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**Drop Out Sportivo in Età Giovanile: Analisi  
Multifattoriale tra Genere, Scuola e Cultura Digitale**

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of youth sports participation and abandonment, with a specific focus on the Italian context, historically characterized by sports participation levels below the European average. The work integrates a systematic literature review with a series of empirical studies adopting quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, aiming to understand the multiple dimensions that influence the continuation or discontinuation of sports participation among children and preadolescents.

The quantitative component of the research examines available official data using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including logistic regression models. This analysis highlights not only the low youth sports participation at the national level, but also the main determinants that influence young people's decision to start, continue, or discontinue sports. Among the most recurrent factors are the pressure of social and family expectations, overloaded school commitments, the psychophysical stress of competition, and a diminishing perception of enjoyment.

At the same time, qualitative studies explore the relational, motivational, and socio-educational dynamics that characterize youth sports experiences through interviews and focus groups with teachers, coaches, parents, and children aged 8 to 13. This approach allows us to explore dimensions not immediately detectable through quantitative techniques alone, such as the quality of the relationship with the coach, the emotional climate in which training takes place, the role of family support, perceptions of self-efficacy, and financial and logistical barriers.

A significant portion of the thesis is dedicated to analyzing gender differences in sports dropout. The results highlight that boys and girls experience different pressures and expectations, which impact motivation and retention in sports differently. Girls, in particular, appear more vulnerable to social influences and body image-related constraints, while boys are more interested in the competitive dimension and peer recognition. These differences suggest the need for educational and sports interventions that take gender into account, promoting more inclusive and welcoming environments.

Overall, the thesis highlights how the main factors of sport dropout are psychosocial, rather than physical or performance-related, drawing attention to the need to rethink youth sport from an educational perspective. This perspective emphasizes the role of sport as an educational space, geared toward the well-being, socialization, and harmonious development of young people, rather than solely performance.

The implications of this research are addressed not only to sports professionals and physical educators, but also to policymakers and educational institutions, who are called upon to adopt prevention and promotion strategies that make sport accessible, sustainable, and meaningful for all. The findings also provide a solid foundation for future studies aimed at developing public policies and intervention programs aimed at combating sport dropout and encouraging long-term participation.

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## Literature Review

Sports participation in childhood and adolescence is currently a major area of interest for educational sciences, as it is closely intertwined with physical, psychological, and relational development. Despite broad scientific consensus on the benefits of physical activity for children's overall growth, youth sports participation in organized settings appears increasingly fragile and inconsistent. This fragility arises within a complex social context, characterized by changing patterns of leisure time, growing academic pressure, a diversification of cultural offerings, and transformations in family systems. The most recent national data confirm that a significant proportion of children and preadolescents abandon sports activity early, with significant peaks between the ages of 11 and 13, highlighting an educational challenge requiring in-depth analysis.

Available evidence suggests that the phenomenon of sports dropout cannot be explained by solely individual variables, but requires a systemic analysis of the factors influencing participation. Quantitative research conducted in Italy shows how continuity in sports participation is influenced by a complex set of factors: family circumstances, availability of financial resources, proximity to sports facilities, school schedules, and the quality of the educational relationship with teachers and coaches. Where these conditions are fragile or inconsistent, the risk of dropping out tends to increase, especially in age groups where young people must balance increasing academic demands and changing identities with structured sports commitments.

Similarly, pedagogical and qualitative studies have highlighted the central role of relational and motivational dynamics. Interviews with teachers, parents, coaches, and young people reveal that the quality of the sporting experience is determined not only by technical organization but also by the sporting environment's ability to establish itself as a space for recognition, belonging, and personal growth. Loss of enjoyment, a sense of inadequacy, monotonous training, and competitive pressure are among the main signs of a weakening of the meaning attributed to sport, which often precedes abandonment. Educational relationships that are not inclusive, lacking in communication, or exclusively performance-oriented can therefore compromise continued participation, highlighting the eminently pedagogical nature of the dropout phenomenon.

Studies conducted in the 8–13 age group also reveal a crucial element: sport dropout tends to occur precisely during the period when the body changes, skills evolve, and external demands increase. Preadolescence, in fact, represents a period of particular motivational and identity vulnerability, in which the transition from informal play to structured practice can generate feelings of anxiety, loss of control, and frustration. The literature confirms that, when the sporting climate does not foster a sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging, participation tends to end early. This evidence, emerging from studies based on large and representative national samples, suggests the need to interpret dropout as an indicator of misalignment between the child's educational needs and the educational context offered by sports clubs.

Overall, the available literature paints a picture in which youth sports dropout appears to be a complex, multidimensional phenomenon rooted in the educational processes that shape young people's daily lives. The research analyzed converges in demonstrating that sporting continuity depends on the harmonious integration of personal, family, relational, and institutional factors; that intrinsic motivation is closely linked to the quality of the educational relationship; and that the organization of youth sports cannot ignore a pedagogical approach geared toward inclusion, well-being, and the sustainability of participation. From this perspective, understanding the processes that lead to dropout represents a fundamental step in rethinking sport as a place of growth and educational rights, and not merely as a space for performance.

**Chapter 1 - Determinants and reasons for participation and drop  
out in sports activities in Italy**

## **Abstract**

This article aims to represent a systematic literature review on sport participation and dropout in Italy, based on quantitative studies. The research methodology included the collection of data. Official data were analyzed, using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, such as logistic regression, to identify the factors that influence sports participation and the reasons that lead to abandonment. The research results show that, despite the growing awareness of the importance of physical activity for health, participation in sport remains relatively low in Italy.

## **Introduction**

This article, based on quantitative studies, presents a systematic literature review on sport participation and dropout in Italy. The research methodology included the collection of data from sources such as ISTAT, EUROBAROMETER, Sport and Health, and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI). Participation in physical and sporting activity is considered an important factor in promoting health and psychophysical well-being (Fraser-Thomas, J.; Côté, J., 2006). However, sport participation in Italy presents some challenges, including early leaving and gender and age disparities. Therefore, the focus of the research was on the factors influencing sport participation and dropout in Italy, including age, gender, availability of free time, availability of sports facilities and affordability. In addition, the aim was to provide an overview of the current situation of sports practice.

Currently our society, and the Italian one, presents a serious problem such as a sedentary lifestyle, especially in old age, which implies a higher relative risk of mortality when we speak in terms of physical condition. Furthermore, low cardiorespiratory fitness and strength deficits have correlated with a higher relative risk of mortality in recent years (Bauman, A., & Craig, C. L. 2016).

We emphasise that precisely for this reason it is important to influence the achievement of sports practice habits from its origins, creating sustained habits.

Italians, many in Mediterranean Europe, devote little of our time to sports and interest in it has increased in recent decades, confirming the difference between men and women. This growth is not so clear when we go back to adolescence and youth, where unfortunately the highest dropout rates are recorded. The age between 10 and 16 is the critical period in which abandonment occurs. Furthermore, in the phase of compulsory secondary education, a percentage is established which always remains below the threshold of 50%.

The abandonment of the practice of physical and sporting activity is certainly complex to analyse, since temporary abandonment should not be considered as such, being in some cases a transitory state. There is also a difference between the practice of organised and disorganised physical activity, which must be considered (Berger, 2008) and verifiable in some North American studies.

Today, many studies have analysed the motivations that lead to physical and sporting activity, focusing on the various types of age. Among the most common reasons are entertainment and recreation. But, instead with age these motivations evolve to be fit and compete.

### **Assesment Methods**

The studies included in this review were selected through a systematic search. The selection was limited to quantitative studies published in English or Italian in the last 10 years. Information on demographic variables, sports activities and outcomes were extracted from each study and analysed to identify factors associated with sport participation and dropout in Italy. To conduct this analysis, data from various official sources were used, including the ISTAT survey on participation in physical and sporting activity, the EUROBAROMETER survey on the sporting habits of European citizens, the data collected by Sport and Health on physical of the Italian population, and the data collected by CONI on organised sporting activities. In addition, data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, such as logistic regression, to identify factors influencing sport participation and reasons leading to dropout.

The tool used for data processing was the questionnaire, with multiple choice questions and questions with Linkert scale.

Physical activity and sport are essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and preventing disease. However, participation in sport and abandonment are complex phenomena that depend on a series of social, cultural, and economic factors. In Italy, participation in sports is lower than in other European countries and the numbers of sports abandonment are worrying. According to the 2022 ISTAT survey "Aspects of daily life", only 34,5% of the Italian population practices sport regularly, while 33,7% do not practice any physical activity. Furthermore, Eurobarometer data (2022) show that only 48% of Italians believe that sport is important for health, while 35% believe that sport is too expensive.

Several factors influence sports practice in Italy. The Eurobarometer survey (2022) found that 40% of Italians consider lack of time as the main obstacle to practicing sport, followed by lack of motivation (27%) and cost (10%). Furthermore, according to the 2022 ISTAT survey, participation in sports practice is more common among people aged between 18 and 44, while it is less common among older people and young people.

This article uses a quantitative methodology to provide a review of the main studies on sport participation and dropout in Italy. We will focus on analysing data from ISTAT, the Eurobarometer, the Sport and Health report and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) annual report. Furthermore, we will review studies investigating factors associated with sport participation and dropout in Italy, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current situation.

According to CONI's 2021 annual report, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted sport practice in Italy. During the lockdown, many people stopped playing sports and sedentary lifestyle increased. In addition, access to sports facilities has been restricted and sporting events have been canceled or postponed. This has resulted in decreased participation in sports practice and increased dropouts.

However, CONI has implemented various initiatives to promote safe sports, such as the "Sport doesn't stop" campaign, which encouraged people to practice sports at home and provided training tips and programs online.

A study conducted by Ipsos (2021) analyzed the impact of the pandemic on participation in sports practice in Italy. The results showed that pre-Covid active people who practiced sport were 73% in the 6-13 age group, 59% in the 14-19 age group and 20% among adults.

With the advent of the pandemic, however, abandonments were very high: 48% among children, 30% among children and 26% among adults.

A third of those who continued changed activities and more than half changed their way of doing sport, with outdoor activities and home fitness. The analysis of the 2019 ISTAT data showed that 68% of people who do not practice physical activity declare that they do not have enough time available, while 16% believe that they are not in adequate physical shape to practice sport.

Affordability is another important factor in participating in sports. According to the 2020 Sport and Health report, 26% of low-income Italian families cannot afford to enroll their children in a sports club. Furthermore, 43% of those interviewed stated that they did not have adequate sports equipment, while 28% indicated that the costs of joining a sports club are too high. Sports culture and social influence are other factors influencing participation in sports in Italy.

According to the 2020 Sport and Health report, 35% of Italians say that family and friends influence the decision to play sport. Furthermore, 50% of respondents said they played sports at school, while only 22% said they continued to play after school. This suggests that promoting sports culture at the school level could positively impact participation in sports.



Personal graphic data processing. Source: ISTAT Personal graphic data processing. Source: ISTAT Sports practices and physical activity of the resident population 2021

**Results**

The research results show that, despite the growing awareness of the importance of physical activity for health, participation in sport remains relatively low in Italy. According to ISTAT data, only 34,5% of Italian adults declared that they regularly practiced physical activity or

sports. This rate is lower than the European average (48.2%) and varies according to gender, age, and socio-economic position.

Studies have shown that sports participation in Italy is influenced by multiple factors, with age and gender being the most significant variables. For example, ISTAT data indicate that 30% of the Italian population aged between 18 and 64 has participated in a sporting activity in the last year, with greater participation among men than women. Furthermore, the EUROBAROMETER and Sport and Health studies found that the availability of free time is an important factor for sports participation, with 68% of respondents saying they would participate in more physical activities if they had more free time.

Regarding sport abandonment, the data show that it is a significant problem, especially among young people, with a significant increase in the percentage of those who stopped practising sport during their adolescence.

Studies have identified the availability of sports facilities and affordability as key factors. For example, CONI data show that 25% of sportsmen and women have abandoned their activity due to inadequate structures, while 22% said they could no longer afford to practice sports due to high costs. In summary, participation in and abandonment of sport in Italy depend on social, cultural, and economic factors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted sports practice, reduced participation and increasing attrition. We need to consider that “the Covid-19 pandemic has placed states in crisis by questioning the model of globalisation, the political system, and the economic system, as well as highlighting difficulties in the health sector at local, national, and international levels. The article starts with a historical-philosophical analysis and tries to find solutions to get out of the crisis, the science alone is not enough; it is necessary to redesign sustainable models in the economy and new political strategies” (Figus, 2020). Lack of time, lack of motivation and cost are the main barriers to participation, while sports culture and social influence can positively influence participation. Sports institutions and organisations must implement policies and initiatives to promote sports practice, especially in times of crisis such as the current one.

## **Discussion**

The study's objectives were to investigate the factors influencing sports participation and abandonment in Italy, with particular attention to the COVID-19 pandemic and data from authoritative sources such as ISTAT, EUROBAROMETER, Sport and Health and CONI.

Firstly, the aim was to analyse the main obstacles to sports participation in Italy. Studies conducted in recent years, such as those by ISTAT, have shown that lack of time is one of the main reasons people do not exercise regular physical activity. However, lack of motivation, lack of accessibility to sports facilities and high costs have been identified as other factors influencing participation in sports practice in Italy.

Therefore, one of the study's main objectives was to investigate these factors and identify possible solutions to overcome the barriers to participation. It appears evident that on the world scene this is framed by a growing concern for the consequences that the poor practice of physical activity or sport can entail.

This concern must be considered of strategic importance for citizens and, therefore a criterion for political evaluation in general.

Governmental public health agencies must be alarmed by data indicating low physical activity and the accompanying social consequences for physical well-being (Mountjoy M., Sundgot-Borgen, 2015). Recent studies indicate a sedentary lifestyle as a factor accompanying the occurrence and severity of many chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, among others.

Secondly, the aim was to evaluate the effect of sports culture and social influence on participation in sports practice. For example, some studies have shown that family and friends can influence the decision to play sports. Furthermore, the promotion of sports culture at the school level could have a positive impact on participation in sports practice.

Therefore, these factors need to be investigated to understand better how sports culture and social influence may affect participation.

Thirdly, the aim was to analyse the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on participation in sport practice in Italy. As reported in several studies, the pandemic has significantly impacted participation in sports practice, reducing attendance and increasing abandonment. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the effects of the pandemic on the factors influencing participation, to

identify possible solutions to maintain participation in sports even in times of crisis such as the current one.

The aim has been to provide suggestions for policies and initiatives aimed at promoting sports practice in Italy. The data collected during the study made it possible to identify the main challenges that sports organisations must face to promote participation in sports practice in Italy. Furthermore, studies conducted in other countries have provided useful insights for developing new policies and initiatives aimed at promoting participation in sports, for example, through financial incentive programs or the promotion of sports culture at the school level. To achieve these objectives, authoritative data sources such as ISTAT, EUROBAROMETER, Sport and Health and CONI have been used, which provide information on the sporting habits of Italians and on the factors influencing sport participation and abandonment.

Furthermore, statistical analyses were conducted to identify the main factors influencing sport participation and dropout in Italy and to evaluate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, that in any case we would like to consider simply as an effect limited in time and not to be considered permanent, even if we do not exclude the possibility of being able to repeat itself.

## **Conclusions**

The results of this systematic examination suggest that several factors, including age, gender, leisure availability, availability of sports facilities, and affordability, influence sport participation and dropout in Italy. The quantitative methodology used in this review has made it possible to analyse these factors in depth and to provide a complete picture of the current situation.

To improve sports participation in Italy, targeted interventions are needed to increase the availability of leisure and sports facilities and reduce sports activities' costs, especially for the most vulnerable sections of the population. These measures could help increase sport participation, reduce sport dropout, and improve population health and well-being.

In the future, it would be important to continue monitoring the situation of sport participation and abandonment in Italy, to identify any trends and refine strategies to promote an active life and regular sport practice. Furthermore, it would be useful to conduct further research to investigate the factors associated with sports participation and abandonment, to provide a solid knowledge base for future policies and interventions.

If soon, we would like further to investigate the studies on the abandonment of sports practice, we could verify in depth how these are not likely to be generalised and require an analysis of the social context in which one intends to intervene to expect the success from the sports promotion programs that are proposed, not only in Italy.

In conclusion, to direct these programs to convey the benefits that physical-sport activity would bring to the students.

All this is not related to the next level of practice, probably because it does not correspond to the interests of the age of the subjects analysed (school cycles, up to the University). For this reason, the proposals should focus less on transmitting information and more on an attractive and recreational physical-sport activity.

The existence of one of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors directly influences the motivation and the abandonment of the practice of physical-sport activity. This summed up the importance of the analysis, with the aim of providing a clear idea and adapted to reality to be able to implement effectively.

Then there is the question of personal factors to verify, their importance where the level of practice of physical-sporting activity is largely influenced by biological and psychological aspects.

