the sidelines, to talking to them when they need it, helping their child analyse how to improve, but also encouraging their child to keep on performing sports. A concrete example came from participant 5, stating that *“We always check the match, what was recorded we check”*, to show that even off the field they always aim to encourage their child to improve. The 13 participants

mentioning the importance of positive coaching varied in their socio-economic background, as did the remaining two parents who did not explicitly mention this importance. This results in no visible difference among different socio-economic backgrounds.

In terms of pressure, parents did not feel like they put a pressure level that was too high for their children. One parent reported that they might have done so in the past, but they are now attempting to let that go and take a step back. No explanation was given about the reasons why. Furthermore, three parents explicitly mentioned that they heavily stimulated their child but tried to maintain a line between stimulating and pressuring. For example, participant 3 said *“Yes, to a higher and lower degree. My daughter, for example, really needs to be challenged, because she does get better from that.”* The stimulating was aimed towards the realisation of the maximum and giving it their all. Participant 12 mentioned this, being the trainer of their child, that *“I try to get the maximum out of it, and if they have to go deep at a condition training, for example, then I get them through it”*. This stimulation was, however, also mentioned by other parents in a different form, to a lesser degree. This stimulation was mentioned by two participants from the middle socio-economic status, and three from the high socio-economic status. However, the remaining high socio-economic group, as well as the two parents from a low socio-economic status did not mention this. This could indicate that a lower socio-economic status does not value the stimulation towards their children to give it their all. However, with the absence of a large portion of the high socio-economic status parents mentioning this, this cannot be said with certainty.

In the past, I have had the feeling that I pushed too much. But I find that very difficult, but that is a feeling that has crept up on me in the past, and then you

take a step back

Participant 11

4.1.2 Parents in a modelling role

The modelling role was taken up strongly by parents themselves, regardless of socio-economic status. A total of 13 parents indicated they do still, or used to work out a lot, and their children grew up with parents that participated in sports. Participant 12 indicated that *"In that sense I am also capable of showcasing many things, because I am still fit enough to compete with these guys, to show them what is expected of them"*. The remaining two participants indicated that they or their partner were active in the sports association, in a different role than performing exercise themselves. Therefore, in a different manner, they still figured as a role model for their children. Participant 14 stated that *"I am quite active, I give training myself, so I try to be an example in that, that not everything just happens and sometimes you have to do something for others"*. Not all parents had the same way of exercising, as some had always played football in their younger years and their kids grew up with that, whereas others had performed different sports, including running, horseback-riding, taekwondo, and swimming. However, this still resulted, in their opinion, in an environment in which sports were stimulated and found as the basis, and that will likely have helped into being a role model. The importance of being a role model was acknowledged by every parent, regardless of their socio-economic status, and no differences were found.

4.1.3 Parents in a provider role

Most parents were actively involved within their child's club. Out of the 15 participants, 12 indicated that they, or their partner, is active within the football association of their child. One of the inactive parents indicated that they signed up to help out but were not approached yet by the association. This activity included being their trainer, the trainer of a different team, being a referee, being the manager of the team, or being part of the club's management or technical committee. Many parents believed that it is important to be involved with their children and their interests. The two remaining parents came from a low and high socio-economic background, leaving no visible differences between socio-economic status groups.

We have good financial buffers, so it gives us the possibility to invest back, in what we like, because everybody asks us, but you are so busy with that club. How do you keep that up? Well, I keep up, because we like it and we do it together

Participant 5

Parents involved in this research mentioned they had observed the lack of involvement as they saw that other kids do not get the right amount of attention and are just dropped off by car and picked up later, showing a minimum interest from their parents. Participant 11 explained it as *“Sometimes it is, a car comes driving, two or three kids are thrown out and I will pick you up in one and a half hour”*. This was confirmed by participant 7 who mentioned *“No I never go watch [...] Because if I have to drive, I always come here [at work]. Then I go to work for an hour and pick them up again”*, and when asked about actively participating in their child’s club, participant 10 mentioned that *“I have indicated that I do not want that yet, since I am busy with my work, and my own hobbies, and I just really have little time for that”*. On the other hand, there were also participants that mentioned to notice the lack of volunteers within the club or team of their child and mentioned this as a reason to actively help. One parent, however, mentioned that they had signed up for an active role in the club, but never got a response from the club and therefore assumed the club did not have a shortage of volunteers. Parents indicating to be less active came from different socio-economic backgrounds, showing no clear differences in background with regards to active involvement.

