

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Athletes, Coaches, and school administrators challenges and confidence toward sports management program implementation

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of the sports management program in the Samar Division, Philippines, focusing on the psychological challenges and support needs of high school athletes. Despite the program's aim to promote overall well-being, data reveals significant mental strain among athletes, stemming from balancing academic demands with rigorous training, managing physical exhaustion, and meeting high expectations. Limited access to training facilities further contributes to feelings of frustration and self-doubt. These stressors can negatively impact athletes' psychological resilience, leading to feelings of unpreparedness and overwhelm, particularly during high-stakes competitions. However, the study also highlights the importance of consistent psychological support from coaches, such as encouragement and structured feedback on performance. This support is crucial for building mental toughness and helping athletes focus on personal growth rather than solely on outcome-based results. The findings suggest that addressing the psychological needs of athletes is essential for effective sports management and the overall well-being of young athletes.

**Keywords:** athletes; coaches; school administrators; challenges; confidence; sports management program; implementation

## 1. Introduction

Sports and physical activities involve not only physical abilities but also significantly engage psychological skills, promoting mental resilience, emotional regulation, and social connectivity among participants. According to Tungpalan and Luna<sup>[1]</sup>, while physical education programs primarily aim to enhance physical capabilities—such as strength, endurance, and flexibility—mental and social benefits also play a crucial role. In alignment with the Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) curriculum objectives, physical education is intended to foster holistic development, supporting the mental, emotional, social, and physical growth of students<sup>[2]</sup>.

The 1987 Constitution of the Philippines emphasizes the Importance of sports programs in promoting not only physical fitness but also psychological well-being, fostering qualities such as teamwork, discipline, and mental alertness (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987). This emphasis on the

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psychological benefits of sports aligns with the growing academic and public interest in the symbiotic relationship between sports practice and mental health. Rodriguez et al.<sup>[3]</sup> further highlight the importance of considering cultural and gender perspectives in sports psychology, advocating for an integrated physical-psychological approach to promote overall well-being.

The Foundation of Philippine Physical Education (1988) reinforces the Importance of physical activities in fostering not only physical health but also positive attitudes, emotional resilience, and a sense of cultural identity. This focus on mental well-being aligns with the goals of developing lifelong mental resilience through sports, fostering national pride, and creating supportive environments for emotional well-being alongside physical health. Sport psychology, a field that seeks to understand the mental states of athletes, coaches, and teams, emphasizes the crucial role of mental resilience or mental fortitude in an athlete's life<sup>[4]</sup>.

DepEd Bulletin No. 5, s. 2010, emphasizes the need for well-organized and psychologically supportive sports programs in schools, advocating for a structured approach that ensures physical education contributes to both physical fitness and mental health and social skills (Department of Education, 2010). This approach recognizes the importance of allowing students to experience the joy of participation and teamwork, which can foster self-esteem, motivation, and social bonds. While research has shown that physical fitness provides psychological benefits such as reduced symptoms of depression, improved mood, reduced anxiety, and increased self-esteem in adults and adolescents, there is a lack of information on these effects in youth<sup>[5]</sup>.

Belarmino<sup>[6]</sup> points out that early sports programs often emphasize competition, which can be psychologically taxing on young athletes. He recommends that educators balance competitiveness with enjoyment, focusing on fostering a healthy psychological environment where all children feel valued. This includes emphasizing personal growth and effort over winning, which can significantly impact young athletes' self-esteem, motivation, and emotional well-being. Children have a right to play sports, and a safe and healthy sports environment is crucial to maximizing the positive effects of sports on their well-being and development<sup>[7]</sup>.

The "Bill of Rights for Young Athletes" emphasizes the psychological Importance of a supportive, developmentally appropriate sports environment, including the right to participate in an encouraging, emotionally safe space, and opportunities for all children to experience success and the enjoyment of play, enhancing their social and emotional development through sports. Research has highlighted the protective role that psychological well-being, such as self-esteem and mindfulness, may play in buffering athletes against the negative repercussions of competitive pressures and adverse teammate interactions<sup>[8-9]</sup>.