Equally important are also the environmental factors dependent on the climatology, the programming of the physical-sport activity and ease of access to sports facilities in the event of adverse weather conditions.

These are reasons that allow us to justify the abandonment of exercise programs or limited access at least partially to facilities and the related problems that cause a daily routine, especially if the population is adults (King and all, 1992).

It is necessary to focus on organised physical activity, quality training for those directly responsible for the sporting practice, as well as for the main social agent, and, therefore, the family. This would improve both provision and family involvement, increasing the quality of school sports. The practice of unorganised physical activity using the natural environment could then be encouraged. For this reason, active centres, and parks, for example, should be considered, where the population who frequent them claims to practice walking, hiking and mountain biking to a greater extent. Its objectives would therefore be to actively use free time to satisfy social needs and thus achieve integral development based on the motivations that promote it (King and all, 1992).

Today, contact with nature, physical and sporting activity, and improving social relations are fundamental. What plays an important role in this complex situation is intrinsic motivation, the important role that physical activity determines, and which must include those reasons why the individual himself argues with the practice to produce satisfaction, therefore seen as a goal. Interpersonal relationships are central when we are talking about sport. For example, going to the gym, going out for a run, cycling, spinning, to play tennis and other group classes, swimming...etc. etc. All sport modalities that can be practiced as a couple or with friends, not to mention team sports. With these, interpersonal relationships can only be strengthened by improving physical performance, health, and self-esteem. It is the overall system that benefits.

Therefore, practicing sport helps to meet people, not only for training, but also in competitions. There are many people who are preparing to achieve the same targets and with whom a connection can be generated that cannot be achieved with other people.

In conclusion, we can say that sport is really productive and relationship-strengthening means, it is in fact possible to train in different contexts, with more people, and thus the possibilities of carrying out different activities are expanded.

In this context, the role of leadership in sport is also played on a matter of personal relationships. Leadership becomes essential from the relational context, removing conflicts within organizations (Scott 2021) and grows with the growth of communication factors and with a close relationship between sports players.

**Chapter 2 - Determining factors of sports dropout of young scholars: a cross-sectional analysis in the 8–13 year age group**

## **Abstract**

This article investigates the phenomenon of sports abandonment among young scholars aged between 8 and 13 years. Regardless of the growing awareness of the importance of sport and physical activity during childhood and adolescence, this theme must be adequately explored in the scientific literature. Our study addresses this gap through a cross-sectional research design, tracking and analyzing data from a cohort of young athletes over one year. The main objective of our study is to identify the determinants leading to sports dropout in this specific age group. We looked at several possible causes through a multivariate analysis, including social pressures, parental expectations, time conflicts, physical and psychological stress, and lack of enjoyment.

The results show a significant attrition rate, with psychosocial factors emerging as the most influential in determining whether a young person will continue or stop their participation in sport. Furthermore, our study highlights the importance of targeted interventions and preventive strategies that promote a positive, inclusive, and balanced sports environment for adolescents.

These interventions can be particularly effective when implemented by coaches, parents and others involved in youth sports education. Finally, this paper discusses the implications of the findings for sports professionals, physical educators, and public policy makers. It highlights the need for more effective support policies and innovative pedagogical approaches to promote sporting persistence during adolescence. Our findings can serve as a starting point for further research in this field, helping to build a future where young people can enjoy the many benefits of sport and physical activity.

## **Introduction**

Physical activity and sports participation have a profound impact on the health and development of young people. The positive effects of physical activity in the pediatric population have been widely documented, including improvements in cardiovascular health, bone health, body composition, and mental health (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). Beyond the physical benefits, sports participation can also offer several psychosocial benefits, including improving self-esteem, developing problem-solving skills, and building social bonds (Eime et al., 2013).

Addressing the rate of sports dropout among young people, particularly during adolescence, is a pressing concern that warrants attention. Fraser-Thomas et al. (2008) shed light on the prevalence of sports dropout among young athletes, highlighting its significance. Additionally,

Pisaniello, Figus, and Digennaro (2023) underscore the severity of this issue, stating, "This growth is not so clear when we go back to adolescence and youth, where unfortunately the highest dropout rates are recorded. The age between 10 and 16 is the critical period in which abandonment occurs. Furthermore, in the phase of compulsory secondary education, a percentage is established which always remains below the threshold of 50%." (Pisaniello et al 2023). Their research delves into the statistical data on youth dropout rates within the European context, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of sports dropout among adolescents (Pisaniello et al 2023) and youth in Europe. Understanding these regional statistics is crucial for devising effective interventions and strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced by young athletes in European societies.

One of the least studied aspects of sports dropout concerns preadolescents and adolescents between the ages of 8 and 13, representing a crucial transition phase from early childhood to adolescence. Often overlooked in the literature in favour of older adolescent groups, this age group presents unique challenges and opportunities regarding sports involvement. While individuals in this age group are less prone to performance pressures than their older peers, they may be more susceptible to external influences such as parental expectations or peer pressure (Gould, 2010).

The importance of keeping young people in sports during early adolescence cannot be emphasised enough. In this time of rapid cognitive, physical, and emotional development, sports experiences can provide young people with a structured environment to face and overcome challenges, learn the value of teamwork, and develop resilience (Holt et al., 2017). However, young people disengage from the sport at this crucial stage. In that case, they miss out on the opportunity to benefit from these positive experiences, which could impact their overall health and long-term well-being.

Sporting activities are voluntary, and the enjoyment and emotional appeal, and relative accessibility of sports make them an appealing force; the loss of enjoyment and the lack of interest can be a cause of sports dropout. Various research has attempted to identify the reasons for sports abandonment, highlighting factors ranging from lack of enjoyment to performance pressure to logistical challenges such as time and costs (Côté et al., 2009; Monteiro et al., 2017 Van Yerpen, et al., 2022).

However, few studies have explicitly focused on the 8-13 age group despite this representing a critical period in which young people are particularly vulnerable to sports disaffection. (Wagnsson et al., 2021, Back et al, 2022).

There is little research about the correlation between cost reasons and sports dropout. In their longitudinal research about hockey dropouts made in 2017 and 2018, Owen found that the reasons for dropout were medical/age, change in circumstances, high cost, and lack of time. (Owen, et al., 2022).

In the context of Italy, factors leading to sports dropout among children and adolescents aged 8 to 13 include academic pressure, economic costs, lack of family support, competing interests, negative experiences such as bullying, health issues, lack of enjoyment, family relocations, inadequate facilities, and peer influence. These factors, individually or collectively, can significantly impact the continuation of sports participation among young individuals. Through cross-sectional analysis, we aim to identify this group's main causes of abandonment and to provide ideas for targeted interventions and preventive strategies.

By incorporating these methods and based on solid methodological references, this study aims to provide a detailed and sustained insight into the reasons for sports dropout in the specific age group.

The environment in which the sport is practised also plays a crucial role. Coaches, parents, and peers can significantly influence a youth's decision to continue or leave sport (Gould, 2010). While a supportive and motivating coach can encourage persistence, unrealistic expectations or a hostile climate can turn young people away from the sporting environment.

Socialisation is an important factor at this age; in fact, sport could serve as a springboard for making new friends and expanding social networks, in the meantime the absence of involvement of peers or of parents can positively impact on sport dropout ( Monteiro et al., 2017; Jaf et al., 2023 )

The cultural and social context adolescents live in can influence their sports experiences. For example, gender-related cultural expectations can influence boys' and girls' sporting opportunities and participation, while socioeconomic factors can limit access to sporting facilities and activities.

Given the importance of understanding and addressing the causes of sports dropout among children and adolescents aged 8–13, this study aims to fill existing gaps in the literature. Through multifactorial approach, we will seek to offer a detailed insight into the factors that lead to sports dropout to provide practical insights for coaches, educators, and sports policymakers.

## **Materials and methods**

### **Participants**

We designed our sample of research in two steps. As a first step, we used the snowing ball guide given the participants' peculiarities, especially their age and occupation. (Parker et al. 2019) While some researchers support the definition of the snowball method as a sampling method in which a respondent provides the researcher with the name of at least one other potential respondent (Cohen&Ariel 2011, Bhattacharjee, 2012), in our research we started with the national Italian Sports Center (CSI) which in turn contacted the regional CSI which contacted the gyms.

To reach a larger number of participants, the study involved a collaboration between gyms, schools, and a multicenter approach across the national territory. Utilizing a combined methodological approach, a network was established involving three universities and provincial committees of the CSI. Participants were recruited freely with parental consent, ensuring a diverse and representative sample for the administration of the questionnaire. This extensive network facilitated access to a broad demographic of children and adolescents, enhancing the study's reliability and comprehensiveness.

The sample consisted of 6,783 Italian students, selected to represent a diverse range of gender, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds. This selection was based on the sampling techniques guidelines outlined by Dillman et al. (2014), specifically the second step. The participants were young students aged 8–13 years.

### **Procedure**

Interviewers previously trained in an earlier study and questionnaire administrators trained during a dedicated meeting were involved to ensure data collection accuracy and adherence to procedures. This prior training equipped the interviewers with the necessary skills and knowledge, ensuring that the data collection process was consistent and reliable across all locations. The comprehensive training session covered all aspects of the questionnaire administration, thereby standardizing the approach and minimizing any potential biases or errors in data gathering.

These students were administered a structured questionnaire, which included multiple-choice questions and questions based on the Likert scale, a method recognised for reliability in measuring perceptions and opinions (DeVellis, 2016).

The questionnaire was structured into three distinct sections, each with a specific objective; this will permit us to understand the dynamics underlying the phenomenon of sports dropout in Italy.

The data collection was conducted by adopting a complex research strategy involving an online questionnaire distributed via the Qualtrics platform and a more traditional data collection based on the administration of paper questionnaires at educational institutions and Sports Associations.

Participants received only preliminary information relating to the research objectives and no indication of merit. This choice was made to ensure the integrity and objectivity of the responses provided by the participants.

Data collection was carried out following strict anonymity and confidentiality policies. The data collected will be used exclusively for research and non-commercial purposes, in aggregate and anonymous form, in full compliance with the Code regarding the protection of personal data (Legislative Decree 196/2003), updated with the new legislative decree (Legislative Decree. Lgs. 101/2018) to adapt Italian legislation to the European privacy regulation (EU Reg. no. 679/2016, GDPR).

- **Personal Data Section:** This section collected demographic information on the respondents, offering a cross-section of the sample population. This data is essential to contextualize subsequent responses and better understand demographic variables that may influence sport dropout. Demographic variables included, for example, age, gender, place of residence and level of education.

- **Sports Activity Section:** The core of the questionnaire. Here, participants were questioned about their past and present sporting experiences. Detailed questions explored the type of sport practised, the duration of the activity, the weekly frequency, the reasons for any abandonment and any perceived barriers to practice. This section has provided fundamental data to outline the main causes of sports abandonment and identify any areas for intervention.
- **Section Information on the Family and Mode of Sports Practice:** This section aimed to investigate the influence of the family environment and the methods of sports practice on the dropout phenomenon. Questions were asked regarding perceived family support, the presence of other family members active in sport, and how sport had been practiced (e.g., independently, in a club, in a federation). Understanding the influence of family context and practice patterns helps define the extent to which these factors may act as facilitators or barriers to sporting continuity.

#### Data analysis

The collected data were organized in a spreadsheet and meticulously double-checked for typos and errors. To ensure a thorough analysis, the data were stratified by both gender and age. Dropout rates were further examined across these demographic segments.

The quantitative data were subjected to statistical analysis, following the guidelines proposed by Field (2013) to identify trends in the analyzed sample. Regarding the qualitative data, a thematic analysis was adopted following the method proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), which allows us to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes in the data.

#### **Results**

The data analysis showed a prevalence of respondents in the 13-year age group, constituting almost a third (29%) of the total sample. This was closely followed by 12-year-old adolescents, who accounted for just over a fifth (23%). Eleven-year-olds comprised 18%, while the youngest age groups (8 and 9 years old) represented 9% and 10%, respectively. This distribution indicates greater participation in the questionnaire by older adolescents than younger ones.

The sample was almost equally divided between genders, slightly biased towards men. Males accounted for 51%, while females were slightly fewer, accounting for 49%. A small segment (0.13%) had not specified gender. (see Table 1)

**TABLE 1 Distribution of the respondents (3,449 boys, 3,325 girls) according to age and sequentially divided for gender.**

Distribution of respondents			
Age	<i>n</i>	Boys	Girls
8	595 (9%)	327 (55%)	268 (45%)
9	663 (10%)	351 (53%)	312 (47%)
10	782 (12%)	430 (55%)	352 (45%)
11	1,223 (18%)	624 (51%)	599 (49%)
12	1,534 (23%)	767 (50%)	767 (50%)
13	1,986 (29%)	953 (48%)	1,033 (52%)

The sample was almost equally divided between genders, slightly biased towards men. Males accounted for 51%, while females were slightly fewer, accounting for 49%. A small segment (0.13%) had not specified gender (Table 1).

The analysis unveiled that the primary class (1st grade) exhibited the highest prevalence, accounting for 23% of the total. Subsequently, the intermediate grades, 2nd and 3rd, demonstrated approximate representation levels at 22% and 21%, respectively. In contrast, the lower grade categories exhibited lower proportions, with the 2nd grade at 3% and the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades at 10%, 11%, and 10%, respectively.

A consistent majority of 57% dedicates between 1 and 2 h a day to studying in the afternoon. However, a small but significant 3% dedicate more than 5 h daily to studying.

When we look at how students get to school, the car emerges as the predominant means of transport, with 49%. This may reflect a combination of socio-economic and practical factors. In contrast, a notable 29% walk to school highlights the possible proximity of school homes and, perhaps, an urban context. Public transport, including buses and metro, is used by 15% of students.

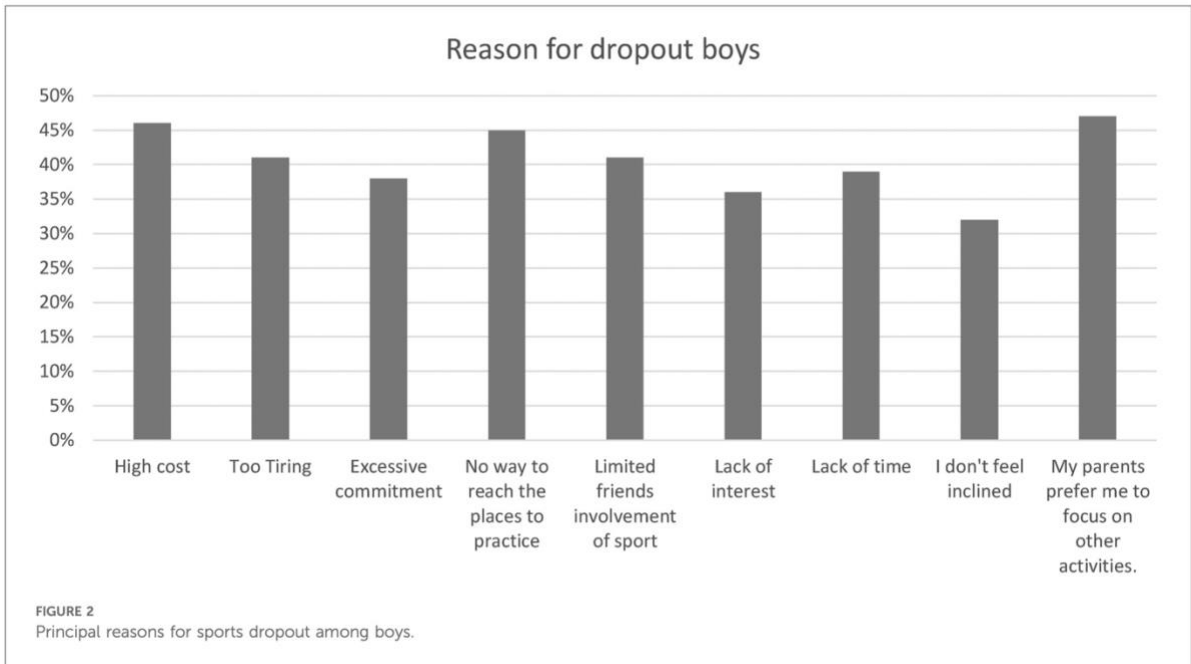
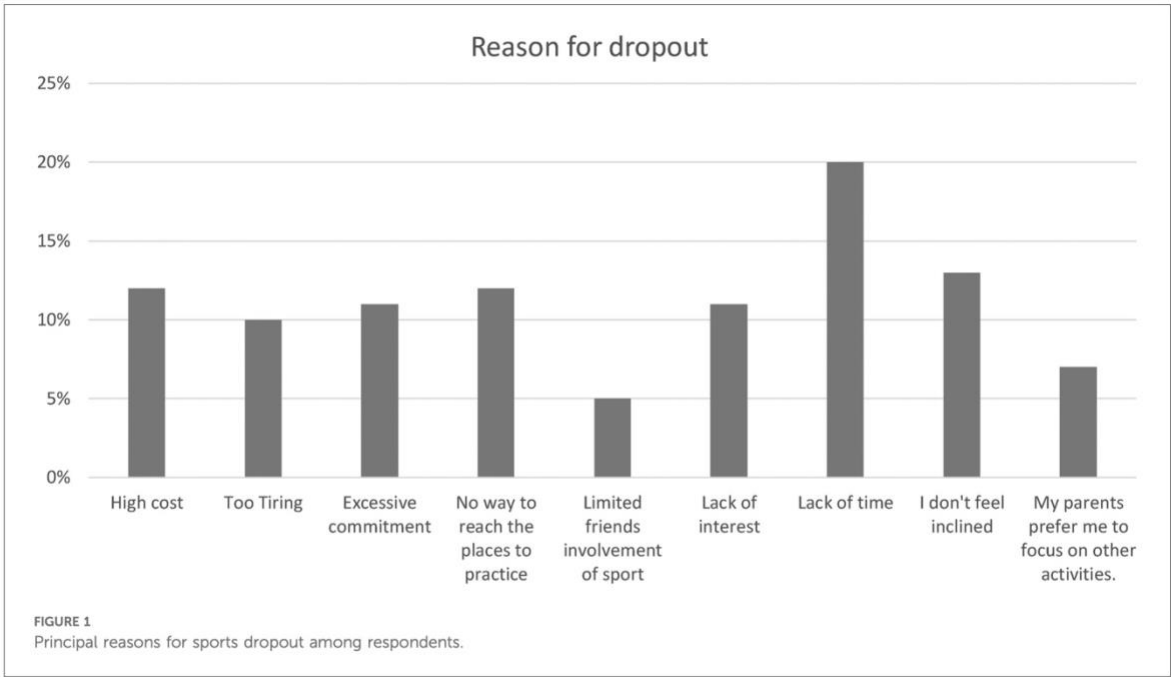
Regarding sports, most students, 74%, are actively involved in sports activities. However, there is 11% who currently do not engage in any sports practice and another 14% who stated that they have stopped practicing sports in the past.