Parents were also aware of their duties. Apart from their involvement with the club and their children’s activities, they were also still responsible for the membership fee, clothes, washing, and being the driver. Many clubs use schemes for the parents to drive, wash, and be linesman, so that this is divided equally. Participant 4, for example, said that *“I am a washing parent. I will not be lines(wo)man. My husband does do that of course.”* All parents interviewed were aware of their duties. Whereas some were active at the association, others helped out with team tasks or were driving their children to trainings and matches. No differentiation between socio-economic backgrounds was found.

4.2 Parenting style

4.2.1 Used parenting styles.

Each of the three parenting styles were mentioned during the interviews. Parents were explicitly asked which of the parenting styles suited them most. Both the permissive and authoritarian parenting style were mentioned once, where the participants in both cases had a high socio-economic background. Participant 8 mentioned that *“No, in that regard I am sometimes also a bit inconsequent, but quite easy I think, yes”*, indicating a permissive parenting style. Participant 5 stated that *“In our house there is a modern dictatorship, which means dad and mom are in charge”*, showing an authoritarian parenting style. The authoritative parenting style was, however, by far the most common, as 13 parents mentioned that this style suited them most. For example, participant 2 mentioned that *“If I for example say, be home at 5:30, and he asks but can it be 6? I can say yes, but then you are home at 6”*, indicating the room for negotiation and thus authoritative parenting style. This included two parents from low socio-economic status, two from middle socio-economic status and the remainder from high socio-economic status. Within these 13 parents, one of the parents mentioned that originally, they were more authoritarian, allowing them now to be more authoritative. This was seen as participant 13 said: *“We have at the start, when the children were very young, been very strict, which is why they now have all the freedom”*. One parent mentioned that, from them and their partner, one was more permissive, and the other was more authoritarian, but together they were authoritative. The predominance of the authoritative form was clear among all socio-economic status groups, with two exceptions in the high socio-economic status group.

4.2.2 Correcting the kids on the football field.

Undesirable behaviour on the football field, such as kicking, trying to hurt somebody, or cursing towards opponents, the referee, or teammates is behaviour that is not tolerated by any of the parents in this study, from all socio-economic status groups. An example of this behaviour was mentioned by participant 1, who said that *“And then he kicked the ball, out of anger, out into the woods and walked away [...] So I said there’s one person getting that ball and that’s you”*, and

participant 5 mentioned that *“After the game you are just politely shaking hands. How frustrated you are, you shake hands.”*

“The other day I could not stay quiet because one of his teammates went in so improperly hard. Yes, I did just feel to say something about that. Like, hey should we a little bit [...] Like, should we keep it a bit tidy? You kick each other out of the match. That cannot be supposed to”

Participant 2

The response from parents differed depending on the situation. Nine parents indicated that during the sport, such as on the pitch, they would never correct the behaviour. Five of these parents mentioned that they considered it the staff's responsibility. However, one parent explicitly mentioned that they would say something if their kid was physically close to them on the pitch. For example, participant 3 mentioned that *“Even my partner sometimes says mind your own business, and then I think mind your own business? Somebody has to say it to that man, let it be me then yes.”* Another mentioned option was that parents would ask the coach to take their child off the pitch when they misbehaved or would even do it themselves. One parent also mentioned that they would probably step in if their kid got actively attacked but would otherwise keep their distance. However, nearly all parents mentioned that they would get back on the subject later, and not directly on the pitch. This could be after the match at home, or during the car ride back. The differences between parents were not attributable to their socio-economic status, as no clear view per socio-economic status group was found.

4.2.3 Most important values in football

The most common value that parents found important was respect. This includes respect to teammates, coaches, trainers, staff, and referees. Every single participant, from every socio-economic status group, mentioned the importance of respect, whether it was on the pitch, towards elderly people outside the pitch, or towards the trainers. Treating others with respect was

sometimes considered being 'normal' or being sportive towards others, in other words, they ask their children to behave how they would behave at home, and not start doing things they would otherwise not do. Participant 1 stated that *"Show respect to your opponent, so that you, in a good way, also after the match always are able to walk off the pitch with a good feeling"*.

Next to respect, six parents mentioned how they valued the intention of their kids to enjoy the game, give it all and always try their best. This is an important value where all the participants mentioning this value were from a high socio-economic status. An example of this being participant 14 who valued *"Respect for others. If you want to achieve something, you can achieve that, but you will have to do it yourself."* There was a clear difference between socio-economic backgrounds. Whereas every parent mentioned respect to be important, there were only six parents mentioning the intention their children have. This value was only mentioned by high socio-economic background participants, showing a clear difference among groups.