The program, as implemented under the Bureau of Physical Education and School Sports Management (BPSS), strives to create a foundation for sports excellence while ensuring that psychological health is a core focus. This includes structuring opportunities to foster positive emotional and social skills, ultimately contributing to a supportive sports culture within schools. However, some schools still face challenges, with sports often reserved for those participating in competitive meets, limiting broader psychological and social benefits for all students.

Respondents echoed findings from De Bosscher et al.<sup>[10]</sup>, identifying financial support, athletic mentorship, and a national competitive structure as essential to successful sports engagement. These resources provide a foundation for mental resilience and emotional support, both vital for athletes' psychological well-being as they develop their skills and social bonds. Coaches play a crucial role in creating a positive psychological environment for athletes. Both coaches and peers significantly influence the social dynamics within sports, impacting athletes' psychological well-being and motivation<sup>[11]</sup>. Coaches in Samar, particularly, impact young athletes' emotional and motivational states, contributing to their mental resilience

and self-confidence in sports settings. Yet, despite the importance of coaching support and psychological training, there is limited progress in expanding these resources, which has been reflected in Samar Division's recent athletic performances.

This study seeks to assess the psychological support embedded within Samar's Sports Program Management, identifying ways to enhance athletes' mental and social experiences to improve overall performance and well-being in future competitions.

## **2. Objectives of the study**

The study aims to evaluate the psychological aspects of the Sports Management Program in Samar Division, with a particular focus on the mental well-being, motivation, and resilience of student-athletes. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Assess the psychological impact of the sports management program on student-athletes' mental well-being, motivation, and resilience, considering factors such as academic demands, training intensity, and resource availability.
2. Examine the role of coaches in fostering athletes' mental resilience and motivation, investigating the effectiveness of coaching strategies such as positive reinforcement, performance feedback, and emotional support.
3. Identify and analyze the psychological challenges faced by athletes and coaches within the sports management program, including issues related to academic balance, physical fatigue, and access to training resources.
4. Explore opportunities to improve psychological support within the sports management program, focusing on strategies to enhance mental resilience, intrinsic motivation, and overall mental health support for young athletes.

## **3. Literature**

Adolescence and emerging adulthood are critical periods when mental health issues often emerge, yet despite athletes' generally superior physical health, they face mental health challenges comparable to their non-athlete peers<sup>[12]</sup>. This underscores the need for comprehensive mental health support in athletic environments, especially within structured sports programs.

Athletic performance, defined by Juan<sup>[13]</sup> as excellence in sports through metrics like speed, strength, and agility, depends heavily on psychological factors. Self-confidence, a core aspect of mental resilience, allows athletes to believe in their capabilities and manage competitive stress<sup>[14]</sup>. This confidence can be fostered through positive reinforcement and consistent achievement, which boosts performance under competitive pressure. As such, the role of psychological resilience is crucial for sustained athletic excellence.

Psychological attributes such as motivation, concentration, and resilience significantly influence an athlete's performance. Motivation can be intrinsic, driven by personal satisfaction and enjoyment of the sport, or extrinsic, stemming from external rewards and recognition. Deci and Ryan<sup>[15]</sup> Self-Determination Theory highlight that athlete driven by intrinsic motivations are often more engaged in training and can endure challenges better. Additionally, students with academic resilience—an ability to stay motivated despite adversity—display a similar tenacity in sports, often achieving higher levels of commitment and persistence<sup>[16]</sup>. This is particularly evident in the connection between sports enjoyment and academic

resilience, where participation in sports fosters psychological well-being, academic motivation, and overall resilience<sup>[17,18]</sup>.

Another important psychological factor is emotional intelligence (EI), which plays a vital role in managing emotions and fostering interpersonal connections. Research reveals that coaches with high EI tend to create better, more cohesive team environments by resolving conflicts effectively and tailoring coaching strategies to individual athletes<sup>[19]</sup>. By understanding each athlete's personal motivations and learning preferences, coaches can develop customized training plans that enhance athlete engagement and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to athletes' mental resilience<sup>[20]</sup>.