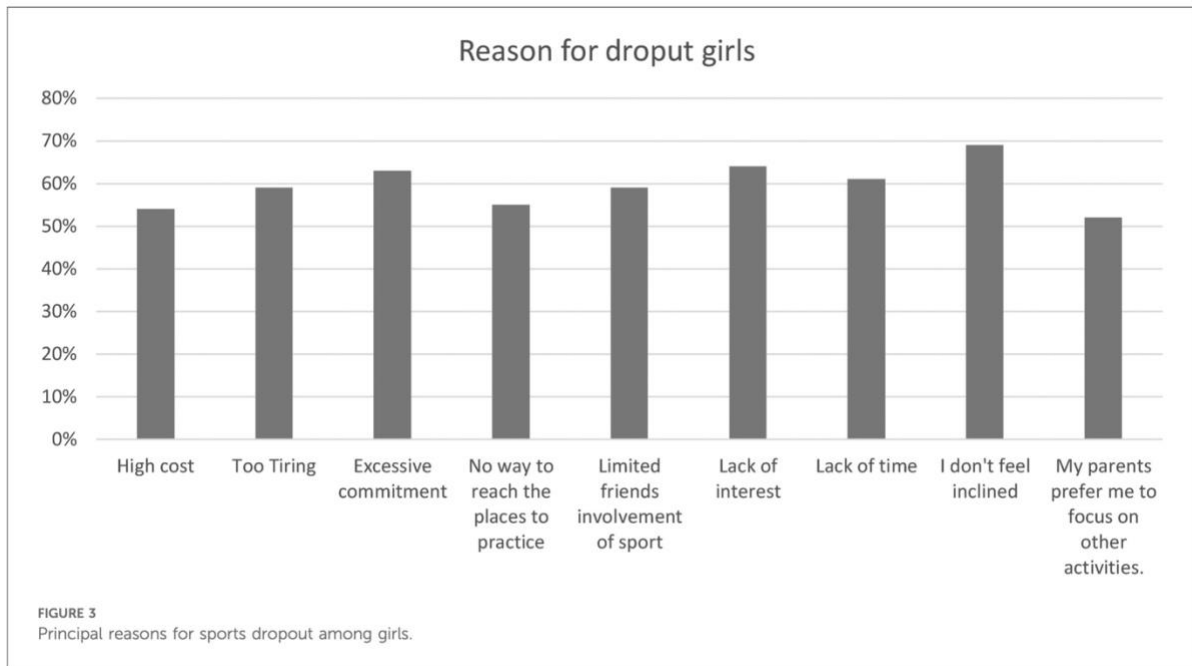
In summary, while a large percentage of students actively engage in study and sport and have specific modes of transportation to get to school, significant segments choose or are forced to do otherwise.

Looking closely at students' daily study habits, an interesting scenario emerges. A significant percentage, 36%, declare that they study only between 0 and 1 h a day. A further 31% of students say they study approximately 2 h daily, which could be considered an average daily study duration. Moving on to a greater commitment, 21% of students dedicate 3 h daily to studies. Only 11% of students study for 4 h or more daily. Finally, a small percentage, 2%, did not specify the study hours.

We can see several recurring themes as we explore why people play sports. As many as 61% of the majority see practising sports as maintaining physical well-being. Aesthetic beauty is another important reason, with 44% practicing sports to improve their physical appearance.

Furthermore, 88% participate in sports simply because they derive pleasure and passion. The sociocultural aspect of sport cannot be overlooked, given that 58% of individuals are motivated by socialization. Personal aspirations motivate 52%, and a high percentage, 91%, feel a sense of obligation towards practising sport, which could arise from societal or personal pressures. From the results it is evident that 20% (see the Figure 1) of the respondents drop out of sports due to a lack of time. Of this 20%, 61% are girls (See the Figure 3) and 31% are boys (See the Figure 2).





The phenomenon of dropping out from sports activities is influenced by high cost 12% (see the Figure 1) of which 54% are girls (see the Figure 3) and 46% are boys 46% (see the Figure 2).

When examining the duration of practice of the main sport, 23% of people have practised their main sport for 1–2 years, while 21% have practised for 2–4 years. Interestingly, 20% of people have less than one year of experience in sports. A percentage of 16% have been practising for 4–6 years, and 13% have practised their main sport for 6–8 years.

## Discussion

One of the least studied aspects of sports dropout concerns preadolescents and adolescents between the ages of 8 and 13, representing a crucial transition phase from early childhood to adolescence. Often overlooked in the literature in favour of older adolescent groups, this age group presents unique challenges and opportunities regarding sports involvement. While individuals in this age group are less prone to performance pressures than their older peers, they may be more susceptible to external influences such as parental expectations or peer pressure (Gould, 2010).

The evidence emerging from our study reveals a contrasting landscape regarding perceptions of sport and community participation. Although the positive evaluation of sport and its

relevance for individual and collective well-being is universally recognized, barriers still hinder active and continuous participation.

First, the importance of sport for physical and mental health was highlighted by our data, in line with previous studies (Warburton et al., 2006). Physical exercise is important not only for offering protection from a range of chronic diseases but is crucial in promoting mental health and reducing the risk of conditions such as depression (Rebar et al., 2015).

However, despite this widespread awareness, effective participation still needs to be solved. The barriers identified in our study, such as lack of facilities, associated costs, and lack of time or motivation, align with previous literature (Troost et al., 2002). While varying by socioeconomic and geographic conditions, these obstacles represent a persistent challenge in many communities.

The systematic research literature confirms our results about the reasons for dropout like High 11% cost and lack of time or incompatible schedule 27%, lack of Interest( Crane 2015, Monteiro et al ., 2017) The logistic accessibility is another important indicator that can impact positively sport dropout in our research the Item Difficulty reaching spaces is 23%t and is in line with the research of Sevilmis and others about gym renewing membership for fitness clubs were the criteria with the highest weight. In our research, 20% of participants indicated the cause of dropout the lack of interest which is in line with the research of Van Yperen about predictors of dropout from organized football in which the lack of enjoyment was a major predictor of both short-term (6 months) and long-term (4 years) dropout.

A further reflection emerges on the need to make physical activity a more inclusive and community experience. Creating sports groups and organising events at a local level could not only break down some of the perceived barriers but also strengthen social bonds, which are essential for a resilient and cohesive community.

Our study highlights the importance of a holistic approach to promote active sports participation. While awareness of the benefits of sports is high, addressing real and perceived barriers through targeted interventions is crucial. This will require a collective effort from public bodies, sports associations, and the community to ensure that physical activity becomes accessible and shared by all.

As we have seen, the data from our study raises an alarm on sports dropout among young people that cannot be ignored.

But as often happens regarding social dynamics, the situation is not uniform throughout the territory. Analyzing the data at a regional level, a notable disparity emerges between Northern and Southern Italy. While the North has slightly lower dropout rates, the South shows figures that raise further concerns. These differences can be attributed to a combination of factors, from the availability of sports infrastructure to local sports culture and public investment in this sector.

Considering this information, the solution cannot be univocal or generic. Italy needs a widespread, targeted intervention based on concrete data. The priorities emerge clearly:

First is the infrastructure. Active sporting participation cannot be hoped for without adequate facilities. The strengthening and modernization of sports infrastructures, especially in the most lacking regions, become essential.

Second, education. Not only training for coaches or physical education teachers but also a renewed commitment to integrating sports culture in schools, showing young people the importance and benefits of regular sports practice.

Finally, community and family support. A family that supports sports practice can make the difference in a young person's choice to continue or abandon sports. Likewise, active and engaged communities can create a stimulating and inclusive environment.

In conclusion, while the current data on sports abandonment in Italy may seem discouraging, it also offers the opportunity to reflect, plan and act with the right strategies and an approach based on research and collaboration.

Recommendations:

- Improve facilities: Investing in high-quality facilities and ancillary services could encourage participation.

- Interventions at the school level: Promoting more sporting activities in schools could instil the importance of sports in younger generations.
- Subsidies and financial aid: Offering discounts, scholarships or other subsidies could play sports more accessible to a wider audience.
- Encourage group practice: Creating sports groups or community events could increase participation and strengthen a sense of community.
- Integration of technology: Developing apps or other technological solutions can modernize and personalize the approach to sport, making it more attractive to new generations.
- Flexibility: Considering extended or variable hours for athletic facilities can help accommodate the varying needs of individuals.

While many people enjoy and want to participate in sports, some barriers and challenges can hinder them. Data analysis suggests many opportunities exist to promote and incentivize broader and more sustainable sports participation with the right initiatives and investments.

## **Conclusions**

The depth of our investigation into sports perception and participation offered a clear and detailed overview of the current situation in each community. A framework of universal recognition of the benefits of sport for physical and psychological well-being has emerged but is counteracted by various obstacles that limit access and regular practice.

Although awareness is high regarding the positive impacts of physical activity on health, logistical barriers such as lack of adequate facilities, associated costs and limited time remain dominant concerns for many. Psychological barriers, such as lack of motivation or perceived competence, are equally relevant. It is interesting to note how, in a society where technology permeates every aspect of daily life, digital solutions are seen as potential aids but not as substitutes for real, physical engagement.

Based on the analyses presented, we can draw the following conclusion:

Practicing sports is seen extremely positively by most people who participated in the research, who recognize numerous physical and mental health benefits. In fact, according to Warburton, Nicol, and Bredin (2006), regular physical activity can "prevent chronic diseases, increase

longevity, improve quality of life, reduce the risk of injury and promote mental well-being". However, despite widespread awareness of the benefits, significant barriers prevent many individuals from participating in sport regularly.

The main concerns include the lack of accessible facilities, associated costs and lack of time or motivation. These barriers align with a study by Trost et al. (2002) who identified similar barriers, particularly lack of access and financial limitations, as main reasons for non-participation in physical activity.

Policymakers and sports practitioners should focus on reducing these barriers to maximize sport participation and take advantage of its public health benefits. This could include investments in local sports infrastructure, subsidy programs to reduce the costs associated with playing sports, and awareness campaigns.

In conclusion, although interest in sport and awareness of its benefits are high, a collective commitment from public, private and community bodies is essential to ensure these positive attitudes translate into effective and widespread sporting practice.

To effectively address these challenges, a multidimensional approach is required. Promoting awareness, while essential, is not sufficient. It is essential to ensure accessibility to facilities, break down economic barriers and create opportunities for training and sports education, creating a more inclusive and integrated sports culture.

In summary, sport is a powerful tool for individual well-being and social cohesion. As such, efforts to broaden its reach and penetration into society should be a priority. The key is the combination of awareness, accessibility and interventions tailored to the specific needs of different communities.

**Chapter 3 - Analyzing gender dynamics: a comprehensive  
investigation into sports dropout phenomena**

## **Abstract**

This study explores gender differences in sports dropout, analyzing the complex, gender-specific factors behind quitting sports. Using a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaires and focus groups, we identify unique social, psychological, and physical reasons affecting males and females differently. Findings suggest the need for gender-sensitive interventions in sports, highlighting the importance of tailored strategies to enhance long-term participation and equity for all genders.

## **Introduction**

Engagement in organized sports is widely recognized as a fundamental component for promoting physical health, psychological well-being, and social cohesion among young individuals. Despite these benefits, the phenomenon of sports dropout during adolescence presents a significant challenge, with marked disparities observed along gender lines. This gender-specific attrition from sports activities can have long-term implications on individual health and social development. The current study aims to examine the underlying gender-related factors that contribute to sports dropout, focusing on the Italian context through a dual approach of standardized questionnaires and focus group discussions.

Extensive research has been conducted to understand the multifaceted reasons behind sports dropout, revealing that gender plays a critical role in shaping these dynamics. For instance, studies by Colley et al. (2005) have indicated that while boys often cite competitive pressures and a preference for unstructured play as reasons for leaving sports, girls are more likely to withdraw due to social stigmatization, body image concerns, and a perceived lack of competence or enjoyment. Furthermore, Eime et al. (2013) emphasize that the social support system within the sport, including coaches, teammates, and family, significantly impacts girls' continued participation, more so than for boys, where the emphasis might be on performance and competition.

Our research leverages a detailed methodological approach, beginning with the distribution of questionnaires through the Centro Sportivo Italiano (CSI) to a broad demographic of young athletes. These questionnaires were meticulously designed to capture diverse aspects of sports participation, including personal motivations, barriers to continued engagement, and the social contexts of the athletes. This quantitative data collection was complemented by qualitative

insights derived from focus groups conducted in various middle schools across Italy. These discussions were aimed at delving deeper into the personal narratives and experiences of the participants, providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing sports dropout.

By integrating findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how gender influences sports dropout. It also explores the potential regional variations within Italy, which could affect sports participation due to economic, cultural, and infrastructural differences. The outcomes of this research are expected to inform policymakers and sports organizations, leading to the development of more targeted interventions that address gender-specific needs and barriers.

This introduction sets the stage for a detailed investigation into the gender dynamics of sports dropout, highlighting the complexity of this issue and underscoring the necessity for research that is sensitive to gender differences and contextual nuances. Through this study, we aim to offer actionable insights that could significantly impact the development of strategies intended to keep young individuals engaged in sports, thereby fostering a healthier, more inclusive future for sports in Italy.

### **Theoretical background**

Sport is one of the highly specialised spheres of human activity that plays an important role in the formation of personality. According to the principle of unity of personality and activity, it is in activity, including sports, that personality is formed, and manifests itself (Vygotsky L.S., 1960) singled out a number of specific features of sporting activity: 1) its subject is the person engaged in sport; 2) the essence of sport as an activity is competition; 3) it is characterised by unusual intensity and intensity. 3) it is characterised by physical and mental strains of unusual intensity and duration; 4) the product of this activity is a sporting achievement.

The research about sport and personality trait development are various. Mainly the researches can be divided in the research that considers the influence of sport activity or sport exercise on personality development (Rico-González, 2023, Halian, 2023); and researches that viceversa are focused on the influence of the personality traits on sport (O'Connor, 2020). The sport activity positively impact on cognitive process development and on the development of the personality characteristics (Klein, M et al 2017, Conzelmann, A et al., 2023). According to the reviewed scientific literature the psycho biological-processes that are developed in the sport

activities are: intellectual, providing reception and processing of information, decision-making; psychomotor, determining the quality of motor actions (Muñoz-Arroyave et al., 2020); emotional, influencing the energy and expressive characteristics of activity( Alcaraz-Muñoz et al., 2020, Muñoz-Arroyave et al., 2020, Alcaraz, 2021, Kliziene,et al 2021); volitional which ensure overcoming of arising obstacles (Méndez-Giménez et al.2014); communicative, which are aimed at interaction with others people( Zelenin et. Al 2016); moral and those that determines the motivation of activity (Moradi et al., 2014, Tárrega-Canós, et al 2018, Akyol, P., & Imamoglu, O. ,2019).