4.3 The degree of importance of factors on their life

4.3.1 Personal factors

There were four parents that mentioned the benefits of doing a team sport over an individual sport. All these parents had a high socio-economic status. One parent mentioned that their kid had to try both, to see which one was preferred. This was seen by participant 12 stating *"I wanted him to try out both an individual sport and a team sport, so he got to know multiple sports"*. Another parent put their child on a team sport to also create more social contacts. Two parents had done individual sports, of which one parent had noticed the lack of social contacts as well, and they wanted to give their child the option to create these social contacts, and with that, social benefits. Participant 8 also mentioned that *"I noticed that she was very much on her own, and then I thought: maybe it is good if she does a team sport, also to make some more contacts"*, indicating the personally perceived benefits of a team sport over an individual sport. A difference can be found, as all participants mentioning the importance of a team sport had a high socio-economic background. However, only 4

out of 11 participants with a high socio-economic background mentioned this, making it difficult to attribute this to the entire group.

Almost half of the parents mentioned the importance of work in their life. The only reason six parents would miss trainings or matches of their kids was when they had to work themselves. One of these six parents had this issue before and has attempted to resolve this by changing jobs to allow them to see their kids more often. One parent mentioned that their own training times coincide with their kids' training times, making it difficult to see those, and one parent mentioned that they also still had hobbies which they would like to consider. There was no difference found in the view of the importance of work between parents from different socio-economic backgrounds.

I noticed then, slowly, at my boys that they had something like, yes, it is all not clear anymore, your schedule is so difficult, and we do not understand it anymore.

But when are you home and when are you not free? And then I went looking to see what fitted me [which job], what also fits my living pattern, and where I also have regularity for the kids, because the kids need rest, cleanliness, and regularity

Participant 11

Many parents had a personal connection to football. As mentioned in the role models, many kids grew up on the sidelines of their parents' matches, and a lot of the parents are active in giving training, being the team manager or being involved in the club. Participant 1 mentioned that *"Because, I, of course, played professional football. That is something he really likes and is interested in, and he does not say it, but he would also like that."* Sometimes this was the reason to join the club, sometimes they have become active due to their kid joining the club. The football knowledge of most parents was therefore higher than might be expected. There was a mix from the different socio-economic status groups of parents that answered this, so that no differences could be seen in this respect.

Personal history was a reason for many parents to pass football on and be involved with their children's sport. One parent mentioned that for competitive sports in their past, their parents would bring them twice a day for over half an hour by car, whereas others were raised, as mentioned, on the sidelines of the football pitch. Participant 6 indicated this by saying that *"I think, that is also how I was raised [...], in the end you pass that on, but that is how I was raised and your parents also, your dad also does things for [the club]"*. The differences between a team sport and an individual sport were again mentioned, as one parent said that you can get a lack of friends when you are older and never did a team sport in your youth. The personal history was mentioned by parents from all different socio-economic backgrounds and no difference were found between different socio-economic backgrounds.

4.3.2 Social factors

Within participants' lives there were multiple social factors that play a role. Four participants talked about the possibility to be with other parents to watch their children's match. This was because of their kid joining a team that would usually result in them joining a group of parents. This was often experienced as very pleasant and would start a bonding within that group. This showed social benefits participants experienced for themselves. Participant 7, for example, said *"Usually, I just sit with other moms on the stands, and that is nice"*. Participant 9 said *"I have, together with my father-in-law, never really missed a match, or it had to be for work"*. Another participant reported that being active can create many new contacts. Three of these parents had a high socio-economic background, and one a middle socio-economic background. This creates no visible differences between socio-economic status groups.

One of the downsides in terms of social factors was the division over several kids within one family. One participant indicated that their kids often play away matches at the same time, making it impossible to see both, and a different participant mentioned that it is sometimes difficult to do something for yourself, as their kid would not like them not being there. Another participant mentioned that their other kid, who does not play football, can sometimes feel left out. Having more

than one kid is therefore sometimes seen as a reason towards struggles, to see all their kids and support them adequately. Another struggle some parents experienced was a divorce, where either the custody was divided, or for example one parent moved away. These challenges were noted by participants from different socio-economic groups, resulting in no evidence of one group being affected more by this than a different group.

