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**To cite this article:** Fernando Santos, Marta Ferreira, Luís Dias, Samuel Kim Elliott, Fabrício João Milan, Michel Milistetd & Camilla J. Knight (2025) A scoping review of coach-parent interactions and relationships across youth sport settings, *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18:2, 1002-1025, DOI: [10.1080/1750984X.2024.2332986](https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2024.2332986)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2024.2332986>



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Published online: 01 Apr 2024.



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## A scoping review of coach-parent interactions and relationships across youth sport settings

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### ABSTRACT

To foster positive sporting experiences and enable young people to reach their sporting potential, parents and coaches need to have positive relationships. Correspondingly, literature exploring parent-coach relationships is expanding. However, previous studies have yet to be considered as a collective body to identify what characterizes effective and ineffective parent-coach relationships across youth sport settings and potential lines of inquiry for future research in the field. Consequently, this scoping review sought to (1) review published studies about coach-parent interactions and relationships within the context of youth sport; (2) systematically consider and identify the characteristics of effective and ineffective coach-parent relationships; and (3) highlight the existent gaps in the literature as they pertain to coach-parent relationships, and identify future research directions. Ten studies were reviewed. Findings highlighted that previous studies have provided valuable insights about coach-parent relationships, but missed important opportunities to understand context, cultural and relational dynamics across socio-cultural contexts. More research is needed on coach-parent interactions and relationships; particularly studies that can help parents and coaches come together to increase their children's development and performance.


### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 August 2023  
Accepted 9 March 2024

### KEYWORDS

Coach education; learning;  
parent education; pedagogy;  
youth development

Organized youth sport is considered a valuable context for positive development (Bruner et al., 2021). However, it can also foster negative developmental experiences, which result from several variables such as overemphasizing winning (Merkel, 2013), coach pressure (Dunn et al., 2022), and conflicting relationships (e.g. Elliott & Drummond, 2017a; 2017b). Indeed, researchers have highlighted the need to '... become informed of not

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only the benefits but also the dangers associated with sport participation' (Bean et al., 2014, p. 10253). Considering these nuances, efforts have been employed to understand how to effectively use organized youth sport (e.g. competitive and recreational contexts) as a resource for youth development (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Till et al., 2022).

Across socio-cultural contexts, the opportunities for youth to participate in sport, have fun, compete, and achieve their potential are largely influenced by the support they receive from meaningful adults (e.g. parents, coaches) intimately involved with/at the heart of youth sport (Wylleman & Lavalée, 2004). Amongst the diverse decision makers that are part of the youth sports system, parents and coaches have a critical role in determining youth athletes' developmental experiences, attitudes, and outcomes (Dorsch et al., 2022; Hardman & Jones, 2013; Zhao & Jowett, 2023). For instance, through their engagement, coaches and parents can contribute to the satisfaction of youth athletes' basic psychological needs (Charbonneau & Camiré, 2020). Further, coaches' and parents' behaviors have been associated with positive mental health and social justice outcomes (e.g. activism towards gender equity issues). Hurley et al. (2018) demonstrated the value of providing a targeted mental health literacy intervention at parents through community sports clubs, as an avenue through which to support children's mental health. Newman et al. (2022) have discussed the value of coaches being used as a resource to teach social justice life skills, which are skills that may help youth foster greater inclusion and equity across societal domains.

Given their extensive influence, researchers have increasingly focused on understanding the interactions and relationships between parents and coaches (O'Donnell et al., 2022). Based on Rusbult and Van Lange's (2008) reflections on interdependence theory, coach-parent interactions may be defined as exchanges between coaches and parents that are unsystematic, episodic, and non-deliberate. Interactions may also refer to one-way communication channels whereas coaches inform parents and vice-versa. For example, a coach might tell parents their children should come early to practice next week without explaining why and for what purpose. In this situation, parents are passive listeners who do not actively engage in a relationship with coaches about their children's sports experience. Conversely, coach-parent relationships involve on-going, continuous, and deliberate interactions between coaches and parents that aim to create solid grounds for athlete development. Coaches and parents are positioned as an interrelated social system (Dorsch et al., 2022; Smoll et al., 2011). Through a systems approach, communication between parents and coaches is postulated as 'a two-way street' (Smoll et al., 2011, p. 18) and can be influenced by, and influence, multiple variables such as culture and social norms (macro-level influences); policy and program delivery (meso-level influences); and athlete development (micro-level influences).

To foster positive sporting experiences and youth development in and through sports, parents and coaches need to interact and develop positive relationships (e.g. Atkins et al., 2015; Lisinskiene & Lochbaum, 2022; O'Rourke et al., 2014). The quality of the interactions and relationships created and maintained over time can lead to the implementation of relevant strategies with direct impacts on holistic athlete development (Davis & Jowett, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2022; Preston et al., 2020; Strachan et al., 2021). Concurrently, coach-parent interactions or relationships are influenced by a multitude of factors such as the ability of parents to pay for private coaching (e.g. Wall et al., 2019), level of parental involvement (e.g. Gould et al., 2006), shared knowledge/understanding of the sport (e.g.

Knight & Holt, 2013), as well as shared or differing goals/objectives (e.g. O'Donnell et al., 2022). Thus, there have also been reports that coach-parent interactions or relationships can lead to negative outcomes such as stress and frustration on both parties (e.g. Harwood & Knight, 2009).

Despite increasing research (e.g. O'Donnell et al., 2022) book chapters on parent-coach interactions (Knight & Gould, 2017) and calls for further research (Holt & Knight, 2014), to-date there have been no systematic reviews of empirical research or critical analysis pertaining to coach-parent relationships in youth sports. Previous reviews have focused almost exclusively on understanding research trends concerning either parents or coaches independently (Dorsch et al., 2021; Sutcliffe et al., 2021). A comprehensive analysis of effective and ineffective parent-coach relationships in youth sports settings can help researchers identify these characteristics and explore potential areas for future research in this field. Consequently, this scoping review sought to (1) review published studies about coach-parent interactions and relationships within the context of youth sport; (2) systematically consider and identify the characteristics of effective and ineffective coach-parent interactions and relationships; and (3) highlight the existent gaps in the literature as they pertain to coach-parent interactions and relationships, and identify future research directions.