From academic literature it is possible to deduct that there are different scientific orientations argues that the achievement of success in sport is most often associated with certain personality characteristics. According to the scientific literature this characteristic, include aggressiveness (Visek & Watson, 2015) dominance, persistence, motivation, persuasiveness, self-confidence, extroversion, and introversion (Zitek &, Jordan ,2011, González-Alemañy et al., 2023).

Gender as a category consists of two major components: biological gender and social gender. Sex differences are genetically determined and continue to be shaped in the socio-cultural environment. How the gender can influence the sport? Analyzing the research literature, it is possible to find literature on gender influence on sport performance (Hunter et al., 2023). According to the data obtained from the various research studies on gender and sport, women are more engaged in sporting activities and are more aware of their interoceptive signals than men. (Rogowska et al ., 2024 ) However, men are better at sporting techniques than women and are better at not worrying about and trusting their bodies. (Rogowska et al., 2024, Alfano et al 2023 Prentice et al 2022 This difference is also explained from a biological point of view, i.e. the biological differences relate to the structure and function of the brain related to the processing of emotions (Alfano et al 2023).

The observation that women often score higher than men in emotional awareness can be attributed to a combination of biological, social and cultural factors (Rogowska et al., 2024).

The sport and influence of gender has also been analysed in awareness of emotion-related body states and has been shown to depend on internal physiological cues as well as external situational cues ( Rogowska et al ., 2024).In fact, according to research data, women differ from men in that they prefer to use different cues to define their emotional state, particularly in a manner consistent with cognitive evaluations.

The gender biases and cultural gender norms and social pressure have a high impact on gender discrimination in sport activities. According to de Jesus “Data from a pooled analysis 298 school-based surveys from 146 countries showed that 87.4% of girls aged 11–17 years were insufficiently physically active compared to 77.6% of boys.” Social norms and gender cultural influence dropout sport. This is due to the fact that some sports are seen as boys' sports as they are steeped in assertiveness girls run the risk of experiencing conflict between the adoption of the dominant values of competition and assertiveness and the norms of femininity (Guillet et al. 2006; Slater and Tiggemann 2010). This conflict positively impacts on girls' abandonment of sporting activity.

This short introduction highlights the importance on research on gender influence on sport dropout. Sports drop-out is a phenomenon that concerns the abandonment of sporting activity by young people.

According to data from the Ordine degli Psicologi del Lazio obtained during the social campaign launched in the summer months, entitled 'Equal opportunities, great results!', carried out as part of the 'Disparities in Sport' project and then presented during the round table on 16 October 2023, it can be seen that the female population is more inclined to give up sporting activity. With advancing age, the drop-out rate increases, marking a significant gap compared to boys. As far back as 2012, the Italian Society of Pediatrics on Adolescents' Habits and Lifestyles indicated that almost 40% of Italian adolescents, in the 13-14 age group, do not engage in any sporting activity. The percentage rises to 57% for girls. Although participation in sport and physical activity is becoming more equal in recent years the focus on sport dropout should be high and intense.

Research on sport and gender shows that sport is more decisive for boys' sporting identities than for girls and offers different experiences and social relationships for boys and girls. Other research focuses on the fact that boys receive more recognition than girls for their participation in sport. Consequently, if (organised) sport conveys less status to girls, this will lead to girls' participation in organised sport being lower than that of boys or, when it does occur, will result in a higher participation threshold requiring more effort and/or motivation. And as Seippel, Ø., & Bergesen argue, “girls have to be more committed than boys, otherwise they will drop out”.

## Research Design

The aim of the research was to analyze whether there were gender differences on dropout sport. The research objective is best explained in the following research questions.

RQ 1 Is there a gender difference in youth dropout sport?

RQ 2 Are their gender differences in dropout sport motivations.

To answer these questions, it was chosen to investigate by means of the quantitative research method. The study adopted a systematic approach to questionnaire development. Initial items were generated in alignment with identified constructs, and subsequent expert review and pilot testing refined the instrument. Items underwent item analysis, leading to the construction of scales for improved reliability.

With regard to the construction of the sample, the snowball method was used. As it is shown in the figure 1

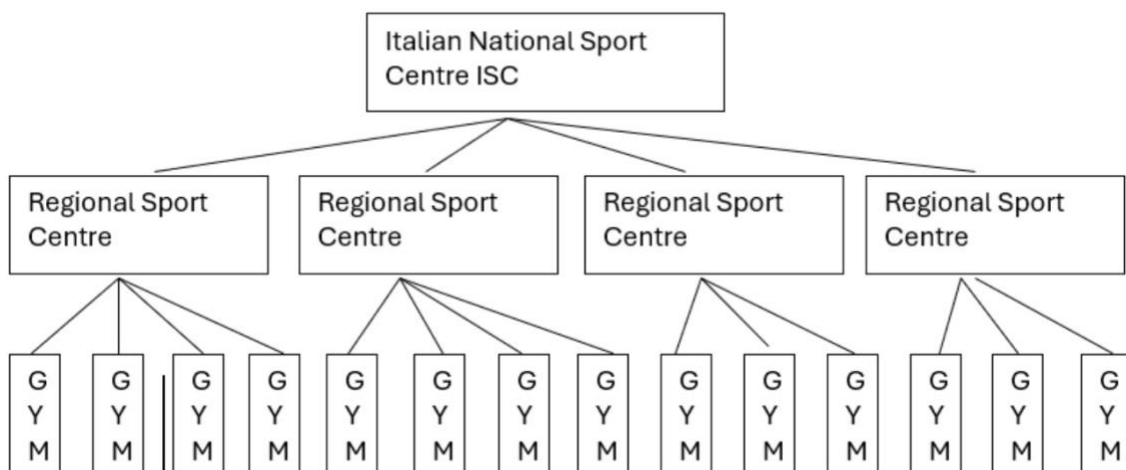


Figure 1 Sampling model

Firstly, it was contacted the Italian Sports Centre (ISC). The Italian National Sport Center contacted the regional Sport Center and the Sport regional Centers contacted GYMS which distributed the questionnaire among young people. This in turn created a network with the regional clubs and a network with the territorial GYMs.

As a result, the sample comprised 6,783 Italian students, representing gender, socioeconomic, and geographic background. The sample composition was 3449 boys and 3325 girls 9 younger did not specify their gender. The distribution of the sample was almost in the middle with a slight tendency towards the male gender a difference of almost 1%. Figure 2

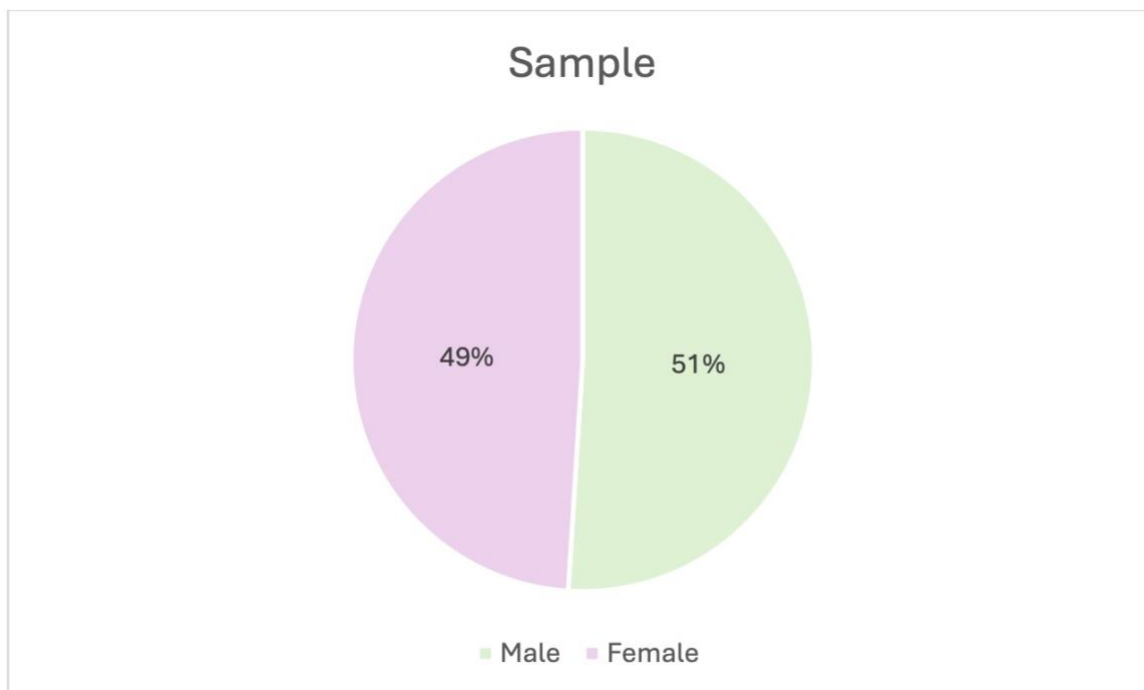


Figure 2 Sample

### Research results and Discussion

The data collected was subjected to a rigorous processing and analysis process. This phase involved organizing, coding, and synthesizing the data to identify significant trends, patterns, and relationships. The main objective of this analysis was to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, allowing meaningful conclusions to be drawn based on solid empirical data. Firstly, we start to investigate among young people if they do practice sport or not or they did but stopped.

	<b>Totale</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>I did but I stopped</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>17%</b>

Table 1 Do you currently play any sports?

From the obtained data there is possible to notice the impact of gender on practicing sport and on sport dropout in fact the girls that practices sport is less than boys and the difference is of 10%. While at the situation of sport dropout the girls are more than boys and the difference are of 6%. Only with this investigation we did reply to our first research question.

For to reply to our second research questions we did more detailed investigation. Firstly, we went to investigate on motivation of sport practicing. At the Question why young people practice sport (a question with multiply responses, there is a big difference between males and females on motivation in fact 62 % of males say they would like to be a champion while females are only 40 %.

There is also a difference in the motivation to be with my friends in fact the males who also indicated this as motivation are 62,6 % while the females are 52,4 %.

There is also a 10 % difference in seeing sport as a tool for socialising. In fact, in the motivation to be with my friends, the males who also indicated this as a motivation are 62.6 % while females are 52.4 %.

There is an 8% difference in the motivation to improve my physical appearance in fact females who chose this option are 39.2% while males are 47.5%. The motivation for To improve my mind/character has a minimal difference in fact males who chose this option are 52.1 % and females are 48.7%.

Analyzing the positive answers of the answer Because I am a professional athlete there is a difference of 8% between males and females in fact the girls who chose this answer are 27.4% while the boys are 34%.

While it can be stated that there is no difference in the motivation to practice sport because it is compulsory if in fact both the responses and the boys who chose this answer are 4% males and 3% females.

To investigate the social aspect, the question was explored further by asking. Who do you play sport with? As can be seen from Table 2, we can see that there is a difference in the gender choice of who you practise sport within your team, the boys 71% who chose this answer are while the girls are 59%. While on the answer on my own girls are 6% more than boys. There is a difference of 3% in the answer with friends in fact boys who chose this answer are 30 % while girls are 27 %. We see that more boys 11% participate in sports with their families than girls 9%.

There are no significant differences for choosing to do sport with occasional groups of people 4,6 % boys and 5,5 girls.

		M	F
Q24: With whom do you play sport? (multiple answers possible max. 3)'	On my own	16 %	22 %
	In the company of my teammates/organised team	71 %	59 %
	With my friends (free and unstructured sports team)	30 %	27 %
	With my family	11 %	9%
	With occasional groups of people (e.g. free courses in the gym)	5%	6%

Table 2 with whom young athletes prefer to practice sport.

Once the social aspect of sport has been investigated and the impact of gender showed we focused on understanding the causes of sport non practice From the table 3 is possible to see that more girls do not like the playing sport than boys the difference is on 4%. More girls than boys do not feel inclined the difference is 7%.

While the boys are more than girls on:

- spaces motivation “Because I have no way of getting to the spaces where I can practise” we see 47% boys and 40% girls
- cost motivation Because the sport I would like to practise is too expensive (registration, equipment, etc.) we see 47% boys and 40% girls
- parents influence: “Because my parents prefer me to do other activities” we see 29% boys and 24% girls

We found small difference 1% on time motivation and friends implication and no difference on not doing sport because of commitment both 41% boys and 41% girls do not practice sport because “Because the sport I like requires too much commitment”.

		M	F
Because I don't like playing sport	Positive reply	38%	42%
	Negative reply	63%	58%
Because it is too tiring	Positive reply	38%	35%
	Negative reply	62%	65%
Because I don't have time for it	Positive reply	70%	71%
	Negative reply	30%	29%
Because I have no way of getting to the spaces where I can practise	Positive reply	47%	40%
	Negative reply	53%	60%
Because I don't feel inclined	Positive reply	45%	52%
	Negative reply	55%	48%
Because my parents prefer me to do other activities	Positive reply	29%	24%
	Negative reply	71%	76%
Because none of my friends practise	Positive reply	21%	19%
	Negative reply	79%	81%
Because the sport I like requires too much commitment	Positive reply	41%	41%
	Negative reply	59%	59%
Because the sport I would like to practise is too expensive (registration, equipment, etc.)	Positive reply	47%	40%
	Negative reply	53%	60%

Table 3 Motivation of not sport practices.

In investigating the impact of gender on sport dropout we indicated different motivations: Curiosity about different disciplines; My friends played sports other than my chosen one and I wanted to be with them; My family wanted me to try different sports; You changed sports for medical/health reasons (doctor's advice, injuries, etc.); I didn't feel suited to the sport I had chosen; I didn't feel involved enough with the coach; I didn't feel involved enough with my teammates; The times I played the sport did not fit in with my lifetime; The commitment

required by the sport I played had become excessive; I was only interested in learning the basics of the sport for occasional practice. We found a statistically significant relationship between Gender and “My friends played sports other than the one I had chosen, and I wanted to be with them” the Q square has p 0,04 and 38isi s confirming us that the socialization and gender has a high impact on sport dropout This data are confirmed by the research of De la Torre-Cruz et al conducted in 2019 and Izorna Folgar et. Al conducted in 2013.

## **Conclusions**

The motivation for sporting activity not only encourages a person to play sport but also gives subjective and personal meaning to the activities. Understanding one’s motivation is the way to effective learning and efficient activity. Knowing what drives a person, what motivates them to activity, and what motivations underlie their actions is it possible to develop an effective system of forms and management methods. To this end, it is necessary to know how these, or those motivations arise or are caused, how and by what means motivations can be put into action, how people are motivated. However, above all, it is important to know the content of the motivational sphere of a particular community of people. And what are the gender differences on motivation of not sport practice firstly and the gender motivation of sport dropout.

It is important to address the sports drop-out phenomenon with a holistic view, considering both technical, psychological, and social aspects. In order to most likely identify the potential abilities of children and adolescents, it is advisable to determine not only the initial level of their preparation, but above all its rate of growth. In the selection system, control tests should be conducted in such a way as to determine not only what the candidate is already capable of doing, but also what he or she will be able to do in the future, i.e., to identify his or her ability to solve motor tasks, the emergence of motor creativity, and the ability to control one’s movements. Sports instructors and families can play a crucial role in keeping young people’s interest in sport alive, ensuring a balance between commitment and enjoyment. When discussing the agents that can influence the sport activity and sport dropout it is important to consider the agents of socialization (family, school, friends, and media). The media influence on sport activity promotion as we saw from our results the girls are influenced also by social networks. The friend and teammates have more effect on boys choose of sport activity another aspects on sport and gender should be psychobiological boys choose to do sport practice for to improve the physical performance.

Our research can serve as a start for new researchers, probably by explaining physical motivation on sporting activity in more detail. As far as sport dropout is concerned, we have focused on the classic motivations found in the scientific literature, and here we should supplement this list in order to highlight how gender difference may impact on sport dropout. The added understanding of these complex interactions between gender and motivational factors is essential for designing interventions that not only prevent dropout but also enhance engagement and satisfaction in sports among different gender groups. This deeper insight could drive more nuanced policy and program development, ensuring that sports environments are adaptive and responsive to the diverse needs of participants.

**Chapter 4 - The impact of digital technologies on youth sports dropout: challenges and opportunities for educational environments**

## **Abstract**

This review explores how digital technologies affect youth sport dropout. While AI, virtual platforms, and apps can enhance motivation and training, they may also cause distraction, sedentariness, and low self-esteem. By analyzing current literature, the study suggests how educational settings can use technology to reduce dropout and promote long-term engagement in sports.

