

## COACH-PARENT RELATIONSHIP IN CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL PREPARATION: ANALYSIS OF THE BEST INTERNATIONAL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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**Abstract.** The article highlights the importance of a supportive family environment in preparing children for physical education and sports activities. It argues for the significance of instilling health-preserving skills in children from an early age. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of promoting the ideals of a healthy lifestyle and enhancing physical, mental, spiritual, and social well-being by engaging students in football education and training. Based on the analysis of sports and pedagogical experience in the training of young players in various countries around the world, both positive and negative aspects of the relationship between the family and the coach in youth football are outlined. The authors have chosen for analysis countries such as Brazil, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and others, which have deep-rooted football traditions and notable expertise in education and training in competitive practice. The article clarifies that in these countries, considerable emphasis is placed on parental engagement in their child's physical development, with coaches playing pivotal roles in facilitating and directing sports activities, thereby nurturing a constructive developmental atmosphere in youth football. Specific characteristics contributing to the establishment of such an environment as a crucial pedagogical requirement for effective training have been delineated. Crucial aspects of coach-parent collaboration in children's football activities in foreign countries have been revealed, including open communication to enhance sports skills acquisition; inviting parents to training sessions and matches to support the child and create a positive game atmosphere; arranging various events to foster a friendly atmosphere among all parents, the children's team, and the coach; developing technical skills in competitive sports practice with parental involvement; taking into account the mental characteristics of the country, its cultural specifics in physical education (discipline, responsibility, openness to interaction), etc. It's been proved that the factors of pedagogical cooperation between the coach and children's parents help create an effective sports environment for young footballers' training and development.

**Keywords:** youth football, coach-parent relationship, physical education, educational developmental environment, competitive practice, international experience.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Relevance of the topic

The topic of maintaining and enhancing children's health holds significant relevance in today's era of digitalization and technological advancement. With children increasingly immersed in the virtual realm and reliant on gadgets, their social interactions with peers have notably diminished. Consequently, their levels of physical activity decline year by year, resulting in a range of health issues including hypokinesia, obesity, muscular weakness, cardiovascular diseases, and more. For example, as evidenced by the results of several studies (Budnyk, & Mazur, 2017), among surveyed Ukrainian

schoolchildren, only 62.6% engage in physical exercises at home, 33.6% do so very rarely, and 3.7% do not engage in physical exercises at home at all (according to their self-assessment, which may be subjective). Moreover, 17.9% stated that they do not take part in additional physical activities at school, and 13% of respondents claimed to have never participated in sports. On the other hand, Polish students expressed a readiness to engage in physical exercises at home (54.3%), actively participate in physical education classes (88.3%), and engage in sports activities after school (58.7%) (Ibid). This situation is typical for most modern countries, including those highly developed. While preschool-age children prefer various forms of physical activity, only a minority of school students are interested in attending physical education classes or relevant clubs.

We believe that an effective way to partially solve this problem is to involve children in sports games and activities, in particular football. Such pursuits offer several benefits, including a) strengthening physical health; b) developing soft skills (team interaction, conflict resolution, empathy, and the ability to collaborate with others); c) preserving mental health (reducing stress levels, enhancing mood), d) skill formation (movement coordination, concentration, strategic thinking, and flexibility); e) instilling values (discipline, responsibility, honesty, mutual respect, equality), and so on.

## 1.2 The importance of football training for children

Numerous studies prove evidence of the significance of physical education and sports for maintaining and strengthening the health of the younger generation (Ponczek, & Olszowy, 2012; Budnyk, 2014; Yatsiv, Tyagur, Lisovskyi, & Tkachivska, 2021; Nikolaienko, Osiptsov, Dub, Kosholap, Vertel, & Balychev, 2023).

*"[...] Two important aspects of encouraging behavior change are: creating awareness of the connection between lifestyle habits and health outcomes and increasing self-efficacy for behavior change by setting achievable goals. Health education can improve students' well-being and reduce their cardiovascular risk. This may be accomplished by engaging them in activities that promote healthy habits and helping them attain personal goals consistent with recommended healthy lifestyle guidelines", American scientists note (McCalla, Juarez, Williams, et al., 2012).*

The article primarily focuses on promoting the values of a healthy lifestyle and strengthening the physical, mental, spiritual, and social health of children and youth. Researchers emphasize the necessity of "developing health-preserving competence and organizing active leisure in the surrounding environment, engaging in physical education and sports, collaborating with parents to enhance students' health, studying the capabilities of one's body, attending sports clubs, hobby groups," and so on (Mazur, Mykhailyshyn, Budnyk, et al., 2018).