## Method

### *The scoping review methodology*

A scoping review methodology was chosen because such an approach facilitates the provision of an overarching synthesis of the available literature in a particular field (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Specifically, a scoping review includes diverse types of literature without excluding any evidence based on quality measures, such as research design. A scoping review methodology also requires the research team to adopt a more flexible approach towards defining inclusion and exclusion criteria (Dowling et al., 2020). Thus, scoping reviews differ from other types of reviews (e.g. narrative reviews, systematic reviews) by not including formal quality assessment, including narrative commentary, and describing the quantity and quality of existent research evidence through a set of flexible parameters. In essence, scoping reviews 'share several characteristics of the systematic review in attempting to be systematic, transparent and replicable' (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 101), but are broader and flexible. For instance, scoping reviews do not follow quality indicators such as impact factors and the need for randomized control trials, which enable a broader variety of research articles to be considered in the analysis.

The rationale for selecting a scoping review methodology, in this case, was based on several factors: (1) the literature on coach-parent interactions and relationships is still developing; (2) coach-parent relationships and interactions represent a broad and vast line of inquiry that has been studied through diverse interdisciplinary lenses including psychology, sociology, and pedagogy/coaching; and (3) within the context of sport, the range of existent literature on coach-parent relationships and interactions has not been collated thus far (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Based on the guidelines provided by the Joanna Briggs Institute for conducting scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2015), a series of steps were followed. These steps, as in

other scoping reviews (e.g. Newman et al., 2021), included identifying the purpose and objectives of the review; defining inclusion criteria; presenting the plan for selecting existent literature; conducting the search process; selecting adequate literature; extracting evidence; charting and summarizing the findings; and member checking to increase the quality of the review process. Figure 1 shows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram, which describes each step of the scoping review process. PRISMA was used as a resource to map the findings and provide a transparent overview of the review process, as previous scoping reviews have shown (e.g. Newman et al., 2021).

### Search strategy

Based on the purpose of this scoping review and consistent with previous reviews (Newman et al., 2021), the systematic search was conducted in the following databases: ERIC (EBSCOhost), APA PsycInfo (EBSCOhostOvid), Web of Science, and Scopus. Based on

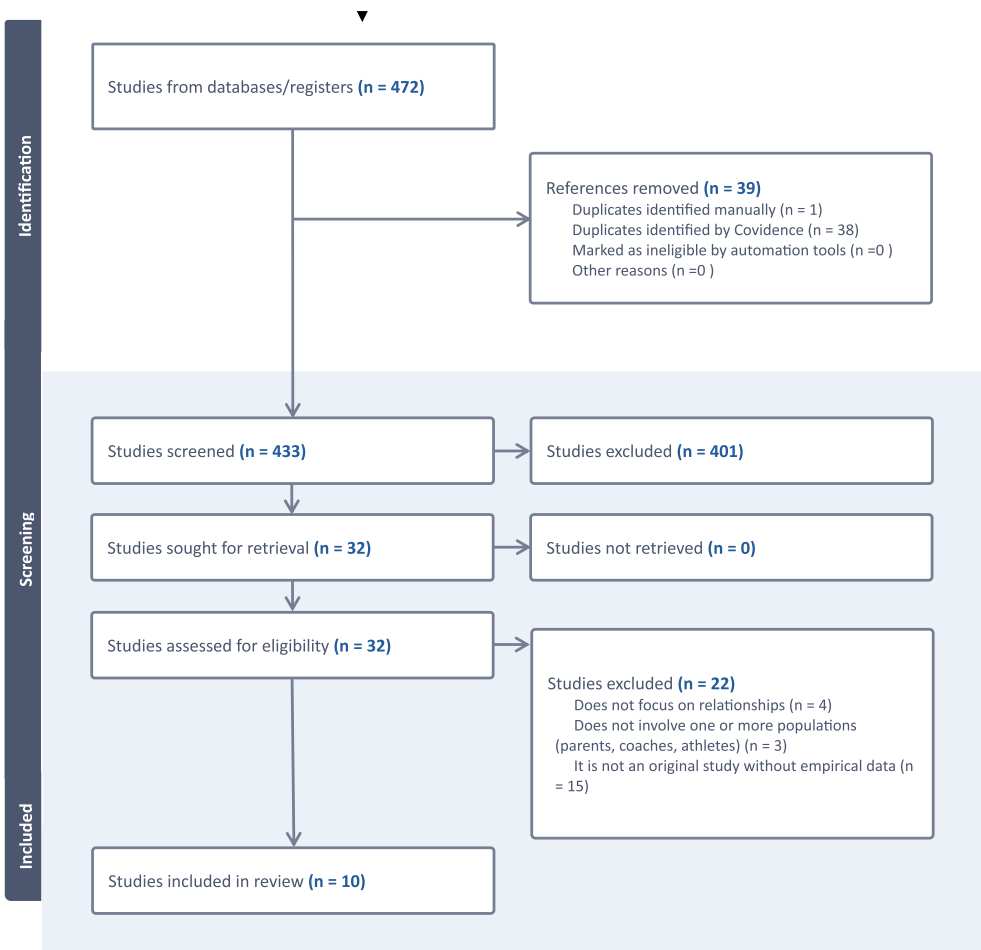


Figure 1. Flow diagram.

previous literature (Dorsch et al., 2021), the keywords used were: (youth sport\* OR children sport\* OR adolescents sport\*) AND (parents\* OR coach\* OR parent coach interactions\*) OR (parent coach relationships\* OR parent coach Perception\* OR parent coach experience\*). Several inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in this scoping review during the search process: (a) articles must be published in the English, Portuguese, or Spanish languages between 1973 and 2023 (30th June 2023); (b) articles must be original articles and they must be published in a peer-reviewed journal with an impact factor, and not dissertations, books, theses or conference proceedings; (c) articles must include data from parent(s), coach(es), and/or athlete(s) regarding coach-parent interactions or relationships within the context of youth sport; (d) full-text article available; (e) articles included youth ranging between 6 and 19 years old (see Bean et al., 2014 review for a similar approach), but not other contexts, such as physical activity, leisure/active recreation or physical education; (f) articles must have gathered original empirical data and could have resorted to any research design such as retrospective, cross-sectional and prospective.