## **Introduction**

It is commonly acknowledged that playing organized sports as a kid or adolescent is essential to healthy development and has a significant positive impact on social skills, academic achievement, emotional stability, and physical fitness (Bailey, 2006; Eime et al., 2013). Every day, children and adolescents should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-intense physical exercise, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (WHO, 2020). Playing sports is frequently essential to adhering to these rules. Notwithstanding the established advantages, organized sports participation declines significantly during adolescence, with dropout rates varying from 30% to 70% based on age, gender, and environmental factors (Crane & Temple, 2015; Balish et al., 2014). Recent evidence confirms that even among children aged 8 to 13, early dropout is influenced by a combination of motivational, environmental, and educational pressures (Pisaniello et al., 2024).

Youth sport dropout, as this condition is usually known, is not a recent problem. However, throughout the past ten years, the environment in which it takes place has undergone significant change. One of the most significant changes has been the widespread use of digital devices in young people's daily lives. Digital media, including everything from smartphones and video games to social media sites and streaming services, has shaped young people's values, habits, and lifestyle choices (Twenge et al., 2018; Stiglic & Viner, 2019). When excluding time spent on digital assignments for school, the typical teen currently spends more than seven hours a day in front of a screen for leisure (Rideout et al., 2021).

These changes have created new challenges for sustaining physical activity and organized sports engagement. Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for information access, socialization, and even sport training and compete directly with physical activity for time, attention, and motivation (Rathbone et al., 2022). In addition, the nature of digital

environments—especially social media—introduces complex psychological dimensions, such as comparison anxiety, body image issues, and performance pressure, which may exacerbate existing dropout drivers like low self-esteem and lack of perceived competence (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015; Twenge & Campbell, 2019).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digital dependency among youth while simultaneously disrupting regular participation in sports and physical education (Moore et al., 2020). Lockdowns and school closures forced millions of young people into online learning environments, further increasing screen time and reducing opportunities for structured physical activity. Early evidence suggests this disruption may have long-term implications on sport participation trajectories (Dunton et al., 2020).

Considering these developments, it is imperative to re-evaluate the traditional frameworks used to understand sport dropout and incorporate the role of digital technology. Leisure Constraints Theory (Crawford & Godbey, 1987) provides a robust model for analyzing the various barriers to sustained sport engagement. This theory categorizes constraints into intrapersonal (e.g., motivation, anxiety), interpersonal (e.g., family and peer influence), and structural (e.g., cost, accessibility, time). The rise of digital technology potentially influences each of these categories. For instance, intrapersonal constraints may now include digital addictions or social media-induced anxiety; interpersonal constraints may involve peer dynamics in online spaces; and structural constraints may relate to the displacement of time toward screen-based activities.

Despite the increasing ubiquity of technology, scholarly attention to the intersection of digital media and youth sport dropout remains limited. Existing studies on sport dropout have focused primarily on traditional factors such as pressure from coaches or parents, lack of enjoyment, and transitions to other activities (Crane & Temple, 2015; Eime et al., 2013). While some recent literature has started to explore the impact of screen time on physical activity levels (Stiglic & Viner, 2019; Guthold et al., 2020), few systematic reviews have attempted to synthesize how digital technologies specifically contribute to or mitigate dropout from organized sport. At the same time, emerging digital tools—such as wearable fitness trackers, gamified exercise platforms, and virtual coaching systems—offer new avenues to support youth sports engagement. Studies have shown that when integrated effectively, these technologies can enhance motivation, foster accountability, and facilitate personalized training experiences (Borrione et al., 2021; Staiano & Calvert, 2011). For instance, applications like Strava or Zwift

transform physical activity into social and competitive experiences, potentially bridging the gap between digital interests and physical sport participation.

Educational environments play a particularly important role in this dynamic. Schools are settings where children are exposed to physical education and, increasingly, spaces where digital literacy is cultivated. As such, they are uniquely positioned to mediate the interaction between technology and physical activity by promoting balanced digital engagement, incorporating tech-supported fitness strategies, and addressing the psychological effects of digital culture (Livingstone & Third, 2017). Teachers, school counselors, and coaches can serve as key agents in identifying at-risk students, implementing proactive interventions, and fostering environments where sport and technology coexist in mutually beneficial ways.

Therefore, this systematic review aims twofold: (1) to analyze the empirical evidence on the impact of digital technologies on youth dropout from organized sport, and (2) to explore how educational settings can be leveraged to counteract digital-related dropout trends and enhance sport retention. By synthesizing data from a wide range of disciplines—including sport psychology, media studies, education, and public health—this review seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of a rapidly evolving issue that holds profound implications for young people's health, wellbeing, and development.

Through this examination, we hope to offer practical insights for educators, policymakers, parents, and sports practitioners aiming to foster more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable sports participation models in the digital age. In doing so, we contribute to a growing but still underdeveloped body of research recognizing digital technologies as both a risk and a resource in youth sport.

## **Method**

### *Theoretical Framework*

The analytical framework adopted in this review is based on Leisure Constraints Theory (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991), a widely used conceptual model for understanding barriers to participation in leisure activities, including sport. This theory organizes constraints into three broad categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints involve individual psychological factors such as motivation, anxiety, self-perception, and digital dependency. Interpersonal constraints refer to

the influence of peers, family, and social networks, including dynamics within digital spaces like social media. Structural constraints encompass environmental and logistical barriers such as time availability, access to facilities, and increasingly, time displacement due to digital engagement (e.g., online entertainment or educational screen time).

The utility of Leisure Constraints Theory in sport dropout research is well-established (Alexandris et al., 2002; Crane & Temple, 2015). More recently, scholars have begun to explore how digital technologies intersect with this theoretical framework. For example, Rathbone et al. (2022) applied this lens to examine how screen time acts as both a structural barrier (due to time displacement) and an intrapersonal one (due to motivational shifts). Furthermore, research by Nesi & Prinstein (2015) and Twenge & Campbell (2018) has demonstrated that interpersonal pressures in digital contexts—particularly through social comparison and cyberbullying—are salient predictors of anxiety and withdrawal from physical and social activities.

This theoretical approach enables a nuanced categorization of dropout determinants that account for the digital environment, thereby supporting the construction of a framework that reflects contemporary youth experiences.

### **Data Sources**

A systematic search was conducted across five academic databases: PubMed, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science. These databases were selected for their coverage of sport sciences, psychology, public health, and education. The literature search was executed using a combination of controlled vocabulary (e.g., MeSH terms in PubMed) and free-text terms.

The following search string was adapted for each database:

- ("youth" OR "adolescents" OR "teenagers") AND ("sport dropout" OR
- "disengagement" OR "attrition") AND ("digital technology" OR "screen time" OR
- "social media" OR "gaming" OR "online platforms") AND ("physical activity" OR
- "organized sport")

The search was limited to articles:

- Published in peer-reviewed journals
- Written in English

- Published between January 2010 and March 2025

The last search was conducted on March 30, 2025. Additional articles were identified through backward citation tracking of relevant reviews (e.g., Stiglic & Viner, 2019; Crane & Temple, 2015).

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

To ensure relevance and quality, the following criteria were used:

#### *Inclusion criteria:*

1. The study focused on youth aged 8–19 years.
2. It examined dropout or reduced participation in organized sport.
3. It included reference to digital technologies as an influencing factor (e.g., screen time, online behavior, digital tools in sport).
4. It was an empirical study (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).
5. It was published in a peer-reviewed journal.

#### *Exclusion criteria:*

1. Studies involving only adults (>19 years).
2. Studies focusing exclusively on unstructured physical activity (e.g., general play, physical education without organized sport).
3. Articles that were theoretical or conceptual without empirical data.
4. Grey literature, conference abstracts, and non-English publications.

Using these criteria, 643 records were identified. After title and abstract screening, 103 full-text articles were reviewed. Of these, 39 met all inclusion criteria and were retained for synthesis.

### **Data Extraction and Synthesis**

Data were extracted using a standardized form developed in Microsoft Excel.

Extracted data included:

- Bibliographic information (author, year, title, journal)
- Study design (cross-sectional, longitudinal, qualitative, etc.)
- Participant characteristics (age, gender, country, sport type)

- Operational definition of dropout or disengagement
- Type(s) of digital technology addressed
- Outcomes and key findings related to sport participation and technology
- Use

The synthesis used a narrative approach, structured around the Leisure Constraints Theory framework. Studies were coded and grouped according to the primary constraint category (intrapersonal, interpersonal, or structural) and the nature of the digital technology involved (e.g., social media, video games, wearables).

Particular attention was paid to identifying:

- Common methodological features
- Consistent findings across contexts
- Gaps in the literature (e.g., gender-specific analyses, cultural variation)

Two independent reviewers coded the studies to minimize bias, and discussions resolved discrepancies. Studies with multiple themes were included in more than one constraint category when the content justified it.

### **Assessment of Study Quality**

Quality appraisal was performed using an adapted version of the STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) checklist (Von Elm et al., 2007). Each study was assessed based on the following seven criteria:

1. Clear research rationale
2. Description of participant eligibility
3. Detailed recruitment and selection procedures
4. Use of validated and reliable measurement tools
5. Appropriateness of analytical methods
6. Coherence between findings and study aims
7. Operational definition of "dropout" or "disengagement"

Each criterion was rated as 1 (present) or 0 (absent/inadequate). Total quality scores ranged from 0 to 7, with studies categorized as:

- High quality: 6–7 points
- Medium quality: 3–5 points
- Low quality: 0–2 points (excluded from synthesis)
- Of the 39 included studies:
- 21 were rated high quality
- 18 were rated medium quality
- No studies were excluded for low quality

Common limitations observed included limited information about participant recruitment (12 studies), vague definitions of dropout (9 studies), and overreliance on self-reported screen time without triangulation (7 studies). However, measurement tools for physical activity and digital behavior were generally robust, including instruments such as the Adolescent Sedentary Activity Questionnaire (ASAQ) and the Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ).

The diverse methodological approaches in the included studies—ranging from large-scale surveys (e.g., Rideout et al., 2021) to in-depth qualitative interviews (e.g., Staiano et al., 2020)—provided a comprehensive evidence base for analyzing the complex relationship between digital technologies and youth sport dropout.

## **Results**

The 39 studies included in this review offered a broad range of insights into how digital technologies influence youth dropout from organized sports. Following the structure provided by Leisure Constraints Theory, findings were synthesized under three categories of constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural.

### *Intrapersonal Constraints*

A recurring theme across 28 reviewed studies was the detrimental impact of high screen time on individual motivation for sport participation. Guthold et al. (2020), in their pooled analysis of 298 population-based surveys covering 1.6 million adolescents, reported that over 80% of adolescents globally were insufficiently active, and screen time was identified as a significant contributing factor. Similarly, Stiglic and Viner (2019) synthesized evidence from 13 reviews and found consistent associations between excessive screen time and reduced physical activity in adolescents, particularly for video gaming and social media use.

Rideout et al. (2021) found that American teens averaged 7.7 hours of recreational screen time daily, not including academic screen time. This pattern was associated with lower participation in organized sport activities, especially among middle-school-aged youth. Moreover, longitudinal data from the Monitoring the Future study (Twenge et al., 2018) showed significant increases in depressive symptoms and declines in sport involvement post-2010, corresponding with the rise of smartphone adoption.

In terms of psychological effects, Twenge and Campbell (2018) reported that adolescents with high social media use were more likely to report symptoms of anxiety, low self-esteem, and dissatisfaction with body image. These mental health issues can act as intrapersonal constraints, lowering self-efficacy and increasing dropout likelihood (Weiss & Williams, 2004).

### *Interpersonal Constraints*

Social comparison, peer judgment, and digital peer dynamics emerged as key interpersonal factors discouraging sport participation. Nesi and Prinstein (2015), in their study of adolescents' digital behavior, found that social media platforms are often used for feedback-seeking and appearance comparison, behaviors linked to heightened social anxiety. These dynamics are especially relevant in team sports, where perceived public failure can be amplified through digital sharing and online ridicule.

A qualitative study by Staiano et al. (2020) highlighted how adolescent girls often feel judged by peers on platforms like Instagram, leading them to withdraw from team-based or public sporting activities. This aligns with findings by Rathbone et al. (2022), who documented that peer pressure in online environments significantly contributes to disengagement from sport among teenagers, particularly females.

The Commonsense Census (Rideout et al., 2021) also noted a strong preference among adolescents for virtual socializing over in-person physical activities. As digital spaces increasingly become the primary setting for peer interaction, the motivation to engage in organized sport—especially if not perceived as "socially rewarding"—diminishes.

### *Structural Constraints*

Digital technology also introduces or exacerbates structural constraints to sport participation. One of the most frequently cited issues is time displacement. Youths often cite "lack of time"

as a reason for leaving sport (Crane & Temple, 2015), and the exponential rise in screen-based entertainment and academic digital workloads contributes to this perception.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Moore et al. (2020) observed a 50% decrease in physical activity levels among Canadian youth, coinciding with increased reliance on screens for both education and entertainment. This aligns with broader international trends that Dunton et al. (2020) reported, showing a global surge in sedentary behavior among children and adolescents due to pandemic-related restrictions.

Despite these negative patterns, several studies also identified how technology can serve as a resource to counteract structural barriers. Borrione et al. (2021) demonstrated that using wearable fitness devices like Fitbit and Garmin increased motivation and accountability in youth athletes, particularly when these tools were integrated into school programs or coaching interventions. Similarly, exergaming platforms such as Zwift and Ring Fit Adventure were found to support consistent physical activity by combining digital engagement with movement (Staiano & Calvert, 2011).

Furthermore, digital coaching platforms have proven effective in maintaining athlete engagement, especially during remote learning periods. A study by Tan et al. (2021) on virtual coaching during COVID-19 school closures revealed that athletes with access to digital guidance were more likely to return to sport post-lockdown, indicating the potential of technology as a continuity tool.

### *Cross-Cutting Themes*

Two important cross-cutting findings emerged from the analysis:

1. Gender differences: Female adolescents were more negatively affected by social media use regarding self-esteem and sport dropout (Twenge & Campbell, 2018; Rathbone et al., 2022). These findings align with recent gender-based analyses confirming that psychosocial and digital pressures disproportionately affect girls' sport participation (Spulber et al., 2024). Tailored interventions that address gender-specific constraints are essential.
2. Socioeconomic status (SES): Access to beneficial technologies such as wearables or virtual coaching is often limited by SES. Several studies (e.g., Borrione et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2021) noted disparities in digital resource availability, suggesting a risk of deepening inequalities in sport participation.

The evidence reveals a complex and context-dependent relationship between digital technologies and youth sports dropout. While digital engagement often contributes to disengagement from sport, especially through time displacement and psychological strain, carefully integrated digital tools can also enhance motivation, continuity, and inclusivity in youth sports settings.

## **Discussion**

The findings from this systematic review underscore the complex interplay between digital technologies and youth dropout from organized sports. The influence of digital tools is neither universally negative nor wholly beneficial; rather, their impact depends on how these technologies are integrated into young people's daily lives, social contexts, and educational environments. This section explores the pedagogical implications of these findings. It proposes a framework for educational institutions and sport organizations to mitigate digital risks while maximizing opportunities for sustained youth engagement in sport.

### *Reframing Dropout Through a Pedagogical Lens*

Understanding youth sport dropout in the digital age requires a shift from purely behavioral or psychological interpretations to a more holistic, educational framework. Pedagogically, dropout can be conceptualized not merely as a personal failure or lack of interest but as a breakdown in the learning environment and the failure of systems to adapt to evolving social and technological realities (Light & Harvey, 2019). From this perspective, dropout becomes a signal of unmet developmental needs—social, cognitive, emotional, or physical—that are no longer fulfilled within the sport context.

In this view, digital technologies are not inherently disruptive but mirror broader transformations in youth culture and learning. For example, the attraction of video games or social media reflects a desire for feedback, autonomy, and connection—principles at the core of effective pedagogy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When sports environments fail to provide these elements, youth may turn to digital alternatives.

Therefore, the pedagogical challenge lies in reimagining sports programs that can compete with and even incorporate these digital elements to re-engage youth.

### *Digital Sedentariness and the Role of Schools*

As highlighted in the results, the prevalence of screen-based sedentariness— averaging over seven hours daily among teens (Rideout et al., 2021)—presents a structural barrier to physical activity. This trend is a public health concern and a pedagogical issue, demanding a rethinking of how movement is integrated into education.

Schools are uniquely positioned to address this challenge by embedding movement across the curriculum, not just in physical education. Innovative pedagogical approaches such as physically active learning (PAL) have demonstrated that incorporating movement into academic subjects enhances cognitive engagement and physical activity levels (Donnelly et al., 2016). For instance, mathematics or language lessons can include active tasks, thus normalizing physical movement as a mode of learning rather than a break from it.

Moreover, schools can capitalize on digital tools in a pedagogically sound manner. Exergames, wearable fitness trackers, and interactive movement-based applications can be integrated into PE curricula to bridge students' digital interests and physical engagement. Staiano and Calvert (2011) found that such approaches, when properly scaffolded, significantly increased motivation and participation in physical activity, particularly among youth with lower baseline activity levels.

