Research Article

# The Role and Importance of Family in Golf Athletes

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the impact of family support on athletes in golf. The research sample consists of golfers aged 15-24, with a handicap of 15 or lower, who are registered with the Turkish Golf Federation. The study evaluates the participation status of these athletes in golf and analyzes the role of family factors in this process In this study, data were collected using the questionnaire technique and analyzed through the chisquare test in SPSS version 25.0. The findings indicate that family support is a significant factor influencing participants' engagement in golf (p<0.05). Additionally, the presence of family members involved in sports and the occupational status of parents were identified as key variables affecting participation in golf. The results suggest that family support encourages participation in golf, enhances athletes' motivation, and fosters long-term sports engagement. Accordingly, it is recommended that families take a more active role in directing their children toward sports and that policies be developed to improve access to sports education.

Keywords: Golf, family, sport preferences, family support.

### 1. Introduction

Many definitions of family have been proposed, with each focusing on different aspects, making it challenging to establish a universal definition (Levanda & Schult, 2018). Over time, as family structures have evolved, anthropology has defined the family as an institution formed by two individuals. Outside of school, the family is the most influential unit in a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Sociologically, the family is considered one of the fundamental institutions, playing a crucial role in children's psychological and educational development. In all societies, the family is the smallest social unit. From birth until reaching school age, children remain in close interaction with their family members. During this period, they acquire communication skills, cultural and sporting habits by imitating family members (Côté, 1999). The behaviors of family members have significant effects on children. The family serves as a foundation where children's basic skills are taught and their physical development is encouraged (Bronfenbrenner, (1979)). A family's socioeconomic status, profession, and attitudes toward sports influence a child's physical development. The demographic structure and cultural capital of a family shape all activities a child engages in, including sports. Consequently, the family's influence is evident in sports, which is considered an important cultural activity. The environment in which a child is raised affects their athletic journey and plays a crucial role in determining their success in sports (Boutcher & Rotella, 1987; Nielsen et al., 2011).

Family involvement is a key factor in shaping a child's entry into and commitment to sporting activities. A child with sports-oriented parents may develop an affinity for sports or be more inclined to engage in physical activities (Yıldız, 2015). According to Knight (2017), parents' interest and involvement in sports significantly impact children's engagement and participation in sports (Knight et al., 2017). The family's role in promoting sports participation and instilling a habit of physical activity is well-documented (Yılmaz & Kartal, 2022). In summary, research suggests that families actively engaged in sports tend to have higher participation rates and encourage their children to become

athletes. "The family is regarded as a vital influence on a child's initiation into sports and the advancement of their sports career (Yüksel, 2016). It is highlighted in research that the influence of parents is a decisive factor in children's participation in sports, shaping both their engagement and learning processes (Keegan et al., 2009).

In developed countries, sports culture is widespread, and resources for sports participation are more accessible. Families in these societies show a greater inclination to support their children's engagement in sports. In Türkiye, family members can participate in sports activities in gyms, parks, and recreational sports fields. One of the sports in which families and children spend time together or individually is golf. Golf is one of the most expensive sports worldwide (Hallmann, 2015) and is one of the few sports that can be played by individuals of all ages, genders, and skill levels (McHardy et al., 2006). Considering both equipment and course expenses, golf is costlier than many other sports. Research indicates that active and passive participation in golf has increased in popularity with significant global growth (Humphreys et al., 2014).

In Türkiye, golf has emerged as a growing sport, gaining increasing popularity. The foundation of golf in Türkiye dates back to 1895 with the establishment of the Istanbul Golf Club, while the Turkish Golf Federation (TGF) was officially founded in 1996 (TGF, 2005). Over the past two decades, golf participation in Türkiye has significantly increased, and TGF has implemented various projects to promote the sport. Additionally, national and international tournaments organized by the federation have contributed to raising awareness and expanding the sport. Since 1998, TGF has been carrying out a comprehensive project aimed at developing new golf athletes and making golf more accessible to a broader audience across Türkiye. The increasing popularity of these tournaments has significantly contributed to the advancement of golf nationwide (Agopyan et al., 2017). The increase in participation in golf in recent years and the increasing prominence of this branch in international platforms have positively affected individuals' orientation towards golf. The increase in the number of individuals playing golf has also increased the interest of families in this sport and encouraged them to direct their children to golf (Yüksel,2019).