Considering these criteria, it is important to provide a rationale for the decisions made. First, the timeframe (1973–2023) was guided by the historical review of sport parenting research conducted by Dorsch and colleagues (2021). Specifically, within this review, except one paper, it was the early 1970s when research into parental involvement in sport began. Second, considering past scoping review protocols, grey literature was not included because these manuscripts have not been subject to peer review (see Clark et al., 2015 for an example). Third, articles published in English, Portuguese, or Spanish were considered because research team members were fluent in these languages and could use their expertise to broaden the scope of the search process, which is often a limitation to English language only in reviews.

After conducting exploratory searches, 20746 articles on coach-parent relationships and interactions were found. Therefore, to improve the efficacy of the search, the same keywords mentioned above were used but they had to be included in the title and/or abstract of the article. Thereafter, an article search was carried out in the following databases ERIC ( $n = 49$ ), APA PSYCINFO ( $n = 48$ ), Web of Science ( $n = 52$ ) and Scopus ( $n = 323$ ) giving rise to the total number of articles used ( $n = 472$ ). The search process was conducted independently by the second and third authors (i.e. main article reviewers) followed by an examination by the first author (i.e. the third article reviewer).

### **Screening and selecting the evidence**

For the analyses of the articles, Covidence was utilized as a resource to better apply the criteria defined and selects relevant articles. Based on the title and abstract of each article, identified articles ( $n = 472$ ) were screened independently by two reviewers (i.e. second and third authors) to ensure they fulfilled the inclusion criteria. In case of disagreement between both reviewers concerning the need to include or exclude an article, a third reviewer made the decision (i.e. first author). This debriefing process was critical to ensure relevant articles were included and to avoid errors in the selection process. Any duplicate articles were removed automatically by Covidence ( $n = 38$ ). During the search process, the reviewers checked the Covidence outputs to ensure no additional duplicates were found. These efforts led to the identification of one more duplicate article ( $n = 39$ ). A

total of 32 articles were considered eligible and included as part of the extraction and charting processes (see [Figure 1](#) for an overview of the extraction and charting processes).

The two leading reviewers independently analyzed these 32 articles. However, after the analysis, 22 were excluded for the following reasons: (1) four articles involved parents and/or coaches as participants but were not focused on coach-parent interactions and/or relationships; (2) three articles were not centered on youth sport settings; and (3) fifteen articles did not include empirical data and, therefore, were not included.

### *Extracting and charting the evidence*

The remaining articles that fulfilled the criteria ( $n = 10$ ) were included in the extraction and charting processes that were conducted, through Covidence, based on a list of variables: (a) authors; (b) country in which the study was conducted; (c) participants' characteristics (age and gender); (d) research design; (e) methods, including data collection instruments; (f) purpose/research question(s); (g) coach, parent, athlete or coach-parent focus; (h) theoretical orientation; (i) context (e.g. recreational or competitive sports); (j) type of participation (e.g. individual or team sports); (k) type of sports category (e.g. athletics, team handball); (l) competitive level (e.g. local, regional, national, or international); and (m) presentation of key findings pertaining effective and ineffective coach-parent interactions and relationships.

During the full-text analysis, the main two reviewers extracted and charted data from each article using a standardized table with the variables mentioned previously to synthesize the findings (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Additionally, each reviewer re-evaluated the studies against the inclusion criteria to determine their appropriateness and relevancy. As a result of this process, no adjustments were made.

## **Results and discussion**

### *Study characteristics*

A total of 10 articles were included in the scoping review (see [Table 1](#) for a description of the contents of each study included).

These studies were conducted across the following countries, Japan ( $n = 1$ ), Australia ( $n = 1$ ), Lithuania ( $n = 3$ ), Sweden ( $n = 1$ ), the United States ( $n = 3$ ) and Canada ( $n = 2$ ). It should be noted that one study was conducted in two countries (i.e. Lithuania and United States). Research has been conducted across a range of countries, including outside North American/Western European countries. However, there is a need to further explore non-English speaking contexts and across an even more diverse range of countries. Such research efforts are required to facilitate the development of evidence-based practices that are culturally relevant and appropriate (Lorenzetti, 2013). For instance, how do coach-parent interactions and relationships occur in Brazil, Timor-Leste, and Ukraine? Continued efforts are needed to make sure research on coach-parent interactions and relationships reaches more socio-cultural contexts which may impact coaches and parents' practices, as well as athletes' experiences and outcomes across youth sport.

**Table 1.** Peer-reviewed articles concerning coach-parent interactions and relationships.

Authors (Year)	Country	Research Methodology	Methods	Purpose	Main focus	Context	Sport	Theoretical Orientation	Participants	Summary of Main Findings
Yabe et al. (2021)	Japan	Quantitative	Questionnaire for parents (not validated)	Describe the characteristics of parents who felt a lack of communication with their children's coaches	Parent-focused with emphasis on interactions	n/a	n/a	n/a	Parents whose children's ages ranged between 6 and 15 years old.	<p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Good relationships between parents and coaches are associated with greater enjoyment and continuation of participation for young athletes.</p> <p>Effective communication creates a positive relationship between parents and coaches and a healthy sports environment.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Parents' awareness of verbal and/or physical abuse by coaches and bullying by their children's teammates were significantly associated with parents' feeling of a lack of communication with coaches.</p> <p>Parents who are not familiar with their children's sport are likely to be less interested, which could result in a lack of communication with the coaches regarding the sport.</p>
O'Donnell et al. (2022)	Australia	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	Examine how parent and coach relationships develop in an Australian youth sport context	Parent and coach-focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Badminton; Dance; Tennis; Netball; Lacrosse; Cheerleading; Gymnastics; Cricket; Australian Football; Soccer; Basketball; Running.	Athletic 'triad' (Parent-Coach-athlete) (Smoll et al., 2011)	Parents and coaches of a youth sport participants whose ages ranged between 10 and 17 years old.	<p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>The use of an intermediary role played by a sport administrator had the potential to encourage positive relationships between coaches and parents by facilitating a channel of communication that was not restricted by time, location, and parent and coach expectations.</p> <p>Open, transparent, and frequent communication is also a key factor for learning about parents' and coaches' goals and expectations.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Many coaches are volunteers with little, if any, formal or informal forms of credentialing</p> <p>The performance of an intermediary role may reinforce wider social discourses that parents and</p>