Children greatly enjoy active games, fun, and competitions, so it is necessary to use this for their physical development and improvement (Yatsiv & Lyseiko, 2021). After all, football training serves several important functions, namely:

- When children are taught to control the ball, navigate zones, and execute accurate passes since preschool age, they develop important soft skills: the ability to communicate and interact within a team, understand team players, assist each other, and strategize the game (Fomin, Budnyk, Matsuk, et al., 2020). Moreover, what is crucial, they also develop their physical qualities – movement coordination, speed, endurance, and so on.
- Football training contributes to the enhancement of children's cognitive abilities, as they learn to quickly make correct decisions, anticipate field situations, predict opponents' actions, and analyze their own and others' mistakes during the game. This process aids in the cultivation of intelligence, attention, and strategic thinking.
- However, arguably the most significant rationale behind parents enrolling their children in football training is the children's desire and motivation. Engaging in such a sport serves as a source of

positive emotions, infusing them with energy and joy. Through deriving emotional satisfaction from the game, children are allowed to further explore their individuality, capabilities, and talents; they also forge new friendships with peers who share similar interests. (Football Training, 2024)

The aim of this article is to (1) study the best international practices of physical education for children, particularly in the field of football training; (2) outline the positive and negative aspects that occur in parental involvement in youth football; (3) identify some features of creating an educational developmental environment as an important pedagogical condition for effective physical education sessions overall, and youth football in particular.

## **2. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH**

To study and analyze the most effective foreign pedagogical experience regarding the cooperation between coaches and parents in preparing children for football, researchers typically focus on the following factors:

1) choosing a country from various continents (geographical regions) to obtain the most reliable information in the study;

2) it is important to consider countries that have an interesting football history and a high level of football infrastructure development, indicating a pedagogical experience in working with children in this field;

3) the availability and accessibility of data for analysis in the selected countries, especially concerning the collaboration between coaches and parents in children's football training.

Of course, we were interested in the football systems of countries such as the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, and Italy, which are well known for their strong football traditions. Of course, we were interested in the football systems of countries such as the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, and Italy, which are well known for their strong football traditions. In our study, we will focus on characterizing educational approaches to the collaboration between coaches and parents in some of these countries.

### **2.1. Analysis of international pedagogical experience in physical education – youth football and relationship with parents**

When studying the best practices of foreign countries in training future football players, of course, we start with Brazil, because it is a unique continental country with a population of over 213 million, where football holds the status of a “national passion” and stands as the cornerstone of both sport and culture. (Bettega, Marques Filho, & Leonardo, 2023). Accordingly, a significant number of children of different age groups are involved in this type of competition.

A special study was conducted in Brazil, resulting in finding positive and negative aspects of the interaction between families and coaches in the physical education and development of the child (a future player), as presented in Fig. 1. While the majority of respondents still indicate a positive impact of family support, some negative facts were also mentioned (Bettega, Marques Filho, & Leonardo, 2023).

Children are highly motivated and “charged” by their parents' energy when they feel the euphoria, encouragement, and support from them in the stands during the game. They are happy to have understanding, and there is a real sense of relationship in the format of “parents – children – coaches”. However, it often happens that one of the players makes a mistake, for example, “loses the ball” or fails to score. Then you can feel the opposite reaction – blaming the children from the parents. And this already harms the child's participation in competitions and their success in football.

Among the negative aspects of their children's football activities is also a decrease in the effectiveness of the educational-training process due to the absence of parents, as then the children do not feel support, miss them, feel abandoned, or are less important in the family. Unfortunately, sometimes there are fights in the crowd, so in such situations, parents often want to take on the role of

coach, or conversely, belittle their child and call them “unskilled” for this game. In addition, sometimes there are quarrels between parents because of children who are on the football field. Or – parents demand too much from their children in sports, which can also negatively affect their health and physical activity.