The integration of psychological strategies into coaching practices is essential for addressing athletes' mental needs. By incorporating motivational techniques and emotional support, coaches can increase athlete engagement and alleviate some of the unique pressures faced by student-athletes, who must excel in both academics and sports<sup>[21,22]</sup>. Student-athletes confront a distinctive set of psychological demands due to the dual expectations of academic achievement and athletic excellence, necessitating targeted psychological support.

However, the competitive nature of sports can act as a barrier to athletes seeking mental health support, as stigmas persist and psychological safety is sometimes limited within athletic environments<sup>[23]</sup>. This reluctance to seek help due to stigma highlights the importance of creating a psychologically supportive sports culture that encourages open discussions about mental health without fear of judgment.

Research indicates that mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, are prevalent among active athletes, with approximately one-third reporting these symptoms<sup>[24]</sup>. Retired athletes often face significant mental health challenges as they transition out of their athletic careers, dealing with identity shifts, lifestyle changes, and financial pressures<sup>[25]</sup>. This points to a need for sustained psychological support, not only during athletes' active years but also as they navigate life beyond competitive sports.

Coaches, too, experience intense stressors, such as pressure to succeed, heavy workloads, and job insecurity, which are compounded by high-performance cultures that prioritize outcomes over well-being [26-28]. The prevalence of depressive symptoms among coaches' mirrors that of the general population, indicating that mental health resources should be extended to all stakeholders within sports environments. High-performance settings must balance the focus on success with robust mental health support to cultivate a healthier environment for athletes, coaches, and support staff.

The role of psychological resilience in athletic environments, particularly within high-stakes competitions, is indispensable. In recognizing the need for a balanced, psychologically supportive sports management program, the study aims to identify gaps in mental health support and explore strategies to enhance athletes' resilience, motivation, and well-being. Coaches and program administrators must prioritize these psychological aspects to ensure holistic athlete development, aligning closely with the objectives of promoting both physical and mental health among young athletes in the Samar Division.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Research design**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the psychological dimensions of the Sports Management Program in the Samar Division. Mixed-methods research provides a broader perspective by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, which allows researchers to gather richer data by leveraging the strengths of each method<sup>[29,30]</sup>. In this case, a

descriptive research design was used for the quantitative aspect to analyze the existing psychological support structures for athletes, while a qualitative exploratory design offered deeper insights into the challenges and needs of athletes, coaches, and administrators.

#### **4.2. Participants and sampling**

The study involved high school athletes, coaches, and administrators from various schools within the Samar Division, selected based on their involvement in the Sports Management Program. This approach enabled a comprehensive examination of their psychological readiness, resilience, motivation, and stress management strategies. Purposive sampling, a non-probability method often used in research, was applied to ensure participants had relevant experience in the psychological aspects of sports<sup>[31]</sup>.

#### **4.3. Data collection methods**

Multiple data collection tools were used to capture the program's psychological aspects comprehensively. Survey questionnaires tailored to each participant group focused on variables such as psychological readiness, resilience, motivation, and perceptions of available support, measured using a Likert scale. Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through in-depth, unstructured interviews and focus group discussions, offering an opportunity to explore personal challenges and coping strategies<sup>[32,33]</sup>. These methods allowed for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, including stress management, academic balance, and resilience-building. A documentary analysis of policies, training guidelines, and psychological resources provided further context to assess the program's mental health support structure.

#### **4.4. Data analysis**

Data analysis proceeded in two phases. Quantitative data from Likert-scale responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, summarizing athletes' psychological readiness, resilience, and motivation within the program. In the qualitative phase, thematic analysis of interview and focus group transcripts identified recurring themes related to stressors, motivation, and the effectiveness of support systems. This process provided valuable insights into the mental and emotional experiences of athletes, particularly their resilience and coping mechanisms<sup>[34,35]</sup>.