Lisinskiene et al. (2019a)	Lithuania.	Quantitative (validation)	Development of a questionnaire to assess coach-athlete-parent triad	Develop a reliable and valid questionnaire for measuring the coach-athlete-parent interpersonal relationships in a youth sport setting.	Parent, athlete and coach-focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Individual and team sports	Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory	Parents and coaches and youth sport participants whose ages ranged between 12 and 19 years old.	n/a	coaches cannot communicate, work together and/or trust one another. Disagreement commonly occurs when parents and coaches misunderstand what each party would like to achieve in the sport setting
Lisinskiene and Lochbaum (2022)	Lithuania	Quantitative	Questionnaire concerning positive and negative processes in the coach-athlete-parent relationship scale Lisinskiene et al. (2019a)	Understand whether the positive and negative processes in the coach, athlete, and parent interpersonal relationships depend on athletes' sex, age, family composition, sport experience, and the type of sport.	Athlete- focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Individual and team sports	Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory	Volunteer student-athletes (aged 11–19 years old)	<b>Effective interactions and relationships</b> Within individual sports, both parents' involvement is very important to the athlete because individual sports are different from team sports, where the interaction between the members and the coach has a higher intensity. Active participation of all three members of the athletic triad (coaches, athletes, and parents) is important and necessary for positive development throughout adolescence (early, middle, and late adolescence). Healthy family relationships within the sporting environment are achieved when both parents understand and enhance their child's experiences. Athletes state that parent involvement, as well as coach training philosophy, should be positive, motivational, as well as supporting and not controlling. <b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b> Individual sports and residing without their parents or with just one were associated with a higher level of the negative processes. If parent-child interrelations in sporting activities are negative	

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Authors (Year)	Country	Research Methodology	Methods	Purpose	Main focus	Context	Sport	Theoretical Orientation	Participants	Summary of Main Findings
Eliasson (2015)	Sweden	Qualitative	Ethnographic fieldwork over a two-year period that involved observations and interviews	This study aims to investigate the process of socialization among the children, coaches, and parents who are involved with club-organized girls' and boys' football teams.	Parent, athletes and coaches-focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Football	Socialization theory (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998)	Parents and coaches and youth sport participants whose ages ranged between 11 and 12 years old.	<p>adolescents' alienation from parents is more common than communication and trust.</p> <p>The degree and form of involvement chosen by the parents are not always appropriate and encouraging, and not always acceptable to adolescents.</p> <p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Positive relationships between coaches and athletes help construct, negotiate and maintain the standards of how they should behave in relation to each other.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>The process of socialization made children, coaches, and parents hold different views on what was most valuable in sport.</p> <p>There were disagreements related to norms and values of sport that could result in open conflicts between children, coaches and parents.</p>
Horne et al. (2023)	United States of America	Quantitative	Two questionnaires (not validated) for parents and coaches	Explore the challenges and opportunities for a youth sport system in an entrepreneurial marketplace by identifying areas of (mis)alignment between parents and coaches in the context of elite youth tennis.	Parent and coach-focused with emphasis on interactions	Competitive	Tennis	Value co-creation theory (Ranjan & Read, 2016) and consumer confusion (Mitchell et al., 2005)	Parents and coaches of a youth sport participants whose ages ranged between 11 and 16 years old.	<p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Requires coaches and parents to re-imagine their relationship from the traditional model of complementary involvement to one of the true collaboration.</p> <p>With a greater understanding of parents' priorities, managers are equipped with the knowledge to develop programming that aligns with, and appeals to their target market to recruit and retain athletes and their parents for program sustainability</p> <p>Reducing consumer confusion via shared language and interpretation and stimulating co-creation via structural change.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>The nature of parent-coach dyads would lead one to believe effective collaboration is rare. Parents and coaches were not aligned on two critical elements of co-creation – responsibility</p>

Horne et al. (2022)	United States of America	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews and follow up focus group	Investigate the nature of the relationships created between parents and coaches	Parent and coach-focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Tennis	Edwards and Cable's (2009) approach towards value congruence theory	Parents and coaches of a youth sport participants whose ages ranged between 10 and 15 years old.	<p>over athletes' development and interaction.</p> <p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Communication strategies may enhance predictability and trust in parent-coach relationships while accounting for contingencies.</p> <p>Parent or coach need to discuss player development goals with each other.</p> <p>Parent-coach relationships should be viewed as important by policy makers, sport providers and those involved in sport development</p> <p>Promoting a long-term mindset with both parties, coupled with alternative means of service delivery and provision, may foster a more positive parent-coach relationship. <b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>Limited communication and lack of trust were perceived by both parents and coaches to negatively impact the relationship.</p> <p>Neither parents nor coaches were aware of the other's goals for player development.</p> <p>Parents deterred from using lesson time to speak with coaches, as this detracts from their children's instruction.</p> <p>Parents' failure to trust coaches' expertise impacts coaches' job autonomy, as some coaches accepted parents' demands in order to maintain the relationship.</p>
Lisinskiene et al. (2019b)	United States of America and Lithuania	Qualitative	Open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview.	The purpose of this study was to begin the development of a questionnaire to assess the coach-athlete-parent interpersonal relationships in youth sports.	Parent, athlete and coach- focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Individual and team sports	The model of athletic triad (coach-athlete-parent; Felton et al., 2013)	Parents, coaches and youth sport participants whose ages ranged between 12 and 18 years old.	<p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b></p> <p>To maintain a close relationship as a group or a team, communication and respect must be present and the feeling of trust is essential.</p> <p>A supportive atmosphere surrounding the young athlete, created by the coach and parents, creates a safe and secure</p>