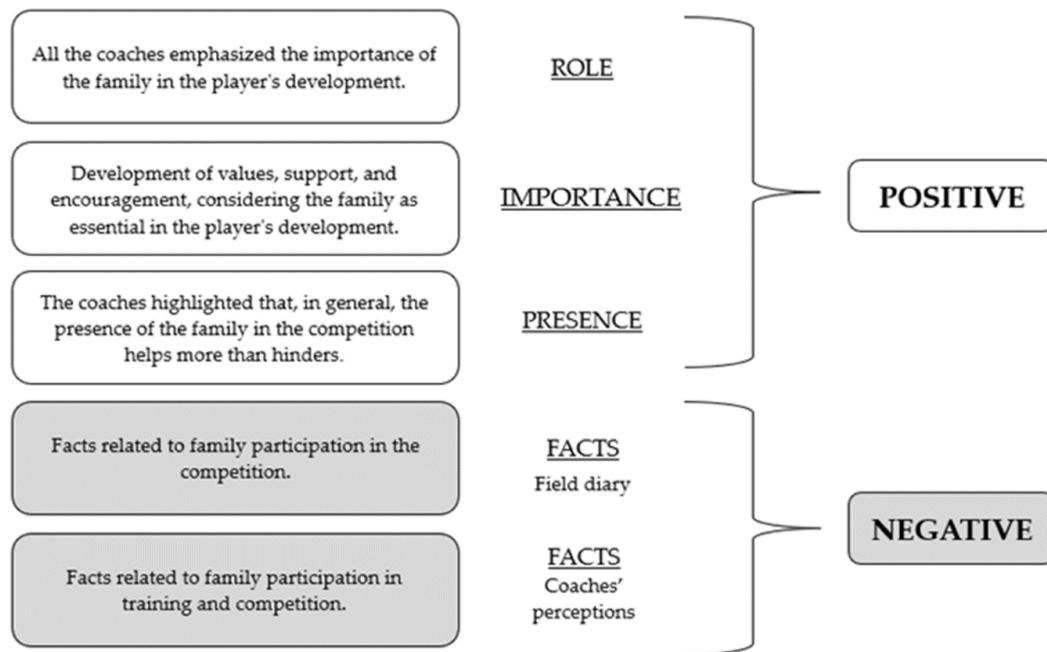


Fig. 1. Positive and negative aspects of the family impact on the healthy development of young players

Source: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/3/2275>

In Brazil, for example, a study was conducted that allowed for a more in-depth description of these positive and negative phenomena based on qualitative analysis. An important positive aspect of this is the understanding of the importance of the family in raising a child, understanding their sporting interests, and the ability to rejoice in their success. At the same time, coaches identify important aspects of the relationship with parents during football training, which we attempted to classify and interpret in our way (Bettega, Marques Filho, & Leonardo, 2023):

*“In the family, we develop values, shape the character of any person, regardless of their age [...], therefore it is important to build a strong character for the player.”*

*The role of parents is very important for children to be more obedient in classes, [...] respected by their peers and especially respected by the teacher, as there have been cases where talented players have left football, because they did not have support from their family.*

*If a boy feels his father's support rather than criticism or 'giving directions' during football, it encourages and supports him in the game.*

Thus, coaches believe it is important “not to push” the boy, not to restrict his actions, so as not to harm his development in football.

*“The family is very important for the player”, especially when it encourages the child to engage, rather than using punishment as a stimulus.*

*“Football should be a child's dream, not the father's”, so it is necessary to cultivate interest in it, not just evaluate the game.*

In the Netherlands, there is a profound understanding of this matter, leading to a collaborative approach between coaches and parents of children engaged in football primarily grounded in principles of openness, cooperation, and tolerance. Indeed, the emphasis is placed on fostering frank communication between coaches and parents, which is regarded as perhaps the most important task in organizing a football team. Coaches clearly express their expectations regarding parental involvement in

training and games, emphasizing the importance of their support for the child. Therefore, this open communication is not usually limited to football – they often support their players in personal and academic growth, and systematically inform parents about their child's achievements in training, being open and receptive to feedback. Moreover, it is very important that under such circumstances, parents in the Netherlands show a willingness to actively participate in the team's life, for example, by assisting in event organization, tournaments, or providing financial support. This positively influences the development of young football players.