Golf, which has gained importance especially on a global scale, has changed the perspective of individuals and families towards the sport. Although often regarded as an individual sport, family support plays a crucial role in the development of golf athletes (Dorsch et al.,2019; Burke et al.,2023). Family members strengthen their children's commitment to the sport through participation in tournaments, training processes and equipment support. In this context, the role of the family in golf is not only limited to encouragement but also stands out as a fundamental element that increases individuals' interest in the sport and their level of success.

The increasing interest in golf and the widespread participation of young athletes in our country in international competitions have brought to the forefront the need to examine the factors affecting participation and participation in golf. In this context, the present study aims to investigate the role and significance of the family in golf, a sport that is growing in popularity each day.

# 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Research Group

The participants of this study consisted of athletes aged 15-24 years who play golf affiliated with the Turkish Golf Federation and have a handicap of 15 or lower. The sample consisted of 59 athletes (32 females and 27 males) aged between 12 and 18 years, all of whom had at least three years of golf experience and competed in the Turkish Golf League. All participants voluntarily participated in the study. When the age distribution was analyzed, it was seen that the majority of the participants were in the "15-19 age group". In addition, most of the participants were identified as students. The majority of the athletes had a handicap between "0 and 7".

### 2.2. Research Design

In the study, a questionnaire served as the tool for data collection. Various studies in the literature were reviewed, and the survey questions were developed based on those from relevant studies (Kaya, 2016; Aygün & Yetim, 2017; Gökçe et al., 2019; Örel et al., 2022). The questionnaire was adapted to golf by the researchers in collaboration with field experts to ensure its suitability for the study's objectives. The first section of the questionnaire included 11 aimed at gathering information on the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second section comprised 10 questions designed

to assess the reasons for participants' engagement in golf and their expectations from the sport. The questionnaire was administered to the participants through face-to-face interviews.

#### 2.3. Data Collection

The role of family in shaping children's involvement in golf has not been comprehensively understood. Therefore, further research is needed to understand family decision-making processes and their influence on children's sports involvement and career development. This study aims to examine the family's role in children's participation in golf and contribute to the sport's popularization in Turkey. The main objective is to explore the significance of family for children and young people interested in golf.

Two research questions were addressed in this study:

- (1) Does the demographic status of the family have an effect on participation in golf?
- (2) Does the family have an effect on the reasons why athletes who participate in golf prefer golf?

# 2.4. Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed using the SPSS 25.0 statistical software package. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions (%), and a chi-square test was applied. The normality of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. A significance level of p < 0.05 was set for the analysis. Accordingly, the relationships between individuals' reasons for taking up golf, their engagement in golf professionally, and their expectations from the sport were examined in relation to variables such as gender, education, age, occupation, and income. The primary objective of the study was to determine whether individuals' motivations for participating in golf and their expectations from the sport varied based on demographic factors.

#### 2.5. Ethics Committee Permission

This study received ethical approval from the Social Sciences Institute of Akdeniz University (Date: 06.12.2023 – Meeting: 22 – Number: 542). At the outset of the research, written informed consent was obtained from both the athletes' parents and coaches. Participation in the study was based on voluntary consent, and all ethical principles and guidelines were strictly followed throughout the research process. Before data collection, participants were thoroughly informed about the study through a detailed presentation and subsequently provided written consent. The research was carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.

# 3. Results

In the study conducted to determine the role and importance of family in golf sport, 59 voluntary and good golf players were selected as the sample. The effect of the participants' families on their preference for golf was analyzed and the data obtained were presented in tables.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Participants Demographics

Demographic Variables	Groups	N	%
Condon	Female	32	54,2
Gender	Male	27	45,8
Father's Education Level	Primary School	1	1,7
	Middle School	7	11,9
	High School	12	20,3
	University	28	47,5
	Postgraduate	11	18,6
Father's Occupation	Public Sector Employee	2	3,4
	Private Sector Employee	54	91,5
	Retired	3	5,1

Table 1. (Continue)

Demographic Variables	Groups	N	%
Gender	Female	32	54,2
Gender	Male	27	45,8
Father's Education Level	Primary School	1	1,7
	Middle School	7	11,9
	High School	12	20,3
	University	28	47,5
	Postgraduate	11	18,6
	Public Sector Employee		3,4
Father's Occupation	Private Sector Employee	54	91,5
	Retired	3	5,1