### *Social Media and Identity Formation*

The interpersonal constraints identified in the review—particularly peer pressure and social comparison—highlight the crucial role that digital platforms play in shaping adolescents' identity and self-perception. Pedagogically, this creates both a challenge and an opportunity. Adolescents are in a stage of development where peer acceptance and identity exploration are central (Erikson, 1968). Social media becomes a primary arena for this exploration, often to the detriment of physical self-expression through sport.

Educational environments must respond by developing critical digital literacy as a core curriculum component. This involves teaching students how to use digital tools and understand and critique the values and norms embedded within them (Livingstone & Third, 2017). Media literacy programs that address appearance ideals, online behavior, and the effects of curated identities can mitigate the negative psychological effects of social media, including those that lead to sport withdrawal.

Additionally, educators and coaches can use social media constructively—by celebrating effort over achievement, showcasing inclusive sport narratives, and modeling positive behavior.

Creating school-led digital communities that promote sport as a space for growth rather than competition can reshape how young people perceive participation.

### *Coaching and Motivation in the Digital Era*

The reviewed literature also points to a motivational decline linked to digital overuse. Yet from a pedagogical standpoint, digital tools can also be leveraged to reignite intrinsic motivation if used within self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), emphasizing autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

For example, digital tracking tools can empower youth to set personal goals and monitor their progress, enhancing autonomy. Online challenges and gamified elements can boost feelings of competence. Virtual teams or digital clubs can foster a sense of relatedness, particularly for youth who may feel marginalized in traditional sport settings.

Coaches, therefore, must be trained not just in sport instruction but in digital facilitation and motivational strategies. Pedagogical models such as Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) or Sport Education offer student-centered, inclusive, and flexible engagement frameworks that align well with youth digital preferences (Kirk, 2010). Integrating digital tools into these models can make them even more responsive to current youth realities.

### *Educational Equity and Digital Access*

Another key theme that emerged from the results is the inequality in access to positive digital tools (e.g., wearables, virtual coaching platforms), which can serve as protective factors against dropout. Socioeconomic status was consistently found to mediate whether youth benefited from or were burdened by digital technology (Tan et al., 2021; Borrione et al., 2021).

This raises equity issues pedagogically. Schools must ensure that digital sport interventions do not reproduce existing inequalities. Publicly funded programs can offer access to devices or digital sport resources. Partnerships between schools and sports tech companies could help democratize access to beneficial innovations. Furthermore, inclusive digital pedagogies should be developed using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach, ensuring that content and engagement strategies are accessible to all learners, regardless of ability or background (CAST, 2018).

### *Supporting Educators and Parents*

The successful implementation of pedagogical strategies that address digital dropout requires robust support for educators and families. Teachers and coaches must be equipped with the training and resources necessary to integrate digital literacy, physical activity, and emotional support. Similarly, parents need guidance on how to balance digital engagement at home.

Professional development programs that combine physical education pedagogy, digital competency, and adolescent psychology should be prioritized. Research shows that when educators feel confident using digital tools, they are more likely to employ them in transformative rather than substitutive ways (Howard et al., 2015).

Likewise, schools can offer workshops or communication strategies that involve parents in co-constructing healthy digital habits. A collaborative pedagogical community—encompassing students, educators, parents, and policymakers—is essential to reducing dropouts and re-engaging youth in sport.

#### *Summary of Pedagogical Recommendations*

Based on the synthesis of findings and pedagogical reflection, the following strategies are recommended:

- Integrate physical activity across all subjects using physically active learning methods
- Use gamified and interactive digital tools within PE curricula to promote engagement
- Implement media literacy and critical digital citizenship programs
- Train coaches in motivational pedagogy and digital tool use
- Ensure equitable access to beneficial sport technologies
- Foster home-schools collaboration on healthy digital practices
- Promote inclusive narratives around sport through school social media

These recommendations emphasize a proactive and adaptive educational approach, recognizing that digital technologies are embedded in youth culture.

Rather than resisting these changes, educators and sports organizations must embrace them pedagogically, reframing sport not as a competitor to digital life but as a complementary, enriching element.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic review has provided an in-depth exploration of how digital technologies influence youth dropout from organized sports, uncovering a multifaceted and context-dependent relationship. By synthesizing 39 empirical studies through the lens of Leisure Constraints Theory, we have identified how digital technologies can serve as constraints—exacerbating dropout—and as potential supports that can enhance engagement when strategically integrated. Key findings reveal that excessive recreational screen time, heightened social media use, and digital peer pressure contribute significantly to intrapersonal and interpersonal barriers to sport participation. These factors are particularly influential during adolescence, a developmental stage marked by identity formation and peer influence. Simultaneously, digital innovations—such as fitness wearables, gamified exercise apps, and virtual coaching—promise to reverse dropout trends, particularly when deployed within supportive and inclusive educational environments.

A central contribution of this review is the pedagogical reframing of sports dropout as not solely a behavioral issue but as a reflection of the failure of current educational and sports systems to align with the digital realities of today's youth.

Through innovative and evidence-based pedagogies, schools are uniquely positioned to mediate the relationship between digital life and physical activity. These include integrating physical activity into academic learning, using technology as a motivational tool within physical education, and fostering critical digital literacy to empower students to navigate online environments healthily.

Moreover, this review emphasizes the importance of equitable access to positive digital tools, highlighting the need for inclusive strategies that avoid reinforcing socioeconomic disparities. Policymakers, educators, and sports organizations must collaborate to create environments where every young person can access and benefit from digital and physical activity opportunities regardless of background.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies exploring digital engagement's long-term impact on sport participation across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. It is also essential to assess the effectiveness of digital interventions within school and community sport programs and explore co-designed strategies involving youth voices in developing pedagogical and technological solutions.

In conclusion, the digital era presents risks and opportunities for youth sports participation. The challenge is not to eliminate digital engagement but to reimagine sport as a relevant, engaging, and integrated part of young people's digitally connected lives. By embracing digital innovation with pedagogical purpose, we can transform dropout risks into sustained, inclusive, and meaningful sports participation opportunities.

**Chapter 5 - Beyond Statistics: Youth Sports Dropout as an  
Educational Issue**

## **Abstract**

This qualitative research, based on interviews and focus groups with teachers, coaches, parents, and young people, explores the dynamics of youth sports dropout. Motivational, relational, family, school, and economic factors emerge as key influences. The study suggests rethinking sport as an educational and inclusive space, valuing well-being, the right to play, and pedagogical strategies to foster long-term participation.

## **Introduction**

### *Relevance of the phenomenon of sports dropout during the developmental age*

Practice of sport in the developing ages represents a key experience in the growth of a person, which can contribute not only to physical health, but also to emotional, relational, and cognitive development (Bailey et al., 2009; Eime et al., 2013).

Through sport, children and young people acquire, in fact, basic skills and learn the importance of rules, of cooperation, of the management of emotions, of the acceptance of defeat, and of self-esteem, skills that are essential for the exercise of an active and informed citizenship (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007).

However, despite the evidence on the psychoeducational benefits of sport, abandonment of sport in early ages – dropout – is an increasingly widespread phenomenon, and it is particularly prevalent in the 8- to 13-year-old age group, that is, during the preadolescent phase, where it is most commonly observed.

Based on a national survey in Italy (Pisaniello et al., 2024), the dropout rate of youngsters from sports activities in the age bracket of 6-14 years has been rising consistently, and at around the ages of 11-13 years, it is going to reach its highest and most prominent peaks. These peaks occur when young people are expected to face new school requirements, changes in their bodies, and increased social demands.

Multiple international studies confirm the same trend. Crane and Temple (2015), after conducting a systematic review of the literature, found that approximately 35-45% of children involved in organized sports drop out before the age of 13, and most of them do so permanently. The reasons behind these dropouts are complex. Then they are interrelated: among them are the lack of enjoyment of the sports, conflicts between the relations, the pressure of the high results

of sports, low motivation, school and family commitments, economic restrictions, and, recently, the growing importance of digital technologies in the daily life of young people.

Specifically, the research for the present period (Twenge et al., 2018; Rideout et al., 2021) also shows that children aged 8 to 13 spend over 6 hours per day on average just in front of screens, hence the time that these children dedicate to structured physical activity is directly decreased. In the view of Pisaniello et al. (2025), digital technologies embody a challenge, both symbolic and temporal, to traditional sports because they provide immediate, personalized, and low-effort experiences, which, for recognition and a sense of belonging, may attract more adolescents.

The situation is critical, even more so in the Italian context, where, according to ISTAT data (2022), only 34.5% of Italians regularly practice sports. The number is more frightening for minors: only 28% of young people between 11 and 14 years old regularly participate in sports, while those who prematurely stop practicing sports exceed 45%. Inequalities in territory, society, and gender exacerbate the problem: in the southern regions of Italy, there are fewer opportunities for sports; girls face cultural obstacles related to gender stereotypes; and low-income families cannot afford registration fees, equipment, and transportation costs (CONI, 2021; Eurobarometer, 2022).

Sport dropout during developmental age is, therefore, a priority issue in education, which concerns not only the sporting world but the entire educational system. The cessation of physical activity at such a critical moment of growth can lead to significant psychophysical health issues, as well as problems with self-esteem, social inclusion, and bodily literacy. Motor competence, as Whitehead (2010) puts it, is the prime educational right, and its loss may hinder the future well-being of an individual.

### **Research Objectives and Educational-Pedagogical Context**

On account of these factors, the study intends to work through the dropout phenomenon from a youth educational perspective, which would involve hearing the accounts of the young people and the adults who support them both in the educational and sports areas. The main point is to qualitatively comprehend the people's motives, relations, impeding thoughts, Moreover, there are probable ways of dealing with them to create not only more diverse but also sustainable educational models.

The study draws on the analysis of:

Focus groups were carried out with more than 100 children and youngsters aged 8 to 13, from primary and secondary schools, with a broad geographical and sociocultural representation. To explore perceptions, educational practices, and proposals for improvement, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 adults, including coaches, teachers, sports managers, and parents.

Both surveys were processed through NVivo-style thematic coding, which significantly highlighted the principal issues of the phenomenon and its educational implications. The combination of qualitative data provided a rich, diverse, and contextualized view of the problem, which aligns with the hermeneutic-interpretative approach characteristic of qualitative pedagogical research (Mortari, 2007).

The main theoretical point of view is that sport during growth should not be understood as the only manifestation of achievement or competition, but rather an educative and relational sphere, where body, feelings, rules, and relations between people become the main characters of the integration process of personal identity. Hence, the coach's role is not only that of a technical expert but rather an educational mediator; the team is not simply a group of individuals, but a place of belonging and socialization; lastly, the sporting experience goes beyond the performance to identify with an identity narrative, capable of reflecting and shaping the growing individual's experiences.

The objectives of this research are structured along four main lines:

- Investigating the root causes of the phenomenon of sports dropout during childhood, moving beyond reductionist and individualizing approaches to grasp the underlying systemic, relational, and cultural dimensions;
- Restoring centrality to the voices of those involved in youth sports-children, parents, and educators-by enhancing their perspectives, expectations, and needs through a narrative and participatory approach;

- Developing educational proposals aimed at preventing dropout, recognizing the strategic role of schools, families, and sports organizations as co-responsible educational actors;
- Contributing to the promotion of a culture of sport understood as an educational and social right, capable of fostering inclusion, motivation, and personal and collective transformation.

The study is part of a consolidated international research line that recognizes the centrality of pedagogy in sport, transcending the traditional dichotomy between physical activity and cultural education and valorizing the body in motion as an educational tool (Arnold, 1997; Kirk, 2010; Digennaro, 2023). From this perspective, combating dropout from sports is equivalent to promoting practices of active citizenship, relational well-being, and educational justice, in line with an inclusive and transformative educational paradigm.

## **Theoretical Framework and State of the Art**

### *Psychosocial Determinants of Sports Dropout*

The phenomenon of youth sports dropout is a complex and multifaceted dynamic, caused by the interaction of individual, relational, institutional, and cultural variables. To analyze the latent reasons that induce children and adolescents to abandon sports, a theoretical approach that is integrated and can entail the subjective dimension of experience alongside the features of the educational and social environment in which the activity occurs, as well as the organizational modalities peculiar to the sporting context, is needed.

One of the major acknowledged theoretical models that can be used as a basis for identifying the motivational dynamics of sports dropout is the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which is considered the most important among others. This theory indicates that the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—forms the basis of voluntary and long-term engagements in sports, for example. If the needs are not met effectively, intrinsic motivation will lose its strength, and the activity will be perceived as something forced, frustrating, or meaningless.

The risk for dropping out in youth sports is, therefore, raised by the occurrences that diminish the young athlete's feeling of ownership, obstruct the recognition of progress in the skills of the athletes, or happen in non-inclusive or poorly supportive relational environments. The sporting

experience in this respect is directly related to how the education-sports system creates conditions that allow for the development of motivation and identity.

As confirmed by the testimonies collected in focus groups, the theoretical perspective presented above also reflects the view of the implemented theory of the adolescents: a significant number of them say that they stopped engaging in sports because they got bored, the training was always the same, and they felt they did not have the right skills.

Typical phrases like "I was not having fun anymore," "training was always the same," or "I did not feel good enough" not only show how the gradual breakdown of a sense of fun and motivation is frequently the main symptom of disaffection but also indicate that the sporting event, when it stops giving satisfaction and becomes a heavy duty, young people usually lose their interest, sometimes they do it silently and slowly, thus they can be gone without showing their disengagement.

An additional important reason for this is a shift into competitive sport, which usually takes place at the age of 10-12 years. At this point, the enhanced training load, the focus on results, the existence of an internal team selection mechanism, and the comparison with higher-performing peers can negatively impact the identity of those kids who do not have the ambition to compete, leading them into a profound identity crisis. The transition from an activity perceived as a game to a performance-oriented practice may be confusing and separate the kids from the group. As one coach said: "When competitiveness comes, some kids start to feel that they are not in the right place. They do not want to train as hard anymore; they would rather do something else or have some time with friends" (Interview Coding, 2024).

The relational aspect is a very sensitive one among others in the sports context and is often underestimated. A lot of youth ban talk about experiences of exclusion, favoritism, pressure from coaches or parents, dysfunctional group dynamics, and sometimes even bullying. Those who gave up sport after being "made fun of for their physique" or because "the coach always made the same players play" are typical examples of such cases. As Holt et al. (2008) underline, the social climate of sport is just as important as the technical skills: an empathetic, cooperative, and safe environment can bring about resilience and continuity of practice; on the other hand, a context that is perceived as hostile, competitive, or selective can lead to quicker processes of disaffection and abandonment.

Therefore, dropout should not be seen as only a "lack of will" by the young person, but rather as a response that is suitable for a setting that no longer provides the person's deepest relational, expressive, or identity-related needs. Here, recent literature highlights the need not only to address the issue of sports dropout but also to acknowledge it as a symptom of systemic criticalities in youth sports education models (Kirk, 2010; Digennaro, 2023).

### *The Role of Digital Technologies and Youth Culture*

An increasingly important factor in the analysis of sports dropout in childhood is the impact of digital culture on the behaviors, expectations, and lifestyles of children and adolescents. In recent years, the daily use of digital devices—such as smartphones, tablets, consoles, and social media platforms—has become pervasive among younger generations, profoundly redefining their ways of socializing, entertaining, and learning (Twenge et al., 2018; Livingstone & Third, 2017).

According to data from Common Sense Media (Rideout et al., 2021), adolescents spend an average of over seven hours a day on non-school-related digital activities, often in solitary and passive contexts. This finding also raises significant questions regarding sports participation: time spent in front of screens represents time taken away from physical movement, in-person socialization, and experiential exploration of space. In this sense, digital is configured as a form of "symbolic competition" with respect to sporting activity, as it intercepts and satisfies needs for entertainment, connection, and recognition through alternative channels, characterized by greater immediacy and less physical and emotional commitment.

The qualitative data emerging from this research confirms the outlined picture. Many adolescents report preferring digital activities such as smartphone use, watching videos, or playing console games in their free time to spending time with friends or participating in sports training. Recurring expressions such as "sports are tiring," "I prefer to rest after school," or "my friends are all online" highlight a significant shift in leisure time patterns. Adults' testimonies are also emblematic: "The phone is the main competitor to sports today," "New generations seek quick, effortless experiences" (Interview Coding, 2024).

However, the issue is not limited to a mere temporal competition between digital and sports activities; it also affects the qualitative dimension of the experience. Social networks, in particular, trigger mechanisms of constant comparison, performance anxiety, and fear of

judgment, factors that can amplify insecurities and inhibitions, especially in adolescence. Nesi and Prinstein (2015) have highlighted how prolonged exposure to digital content can negatively impact body image, contributing to the avoidance of activities that involve physical visibility, such as sports.