In Spain, youth football is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, so cooperation between coaches and parents with children is at a high level and aimed at achieving common goals. Emphasis is placed on the development of player's technical skills, and coaches (very important) can collaborate with parents to support and assist in teaching football techniques even in home settings. After all, Spanish parents are often the main mentors for their children in their football careers. Such collaboration contributes to the success of children (and ultimately young players) both on and off the football field (Lesma, Pérez-González, & Salinero, 2011).

In youth football in Italy, the cooperation between coaches and parents plays a significant role in the physical development of young players. The features of such collaboration include clear communication (coaches establish productive communication with parents, explaining football goals and expectations for children's participation, and being open to any questions or requests from parents); coaches are fully aware of the parent's role in this educational process, so they actively contribute to creating a positive atmosphere in football and preparation for training. In Italy, coaches often invite parents to training sessions and matches so they can observe their child's progress, physical activity, their "football mood," and feel connected to the youth team. Additionally, coaches sometimes initiate various events to foster a friendly atmosphere among all parents and children

In Japan, for instance, children's football training often relies on a system that not only focuses on physical skills but also instills certain values and approaches to the game. And of course, parents play a significant role in this process, actively supporting their children's upbringing. In this context, the emphasis of coaches in youth football, as in Spain, is on developing technical skills (ball control, passing, dribbling, and shooting) from an early age. This provides a solid foundation for future football play.

In this country, great attention is paid to teamwork, collaboration, and discipline, which are crucial for a football player. At the same time, children learn to develop mental strength and responsibility through football, making important decisions on the field, and taking responsibility for their actions and results in the game. Parents in Japan, despite their busy schedules, often actively participate in their children's football lives, including supporting them in training and matches, helping to create a positive sports environment, and promoting their football development in cooperation with the coach. (Yatsiv, Tyagur, Lisovskyi, & Tkachivska, 2021).

## **2.2. Formation of a developmental educational environment as a pedagogical condition for effective football practice**

Creating a developmental environment to foster interest in physical education and sports, promoting a healthy lifestyle for children is essential.

*"[...] preventing the development of students' negative emotional states, strengthening their physical, mental and social health. For this purpose in the educational environment, it is necessary to eradicate the following negative factors: monotony, unfavorable sanitary and hygienic conditions that contribute to reducing stress resistance, fatigue, irritability, and fear. Therefore, education managers need to introduce preventative medicine aimed at preventing and identifying diseases in time, generating interest in preserving and promoting health; overcoming depressive states and solving conflict situations, etc."* (Smolinska, Budnyk, Voitovych, et al., 2020).

Preserving children's health is extremely important now, as Ukrainians are in a state of full-scale war with the Russian aggressor, so it is necessary to stabilize various factors (social, mental, educational, etc.)

to activate children's involvement, particularly in engaging them in physical education and sports activities.

To initiate football training for children, it is necessary to collaborate with parents regarding health: every child should have a medical certificate from a doctor confirming physical readiness for the activities. Then, the coach (educator) develops their training plan taking into account the age and physical fitness level of each student. This process is crucial for establishing an optimal developmental educational environment for conducting classes. Additionally, in close collaboration with parents, the initial lessons can incorporate the following elements:

Warm-up serves as the first stage of training and includes several exercises to prepare for further physical activity. These exercises involve muscle warm-up and blood circulation stimulation, sometimes it's important to include jogging, squats, stretching, and exercises to develop hand-leg coordination.

1. Technical skills represent the next stage of training, where it's important to provide proper conditions for mastering exercises of various levels of complexity to gradually progress in physical readiness for competitions. This includes ball striking, passing, control, and dribbling exercises that need to be practiced regularly.

2. Strategic thinking and tactics are important aspects of training even at preschool age, as children should learn how to defend, attack, and understand the specifics of movement on the field. It is essential to emphasize the need to fully focus on the game, strategically plan, and make decisions several steps ahead quickly and effectively.

3. Physical exercise is the final stage of training aimed at improving the child's fitness level and readiness for the game. At this stage, it is important to use a variety of exercises for endurance, speed, and strength, which are essential during the match.

