

# Enhancing Girls' Sports Participation: Understanding Parental Decision-Making and Develop a Toolkit for Increasing Participation, Improving Retention, and Promoting Sport Enjoyment



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## Introduction

- Pre-adolescence (ages 6-12) is a critical period for developing healthy lifestyle habits.<sup>1</sup>
- Physical activity offers physical, psychological, and social benefits.<sup>1,2,5</sup>
- World Health Organization (WHO) recommends 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.<sup>3</sup>
- Less than 25% of children and adolescents meet this recommendation.<sup>2</sup>
- Sports participation is a key method to meet these activity recommendations.<sup>6</sup>
- High attrition rates in girls' sports participation:
  - In Canada, 1 in 3 girls drop out by late adolescence, compared to 1 in 10 boys.<sup>5</sup>
- Parents play a crucial role in:
  - Facilitating sports opportunities
  - Modeling behaviors
  - Helping interpret sporting experiences<sup>6</sup>
- Thus, an important step is to understand parental decision-making regarding girls' sports participation.**

## Objectives

- There are two main objectives:
- To explore parental perspectives regarding their daughters' participation in sports
  - To understand factors influencing parental decisions related to their daughters' sport participation

## Methodology

- Qualitative** research design using semi-structured interviews.
- Interview guide developed from literature on parental influence in youth sports.
- Conducted eight virtual interviews (25-30 minutes each).
- Inclusion criteria: **parents of daughters aged 6-12** years in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).
- Interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software and manual coding.
- Inductive thematic analysis** approach: coded segments based on recurring ideas or themes.
- We used investigator triangulation, maintained an audit trail for dependability, employed color-coding in NVivo for comparative analysis, and held regular team meetings to refine thematic structures.

## Results

Three broad categories - 'Sport Criteria,' 'Daughter's Representation,' and 'Parental Role and Experience' - emerged from the analysis. Each category represents distinct aspects of parental perspectives that influence decisions about their daughters' participation in sports.

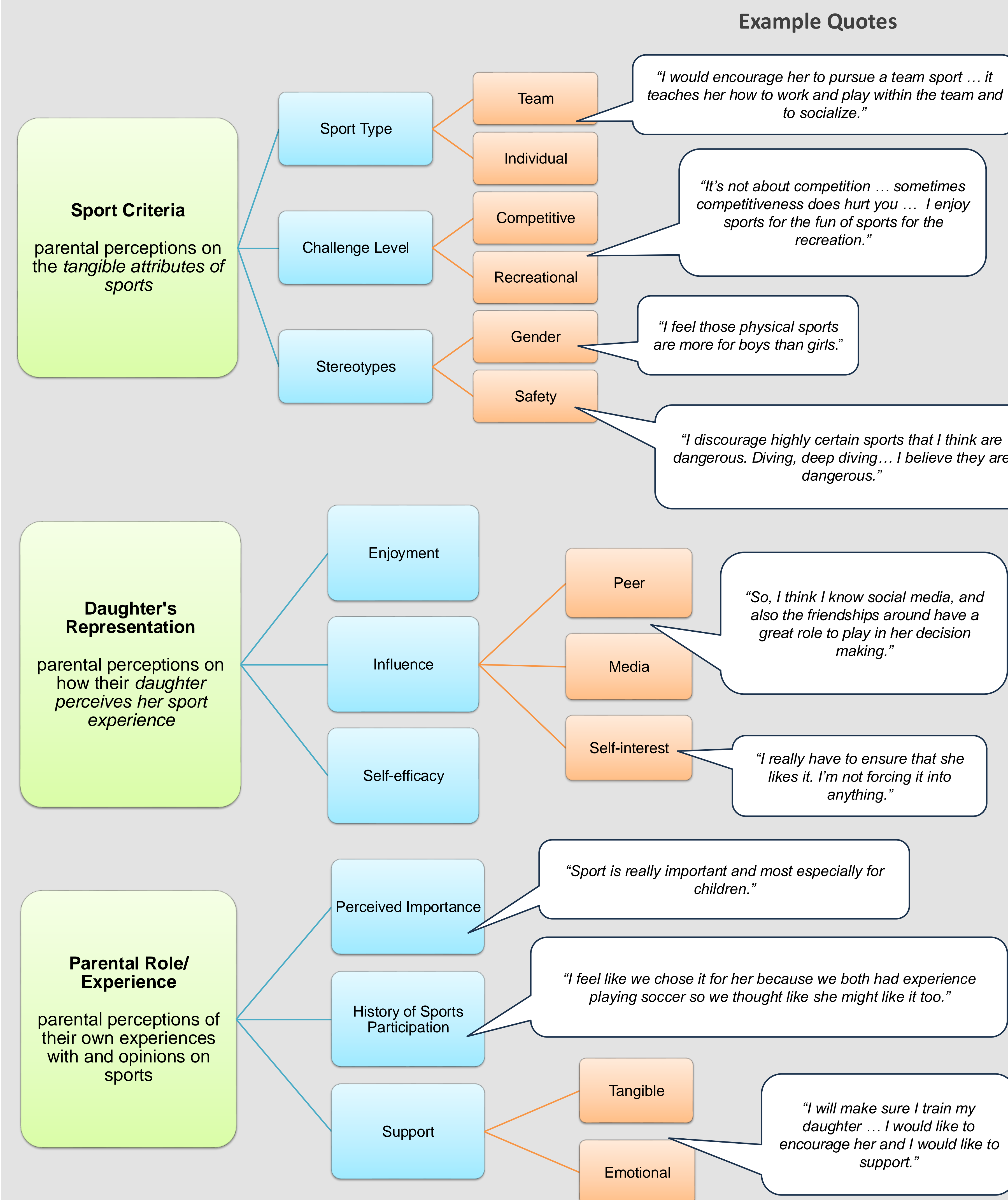


Figure 1: Flow chart providing an overview of the 3 broad categories (green), 9 themes (blue), and subthemes (orange) related to parental decision-making for their daughters' sport participation.

## Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth understanding of parental perceptions and identifies the priority criteria parents consider when making decisions about their daughters' sport participation. By addressing these factors, efforts can be directed toward enhancing girls' sports retention, fostering inclusive participation, and promoting sustained engagement in physical activity.

## Future Implications

This research represents the initial phase of a larger study aimed at developing an evidence-based toolkit, "**Sporty Daughter's Playbook**," to assist parents in making informed decisions about their daughters' sports participation. Currently in its pilot phase, the toolkit will be evaluated through a pre- and post-intervention study to assess its effectiveness in boosting participation, enhancing enjoyment, and decreasing dropout rates among pre-adolescent girls. By providing parents with valuable resources, this work supports ongoing sports engagement and promotes healthier, more active lifestyles for girls in Ontario.



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