PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL SUPPORT OF HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN JAPAN

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Introduction

Exceptional levels of sport skill require certain types of environmental support, special experiences, excellent teaching, and appropriate motivational encouragement. Parents play an important role as a contributing factor for talent development and athletes’ sport experiences. The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of parental support of high school basketball players in Japan taking into account their family systems in relation to talent development.

Methods and Procedure

Seventeen female players of a public high school basketball team in Japan and their parents and coaches served as participants for this study. Focus-group interviews and in-depth open-ended interviews were used to gather data. Each interview took approximately 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were systematically transcribed verbatim from the audio cassettes immediately after the completion of each interview. The data was decontextualized using an inductive procedure for analyzing unstructured qualitative data.

Results

A total number of 57 meaning units were gathered related to the contextual component from a total of 276 gathered from the 17 players, 15 parents and two coaches. The inductive analysis process resulted in regrouping these interview transcripts into two categories corresponding to the players’ different level of basketball participation: (stimulating, empowering and backing), and six properties (having feelings of sympathy, helping substantially, motivating, providing positive feedback, understanding, and respecting).

Stimulating: Strong flow experiences which players felt during playing basketball and the other times that they spent with their families in their initiation phase were important for fueling the motivational resources.

My father was interested in various sports. He always took me and my sister to a lot of interesting places outside of the house. This kind of communication with my father was deeply impressed on my mind. (Player 3)

Empowering: Once players started to commit to practice, it was necessary to inspire them towards greater efforts. But none forced their children into playing basketball. Most parents encouraged their children to achieve the things to which they aspired. Players recognized this as positive feedback from their parents.

My mother taught me the importance to exert all possible effort in daily life. She had never forced me to play well, but she always encouraged me to do my best when I faced a difficult task or complained. I learned the basic attitudes of an athlete. (Player 7)

Backing: During the full-scale practice phase, parents played an important role supporting their children in a different way. Players were relieved when they felt a sense of belonging to a family.

When I played so bad in a practice and I had a good scolding, I did not want to talk with my family after I went back home. My parents left me as I was. I was thankful to them for their sympathetic understanding. (Player 5)

Parents played a crucial role to support their children’s performance development in a manner that made an optimum psychological environment for players.

Discussion and Conclusions

The strong relationship between stimulating, empowering, and backing indicates that parents direct players to commit to deliberate practice as a way of overcoming the three constraints for talent development: motivation, effort, and resources.

Keywords: Parents, Basketball, Support