According to Ukrainian scientists, the game method in working with children, particularly in football, "[...] key to effective learning, during which individual capabilities develop, game intelligence is formed, the foundations of the child's technical and tactical skills are laid, which in the future will determine the player's potential at a professional level" (Nikolaienko, Osiptsov, Dub, et al., 2023).

Considering both the advantages and drawbacks of parental participation in preparing the child for training, the coach autonomously and individually determines their presence at sessions. It is important to focus on the successes and failures of the child, correcting mistakes, and promoting a healthy lifestyle to achieve effective results in competitive sports, particularly football.

### 3. CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, we conclude on the importance of pedagogical relationship between the coach and parents to motivate their children to engage in physical activity, particularly in football training. "Energized" by the positive energy of their parents, they feel understanding from adults, support, and interest in competitive practice. Effective cooperation in the format of "parents – children – coaches" enables the creation of an efficient sports developmental environment for children in football. Therefore, it is worth emphasizing the negative aspects that may occur in this cooperation, such as decreased effectiveness of the educational training process due to the absence of parents' desire to attend sessions; misunderstandings between parents during matches, or conflict situations involving children with parental involvement in resolving on-field situations; excessive demands and expectations placed on the child in football by parents, and similar issues.

Analysis of foreign experience in coach-parent relationships for children involved in football has allowed for the identification of certain approaches in competitive practice and the training of young players. Typically, such experience is based on principles of openness, collaboration, and tolerance in coach-parent communication, active participation of parents in the team life; sometimes including financial support; development of players' technical skills with parental participation (sometimes at home), creating a positive football atmosphere, and preparing for training sessions, and so on.

The prospects for further scientific research lie in developing a model of coach-parent collaboration tailored for students of varying ages, aimed at fostering a positive sports environment for the training of young footballers in Ukraine. Additionally, enhancing the organizational and methodological framework of this process, while integrating innovative educational practices, holds promise for improvement.

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Оклієвич Назар, Яців Ярослав. Співпраця тренера і батьків у підготовці дитини до футболу: аналіз кращого зарубіжного педагогічного досвіду. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, **11** (1) (2024), 147-154.

У статті висвітлено значення родинного середовища та супроводу дитини у її підготовці до занять фізкультурою і спортом. Обґрунтовано актуальність проблеми формування здоров'язберезувальної компетентності у дітей, починаючи з дошкільного віку. Наголошено на необхідності популяризації цінностей здорового способу життя, зміцнення фізичного, психічного, духовного та соціального здоров'я шляхом залучення вихованців до навчально-тренувального процесу з футболу. На основі аналізу спортивно-педагогічного досвіду підготовки молодих гравців у різних країнах світу окреслено позитивні та негативні аспекти у взаємодії родини і тренера у дитячому футболі. Авторами обрано для аналізу такі країни, як: Бразилія, Нідерланди, Іспанія, Італія та ін., які мають багаті футбольні традиції та цікавий досвід навчання і виховання у змагальній практиці. З'ясовано, що в цих країнах значна увага приділяється участі батьків у фізичній підготовці дитини, тренери виступають основними фігурами для посередництва та керівництва реалізацією спортивних сценаріїв і сприяння створення позитивного розвивального середовища у дитячому футболі. Визначено деякі особливості формування цього середовища як важливої педагогічної умови для ефективності тренувань. Виявлено такі важливі аспекти співпраці тренера з батьками дітей на заняттях з футболу в зарубіжних країнах, як: відверте спілкування заради поступу у здобутті спортивних навичок; запрошення батьків на тренування та матчі для підтримки дитини та створення позитивної атмосфери у грі; проведення різноманітних заходів, які сприяють налагодженню дружньої атмосфери між усіма батьками, командою дітей і тренером; розвиток технічних навичок у змагальній спортивній практиці за участі батьків; урахування ментальних характеристик країни, її культурних особливостей у фізичному вихованні (дисциплінованість, відповідальність, відкритість до взаємодії) та ін. Доведено, що представлені чинники педагогічної співпраці тренера з батьками дітей допомагають створити ефективне спортивне середовище для навчання й розвитку молодих футболістів.

**Ключові слова:** дитячий футбол, співпраця тренера з батьками, фізичне виховання, освітнє розвивальне середовище, змагальна практика, зарубіжний досвід.