(Continued)

**Table 1.** Continued.

Authors (Year)	Country	Research Methodology	Methods	Purpose	Main focus	Context	Sport	Theoretical Orientation	Participants	Summary of Main Findings
Wall et al. (2019)	Canada	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship in Canadian competitive figure skating.	Parent and coach-focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Figure skating	n/a	Mothers of competitive figure Skaters who children's ages ranged from 11 to 20 years old and coaches	<p>attachment amongst the members.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b> Relationships are complex and dynamic, especially during adolescence, and can result in negative outcomes, requiring psychological, educational, and social skills from the coach and parent in working with young athletes.</p> <p>Lack of time commitment for specific communication strategies, understanding, and supporting the athlete.</p> <p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b> Coach-parent collaboration resulted not only in skater development, but also development of athlete well-being.</p> <p>Parents and coaches were respectful of one another's expertise, often complementing.</p> <p>The parent is viewed as an important part of the team.</p> <p>Coaches can adapt their approaches to work collaboratively with parents.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b> Coach-parent relationship is experienced differently by coaches and parents.</p> <p>Parents were expected to relinquish control for player development to the coach and to refrain from interfering with or questioning coaches' decisions.</p>

Preston et al. (2020)	Canada	Qualitative	Reflexive journal	Provide an in-depth analysis of the coach–parent relationship, and how its effects can either nurture or impede PYD, through the lens of an elite youth ice hockey coach.	Coach-focused with emphasis on relationships	Competitive	Ice hockey	Dual-concern model of conflict resolution (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) and Positive Youth Development (Lerner et al., 2005)	A coach who coached athletes whose ages ranged between 10 and 12 years old.	<p><b>Effective interactions and relationships</b> Taking time to acknowledge and respect opinions from parents. Through collaborative discussions with parents, a coach has the potential to gain insight into the athlete’s psychological and physical state, as the athlete’s parents may provide information to help the coach tailor his or her coaching style to the needs of the individual athlete.</p> <p>Exchanging information and integrating interests are hallmarks of collaboration, a problem-solving style of conflict management that results in mutual benefit.</p> <p><b>Ineffective interactions and relationships</b> Uncooperative interactions had the greatest impact on the well-being and self-efficacy of the coach</p>
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From a research methodology standpoint, four studies were quantitative and six qualitative. Mixed methods approaches were not used in any studies. Despite the relatively even distribution between quantitative and qualitative studies, most quantitative studies utilized questionnaires ( $n = 3$ ; Horne et al., 2023; Lisinskiene & Lochbaum, 2022; Yabe et al., 2021) that were not developed through a validation process. Only one study used a validated measure (i.e. Lisinskiene et al., 2019a). Meanwhile, most qualitative studies ( $n = 4$ ; Eliasson, 2015; Lisinskiene et al., 2019b; O'Donnell et al., 2022; Wall et al., 2019) used semi-structured interviews that were conducted at one time-point with a given participation (i.e. 'one shot' interview design). A few studies combined data collection methods, for instance, semi-structured interviews with observations and field notes ( $n = 1$ ; Eliasson, 2015); semi-structured interviews with open-ended questionnaires ( $n = 1$ ; Lisinskiene et al., 2019b); semi-structured interviews with focus groups ( $n = 1$ ; Horne et al., 2022).

Given these findings, it seems important that efforts are focused on developing validated measures across socio-cultural contexts that can expand research possibilities and the existing knowledge base. Although researchers have emphasized the importance of psychometric development concerning parent involvement in sports (Teques et al., 2018), more efforts are needed regarding to parent-coach relationships. However, simply developing appropriate and rigorous measures may not be sufficient. From a content standpoint, there is a need to develop measures that will enable a comprehensive understanding about coach-parent interactions and relationships as two distinct constructs. Based on the multitude of variables that influence these constructs, measures would benefit from being framed to examine the perceptions of coaches, parents, athletes, sports administrators (Harwood et al., 2019; Knight et al., 2022).

Concerning the research methodology used, it is important to acknowledge that a mixed-methods approach or more extensive integration of multiple methods within one study, may help researchers answer specific research questions that can deepen the existing knowledge base. Also, considering the complexity and inherent intricacies of coach-parent interactions and relationships, 'one shot' interview designs have some limitations, particularly when seeking to examine dynamic concepts, such as relationships. Longitudinal integrated qualitative approaches that include multiple methods (see Kendellen & Camiré, 2020 for an example) may provide meaningful insights. Researchers (helped by access) must strive to recruit samples for longer study periods as examining coach-parent relationships takes time and prolonged engagement.

Such longitudinal research is needed for several reasons. First, coach-parent interactions and relationships are processes that are changing and evolving over time. Second, participants may have limited reflexive ability to understand how they engage in youth sports, requiring time to develop such understanding. We should bear in mind that descriptive studies, although they do not explicitly involve intervention, can serve as prompts for reflection, introspection, and critical appraisal. Third, to thoroughly map coach-parent interactions and relationships, multiple methods may be needed as they can elucidate the researcher's perceptions, practices, and lived experiences.