They are in second place, and they are playing against the number one. So that is quite an important match. And I am not there then, because I am leaving for a day, and he is already busy with that

Participant 4

4.3.3 Environmental/contextual factors

Not every parent gave a clear answer about their environmental and contextual factors playing a role. However, part of the respondents did give a clear answer and from these respondents, every one of them had a high socio-economic status, making it difficult to see a clear pattern or find differences among socio-economic status groups. However, from the high socio-economic status parents, many appreciated the living distance to the club, as they would typically have their kid play at a club that was nice and close by, sometimes resulting in them being able to take the bike. Some parents, however, mentioned that their kids did some extra trainings, at either professional or commercial teams, or additional optional trainings, for which they had to drive them. Most parents did not see this as an issue, as one participant indicated that this also added some enjoyable time with their child. As mentioned, there are no differences that can be seen among socio-economic status groups.

He had, via the football school, last year, he had a tournament in the south of the country, then, well then, we go there with the two of us, a hotel, overnight stay, and that is then also really nice

Participant 2

Some of the other parents did see this more as a struggle, as one of the parents would bring the child and the other would pick them up, and one of the parents mentioned that they did not like watching the trainings, and therefore would get to work in the meantime, which was close by. One participant also mentioned that he would not always like being at the matches or trainings, due to all the screaming parents who would irritate them, creating an environment that was not appropriate to them. Again, there was not enough representation among parents from different socio-economic status groups to find differences.

Because I have a lot of difficulties with the shouting and swearing at a group of boys who are trying to play a nice match of football, who are not professionals, nothing for anything, who are just doing their best

Participant 9

A few parents indicated that the climate on the club was something they valued. For example, making it a smoke-free area, maintaining rules for youth football, such as not serving alcohol, and actively working on a positive attitude were indicated as important. It was also indicated by a few parents that there was a strong emphasis on the performance teams, and that the importance of the lower, non-performance teams, was sometimes overshadowed and they would not receive sufficient attention. This was shown by the fact that they would not get any paid trainers, no team clothes, no referees (so parents had to referee) or other benefits. One parent mentioned knowing that their club was very actively working on closing this gap, and making sure that every single team, so also the recreational teams, has a referee, and has the possibility to train and have as much fun as other, performance-oriented teams. There was, however, not a clear division between socio-economic groups.

There goes quite some attention to, relatively, to the selection teams. There are paid trainers put on those teams, and at the recreational teams this is not done, or less. That can be seen in all kinds of different aspects, such as clothes, up till

yes, they get left to their own fate, so to say, sometimes it feels like that. It is not true, but yes, there is really a big difference in that

Participant 15

5. Discussion

The goal of this thesis was to find influences on the behaviour of parents of youth football players and to find if there were differences between the influences on parents from different socio-economic backgrounds. The results showed few differences between parents, but the sample contained too few participants of two of three socio-economic groups to draw conclusions. With a sample of 15 participants, of which 11 had a high socio-economic status, this group is the only group about which anything can be said. The only noticeable difference found in parents with a low or middle socio-economic status, was the absence of mentioning the value parents put on the intention their child has, which was mentioned only by parents with a high socio-economic status.

5.1 Parental roles

Parents felt encouraging, positively supporting, and tried to find a balance between pressure and encouragement. These findings are in line with previous research, which saw the importance of encouragement (Shen et al., 2018; Wuerth et al., 2004) and positive support (Kanters et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2018), as well as the negative impact that excessive involvement could have on the enjoyment levels of children (Dorsch et al. 2019). The supportive role saw no differences in socio-economic status, which could be due to either a general common sense of parents, a bias within the participating parents, or a socially desirable answer. This means that either all parents see the need of encouragement and positive support for their child, this sample was biased towards seeing this need, or parents thought it was socially desirable, and thus mentioned the importance of their children's needs, without actually believing it. However, which of these explanations is correct cannot be concluded from the results: all parents, from all socio-economic status groups, indicated

with examples the importance, which could be seen as genuine support to their children, and thus a well-executed role.

Next to supportive, parents were also positive about their modelling role. Most parents were active and were aware of the negative impact they could have as a role model, in accordance with Muthuri et al. (2016). Here, again, the results show no differences in the socio-economic status of the parents. This could, again, be due to the knowledge that it is socially desirable to give this answer, and they would not want to look bad, or it could be due to their personal history (some parents saw their parents did it for them, so they would do it for their children), or the general sense of parents that it is important to be a role model for their children. The fact remains that parents in this research all mentioned that they were aware of their modelling role and actively aimed to execute this properly.