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. The majority were female (54.2%), while 45.8% were male. Regarding mothers' education levels, 3.4% had primary education, 15.3% had middle school education, 33.9% had high school education, 37.3% were university graduates, and 10.2% had postgraduate education. Concerning fathers' education levels, 1.7% had primary education, 11.9% had middle school education, 20.3% had high school education, 47.5% were university graduates, and 18.6% had postgraduate education. Rögardan mothers' occupations, 50.8% were private sector employees, 39.0% were housewives, and 10.2% were retired. Concerning family income levels, 62.7% of families had an income of 22,500 TL or above. In terms of the number of years participants have been engaged in golf, 40.7% had been playing for 7-10 years, 33.9% for 4-6 years, 22.0% for more than 10 years, and 3.4% for 1-3 years.

Tablo2. Comparison of Athletes Reasons for Preferring Golf According to Family Members Sports Participation

Determinant	Yes (f)	Yes (%)	No (f)	No (%)	Total (f)	Total (%)
Family	26	81.3%	6	18.8%	32	100%
Friends	9	64.3%	5	35.7%	14	100%
Physical Education Teacher	0	0.0%	4	100.0%	4	100%
Coach	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	3	100%
Famous Player	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	1	100%
Other	4	80.0%	1	20.0%	5	100%
Total	42	71.2%	17	28.8%	59	100%

Table 2 shows that the reasons young athletes choose golf differ significantly based on their families' participation in sports ( $\chi^2 = 15.662$ ; df = 5, p < 0.05). The findings suggest that individuals with family members actively engaged in sports are more likely to prefer golf.

Table 3. Comparison of Factors Influencing Athletes' Golf Preference According to Family Support

Determinants of Golf Preference	Yes (f)	Yes (%)	No (f)	No (%)	Total (f)	Total (%)
Family	27	84,40%	5	15,60%	32	100%
Friends	7	50,00%	7	50,00%	14	100%
Physical Education Teacher	0	0,00%	4	100,00%	4	100%
Coach	2	66,70%	1	33,30%	3	100%
Famous Player	0	0,00%	1	100,00%	1	100%
Other	3	60,00%	2	40,00%	5	100%
Total	39	66,10%	20	33,90%	59	100%
-			20	-,	59	

Table 3 demonstrates a statistically significant difference in the reasons athletes choose golf, based on the presence of another family member involved in the sport ( $\chi^2 = 16.222$ ; df = 5, p < 0.05). This suggests that having a family member who participates in golf may influence an individual's motivation for engaging in the sport.

Table 4. Comparison of Athletes Reasons for Preferring Golf Based on Family Support

Determinants of	A	lways	Mostly		Oce	casionally	Total		
Golf Preference	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Family	26	81,30%	5	15,60%	1	3,10%	32	100%	
Friends	8	57,10%	5	35,70%	1	7,10%	14	100%	
Physical Education	2	50,00%	0	0,00%	2	50,00%	4	100%	
Coach	2	66,70%	1	33,30%	0	0,00%	3	100%	
Famous Player	1	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	100%	
Other	5	100,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	5	100%	
Total	44	74,60%	11	18,60%	4	6,80%	59	100%	

An analysis of Table 4 reveals a statistically significant difference in the reasons athletes prefer golf based on whether they receive support from their families ( $\chi^2$  = 18.451; df = 10, p < 0.05). This finding suggests that the motivations for choosing golf differ significantly according to the level of familial support. The comparative analysis conducted to identify the source of the observed difference revealed that 32 out of 59 athletes (54.2%) cited family support as the primary factor influencing their decision to pursue golf. Furthermore, 26 out of 59 athletes (59.1%) reported consistently receiving support from their families regarding golf. These findings suggest a statistically significant relationship between family support and the preference for golf. In other words, athletes who benefit from familial encouragement are more likely to engage in golf. Consequently, it can be inferred that family support serves as a critical determinant in the selection of golf as a sport.