Also, coach-parent interactions and relationships manifest themselves differently across socio-cultural contexts. For instance, parents and coaches may develop positive collaborative relationships or resort to violence (e.g. physical, verbal abuse). These coach and parent behaviors may be both normalized depending on the social norms,

values, beliefs and cultural influences at play. To understand these nuances, observations and journaling may need to be paired with other methods such as interviews to better understand the nature and meaning of parents' and coaches' interactions and behaviors, while the inclusion of quantitative surveys may facilitate consideration of antecedents and consequences of quality relationships. Particularly, although it is important to develop interventions focused on the micro-level (e.g. parents and coaches' practices), attention should also be paid towards process and outcome evaluations that consider culture, social norms, and policy (Dorsch et al., 2022). No intervention studies with pre- and post-testing were identified. Intervention studies may help researchers learn important lessons about the processes and mechanisms that reflect effective relationships. Thus, research designs are needed that considers the potential effects of intervention programs on broader components of the youth sport system (e.g. policy, social norms).

Studies involved a wide range of participants including coaches ( $n = 1$ ); parents ( $n = 1$ ); athletes ( $n = 1$ ), parents and coaches ( $n = 4$ ) and parents, coaches, and athletes ( $n = 3$ ). Most studies that included coaches also involved parents ( $n = 7/8$ ). Considering the nature of coach-parent relationships, research designs may need to be framed to capture at least coaches and parents' voices creating *relational research outputs*. Indeed, most of the articles focused on coach-parent relationships ( $n = 8$ ) and less analyzed coach-parent interactions ( $n = 2$ ). To date, the bulk of research on coach-parent relationships also cannot be considered dyadic in the sense of capturing dual perspectives of the one relationship representing a two-way entity. To attain dyadic data, data collection and analysis methods should enable an understanding of the relationship as a construct and must be planned. Simply including parents and coaches in a study does not mean that it is a study of relationships. Meanwhile, relational research outputs can shed light on and create robust and thick portraits of coach-parent relationships. On the other hand, if emphasis is placed on coach-parent interactions, coaches and/or parents' practices (e.g. Kramers et al., 2023), other sampling criteria can be used.

### Context

One of the inclusion criteria indicated that all articles should be related to youth sports, excluding those conducted within school sports programs and/or physical education. Based on this premise, most studies were conducted within competitive youth sport programs ( $n = 9$ ), but one study did not include information pertaining to the context. As for the competitive level, only four articles allude to this variable: (a) national level ( $n = 3$ ); and (b) international level ( $n = 2$ ); one study was at both national and international level. Competitive youth sport programs represent complex environments where both coaches and parents face tremendous pressures to achieve performance outcomes (e.g. technical and tactical skill development) and results (Holt et al., 2008; Larson et al., 2022). Subsequently, this performance-focused climate can create tensions between coaches and parents, resulting in excessive parental involvement, verbal abuse, and negative communication (Smoll et al., 2011).

However, it should be noted that we perceive that the categorization of programs as a dichotomy of competitive or non-competitive/recreational could be problematic, particularly when considering parent-coach interactions. Competition permeates all fabrics of society as well as coaching domains due to the highly capitalistic contemporary

landscape in which we live (Lewis & Maslin, 2018). As such, it is quite challenging to confine competition to a context simply due to the intended purposes of sport participation. Competition is highly likely to be present in recreational or grassroots youth sport programs and as such, one may anticipate that some of the parent-coach challenges that arise due to the performance focus in 'competitive' programs will be present in recreational sport. Moreover, recreational sport can be stressful and demanding for parents and coaches who attempt to support youth to develop motor skills, as well as commit to and engage in diverse forms of physical activity that move them away from sedentary behavior (see Vella et al., 2022 for the complexities of the recreational sport system). As such, these contexts are worthy of and require consideration within parent-coach research. In fact, one might argue that, particularly at younger ages, this is the most important venue in which to consider these relationships, because more children will engage in these levels than elite sport, and to reach elite sport children will have to progress through these entry-levels first. Beyond this, participation and recreational programs deserve attention because they may provide opportunities for interactions between more diverse groups of parents and coaches, providing critical and pertinent insights into positive and/or negative coach-parent interactions and relationships.

Additionally, although sports can be a 'laboratory for excellence' (Broch, 2022, p. 535), the contexts (i.e. affordances and dynamics of sport participation) within a given context matter and should be valued in the way research is developed and disseminated. The way research has been conducted and written to-date, and the information provided about contexts, does not highlight with sufficient depth the cultural nuances behind human relationships and explicitly coach-parent interactions and relationships. Most articles that described their relative context ( $n=8$ ) provided brief and simplistic descriptions but did not afford opportunities for readers to understand the contextual nuances needed to situate the findings. To this end, and to move the field forward, we would encourage researchers to consider what social norms might influence the contexts in which parents and coaches interact; what attitudes and behaviors dominate, reinforce, and maintain youth sport surrounding parent and coach interactions; which are the less dominant attitudes and behaviors; and the motivations and beliefs of all actors involved in and with programming. Dorsch et al. (2022) heuristic model of youth sport can serve as the basis for researchers to orientate new research trajectories within specific youth sport domains and contexts.

Most studies included and/or focused on youth between 10 and 19 years old ( $n=9$ ). Conversely, only one study included children between 6 and 9 years old. Although adolescence is an important developmental stage (Pittman, 1991), there are other age groups that deserve further consideration. Early and middle childhood is a critical stage for physical development and social and emotional learning, and during this time parents are key actors in enabling participation in sport activities (Furusa et al., 2021). Furthermore, the introduction of pre-school aged children in entry-level sport programs can also represent a big change to family routines, expectations, and beliefs about organized sport (Mysko et al., 2023). As such, these formative years represent a unique phase of sport socialization for coaches and parents alike. Hence, the processes and mechanisms through which parents and coaches support athlete development are varied and age-related. Inherently coach-parent interactions and relationships are impacted by such variance. The adoption of general recommendations that do not consider who children and youth are and their

process of becoming throughout the developmental spectrum may have significant limitations and contribute to unwanted generalizations. Although age is not the only factor influencing development (Pittman, 1991), using sampling criteria that include diverse age groups may be beneficial, with a particular emphasis on early and middle childhood.