#### **4.5. Ethical considerations**

Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed to safeguard participants' rights and well-being. All participants provided informed consent and were assured that their involvement was voluntary and their information confidential. Sensitive information shared by participants was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes.

#### **4.6. Results**

This result presents the gathered data, along with an analysis focused on athletes' psychological experiences, motivations, and resilience. The findings are interpreted to provide insight into how mental readiness, challenges, and support systems influence athletes' performance and well-being.

### **5. Profile of high school athletes**

The profile of the high school athletes is presented and discussed in this section in terms of age and sex, physical fitness, sports participated in, performance of athletes in sports competition and highest awards received.

**Table 1.** Age and sex.

<b>Age and Sex Distribution of the Athlete-Respondents</b>						
<b>Age (in years)</b>	<b>Sex Category</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>			
	<b>f</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Percent</b>		
18	1	2.70	2	3.39	3	3.13
17	7	18.92	26	44.07	33	34.38
16	13	35.14	16	27.12	29	30.21
15	12	32.43	13	22.03	25	26.04
14	4	10.81	2	3.39	6	6.25
Total	37	100.00	59	100.00	96	100.00
Mean	15.70 yrs.	-	16.22 yrs.	-	16.02 yrs.	-
SD	0.10 yrs.	-	0.95 yrs.	-	0.99 yrs.	-

**Table 1** presents the profile of athletes along age and sex. It can be seen from the table that majority of the athletes are males which has a total of 59 or 61.46 per cent while the female-athletes has a total of 37 or 38.54 per cent. Furthermore, along age, majority of the male-athletes is 17 years old which has an equivalent of 44.07 per cent followed by 16 yrs. old where 16 of the male-respondents have this age followed by 15 years old where 22.03 percent of the respondents has this age and two male-respondents have ages 18 and 14 years old. The mean age for the male-respondents is 16.22 years old with a standard deviation of 0.95 years. On the other hand, for the female-respondents, most of the athletes are 16 years old followed by 15 years old with 12 respondents, next is 17 years old where 7 respondents have that age while 4 or 10.81 percent have the respondents are 14 years old and 1 athlete is age of 18 years old or 2.70. The mean age for female-respondents is 15.70 with a standard deviation of 0.10 years.

**Table 2.** Sports participated in by the athlete-respondents.

<b>Sports Participated in by the Athlete-Respondents</b>		
<b>Sports</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Ball Games	67	69.79
Taekwondo	9	9.38

**Table 2** presents the sports that the athlete-respondents participate in. Among the 14 sports included in the study, the majority of athletes, 67 or 69.79%, are involved in ball games. Taekwondo follows with 9 respondents, or 9.38%, while 7 athletes, or 7.29%, participate in athletics. Dance sports, gymnastics, and wushu each attract 2 participants. Additionally, 1 athlete each is involved in racket games, swimming, and chess. Notably, none of the 96 athletes participate in boxing, wrestling, or table tennis.

**Table 3.** Motivation and psychological readiness.

<b>Performance of the Athlete-Respondents in Sports Competition</b>				
<b>Level of Competition</b>	<b>Type of Awards</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>Gold</b>	<b>Sliver</b>	<b>Bronze</b>	
Provincial Meet	129	45	19	193
EVRAA Meet	0	0	3	3
Palarong Pambansa	0	0	1	1

**Table 3.** (Continued)

Total	129	45	23	217
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**Table 3** illustrates the proportion of awards received by athlete respondents at different competition levels. A clear link exists between athlete motivation and performance, with athletes receiving a larger number of awards, specifically at the Provincial Meet level, reporting greater intrinsic motivations based on the need to improve themselves, master their skills, and gain recognition. Apparently, these awards also affect psychological preparation of the athletes since people who receive many awards on their performance show higher level of confidence and mental readiness for other competitions.