Table 5. Comparison of Athletes' Interest in Golf Based on the Presence of Golf Players in the Family

Reason for Interest		Yes		No	Total		
		%	f	%	f	%	
My participation in golf is influenced by my family's wishes	1	100,00%	0	0,00%	1	100%	
I play golf because I enjoy the sport.	34	75,60%	1	24,40%	45	100%	
I do it because sports have positive contributions.	0	0,00%	1	100,00%	1	100%	
I want to make a professional career in this field.	3	27,30%	8	72,70%	11	100%	
Other	1	100,00%	0	0,00%	1	100%	
Total	39	66,10%	2	33,90%	59	100%	

An analysis of Table 5 indicates a statistically significant difference in athletes' level of interest in golf based on whether they have family members who play the sport ( $\chi^2$  = 12.172; df = 4, p <0.05). According to this finding, athletes' interest in golf varies depending on whether there are individuals in their families who play the sport. The comparison results revealed that 34 out of 59 athletes (87.2%) identified the presence of family members who play golf as the most significant factor influencing their interest in the sport." In addition, it was concluded that this was an important variable in the liking of golf by all of the athletes whose families played golf. When the results obtained are evaluated holistically, it is seen that the presence of golf-playing individuals in the family is an important factor that increases the athletes' interest in golf. In other words, it was concluded that athletes who have golf-playing members in their families have a higher interest in golf.

Reason for Interest		Private		Housewife		Retired		Total	
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
My participation in golf is influenced by my family's	0	0,00%	1	4,30%	0	0,00%	1	1,70%	
I play golf because I enjoy the sport.	27	90,00%	1	65,20%	3	50,00	4	76,30	
I do it because sports have positive contributions.	1	3,30%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	1,70%	
I want to make a professional career in this field.	2	6,70%	7	30,40%	2	33,30	1	18,60	
Other	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	16,70	1	1,70%	
Total	30	100%	2	100%	6	100%	5	100%	

Table 6. Comparison of Athletes' Reasons for Interest in Golf According to Mother's Occupation Variable

An analysis of Table 6 reveals a statistically significant difference in athletes' level of interest in golf based on their mothers' occupational status ( $\chi^2$  = 15.172; df = 4, p < 0.05). In addition, it was concluded that the fact that all athletes whose mothers' occupation was related to golf enjoyed the sport was a significant factor. When the results were evaluated holistically, it was revealed that the presence of golf-related occupations within the family is an important factor in increasing athletes' interest in golf.

# 4. Discussion

Authors should discuss the results and how they can be interpreted from the perspective of previous studies and of the working hypotheses. The findings and their implications should be discussed in the broadest context possible. Future research directions may also be highlighted.

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the factors influencing young golfers' interest in the sport. The findings show that the reasons for choosing golf vary significantly depending on factors such as parental education level, family sports participation habits and the presence of family members interested in golf.

An analysis of the participants' duration of involvement in golf shows that the majority have between 7 to 10 years of experience, suggesting that they began playing the sport at a young age and have maintained long-term engagement. Family support emerged as a significant factor in this process. Most participants reported that they started playing golf under the guidance of their families. This supports the idea that sports-related behaviors often develop within the family context, with parents playing a crucial role in shaping their children's involvement in athletic activities (Snyder & Spreitzer, 2013; Becker et al., 2007; Greendorfer & Lewko, 2013). Similar findings were also reported in the present study, further confirming the importance of family involvement in early sport socialization.

The study also found that the reasons for choosing golf differed depending on whether family members participated in sports. A large proportion of the athletes stated that their family members were actively engaged in sports and that this was one of the most important influences on their decision to pursue golf. These findings highlight the role of family sports culture in fostering children's engagement and interest in sports. In particular, parental support and role modeling play a crucial role in initiating early sports participation and sustaining it as a lifelong habit. Family involvement has the potential to strengthen children's motivation and commitment to athletic activities. Previous research supports these conclusions. Gao et al. (2023) highlighted parents' role in creating a motivational climate; and Knoester & Bjork (2025) demonstrated strong links between socioeconomic status, sport culture, and youth sport commitment. Snyder & Spreitzer (2013) emphasized the impact of social support from families on children's commitment to sports. Similarly, children often perceive their parents as role models, developing an interest in sports by observing their behaviors (Snyder & Purdy, 1982; Greendorfer & Lewko, 2013). Additional studies have also shown that parental participation in sports is a key determinant of children's orientation toward athletic activities (Kepoğlu, 1995; Yüksel, 2019; Yılmaz et al., 2022). In this context, parental encouragement and involvement in physical activity are fundamental in shaping children's long-term sports habits.

The findings also suggest that parental education and economic status significantly influence children's choice of sport, including golf. This aligns with the findings of Yücel et al. (2015), who reported that a family's socioeconomic status

plays a critical role in determining which sports children pursue, their access to proper training, equipment, and other opportunities.