The last parental role was the provider role, which was arguably the least recognised role of the three. Whereas parents recognised themselves in it, not all the different aspects of the role were properly recognised. The activism within this population was high, indicating that parents were actively involved in their child's sport. This, however, could be due to the nature of the research, which could see that only involved parents were interested in improving upon the topic under study. Most parents saw being active as a normal activity. A recurring theme within this thesis was that of uninvolved parents. Several parents had indicated that they saw too often that parents were uninvolved and only dropped off their children and picked them up afterwards. Apart from lack of involvement, other reasons behind this could be personal factors, such as work or hobbies, but also a lack of opportunities to do so, being divided by the care task of several children. This lack of involvement, however, was rarely found back in participants, as the biggest part was active. This role was in line with previous research, seeing that parents were a means of transport (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020; Knight et al., 2010), important for paying the bills (Knight et al., 2010), and could co-participate in physical activity (Pyky et al., 2021) in the form of trainer, coach, or team manager. Parents were involved and this is important, yet also gave a skewed view, since the relative number

of parents that are active in their children's sports is much lower than the relative number of parents that were active in this thesis sample. However, the parents in this research were active and had a good understanding of what was expected from them in their provider role. However, another possible explanation is that the active parents feel more responsible to reach out for this research, and therefore the activism rate was relatively high in this group.

The luxury of higher socio-economic status groups is reflected in the ease with which they can pay the bills, but also in the extra time they can spend watching their children. There was no clear difference in the results, but it can be hypothesized that parents from a higher socio-economic background might have more means to make everything happen, as for example one parent mentioned their financial buffer to be a reason to contribute to their child and the association.

5.2 Parenting styles

The authoritative parenting style was the most commonly found style, which is positive as it has been shown to be the most effective for children, since it has multiple benefits, as found by Lamborn et al. (1991), Timpano et al. (2015), Rezai Niaraki & Rahimi (2013), and Lavrič & Naterer, (2020). Socio-economic status did not matter in this case, as the two deviations to either side from the authoritative style were both from the high socio-economic status group.

Children sometimes also needed to be corrected on the field. Between socio-economic groups, no difference was found on parents' intentions, however the definition of undesirable behaviour from children is still an open question. This is also a possible explanation for the agreement between all parents, as they could agree on the general idea, but their boundaries might be different. A clear connection between socio-economic status and correcting behaviour, such as immediately correcting or correcting after the match, was not found.

This agreement on undesirable behaviour could also be seen back in the question on values in football. Respect was mentioned, but was, again, an ambiguous answer, as the definition of respect can be discussed, and each parent might have a different boundary for it. There was no clear difference between socio-economic status of the parents, which can be attributed to the wide

boundaries of respect. However, there was a clear difference on the value parents put on the intention with which children execute their sports, such as giving it all they have. This can have a varying definition, but only parents with a high socio-economic background mentioned this.

However, it is important to note that the parents from other groups also did not contradict this importance, and thus perhaps they value this as well, only did not mention it.

5.3 Life factors

The differences for work, a personal life factor, were seen in socio-economic status. A lower socio-economic status created less freedom to support their children, but also saw less restrictions with regards to travelling and spending time away from their children, as two parents from a high socio-economic status mentioned their mandatory attendance in other countries for work. However, both parents mentioned this was in the past, and not currently. This can be hypothesized to be due to the lack of freedom parents have in a lower socio-economic status, due to the type of work they might execute.

The social network with other parents that was found by Harwood & Knight (2015) was clearly visible too in this thesis, as was the dependence of parents on extended family (Knight et al., 2017). Participants mentioned the downsides of having multiple children and the difficulties in dividing their support, as is in line with Furusa et al. (2021) and Knight et al. (2016a). Differences in socio-economic status were not found, which might indicate that parents, regardless of socio-economic status, need a social network in their life, due to the social nature of humans.

A living location further away from the sports venue is a barrier to perform sports (Furusa et al., 2021). This could also influence sports participation (Reimers et al., 2014; Kamphuis et al., 2008) and was also seen in this thesis. Parents tried to live close by or find a sports club close to their home, so children would not need to be taken to the trainings by car. Some children had additional trainings, which were further away. These children all had a high socio-economic background, which could be explained by the increased resources that a high socio-economic background brings. Furthermore, regardless of socio-economic status, parents valued the climate on the club and the rules, such as a

no-smoking policy or control on serving alcohol to minors. These are the starting points of a desired sports climate, which included a caring, motivating, development oriented, and socially safe climate, as seen by Schipper-van Veldhoven (2021). The higher socio-economic status can be thought to increase the opportunities to provide the resources, such as additional trainings, and therefore give rise to a difference in socio-economic backgrounds. However, this was not researched enough to draw conclusions.

