

**Title:**

Sport and exercise-related socialization in single-parent and two-parent families

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Abstract:**Introduction:**

Being important socialization agents, parents may strongly influence the extent to which their children engage in sport and exercise. Both parents from single-parent as well as from two-parent families may do so by means of a wide range of parental sports and exercise-related practices such as parental modeling and different kinds of parental support. However, a number of barriers (e.g., a lack of time, a lack of financial means etc.) can make this more challenging for parents. Single parents are more likely to face such barriers as, per definition, there is only one parent in the household who usually has to fulfil both the functions of child rearing and financial coverage. At the same time, it appears possible to overcome at least some barriers, for instance by relying on social support from other persons (e.g., by other family members). Furthermore, the child as active creator of its own sport and exercise engagement needs to be taken into account. Guided by interactional socialization-theoretical conceptions (Burrmann, 2005), this study investigates the relevance and interplay of the factors mentioned, namely a) parental sports and exercise-related practices, b) parental barriers, c) social support parents receive from other persons, and d) children as active creators with regard to children's sport and exercise engagement in single-parent and two-parent families.

Methods:

Interviews were conducted with parents from single-parent (n=6) and two-parent families (n=13) whose children were at the age of 6-14, respectively. The constant comparative method was used for analysis.

Results:

While most children both in single-parent and two-parent families engaged in sport or exercise regularly, few were not active at least once a week. As expected, parental sport and exercise-related practices seemed to play important roles with regard to children's sport and exercise engagement both in single-parent and two-parent families. Even if children were active, however, in some cases parents still perceived limitations in the opportunities for their children to engage in *certain types* of sport or exercise. Particularly single parents indicated that parental barriers (lack of time, lack of financial means, impaired parental health) restricted children's opportunities to engage in certain types of sport or exercise. Furthermore, single parents were more likely to perceive restrictions for their own sport and exercise engagement, which limited parental sport and exercise-related modeling. Additionally, the social support parents receive from other persons (and a lack thereof) seemed to play a more important role for the sport and exercise engagement of children in single parent families. Finally, it became evident from the interviews that children can be active creators of their own sport and exercise socialization by both demanding parental support as well as refusing parental offers of support.

Discussion/Conclusion:

From a parental perspective, even if single parents find ways to assure that their children can engage in some form of sport or exercise, restrictions regarding particular types of sport and exercise engagement may still persist.

References:

Burrmann, U. (2005). Zur Vermittlung und intergenerationalen „Vererbung“ von Sport(vereins)engagements in der Herkunftsfamilie. *Sport und Gesellschaft*, 2(2), 125-154.