Concerning the sports examined, studies explored individual sports ( $n = 3$ ), collective sports ( $n = 1$ ), individual and collective sports together ( $n = 4$ ). In one article such information was not presented. The following sports were identified: badminton ( $n = 1$ ), dance ( $n = 1$ ), tennis ( $n = 3$ ), cheerleading ( $n = 1$ ), cricket ( $n = 1$ ), gymnastics ( $n = 1$ ), cricket ( $n = 1$ ); soccer ( $n = 2$ ), Australian football ( $n = 1$ ), soccer ( $n = 1$ ), basketball ( $n = 1$ ), running ( $n = 1$ ), netball ( $n = 1$ ), lacrosse ( $n = 1$ ) and figure skating ( $n = 1$ ). Four studies included in our analysis focused on one single sport. Four studies did not provide specifics about the sport beyond acknowledging if it was an individual and/or team sport. Only one study identified more than two sports (i.e. a total of 12 sports). Interestingly, despite the varied range of sport included, only two studies provided a rationale for choosing a specific sport or set of sports. The two studies that provided a rationale for recruiting participants from a specific sport alluded to the fact 'tennis has traditionally been pursued outside of the school setting, which requires parents to select who coaches their child, with the option of terminating unsatisfactory relationships' (Horne et al., 2023, p. 228), as well as figure skating involved regular contacts between parents and coaches (Wall et al., 2019). Different sports may entail diverse (and surely unique) coach-parent interactions and relationships (Smoll et al., 2011). Thus, researchers need to carefully consider how the context and nature of a given sport may shape parent and coach interactions and relationships.

Consequently, researchers should take care to consider how settings influence parent-coach relationship, and provide stronger justifications for participant sampling. Specifically, we encourage researchers to move beyond convenience sampling approaches and instead deliberately select research contexts and participants to address specific relationship questions and provide diverse insights. Particularly researchers should strive to recruit coach-parent dyads across developmental stages, which have prolonged engagement in that sport, and/or involvement in a varied number of sports, among other factors when developing sampling criteria. The use of convenience sampling approaches might be due to the challenge of accessing participants and the fact sport organizations typically provide support and access to 'lucrative' samples. These 'lucrative' samples are chosen by sport organizations themselves, and subsequently researchers take less time throughout the recruitment and data collection processes. Although there is critique of convenience sampling approaches, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of sampling with regards to coach-parent research. The burden placed on researchers to produce outputs is significant, especially for those who are part-time lecturers and/or thriving to become tenure track academics (Macdonald, 2022; Rahal et al., 2023). Nonetheless, as highlighted by Koro et al. (2023), simply producing research outputs it is not enough and may result in increases in research waste that also impact youth sport programs and communities.

### **Theoretical orientation**

Most studies ( $n = 8$ ) referred to theory or a theoretical framework such as the athletic 'triad' (i.e. parent-coach-athlete; Smoll et al., 2011), interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) and Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Further, one study by O'Donnell et al.

(2022) utilized sociological theory and specifically social constructionism as the philosophical device to explore the social meaning of parent and coach relationships. However, in all cases ( $n = 8$ ), the extent to which theories were explicitly used to guide, frame, or support analysis and subsequent conclusions was often. There is value in modeling coach-parent interactions and relationships through theory. Such theory can derive from diverse disciplines and fields, particularly relationship science. However, ensuring that when theory is used it is integrated throughout all stages of the research is important. Moreover, inclusion of evidence-based approaches that shed light on contemporary issues such as technology, overprotective environments, and the role played by social and cultural constraints (e.g. ecological dynamics theory; O'Sullivan et al., 2020) may help pave the way for future research explain, interpret and/or make sense of real-world contemporary issues surrounding parents and coaches' interactions in organized youth sport.

Indeed, there is value in challenging researchers to read widely and seek transdisciplinary interpretations of coach-parent interactions and relationships through diverse application of theoretical and conceptual frameworks and onto-epistemological positions (Camiré, 2023). Furthermore, a transdisciplinary lens can also help recruit knowledge and expertise from diverse sources such as social work, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Whitley et al., 2022). Such cultural and system-level awareness may create the necessary foundations to build situational knowledges (see Haraway, 1988) that recognize the intersection of geopolitical influences and youth sports. Moving forward, efforts may also need to be deployed to highlight the importance of culture and context.

### *Effective and ineffective practices*

A range of practices was discussed across the diverse articles examined that were inductively categorized into two domains: (a) effective practices and (b) ineffective practices. Concerning effective practices associated with coach-parent interactions and relationships, they were centered on deconstructing traditional approaches and, instead, advocated for the use of a collaborative approach. Traditional approaches attempt to use a deficit-based approach to eliminate negative coaching and/or parenting practices (e.g. asking parents to avoid interfering and engaging in their children's sport experience; Knight & Gould, 2017). Nonetheless, the studies analyzed highlighted the need for a collaborative assets-based (strengths-based) approach that followed several guiding principles. First, parents and coaches need to connect and create meaningful partnerships through periodic opportunities for social interaction and communication. Fundamentally, parents should be recognized and considered a valuable and important part of the team. Second, open, honest, and constant communication between coaches, parents and athletes was deemed critical. Third, a safe and supportive environment needs to be in place to help foster productive, respectful, and reciprocal parent and coach interactions.

Such features highlight the need for youth sport organizations, including coaches and parents, to center their joint efforts on establishing a common agenda that is centered on fostering a positive climate (Preston et al., 2020; Wall et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2022). For instance, Preston et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study with an ice hockey coach involved in competitive sport to examine how coach-parent relationships influenced positive youth development. Findings reinforced the need to take time to create a climate of

respect between coaches and parents, as well as one of transparency about the child's needs. Such a climate can positively influence both coaching and parenting styles. From an outcome perspective, enjoyment (Yabe et al., 2021), as well as continued and long-lasting sport participation (Horne et al., 2023) were viewed as target outcomes, which is supported by previous research (Knight et al., 2022). Horne et al. (2023) highlighted that it is paramount for both coaches and parents to develop a common agenda to recruit and retain athletes for longer periods of time.