5.4 Theoretical contribution of this thesis

The focus on the socio-economic status influencing the importance parents put on the execution of parental roles, differences in parenting styles and the importance they put on different factors adds a perspective to the existing literature, by focusing on the differences resulting from the socio-economic status of the parents. The results in this thesis can be taken as a starting point for future research to further identify relevant differences within the socio-economic status of parents and their behaviour.

5.5 Practical contribution of this thesis and recommendations

This thesis shows the need for more research on the differences in parental behaviour, based on their socio-economic status. The different socio-economic groups have a high level of overlap in behaviour, and norms. This also needs to be researched further. Sports associations throughout the Netherlands can learn that a higher level of involvement from parents with their children's sports association is important and valued by other parents in the team. They can also learn that the socio-economic status does potentially have an impact on the behaviour of parents, and therefore adjustments can be made based of this. However, this needs to be researched further. Creating this cohesion can not only help the team by creating more chemistry among parents but could also improve the club's situation by taking difficult tasks out of their hands.

Research has shown that an integral part of a proper pedagogical sports climate is a socially safe ambiance. The first recommendation, therefore, focuses on maintaining a socially safe environment. Parental behaviour, and the awareness of their behaviour, are important parts to create this desired

environment, and the awareness of the clubs in this regard is important. Clubs could make an impact on this by creating a youth sport vision plan that includes the role they wish parents to have for their children, their desired level of involvement and their desired behaviour to maximise the parents' contribution to a proper pedagogical youth sport climate. These plans could be adjusted to the socio-economic status of parents and different options can be offered to parents from different socio-economic backgrounds, which match their preferences and capabilities. Parents can then be held accountable for their behaviour when this is not according to the vision of the association. This plan can be created per association and sent out to each parent, but could extend to the city, province, or nation to create a micro-, meso-, macro-plan.

Furthermore, parental behaviour starts with the involvement of the parents. Parents that are more involved, might have a better understanding of what is needed for their child, and therefore contribute better to a socially safe environment. Activism of parents is therefore an important part, and the second recommendation is therefore to increase the activity of parents by formally requesting them to volunteer when their child becomes a member of the club. This can, again, be tailored to the parents' wishes, and their personal possibilities and wishes to help. This could be done on voluntary basis, but also by a reduction of contribution fee. This question can be recurring, as situations might change every year. This also means that a volunteer plan should be created with a clear long-term vision, required number of volunteers and plan to attract volunteers.

5.6 Limitations and future research directions

Although this study had participants that came from three socio-economic groups, 11 out of 15 participants had a high socio-economic status. This underrepresentation of the low socio-economic group (two participants) and middle socio-economic group (two participants) limits the possibilities of drawing conclusions that can be representative for the entire population of each socio-economic group. The results overall were generally the same, with two exceptions. The freedom parents have in terms of their work situation (e.g. being able to attend trainings, matches, etc. due to work) was suggested to increase with socio-economic status, as was the case with the value parents put on

their child giving it all they got and trying their hardest. These differences, however, were not conclusive and could only be presumed. Future research should aim to have a larger number of participants, allowing for better representation of each socioeconomic status group so that conclusions can be drawn.

The participating parents were all recruited through own initiative. Through connections of the author, football clubs close by the research area and the snowball effect through other participants parents took part in the study. The participating pool could be a limiting factor in the findings in this study, as participants could be biased. Since participation was through own initiative of the participants, the moral obligation could have had a stronger appeal to a certain group of parents. Also, the percentage of active parents was higher than average, showing a potential bias as well. The answers given could therefore also be seen as socially correct, again impacting the results of the thesis. Although it is not possible to verify this research for the actual impact these biases might have had, it is possible that the results are biased. The results show a sample that is positive about their roles, shows interest in executing these roles accordingly and has a relatively high percentage of active parents. The parents mention the lack of activity they see from other parents and therefore it can be assumed that the view of the parent in this thesis might not be the same as the view of the average parent, with regards to what is important for their children to sport. This could have led to results that are positively skewed towards the degree to which parents act accordingly to the children's needs. Finding an unbiased population sample is a strong recommendation to future research, which should include parents from different socio-economic groups and with different opinions. This could be done by increasing the sample size, which will automatically create more room for diversity, or this could be done by motivating parents externally, through creating benefits for them personally. Finding what motivates these parents (rather than parents that are actively involved) to (not) show desired behaviour for their children and football clubs is perhaps more interesting, since this is the core of the problem researched.