Nonetheless, the data collected indicates that athletes with very few accolades, as in the case of those of the EVRAA and Palarong Pambansa, seem to lack a motivation since they are hardly recognized. These athletes felt a lack of motivation, which may have been due to not being recognized as their peers. Based on these results, coaches are advised to maintain psychological support and positive reinforcement even when the athletes are not receiving awards, to help them stay motivated, develop resilience, and prepare mentally for future challenges.

**Table 4.** Highest award received.

Highest Award Received by the Athlete-Respondents		
Type of Award	F	Percent
Gold	71	73.96%
Silver	15	15.63%
Bronze	10	10.42%
Total	96	100.00%

**Table 4** also shows the distribution of most outstanding honors taken from the respondents. There was a high percentage distribution regarding the distribution of highest medals taken home by 96 athletes in which a maximum of 73.96% got gold medal whereas 15 athletes representing about 15.63% percent received silver medals. Of course, 10 represented 10.42%. Most of them received honors in form of gold being one of the most rewarded by the events. The relatively smaller percentages for silver and bronze suggest that while many athletes performed at a high level, fewer reached the top tier of competition.

**Table 5.** Distribution of awards earned by athletes of the coach-respondents.

Number of Awards Received of Athlete Handled by the Coach-Respondents		
Number of Awards Received	f	Percent
>6	4	14.29
4 – 6	8	28.57
1 – 3	9	32.14
None	7	25.00
Total	28	100.00
Mean	4 awards	-
SD	5 awards	-

From **Table 5**, it can be noted that most of the coaches have athletes who have earned between 1 and 6 awards. However, some coaches earned more than 6 awards. Yet, 25% of the coaches reported that their athletes did not earn any awards. This implies that, although coaching is indeed a very important factor in the

performance of athletes, other factors such as the popularity of the sport, the level of competition, and available resources may influence the number of awards achieved. For instance, sports with higher visibility and more competitive opportunities may lead to greater chances for athletes to earn awards, regardless of the coach's efforts.

The data reveals that effective training programs require coaches to design a complete program in which not only the athlete's physical skills are groomed but also his or her mental and emotional side is developed. Coaches who engage both in physical training and in mental preparation, such as goal setting, offering constructive feedback, and providing emotional support, can foster greater motivation, confidence, and resilience in athletes.

The study also indicates that there is a lack of psychological resources, such as counseling services or mental health workshops, in the sports program. In most cases, athletes who do not have these resources experience burnout and low morale during intense training periods before the competitions. The implementation of structured mental health support may enhance the psychological well-being of athletes and, in turn, their performance in competitions.

**Table 6.** Physical Fitness of the athlete-respondents in terms of their perceived health condition in performing activities.

Physical Fitness Category	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Physically Fit	68	70.83
Extremely Favorable	2	2.08
Very Much Favorable	1	1.04
Moderately Favorable	3	3.13
Favorable	22	22.92
Total	96	100.00

**Table 6** indicates that 70.83% of athlete-respondents claimed to be in good health, while another 22.92% considered their health to be good. In general, this reflects a confidence level among the majority of athletes regarding their fitness levels and ability to engage in physical activities. Nonetheless, very few respondents rated their health as being moderately favorable, extremely favorable, or very much favorable. This generally reflects a positive, but relatively diverse, perception of fitness within the group.

In addition to the physical ratings, the study also established several psychological stressors that athletes experience. Respondents cited challenges such as balancing one's academic responsibilities, managing physical fatigue, and dealing with the pressure that comes with high sports expectations. Limited access to the training facilities was another essential stressor that led athletes to feel frustrated and doubting themselves at times. These psychological challenges, though not directly assessed in the data, are critical factors that may influence an athlete's overall performance and resilience, especially during high-pressure competitions.

Athletes who received consistent psychological support, such as encouragement from coaches and structured feedback, were found to exhibit better stress management skills. This shows that mental support is important in building resilience and keeping the focus on personal growth rather than the outcome of competition.