Several ineffective practices were also reported including (1) verbal and/or physical abuse (Yabe et al., 2021); (2) lack of communication between coaches and parents coaches regarding the sport (Lisinskiene et al., 2019b); (3) lack of meaningful coach-parent relationships (O'Donnell et al., 2022); (4) lack of knowledge about how to foster positive coach-parent interactions and relationships (Horne et al., 2023); (5) parents' failure to trust coaches' expertise (Horne et al., 2022); (6) coaches' lack of job autonomy (Horne et al., 2022); (7) lack of time commitment for specific communication strategies (Lisinskiene et al., 2019b). These ineffective practices have significant impacts on athletes' experiences and outcomes (Harwood et al., 2019; Kramers et al., 2023). However, it is important to note that while identifying ineffective practices has some use in helping practitioners and researchers to identify what and when issues may arise between parents and coaches, simply doing the opposite of these things will not guarantee an effective relationship. Unfortunately, to date, limited consideration has been given to identifying how to minimize ineffective practices or how to overcome them. Thus, it is clear that more work is required in this regard.

Nevertheless, based on these findings, what is clear is that education or support programs that target both parents and coaches to help change their perspectives towards each other and perhaps youth sport programming more broadly are likely to be beneficial (e.g. Strachan et al., 2021). However, if ineffective practices are present, which create an unsafe environment for young people involved in sport, focusing only on educating parents and coaches may be insufficient. Rather, education to support all decision makers (e.g. coaches, parents, sport administrators) to reflect upon and revise their conceptualizations of what youth sport is, can, and should be is required. In fact, such values-based, whole systems approaches have been recommended within safeguarding (Rhind et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, if some effective practices are already being applied by youth sport organizations, coach developers can focus on optimizing current programmatic efforts. Further, as alluded to above, effective-ineffective practices are part of a dynamic continuum through which youth sport organizations navigate. Such a continuum requires constant and systematic reflection and consideration by youth sport organizations to examine the level of congruency between their philosophy and overall mission, and coaches and parents' practices (Kramers et al., 2023). To monitor the level of congruency within youth sport organizations strategies need to be tailored to fit the needs and wants of each context.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this scoping review, it is clear there is a need to expand research endeavors to move research and practice pertaining to parent-coach relationships forward. However, this is a complex effort that should not be simplified. In contemporary youth sport (and society), aligning research and practice may require questioning the

status quo and speculating about what coach-parent relationships (more than interactions) could and should become to create an environment that may be conducive to positive youth sport experiences and outcomes.

Future studies may also attempt to deploy efforts into integrating theory that can actually tap into the nature of coach-parent relationships. To achieve such a purpose, it could be valuable for scholars to understand (a) differences between coach-parent interactions and relationships to avoid methodological inconsistencies; (i.e. using longitudinal approaches, such as the *Daily Life Methods* (Bolger et al., 2003), to adjust the research sensitive to the parental and coaches context in environments such as NGB/Federations, competitions and the family environment); (b) how to infuse contextual variables into theory-driven thinking (i.e. using theories such as Schiffman et al.'s (2009) simple model of consumer decision-making could lead to a comprehensive exploration of the decision-making stages, shedding light on factors influencing parental choices and the resulting outcomes in this selection process); and (c) how to develop interventions with coaches and parents through theoretically informed perspectives towards development and learning (i.e. crafting evidence-based interventions by employing frameworks such as the Behavior Change Wheel [Michie et al., 2014] offers a strategic approach to bolster the parent-coach relationship across various dimensions, encompassing both personal and environmental facets). For instance, researchers may need to acknowledge, depending on their ontology, the role of context within their research. Also, they can consider how knowledge is indeed created and applied (i.e. epistemological thinking). Such reasoning will vary depending on these two variables and how they connect with positivistic, post-positivistic, or constructivist lenses.

Intervention efforts are also needed. However, researchers may need to consider how to foster sustainable change across youth sport organizations. Research can be a resource to *educate* rather than teach. Such issue requires an in-depth comprehension about learning, development and (organizational) culture. Conversely, studies that do not consider these variables may generate false expectations for practitioners and artificial outcomes. Therefore, intervention efforts should not be weaponized to serve capitalistic purposes such as grant funding and a politically correct approach towards youth development. Furthermore, future studies may need to explicitly and proactively explore the motives for fostering improvements of the coach-parent relationship. For instance, is it to achieve better positive youth development outcomes, mental health, social justice behaviors, and performance outcomes and/or to improve the quality of parent experiences in sport? Such consideration is necessary to enable researchers and practitioners to clarify the main focus of a given intervention program and effectively evaluate the intervention in line with this aim. It is also critical for intervention research designs to acknowledge the antecedents of coach-parent interactions and relationships together with the moderators/mediators across all levels (individual, relational, environmental) – which necessitate some consideration themselves.

Despite the reflections that can be prompted by this scoping review, there are some limitations to consider. First, not all contexts were considered such as physical education. A broader approach could have provided interesting insights about coach-parent interactions and relationships across settings that are part of youth's lives. Second, studies even in a broader range of languages could have been included for more diversity and reach. A broader body of research could have strengthened the review considerably.

Third, it is important to acknowledge that a scoping review process is complex, rigorous but still fallible. Concurrently, a scoping review methodology does not aim to generalize findings. Therefore, future efforts may be deployed towards conducting narrative reviews and conceptual exercises that aim to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of coaches, parents, and youth sport organizations across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Moving forward, there are exciting pathways for future research in the field that can help both coaches and parents forge meaningful partnerships that foster positive athlete outcomes. It is also important to reflect on the responsibility of researchers and the research community to thrive for equity and social justice across sociocultural contexts and avoid conducting research in geopolitical silos. Nonetheless, operationalizing such a mandate is increasingly complex due to pressures to publish and adhere to the contemporary (and pernicious) citation game (Macdonald, 2022). Therefore, social justice should permeate research on coach-parent interactions and relationships so greater diversity can be considered, providing added value to the existing body of literature and enabling meaningful change to occur.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### Funding

This work was supported by Fundacao para a Ciencia e Tecnologia: [Grant Number UIDP/05198/2020].

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