The last limitation comes from the interviewing side. As there was a semi-structured interview, the interviewer could (unwillingly) be biased and ask more, or less follow-up questions based on what he is looking for. This could lead to results that are more focused on certain topics. In future research an interview training can be given to the interviewer to improve the interview quality.

6. Conclusion

Research has shown that various factors influence parents' behaviour towards their children in sports, but no research has explored yet whether differences in parents' socio-economic status play a role. This thesis aimed to provide the first answers on the existing research gap through the research question: To what extent does socio-economic status influence parents in their behaviour towards youth sports?

This thesis only found differences in the value parents put on their children's intentions. The sample's limitation, with 11 out of 15 parents coming from a high socio-economic background, made it difficult to find conclusive differences. Parents from the high socio-economic group were found to value all parental roles, had a predominantly authoritative parenting style, and had similar values for respect and intention of their child. Furthermore, they had a slightly higher degree of freedom in their work but valued the social and environmental context as well. This thesis saw a first answer to the research question, as there is a slight difference to be found in the behaviour of parents from different socio-economic backgrounds, based on personal freedom and a difference in behaviour they value from their child. However, these differences were not conclusive and should be further researched.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Informed consent and demographics

Geïnformeerde toestemming

Beste ouder,

Allereerst bedankt dat u de tijd neemt voor dit interview. Dit interview zal de basis leggen voor een onderzoek naar het gedrag van ouders van kinderen tussen de 12 en 17 jaar, waarbij het gedrag langs de lijn en buiten het veld centraal staan. Het doel is om te onderzoeken welke factoren een invloed hebben op ouders in een sportomgeving, en hoe zij kijken naar de rollen die zij hebben voor hun kinderen, en hun opvoedstijl.

De interviews zullen worden opgenomen en uitgeschreven. De gegevens die u verstrekt, evenals het interview, zullen enkel voor academische doeleinden gebruikt worden en enkel in geanonimiseerde vorm worden gebruikt. Deze zullen bewaard worden volgens de AVG (Algemene verordening gegevensbescherming)

Het interview zal tussen de 45 en 60 minuten duren, en zal in de vorm van een semi-gestructureerd interview zijn. U heeft ten alle tijden het recht om uit te stappen of te stoppen met het interview, en hier hoeft geen verklaring voor te worden gegeven.

Indien u opmerkingen of klachten over dit onderzoek heeft kunt u ook contact opnemen met l.i.damen@student.utwente.nl (onderzoeker), of n.h.m.j.vanveldhoven@utwente.nl (supervisor). Dit kan ook als u interesse heeft om de resultaten van het onderzoek te ontvangen.

Deelname van het onderzoek.

	Ja	Nee
Ik heb de informatie van het onderzoek gelezen en begrepen, of het is aan mij voorgelezen. Ik heb de kans gekregen om vragen te stellen en mijn vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik geef vrijwillig toestemming om een deelnemer in dit onderzoek te zijn en begrijp dat ik het beantwoorden van vragen kan weigeren, evenals op elk moment kan stoppen met het onderzoek zonder een reden op te hoeven geven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik begrijp dat deelname in het onderzoek een korte demografische vragenlijst vooraf is, evenals een interview waarvan de audio wordt opgenomen met een telefoon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Gebruik van de informatie.

Ik geef toestemming voor het opnemen van de audio van het interview
Ik begrijp dat de informatie die ik verstrek gebruikt zal worden voor het onderzoek, welke wordt gebruikt om het sportklimaat van de jeugd te verbeteren

Ja **Nee**

Ik geef toestemming dat de verzamelde data van mij wordt gebruikt in een geanonimiseerde vorm

Ik geef toestemming dat mijn informatie (in geanonimiseerde vorm) in een quote gebruikt mag worden in de onderzoeksuitkomsten

 Demografische gegevens

Bent u...

- Man
- Vrouw
- Andere
- Dat zeg ik liever niet

Andere is voor u: _____

Wat is uw culturele achtergrond?