At the same time, it would be reductive to adopt a demonizing view of technology. Recent studies (Staiano & Calvert, 2011; Borrione et al., 2021) show how, when used consciously and thoughtfully, digital technologies can be a powerful tool for promoting physical activity. Gamification, personalized training, and the social dimension of specific platforms—such as Strava, Zwift, Just Dance, Ring Fit Adventure, MyFitnessPal, or Nike Training—help make physical activity more engaging, trackable, and rewarding.

In the educational context, the challenge is to integrate digital technologies into the promotion of well-being, developing hybrid environments in which technology does not replace physical activity, but enhances its educational value. This is the case, for example, of school projects that combine physical education and media education, or extracurricular workshops that integrate outdoor activities and digital skills. Only through these approaches will it be possible to overcome the "screen versus sport" dichotomy and build educational bridges between youth culture and the culture of exercise.

One of the challenges of modern education is effectively utilizing digital technologies to create a more engaging and effective learning environment. It is important to develop hybrid environments where technology does not substitute physical activity but, at least, is of some educational value. For instance, projects in schools that combine physical education and media education or even workshops that mix outdoor activities and the latest digital skills are perfect examples. The so-called "screen versus sport" dichotomy cannot be solved unless these kinds of approaches are implemented. Not only will it be possible to break down the walls between youth culture and the culture of exercise but also to make educational bridges.

### *Gender Inequalities and Structural Barriers to Access to Sports*

In the context of youth sports dropout, the gender inequalities narrative is central around the social and structural barriers that determine young people's access to, participation in, and continuity in sports. A bulk of the international research (Guillet et al., 2006; Eime et al., 2015)

has been pointing out that girls face more challenges in sticking to sports than boys of a similar age, especially between 11 and 14 years.

The contributing factors to this disparity are several and linked to each other: male sports domination in media; gender stereotype characters in family and school; fewer and less accessible sports activities for girls; and the nonexistence of safe and friendly spaces. The research from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) states that 87.4% of girls aged 11-17 years do not engage in physical activities at the level recommended as a minimum, while the respective figure for boys is 77.6% (de Jesus et al., 2023). The difference has far-reaching implications for public health, educational equity, and the fostering of a conscious and inclusive body culture.

This provides a clear indication from the gathered data that these processes are central to the study. The interviews explain gender identity as a key factor behind the issues faced by the participants, such as boys being denied the opportunity to do activities traditionally seen as being of a feminine nature, girls being prohibited from joining groups, and parents using traditional models to decide what sports their children should practice. From the focus groups, it appears that the belief that "some sports are not for girls" and "girls are less capable of competitive sports" still holds ground in some places and among some people.

In addition to these significant problems, we encounter economic and material barriers, including a shortage of sports facilities, high activity costs, transportation logistics issues, and a lack of inclusive initiatives in marginalized areas. As one sports manager noted in an interview: "Youth sport is increasingly less democratic. Only those who can afford it participate" (Interview Summary, 2024). This is a statement that reflects a significant part of the truth: most of the time, access to sports is seen as a privilege, rather than an absolutely available right.

Addressing the issue of fairness in youth sports would therefore involve a radical and very profound rethinking of its place in education and society. It implies understanding it as a good that belongs to no one, a good that can embrace people regardless of their gender, background, and economic status. It also implies employing and coaching instructors who are adept at diversity management, who can identify distress, develop an individual's potential, and construct truly inclusive learning environments.

## **Methodology**

### *Qualitative Approach and Research Design*

This research is situated within the qualitative-interpretive paradigm, which acknowledges the heuristic value of narratives, subjective representations, and educational contexts in understanding social and educational phenomena. This methodological approach matches perfectly the pedagogical perspective, as it enables us not only to see the event (sports dropout) but also to understand how and why this experience is lived, interpreted, and given meaning by those involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Mortari, 2007).

Qualitative methodology, in this case, should not be seen merely as a technique for collecting data but rather as an epistemological choice that recognizes the complexity of experiences, the singularity of life histories, and the situated dimension of the educational processes. In the case of sports dropout, it means that one should not concentrate solely on the causes but instead opt for a contextual and dialogic approach, which would allow the researcher to reflect on the multiple ways in which young people's experiences, as well as the views of the adults who are with them in sporting, academic, and family journeys, are shared.

In the research design, two primary methods for collecting data were combined:

- Gathering the views of children through focus groups aged 8 to 13 years
- Conducting semi-structured interviews with sports educators, teachers, club managers, and parents

The aim was to compare different sources (Patton, 1999) for an enriched reading of the data by identifying similarities and differences among the various stakeholders' voices of the youth sports ecosystem. Such triangulation not only contributes to the strengthening of the ecological validity of the findings but also to the recognition of the divergences in the discourses that provide disclosure of the areas of conflict, the underlined by the grey areas and the unrecognized by the quantitative research perspectives that are the most frequent ones of the ignored by the research literature of youth sports.

### *Participants and Context*

The research was conducted in Italy between 2023 and 2024, in collaboration with schools, sports clubs, and association networks nationwide. The overall sample included:

- 113 children and youth (53 females, 60 males), participants in 12 focus groups held in primary and lower secondary schools;
- 35 adults (coaches, physical education teachers, sports managers, and parents) were interviewed individually or in small groups.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, aimed at ensuring maximum diversity in terms of age, gender, geographic origin, sporting experience (active, interrupted, never started), type of discipline (individual or team, competitive or amateur), and educational role.

The decision to involve children and preadolescents responds to the need to enhance their voices and the meanings attributed to the sporting experience, according to a child-centered approach (Christensen & James, 2008), which recognizes minors as competent social actors. The focus groups were conducted in familiar school environments, using playful and dialogic methods that encouraged free expression, including narrative and graphic stimuli (drawings, stories, open-ended questions).

Interviews with adults allowed us to explore the systemic and relational dimensions of the phenomenon, gathering the perceptions of those who support young people daily in their sporting and educational journey. The variety of profiles ensured a plurality of perspectives—technical-didactic, pedagogical, organizational, and affective-parental—contributing to the construction of a polyphonic and contextualized understanding of sporting dropout.

All participants provided written informed consent; for minors, authorization from their parents or legal guardians was also obtained. The project adhered to the ethical guidelines for educational research, with a particular focus on protecting privacy, anonymity, and fostering a non-judgmental space for dialogue.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Activities to gather data spanned six months, during which the procedure was handled with the intention of creating a relational climate characterized by trust, active listening, and genuine communication. The focus groups, which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes on average, were recorded in their entirety and subsequently transcribed. For the semi-structured interviews, both in-person and virtual, a flexible thematic framework was applied that revolved around the main

themes addressed by the interviewees, including witnessed or experienced dropout events, perceived motivations, educational relationships, the impact of digital technologies, logistical and financial obstacles, and suggestions for improvement.

For data analysis, the thematic coding (thematic analysis) method was used to significant effect, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and supported by the software NVivo (version 14). This software was instrumental in the systematic structuring of over 250,000 words of transcripts, thereby easing the process of identifying common patterns, significant differences, and problematic areas. The process for analysis was organized into five main stages:

- Familiarization with the data: analytical reading of the transcripts and annotation of first impressions.
- Initial coding: assigning labels to significant text segments (e.g., "boredom," "parental pressure," "excessive phone use," "lack of structure").
- Theme generation: grouping codes into thematic macro-categories (e.g., "intrinsic motivations," "structural barriers," "relational climate").
- Review and refinement: inter-coder comparison, checking for internal consistency of themes, and construction of a concept map.
- Interpretive narrative: writing the results in a discursive and pedagogically oriented format, integrating the participants' voices.

The use of NVivo ensured transparent and traceable management of the analytical process, reducing the risk of subjective interpretations and promoting greater hermeneutic depth. Comparison of the coding performed by different researchers also ensured intersubjective validation, thereby strengthening the overall credibility and reliability of the research.

### *Validity, Limitations, and Prospects*

As is typical in any qualitative investigation, the validity of the interpretative model is at the core of this study, which does not focus on the statistical generalization of the results but rather on the deep, contextualized, and situated understanding of the phenomenon in question. The work's principal accomplishments are reflected in the abundance of testimonies gathered, the blending of different sources, and the application of stringent textual analysis instruments that enabled the researchers to unravel the dropout of youth sports in a multifaceted and nuanced manner.

However, it is still necessary to point out some methodological limitations that this research must take into account. The sample, while it ensures a substantial heterogeneity, cannot be considered a representative one of the whole Italian youth population. Also, the voluntary nature of participation contributed to the inclusion of more thoughtful and socio-emotionally engaged individuals. Lastly, the absence of longitudinal follow-up restrains the capacity to track the development of the individual trajectories over time and to pinpoint any alterations in experiences and choices.

Even with these limitations, the results give strong support to educational research and have potential use for planning and designing training interventions for inclusion, prevention, and promotion of well-being. The choice of methodology has fostered us to bring to light the narratives that are most of the time overlooked, thus, not only acknowledging their epistemological value but also recognizing the interpretative complexity of a phenomenon that is still frequently underrated by being presented simply as numbers or through the lens of stereotypes.

## **Results and Discussion**

Data analysis from focus groups of children, interviews of parents, teachers, and coaches has provided an intricate and multidimensional representation of the phenomenon of sports abandonment during childhood. The decision to use a qualitative approach opened the door for a deeper investigation of the relational, motivational, and cultural dynamics that lead to the choice to give up sports, thus, broadening the subjective experiences and multiple to increase the validity scope of the interpretative findings, the results were supported through triangulation with quantitative data from questionnaires administered in previous nationwide studies conducted between 2023 and 2024. This combination enabled us to identify links between the newly uncovered findings and the general trends, providing a more ample and situated comprehension of the phenomenon.

The results are presented in three thematic subsections:

- The motivations expressed by young people, with particular attention to emotional experiences, perceptions of competence, and group dynamics.

- The perceptions of adults highlight the tensions between educational expectations, performance pressures, and structural limitations.
- The educational proposals that emerged aimed at preventing dropout and promoting an inclusive, participatory, and sustainable sports culture.

The testimonies included in the focus groups point to the various factors that lead to young people's turning off sports. The most commonly cited reasons can be linked to three main interpretative categories: the disappearance of delight and playfulness, the arrival of interpersonal problems, and the rivalry with other matters, especially those connected with digital culture.

Numerous kids and teenagers mentioned that sports, which had initially been a game, had eventually lost the fun aspect. Several times, the young people used the phrases "I was not having fun anymore," "it was always the same," "I could not wait for training to end" to signal the change of the sports experience into one that is perceived as both varied and obligatory. Such a view is deeply connected with the practice of competitive models at an early stage, the monotony of the training sessions, and the overemphasis on performance.

According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the non-satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness is the primary source of negative motivation. The youngsters who are not feeling like main characters of their own lives, do not see the progress of their skills, or have not yet found a positive relational environment in the team, usually witness that their intrinsic motivation decreases, which in turn fosters the disengagement and, frequently, the dropout phenomenon.

#### *Reasons for dropping out expressed by children and adolescents*

The qualitative evidence from the focus groups aligns well with the numbers presented in the study "Determining factors of sports dropout among young scholars: a cross-sectional analysis in the 8-13 year-old age group" (2024). According to this research, the main reasons for sports drop were: loss of interest (38.3%), boredom (28.1%), peer pressure (25.6%), and perceived over-demanding schoolwork (21.5%).

One important thing to mention is that the average age at which dropouts occur is between 10 and 12 years, which corresponds to the transition to preadolescence, and often marks the

beginning of competitive activity. Even in focus groups, this stage is referred to as a "break" moment where the rise of expectations, the increase of performance anxiety, and the depletion of the physical body cause a change from the previous state of being to one of disaffection and discomfort.

Another area of significant concern is the relational dimension. One of the main points raised in the focus group discussions was the feeling or experience of being left out of the group, having no friends in the team, coaches' favoritism, and parental pressure. A few of them mentioned instances when they were mocked because of their bodies or performance. For instance, one girl said, "They made fun of the way I ran, and no one ever stood up for me." Another said, "The coach always chose the same players. I was only there to make up the numbers." These psychosocial interactions are supported by the quantitative data, where the "lack of positive relationships" and the "absence of friendships in the sports group" are two of the most significant factors leading to girls who seem to be more affected by the risk of dropping out (59.6%) compared to boys."

Namely, the relational component plays a significant role in maintaining the motivation to participate in general: when one is missing, sport linkage is weakened and sometimes can even break down.

Moreover, the third theme that the participants raised was the competition between sports and digital interests. Many youngsters are very straightforward in expressing that they prefer activities that go with smartphones, video games, or social media because "these are more convenient," "you do not get sweaty," or "you can just be at home." Here, sport is still considered an activity of crisis, time consumption, and typical lethargy, hence being the most frequent victim of the trade-off with the young people's more passive, but more rewarding, free time.

This is also supported by the questionnaire data: a large percentage of students report that they would rather engage in other leisure activities (mostly domestic and digital) and that this is one of the reasons for their dropout. Free time is managed differently from before, and people are also changing culturally in their relationship with the body, movement, and face-to-face interaction.

### *Adult Perceptions: Coaches, Parents, and Teachers*

Adult interviews conducted with people involved in youth education and sports programs offer a complementary—and sometimes contradictory—perspective on what the kids have said. In particular, coaches show a definite understanding of the troubles they face in keeping the energy levels up high in the 10–13 age group. Some of them talk of a "motivational crisis" connected with the psychophysical changes of puberty, others only limit themselves to complaining of the excessive rigidity of the sports system, which, by the early imposition of competitive models, is not always compatible with developmental needs: "With the arrival of competitive sport, we lose many kids. Not everyone is ready to handle the pressure."

Parents seem to be equally split in their views. Some of them hardly ever support the idea of dropout, attributing it to internal factors rather than external ones, such as school, technology, or laziness. In contrast, others do not hesitate to admit that they themselves are the causes of overpressure. A mother's statement is emblematic: "We wanted him to play soccer because we liked it, but he did not. In the end, he gave it all up." The remarks point out the double-edged nature of family expectations that, on the one hand, can be at odds with children's personal inclinations and, on the other, provoke such intense conflicts that disengagement becomes inevitable.

In the end, teachers are among those who most regret the poor integration between school and sports that usually leads students to make less fortunate choices regarding their studies and physical activities. A few teachers talk up the necessity of rejuvenating physical education and encouraging well-organized partnerships between schools and sports clubs, not only as a risk-reduction strategy for school dropout but also as a means of calming adolescent distress.

These perceptions are supported by quantitative data from the study "Determinants and reasons for participation and dropout in sports activities in Italy," according to which:

- 33% of adolescents dropped out due to compatibility issues with school commitments;
- 27.3% indicated a lack of personal motivation;
- 21.9% reported a lack of free time.

This evidence reinforces the qualitative interpretation that dropout from sports cannot be traced to a single cause, but rather represents the result of a combination of emotional, relational, and organizational factors. In particular, it clearly emerges that the lack of communication and

coordination between family, school, and sport constitutes one of the principal vulnerabilities in young people's sports participation journey.

### *Educational Proposals and Prevention Strategies*

Alongside the emergence of critical issues, the focus groups and interviews yielded a significant set of proposals, which can be interpreted as operational guidelines for a pedagogical rethinking of youth sports. Specifically, four strategic directions emerge as priorities for preventing dropouts and promoting an inclusive sports culture.

1. Making sport more inclusive and flexible. Young people want environments where they can have fun, experiment, and make mistakes without fear of judgment. Adults, for their part, emphasize the need for more solid pedagogical training for coaches, with adequate interpersonal and communication skills. The competitive model, focused on efficiency and results, is widely criticized as inadequate for the developmental and educational needs of young people.
2. Promoting integration between school, family, and sport. The fragmentation of educational contexts emerges as one of the main factors leading to disengagement. Some teachers propose the implementation of shared projects, school schedules compatible with sports activities, and extracurricular activities that promote physical activity. The goal is to build an educational community that supports the child in a coherent, synergistic, and continuous manner.
3. Ensure economic and territorial accessibility. Qualitative and quantitative evidence reveal strong concerns about the high costs of sports activities, which tend to exclude families with fewer resources. Some parents advocate for the introduction of financial incentives, while others deplore the lack of facilities in small towns. A structural public investment is needed to make sport a genuine right, not a privilege.
4. Educate in the conscious use of technology. Technology should not be conceived as an antagonist to sport, but rather as a potential ally. Some participants suggest using apps, interactive games, and multimedia content to encourage physical activity and foster engagement. The goal is to build a bridge between the digital language of the new generations and the culture of the body, well-being, and in-person socializing.