Furthermore, the study revealed that having another family member involved in golf significantly affected participants' decisions to take up the sport. Active family involvement—such as attending tournaments, joining training sessions, and offering moral support—was found to enhance children's interest and commitment to golf. In skill-intensive and strategic sports like golf, parental guidance in developing fundamental abilities is especially important. Parents with knowledge of golf can provide meaningful support by assisting with technical skill development and facilitating access to appropriate resources. This finding is consistent with existing literature. Burke et al. (2023), in their research on young golfers, emphasized the importance of "Individual Parental Support Preferences," noting that emotional, informational, and autonomy-supportive parenting practices positively influence athletic development. Knoester and Bjork (2025) linked parental socioeconomic background to long-term sport commitment. In addition, golf is considered a relatively high-cost sport, and the financial capacity of families can significantly influence children's access to training opportunities, equipment, and tournament participation (Knoester & Bjork, 2025).

In our study, it was found that the reasons why young golfers prefer this sport are closely related to family support. Family support in golf is a critical factor in terms of commitment and success in the sport. Family support plays an important role in children learning golf, developing their skills and establishing a long-term relationship with the sport. This finding is in line with other studies in the literature. When parents support their children's interest in golf, children's motivation increases. Parents' encouraging and positive attitudes develop children's self-confidence and help them cope with sports-related challenges. It has been reported that parents' encouragement of their children's participation in sports activities positively affects children's choice of sport and their commitment to this sport (Wuerth et al, 2004; Harwood et al, 2015; Dong-Su et al, 2025). In addition to emotional and motivational support, economic support—such as providing access to golf equipment, lessons, and tournament participation—is often a prerequisite in golf, which is known to be a high-cost sport. Additionally, a study on competitive junior female golfers (Burke et al., 2023) also highlighted the positive aspects of family support in youth golf.

# 5. Conclusions

The results of this study underline the significant influence of family involvement in sport and parents' occupational status as key factors shaping participation in golf. Family support not only encourages initial participation in sport, but also boosts athletes' motivation and promotes long-term commitment to sport. Based on these results, it is recommended that families take a more proactive role in guiding their children into sport and that policies are developed to improve access to sport education and opportunities for young athletes. The study results also show that family support is closely related to young athletes' motivation to take up golf. Not only does this support foster an early interest in sport, but it also contributes to skill development and sustained participation. Encouraging and supportive parental attitudes significantly increase children's self-confidence and resilience in the face of athletic challenges.

Finally, family involvement in sport and participation in golf as a sport proves to be influential not only in shaping children's orientation towards golf, but also in their long-term career planning in sport. Families who encourage their children to play golf, actively participate in their training and provide both financial and emotional support are crucial in fostering the motivation necessary for young athletes to progress in the sport.

### Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the sample is confined to a specific age group and a particular subset of athletes, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the sample to include participants from a wider range of geographical regions, various sports disciplines, and female athletes would enhance the scope and applicability of the research.

Additionally, the study relies solely on self-reported data from the athletes, which could introduce subjective bias. Future research should incorporate parental perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the familial influence on children's engagement in golf. By integrating multiple viewpoints, researchers could obtain richer data and conduct a more in-depth analysis of the factors shaping young athletes' participation in the sport.

### **Future research Directions**

In families with good or very good economic status, the presence of a family member involved in any sports discipline significantly influences children's interest in golf. Based on these findings, it is recommended that financial support programs be established, scholarship opportunities be provided for talented young athletes, and policies be developed to improve access to golf education. Such initiatives would contribute to the wider dissemination of golf across various socioeconomic groups.

Furthermore, future research should conduct more comprehensive investigations to gain a deeper understanding of the role of families in shaping children's sports orientation and the underlying factors that influence this process. Parental support plays a crucial role in fostering motivation and directly contributing to athletic success. As parents are a key source of motivation, raising awareness about the importance of their involvement in their children's sports engagement is vital. Expanding educational programs and awareness campaigns to enhance parental knowledge and involvement in sports-related activities would be a valuable step in supporting young athletes.

**Author Contributions:** Author M.K. was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, and software aspects of this study. Author M.D. contributed to the sourcing, data curation, and writing review. Author G.T. provided support in research, data acquisition, and analysis.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Before the measurements, the participants were given a detailed information presentation about the study and signed an informed consent form.

Declaration of Data Availability: The data are publicly available.

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