- Nederlands
- Europees (Niet-Nederlands)
- Aziatisch
- Afrikaans
- Australisch / Oceanisch
- Zuid Amerikaans
- Noord Amerikaans
- Dat zeg ik liever niet

Bent u samenwonend, getrouwd, weduwe/weduwenaar, gescheiden, uit elkaar of nooit getrouwd?

- Samenwonend
- Getrouwd
- Verweduwd
- Gescheiden
- Ongehuwd
- Dat zeg ik liever niet

Wie heeft de verantwoordelijkheid voor de opvoeding van de kinderen?

- Ik alleen

- Ik samen met de moeder/vader van de kinderen
- Ik samen met mijn nieuwe partner
- Anders, namelijk: _____

Wat is uw hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?

- Basisonderwijs, VMBO
- HAVO/VWO
- MBO diploma
- Bachelor diploma HBO/WO
- Master diploma HBO/WO
- PhD

Wat is uw huidige arbeidssituatie.

- Student
- Part-time medewerker
- Full-time medewerker
- Met pensioen.
- Geen baan
- Anders, namelijk _____

Wat is uw huidige huishoudelijke inkomen per jaar (bruto)?

- Minder dan €15.000
- Tussen de €15.000 en €30.000
- Tussen de €30.000 en €45.000
- Tussen de €45.000 en €65.000
- Boven de €65.000
- Dat zeg ik liever niet

Appendix B – Question list interviews

Topiclijst voor interviews met ouders van kinderen 12-17 jaar

- 1) De algemene informatie
 - a. Welke leeftijdsgroep speelt uw kind
 - b. Jongens/meisjes
 - c. Welk niveau speelt uw kind
 - d. Hoe vaak per week traint uw kind
 - e. Waarom speelt uw kind bij deze club (waar hij/zij nu lid is)
 - f. Waarom is uw kind begonnen met het spelen van voetbal?
 - g. Wat vindt u er van dat uw kind bij deze club speelt
 - h. Hoe voelt / weet u dat uw kind het goed doet / hoeveel plezier hij/zij heeft, ergens mee zit, hoe hij/zij de coach vindt ... ?
 - i. Hoe kijkt u naar de coach/trainer en zijn/haar trainingsstijl?
 - j. Heeft de club een bepaalde visie op jeugdsport? En kent u deze?
 - k. Hoe is het sportklimaat op de club?

- I. Hoe kijkt u naar sport en het belang er van?
 - i. Fysiek gebied
 - ii. Mentaal/sociaal gebied
- 2) De rol van de ouders.
 - a. Heeft u een idee van welke rollen u vervult voor uw kinderen in de opvoeding en voor het deelnemen aan sporten?
 - i. Rollen?
 1. Ondersteunend en aanmoedigend
 - a. Druk zetten, voor plezier zorgen etc.
 2. Model rol.
 - a. hebben ze het idee dat zij een invloed hebben op het gedrag van hun kinderen in het veld? – zo ja, hoe? Binnen of buiten het veld?
 3. Faciliterend
 - a. Betalen, brengen, ophalen, mogelijk maken
 - b. Als coach/trainer?
 - ii. Hoe gaat het vervullen van deze rollen?
 - iii. Heeft u een idee wat de kinderen van u verwachten, of wat de club van u verwacht?
 - iv. Eventueel aanvullen en vragen naar hoe zij rollen zien
 - a. Heeft u een bepaalde opvoedstijl? (Autoritatief, Autoritair, Permissief) Heeft u duidelijke opvoeddoelen? Hoe kijkt u tegen de opvoeding van uw kinderen aan? Geeft u bewust waarden / regels / eisen ... mee aan uw kind?
 - a. Tot hoeverre bent u actief bezig met opvoeding van uw kinderen bij en tijdens het sporten? Tot hoeverre grijpen ze in als ze iets zien etc.
 - i. Op het veld/rondom het veld met tegenstanders/supporters/trainers
 - ii. Naar/van de wedstrijd komen.
 - iii. Thuis
 - iv. Op andere locaties
 - v. Verschil tussen bovenstaanden?
 - b. Tot hoeverre heeft u het idee dat uw kinderen zich vrij voelen om kind te zijn? (dit wil zeggen, vrij zijn, fouten maken, leren, plezier maken etc.) Of heeft u het gevoel dat ze (graag) gepusht worden om het beste uit zichzelf te halen? Of hebben ze het gevoel dat het kind niet altijd even goed luistert? Of ...
 - i. Dit kan zowel thuis zijn als bij andere mensen met leiding (Trainers, leraren)
 - 4) Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste normen en waarden in het voetbal?