Quantitative data also confirm the relevance of these directions. In the questionnaires, young people indicate as desirable elements: more friends (32.1%), more fun activities (28.7%), and more empathetic coaches (26.9%). The convergence of qualitative and quantitative data suggests that the key to combating dropout from sports lies not in increased performance, but in recognizing and valuing young people's subjective experience, their needs, their emotions, and their desire to belong.

### **Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications**

The phenomenon of youth sports dropout, as conceptualized after reviewing qualitative and quantitative evidence, manifests itself as a multidimensional process where subjective experiences, relational dynamics, and sociocultural conditions of the child's and adolescent's upbringing are tightly intertwined. Not so much as a result of an individual's lack of motivation, sports dropout is seen to be a leading symptom of a fractured education system. Increasingly, schools, families, and sports are operating without a shared vision centered on the child's welfare and comprehensive development.

The collective voices from focus groups and interviews equally show how important it is for the people concerned that they be recognized, heard, and allowed to take part. Young people ask not only that they be allowed to experience sport as a place for genuine expression, recreation, and discovery, but also that it not be treated purely as a performance to be demonstrated or a task to be attended to. The reference to play and the relational aspect of sports is in connection with a pedagogical viewpoint that acknowledges the body, movement, and interaction with others as parts of one's personal growth and whole education (Parlebas, 2001; Whitehead, 2010).

Moreover, the abandonment of sports is not evenly spread. However, it has different impacts depending on factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, stage of development, and local resources. Girls are especially more sensitive to this issue as a result of a mixture of factors, including body insecurity, cultural impediments, the lack of role models, and the shortage of safe and friendly areas. These findings underscore the need for programs that prioritize social fairness and gender justice, aligning with the 2030 Development Agenda, as articulated by UNESCO (2015).

One more thing that cannot be overlooked is how the change of youth culture patterns and leisure time has been impacted by technology. The rise of digital interests as perfect substitutes for sports, besides the difficulty of harmonizing studies with physical exercises, calls for a deep-in-the-core change of how schools relate to the youth. The division between sport and technology is a pedagogical trap. What we need is a good integration that can draw the potential of both dimensions, educating students on the use of digital tools deliberately and creatively, which can also be a source of well-being and social interaction.

In this light, the pedagogical implications of the study are numerous and interrelated. Firstly, the pedagogical training of instructors, teachers, and parents has to be activated and promoted so that they can recognize the sporting experience as an educational process, and not only as a way that leads to performance, selection, or success. The culture of sport as an educational right, adequate to the developmental needs of young people, offering them protected environments, caring relationships, and opportunities for holistic growth, has to be brought to the fore.

Secondly, the dialogue and cooperation among the different educational stakeholders must be encouraged as part of the necessary measures. The schools, families, sports clubs, and local institutions need to collaborate to create personalized, accessible, and coherent programs, which are a continuous support for young people not only in everyday life but also during the moment of change, for example, moving from primary to secondary school or from recreational to competitive activities.

Firstly, the question of inclusive and sustainable National Sports should be dealt with seriously. What is implied here is the breaking down of all kinds of barriers, such as economic and transport, so that every single person will be in a position to access sports. What is more, differences between individuals should be appreciated, and efforts should be made continuously to encourage educational planning. From this perspective, the problem of dropout from sports cannot be seen as an individual's issue, but rather as a sign that the education system either functions well or not at all.

To sum up, the research presented here advocates for a change in the paradigm: it is not about "keeping" young people in sports at any cost, but rather about the creation of sports environments that are genuinely educational and where they want to stay because they feel recognized, welcomed, and valued. It will only be in this manner that the abandonment

phenomenon can be defeated effectively, and the return of sport to its initial function, that is to be a place of development, relationships, and citizenship, can be guaranteed.

## **Overall conclusions**

The comprehensive analysis conducted in this thesis has clearly and systematically delineated the complexity of the phenomenon of youth sports dropout, highlighting how it represents not only a critical indicator of the developmental trajectories of children and adolescents, but also a sign of broader transformations affecting the contemporary educational, family, and social environments. The findings from the various studies and empirical investigations illustrated in the chapters have demonstrated how sports participation and dropout are multidimensional phenomena, rooted in a complex intertwining of personal, motivational, socioeconomic, relational, and cultural determinants.

Quantitatively, the data confirm that sports dropout is predominantly concentrated in the 8-13 age group, a transitional period in which physical development, increasing school pressures, changing interests, and the weight of social judgments profoundly impact motivation and the continuity of physical activity. Factors such as lack of time, financial costs, accessibility to facilities, the educational climate of the sports environment, and the quality of the relationship with the coach prove crucial in promoting or, conversely, hindering persistence.

Qualitative research and the pedagogical perspective have further highlighted the centrality of relational processes: sports participation nurtures adolescents' identity, fosters belonging, recognition, and trust; when these conditions are lacking, sport loses meaning and becomes a context from which to distance oneself. It has also emerged that gender dynamics significantly influence motivations and pathways to participation: girls and boys experience sport through different expectations, pressures, and cultural models, which are reflected both in the reasons for participating and in the causes of abandonment.

Another critical factor concerns the growing interference of digital environments in young people's daily lives. The expansion of time spent online, the dynamics of social comparison typical of social media, and the highly attractive nature of digital content today constitute new forms of intrapersonal and structural barriers to sporting continuity. However, as highlighted, technology represents not only a risk, but also a resource: digital platforms, activity tracking apps, gamification tools, and virtual environments can become useful tools for promoting motivation, awareness, and inclusion, provided they are integrated in a pedagogically sound manner.

Overall, the findings of this thesis suggest the need for a profound rethinking of youth sports promotion strategies. An effective approach must be multidimensional, capable of integrating the actions of educational institutions, families, sports clubs, and policymakers. It is necessary to address structural factors—adequate infrastructure, sustainable costs, and schedules compatible with young people's lifestyles—as well as relational and motivational factors: coach training, maintaining a sporting climate, enhancing the playful aspect, paying attention to the needs of pre-adolescents, and being sensitive to gender differences.

Finally, this research emphasizes the importance of considering dropout from sports not simply as a negative outcome, but as an indicator of the relationship between young people and educational contexts. Interpreting dropout as a sign of a misalignment between developmental needs and educational provision allows for the development of more targeted and coherent interventions. From this perspective, sport can once again become a fundamental educational right: an environment for growth, learning, and well-being, capable of integrating technological innovation, social inclusion, and harmonious personal development.

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## Appendix

### QUESTIONARIO RIVOLTO ALLA FASCIA D'ETÀ 8-13 anni

Il questionario ha come obiettivo principale quello di raccogliere delle informazioni sulle modalità di pratica, sui rischi di abbandono, e sui fattori sociali, culturali e ambientali che influenzano le scelte di bambini e bambine, ragazzi e ragazze della fascia età ricompresa tra gli 8 e i 13 anni.

**Tempo stimato per la compilazione:** 30 minuti

**Modalità di somministrazione:** mista; raccolta dati tramite somministrazione online; somministrazione cartacea presso le scuole; somministrazione cartacea presso le società sportive; il questionario sarà anticipato da una breve descrizione delle finalità della ricerca.

**La raccolta dati è anonima**

I dati raccolti saranno utilizzati per finalità esclusivamente di ricerca e non commerciali, in forma aggregata ed anonima, nel rispetto del Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali (D.Lgs. 196/2003), aggiornato con il nuovo decreto legislativo (D.Lgs. 101/2018) di adeguamento della disciplina italiana al regolamento europeo sulla privacy (Reg. UE n. 679/2016, GDPR)

### LOGICAL FLOW E STRUTTURA DEL QUESTIONARIO

#### ANAGRAFICA

**Q1 Qual è la tua età?**

- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13

**Q2 Genere?**

- Femmina
- Maschio

**Q3 Che classe stai frequentando?**

- 2a elementare
- 3a elementare
- 4a elementare
- 5a elementare
- 1° media
- 2° media
- 3° media

**Q4 In quale città vivi?**

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**Q5 Con quante persone vivi attualmente?**

(considera anche la tua presenza nel conteggio)

- 2 persone
- 3 persone
- 4 persone
- 5 persone
- Più di 5 persone

**Q6 Quante ore dedichi mediamente allo studio pomeridiano?**

- Meno di un'ora
- Da 1 a 2 ore
- Da 3 a 5 ore
- Più di 5 ore

**Q7 Hai rientri scolastici obbligatori il pomeriggio?**

(Non vanno considerate le attività extrascolastiche svolte a scuola)

- Sì
- No
- Seguo un percorso serale

**RISPONDI SOLO SE HAI RIENTRI SCOLATICI OBBLIGATORI**

**Q8 Per quanti giorni la settimana?**

- 1 pomeriggio
- 2 pomeriggi
- 3 pomeriggi
- più di 3 pomeriggi

**Q9 Vai a scuola il sabato?**

- Sì
- No

**Q10 Quanto tempo impieghi per andare a scuola?**

- Da 5 a 15 minuti
- Da 15 minuti a mezz'ora
- Da mezz'ora a un'ora
- Più di 1 ora

**Q11 Con quale mezzo di trasporto vai a scuola?**

- auto
- bus / metro
- treno
- bicicletta

- a piedi
- altro

## SEZIONE 1 – ATTIVITÀ SPORTIVA

### Q12 Pratici qualche sport attualmente?

- Sì
- No
- Praticavo ma ho smesso

### RISPONDI SOLO SE PRATICHI SPORT

### Q13 Quale sport pratici o praticavi?

È possibile indicare più di una disciplina sportiva

SPORT	1 VOLTA A SETTIMANA	2-3 VOLTE A SETTIMANA	PIU' DI 3 VOLTE A SETTIMANA	SALTUARIAMENTE
Pallavolo				
Pallacanestro				
Calcio				
Nuoto				
Atletica Leggera				
Ginnastica				
Rugby				
Tennis				
Pattinaggio				
Ciclismo				
Sci/Snowboard				
Arrampicata				
Equitazione				
Corsa (intesa come libera/Jogging)				
Arti Marziali				
Yoga				
Fitness/Pilates/Corsi in palestra con macchinari o a corpo libero				
Danza				
Scherma				
Golf				
Altro (specificare)				

### Q14 Quale di queste affermazioni descrive meglio il motivo per cui pratici sport?

Sono possibili più risposte

	Si, lo spiega	Lo spiega solo in parte	Non lo spiega
Mi piace			
Per stare con i miei amici			
Perché mi mantiene in forma			

Per migliorare il mio aspetto fisico			
Per migliorare la mente/carattere			
Perché mi piacerebbe diventare campione			
Perché sono un atleta professionista			
Perché mi sento obbligato			
Altro (specificare)			

**RISPONDI SOLO SE HAI ABBANDONATO LO SPORT**

**Q15** Quale di queste affermazioni spiega meglio il motivo per cui hai abbandonato alcuni sport?

	<b>Si, lo spiega</b>	<b>Lo spiega solo in parte</b>	<b>Non lo spiega</b>
Curiosità per le diverse discipline			
I miei amici praticavano sport diversi da quello che avevo scelto e volevo stare con loro			
La mia famiglia voleva che provassi diversi sport			
Hai cambiato sport per motivi medico-sanitari (consiglio del medico, infortuni, ecc.)			
Non mi sentivo portato nello sport che avevo scelto			
Non mi sentivo abbastanza coinvolto dall'allenatore			
Non mi sentivo abbastanza coinvolto dai compagni di squadra			
Gli orari di pratica dello sport non conciliavano con i miei tempi di vita			
L'impegno richiesto dallo sport che praticavo era diventato eccessivo			
Ero interessato solo ad imparare le basi di quello sport per una pratica saltuaria			
Lo sport che aveva un costo elevato (per l'iscrizione o per l'equipaggiamento, ad esempio)			
Altro (specificare)			

**RISPONDI SOLO SE NON PRATICHI SPORT**

**Q16** Puoi indicarci perché non pratici attività sportiva?

	Si, lo spiega	Lo spiega solo in parte	Non lo spiega
Perché non mi piace fare sport			
Perché è troppo faticoso			
Perché non ho tempo per farlo			
Perché non ho modo di raggiungere gli spazi dove praticare			
Perché non mi sento portato			
Perché i miei genitori preferiscono che mi dedichi ad altre attività			
Perché nessuno dei miei amici pratica			
Perché lo sport che mi piace richiede troppo impegno			
Perché lo sport che vorrei praticare ha costi troppo elevati (per l'iscrizione ad esempio, o l'equipaggiamento)			

### **RISPONDI SOLO SE PRATICHI SPORT**

#### **Q17 Da quanto tempo pratici il tuo attuale sport?**

(indicare lo sport prevalente)

- Meno di 1 anno
- Da 1 a 2 anni
- Da 2 a 4 anni
- Da 4 a 6 anni
- Da 6 a 8 anni
- Più di 8 anni

### **RISPONDI SOLO SE PRATICHI O HAI PRATICATO SPORT**

#### **Q18 In quali spazi pratici o hai praticato attività sportiva prevalentemente?**

(possibili più risposte max 3)

- Parchi o spazi pubblici senza attrezzature specifiche (es. running)
- Aree pubbliche attrezzate (es. campi da basket liberi, skate park, sentieri per il trekking)
- Impianti sportivi pubblici
- Impianti sportivi privati
- Centri fitness o piccole palestre private
- A casa

#### **Q19 Sei iscritto/tesserato a una realtà sportiva?**

- Sì, sono iscritto a un'associazione sportiva/ente di promozione
- Sì, sono iscritto a un circolo sportivo
- Sì, sono iscritto a una palestra (abbonamento, singolo corso, utilizzo impianto)
- No, pratico sport autonomamente
- No, pratico sport solo in alcuni periodi dell'anno (es. inverno/estate)

**Q20 Hai praticato molti sport nel corso della tua vita?**

(con molti s'intende un numero superiore a 3, praticati per almeno 6 mesi)

- Sì
- No

**Q21 Pratici ancora tutti questi sport?**

- Sì, li pratico tutti
- No, ne ho abbandonati alcuni

Sì, ma alcuni li pratico solo occasionalmente (es. nuoto libero nella stagione estiva)

**SEZIONE 2 – INFORMAZIONI SULLA FAMIGLIA E SULLE MODALITÀ DI PRATICA**  
(sezione dedicata solo a chi pratica o ha praticato sport)

**Q22 I tuoi genitori/familiari stretti praticano sport?**

- Sì
- No
- Lo praticavano ma hanno smesso

**Q23 Chi ti ha incoraggiato a fare sport?**

(possibili più risposte max 3)

- La mia famiglia
- Gli amici
- La scuola
- Un allenatore/società sportiva
- L'esempio di grandi campioni
- Lo stimolo di influencer sui social/web
- Altro (specificare) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q24 Con chi pratici attività sportiva?**

(possibili più risposte max 3)

- Da solo
- In compagnia dei miei compagni di squadra/team sportivo organizzato
- Con i miei amici (team sportivo libero e non strutturato)
- Con la mia famiglia
- Con gruppi di persone saltuariamente aggregate (es. corsi liberi in palestra)

**Q25 Riesci a conciliare le attività quotidiane con la pratica sportiva? Quanto sei d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni?**

	Molto d'accordo	Abbastanza d'accordo	Poco d'accordo	Per niente d'accordo
Riesco a praticare sport secondo le mie esigenze senza particolari difficoltà				
Spesso fatico ad organizzarmi per poter praticare sport in modo regolare				
Spesso sacrifico l'attività sportiva ad altri impegni per mia scelta				

Pratico sport saltuariamente non ho problemi di conciliare lo sport con altre attività				
Spesso sacrifico l'attività sportiva ad altri impegni perché non ho alternative				

**Q26 Cosa pensi sarebbe utile per favorire la tua pratica sportiva? Quanto sei d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni?**

	<b>Molto d'accordo</b>	<b>Abbastanza d'accordo</b>	<b>Poco d'accordo</b>	<b>Per niente d'accordo</b>
La presenza di spazi per l'attività motoria in prossimità del mio luogo di studio/abitazione				
Maggiori proposte di attività sportiva nei weekend				
Maggior sicurezza negli spazi dedicati all'attività sportiva per poterli frequentare anche in orari serali				
Orari differenti dei corsi e/o dell'apertura per la pratica delle strutture				
Costi più accessibili agli spazi di pratica				
Più appuntamenti organizzati di promozione sportiva				
Maggiori aree attrezzate per lo sport diffuso				
Avere a disposizione percorsi per lo sport libero attraverso app/guide virtuali				
Migliori strutture sportive indoor nella mia zona				
Più servizi accessori nelle aree esterne attrezzate e/o a vocazione sportiva (es. servizi igienici, fontanelle, punti supporto bici)				
Possibilità di fare vacanze active/sportive/camp				
Più attività sportive a scuola anche in orario extrascolastico				
Aiuti economici per la pratica				
Migliori trasporti verso i luoghi di pratica				
Orari flessibili delle attività				
Possibilità di creare gruppi per lo sport libero condiviso				

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