



Section 2. General psychology

DOI:10.29013/EJEAP-25-3-6-9



ANXIETY LEVEL IN PARENTS OF CHILDREN ENGAGING AND NOT ENGAGING IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS

Blerina Aliaj¹, Mirjeta Cenaj¹

¹ Department of Education and Health, Sports University
of Tirana, Faculty of Movement Sciences

Cite: Blerina Aliaj, Mirjeta Cenaj. (2025). *Anxiety Level in Parents of Children Engaging and Not Engaging in Physical Activity and Sports. European Journal of Education and Applied Psychology 2025, No 3.* <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJEAP-25-3-6-9>

Abstract

This paper aims to study the level of anxiety and emotional state of parents. Anxiety level refers to the degree of nervousness, worry or fear experienced by parents. It includes both general anxiety and specific apprehension that parents may experience in different situations. This study includes 100 parents, 50 whose children practice sports several times a week after school, and 50 parents of children that do not do not engage in any sport or physical activity except curricular Physical Education classes at school. The study was carried out in the city of Tirana. The instrument used to measure the level of anxiety was the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (Birmaher, B; Khetarpal, S; Cully, M; Brent, D; McKenzie, S. 1997). The instrument is a self-reported one, meaning that the pupils answered about their level of anxiety along the past three months. The instrument is designed to target the group of parents that have children aged 9–11. The gathered data were processed using SPSS. The results of the study showed that parents whose children engage in extra-curricular sports have a lower level of anxiety and a better emotional state than those whose children who engage only in physical activity classes at school.

Keywords: *parents, children, anxiety, sport and physical activity*

Introduction

Analyzing the prevalence of anxiety and mood swings in children who participate in sports and those who do not participate in sports may provide insights into the potential impact of sports engagement on mental health and, consequently, on the mental health of their parents. However, it is important to note that individual experiences

and different factors may contribute to anxiety and mood swings, and the relationship between sports participation and these outcomes may be complex.

Studies in this area have examined the relationship between sports participation and anxiety/emotional state in children. Some findings from studies in the field are:

(Adams, 2019) suggests that children who participate in sports tend to have lower levels of anxiety compared to those who do not participate. Engaging in physical activity and sports has been associated with reduced general anxiety symptoms and lower levels of social anxiety in children.

Research suggests that participation in sports can have a positive impact on children's emotional well-being. It has been associated with higher levels of positive emotions, increased self-esteem, improved mood, and better overall emotional health (Carter, 2018).

Participation in sports has been identified as a potential protective factor against the development of anxiety in children. Children who participate in sports may have better coping mechanisms, higher levels of resilience, and improved stress management skills, which may help reduce the risk of anxiety disorders (Ellis, 2020).

Sport participation provides opportunities for social interaction, teamwork and the development of social skills. Studies have shown that these social aspects of sport can contribute to better social-emotional development, increased social support and improved emotional well-being in children (Daniels, 2018).

It is important to recognize that not all children who participate in sports will experience lower levels of anxiety or better emotional states. Individual differences, such as personal temperament, previous experiences, and external factors, may influence the relationship between sports participation and anxiety/emotional states. Some children may still experience anxiety or have different emotional states despite participating in sports (Mason, 2017).

These findings suggest that participation in sports may have positive effects on anxiety levels and emotional well-being in children aged 10–12 years. However, it is essential to consider the limitations of individual studies and the complex nature of the relationship between sports participation and mental health outcomes. Further research is needed to gain a more complete understanding of this topic and to identify the specific mechanisms through which sports may influence anxiety and emotional states in children. Children's emotional well-being may influence the emotional state of their parents.

Materials and Methods

The sample of this study are 100 parents of 10-year-old children living in the city of Tirana, studying at the secondary school "Siri Kodra". The sample of 100 parents is divided in two equally numbered groups i.e. 50 parents of children engaging and actively participating in extra-curricular sports and physical activity at a frequency of 3 or more times a week, and the other group of 50 parents of children who are active only during the PE classes at school.

The instrument used to assess anxiety levels in children is the 'Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders' (SCARED) questionnaire (Birmaher, B; Khetarpal, S; Cully, M; Brent, D; McKenzie, S. 1997). This questionnaire is composed of 41 statements with a Likert scale of 3 used to assess children's anxiety levels, the scales are as follows "Not true or sometimes true – 0", "Somewhat true or sometimes true – 1" or "Very true or often true – 2".

Findings and Discussion

Regarding the questionnaire with parents, data has been identified where we have 100 parents in total, of which 50 are parents of children who are active in sports and 50 are children who are not active in sports.

Parents were asked 41 statements about their children, with each of them giving the corresponding answers based on the responses not true, somewhat true and very true. The following table shows the percentage data on the total answers given by parents of children who play sports and parents of children who do not play sports:

By analyzing the data in the table, we can identify some differences in the experience of anxiety between parents of children who play sports and those who do not play sports. Here are some key differences:

For most of the experiences shown, parents of children who play sports report a lower percentage of anxiety compared to parents of children who do not play sports. This applies to experiences 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41. This suggests that children who play sports tend to have fewer anxiety problems in these aspects of their lives according to the parents.

In some of the experiments shown, parents of children who play sports and those who do not play sports report similar levels of anxiety. This applies to experiments 4, 8, 14, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23 and 35. In these cases, playing sports has no significant impact on the children's experience of anxiety.

In some of the experiments, parents of children who do not play sports report a higher percentage of anxiety compared to parents of children who play sports. This applies to experiments 20, 25 and 28. This shows that children who do not play sports tend to have more anxiety about these aspects of their lives.

Overall, the results show that according to parents, children who play sports tend to have less anxiety in most of the experiences analyzed compared to those who do not play sports. This suggests that playing sports can have a positive impact on children's emotions and anxiety levels.

The t-values indicate the differences between the two groups of parents. If the t-value is positive, group 1 (parents of children who play sports) has a higher mean than group 2 (parents whose children do not play sports). If the t-value is negative, group 1 has a lower mean than group 2.

The p-value indicates the chances that the differences between the groups are due to chance. In general, a p-value less than 0.05 (the level of p-value restriction) indicates a statistically significant difference between group 1 and group 2.

Both t-values and p-values vary for each group, and it is important to evaluate them in the context of the study and the level of p-value restriction.

For statements 25–30, there are no significant and very substantial differences between the opinions of parents of children who practice sports and those who do not practice sports. The mean values and t-test

values (t-value) are relatively similar and the p-values are above the level of statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that the differences in their statements are not significant, we must say that with small differences where parents of children who practice sports present lower levels of anxiety or aggravated emotional states in their children than parents of children who do not practice sports.

For statements 31–34, there are some significant differences in parents' perceptions. Parents of children who do not play sports tend to report a higher level of anxiety and worry compared to parents of children who do. The t-test values are positive and the p-values are below the level of statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the differences are statistically significant.

For statements 35–41, there are no significant differences between the two groups of parents. The mean values and t-test values (t-values) are similar and the p-values are above the level of statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that the differences in their statements are not significant.

For statements 31–34, where there are significant differences between parents in the sports group and the non-sports group, it may be interesting to understand how sports practice affects the level of anxiety and worry in parents about their children. Additional analysis may be required to understand what specific factors of sports may be associated with differences in the perception of anxiety.

Conclusion

Studying the level of anxiety and emotional state of children aged 10–12 is an important aspect to understand the impact of sports engagement on their emotional health. Parents of children who play sports prove that their children are less affected by anxiety and emotional state management is more effective in children who play sports.

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submitted 01.09.2025;
accepted for publication 15.09.2025;
published 31.10.2025
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Contact: baliaj@ust.edu.al