**Table 7.** Sports management program of the school along sports policies and incentive.

<b>Sports Management Program of the School Along Sports Policies and Incentive</b>			
	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1.	Student-athlete must be enrolled in any School as reflected in Learners Information System (LIS).	4.15	Nearly Imp
2.	Student-athlete must not exceed the requirement in order to play the sports which require 75 above grades in all classes for sports eligibility.	4.30	Nearly Imp
3.	Student-athlete must not exceed the cut off age 18 as reflected to their NSO.	4.67	EI
4.	Student-athlete must secure required documents such as medical certificates etc.	4.63	EI
5.	Selection is made through an open trial process based on the competition performance in the Intramural, District, and Provincial Meet which is evaluated by screening committee.	4.22	Nearly Imp
6.	Student-athlete is granted athletic scholarship.	3.41	SI
7.	Student-athlete is granted monetary incentives.	2.63	SI
8.	Student-athlete is granted insurance program.	2.41	NI
9.	Student-athlete is granted additional assistance in academic support such as tutoring and library support /modular instruction.	2.96	SI
10.	Student-athlete is granted 50 % grades compensation in all subject areas especially PE subjects.	3.04	SI
11.	Coaches and officiating officials are granted 2-5 or more days' vacation leave credit after the sports competition.	3.26	SI
12.	Coaches are selected according to the highest number of gold medals received by athlete, and officiating official in- charge is selected through recommendation substantiated with annual sports rating and trainings attended.	3.52	Nearly Imp
13.	Coaches and athlete are awarded with Certificate of Recognition in School.	3.56	Nearly Imp
	<b>Grand Total</b>	18.75	-
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	3.13	SI

**Legend:**

- 4.51-5.00 Extremely Implemented (EI)
- 3.51-4.50 Nearly Implemented (Nearly Imp)
- 2.51-3.50 Satisfactorily Implemented (SI)
- 1.51-2.50 Needs Improvement (NI)
- 1.00-1.50 Poorly Implemented (PI)

**Table 7** highlights the implementation of sports policies and incentives within the sports management program. From a psychological perspective, the data shows that the implementation of policies directly impacts the motivation and mental resilience of athletes. For instance, policies rated as “extremely implemented,” such as ensuring that student-athletes adhere to age limits and secure necessary documents, contribute to a structured and predictable environment, which fosters a sense of security and focus. The five indicators rated "nearly implemented" reflect key areas that influence athletes' motivation. Clear academic eligibility requirements and open selection processes encourage athletes to strive for excellence, enhancing their sense of competence and achievement. Furthermore, the recognition of coaches based on performance and qualifications supports a growth-oriented environment, motivating both athletes and coaches to perform at their best.

Additionally, the policies rated “satisfactory”—such as athletic scholarships, academic support, and incentives—highlight the importance of balancing competition with support, which is crucial for athletes’ psychological well-being. These incentives reinforce athletes’ sense of value and accomplishment, motivating them to continue striving for success. However, the indicator rated “needs improvement,” such as the lack of an insurance program for athletes, suggests that some aspects of the program may be lacking in fostering a fully supportive environment, which could impact athletes’ mental resilience.

Overall, the quality of coaching experience and the coach-athlete relationship play a significant role in shaping an athlete’s psychological resilience and motivation. Positive relationships with coaches provide emotional support, build trust, and strengthen the athlete’s self-efficacy, which is crucial for overcoming setbacks and maintaining long-term motivation. A supportive, encouraging coaching style contributes to improved performance, mental toughness, and sustained motivation among athletes.

## **6. Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight key psychological aspects impacting high school athletes in the Samar Division’s sports management program, with a focus on motivation, mental resilience, and the role of coaches. First, the psychological impact on athletes’ well-being, motivation, and resilience is evident through intrinsic motivation. Athletes driven by personal growth and skill mastery showed greater psychological readiness for competition, particularly when they received recognition through awards or positive reinforcement. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation fosters resilience and mental preparedness by supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness<sup>[36]</sup>. Conversely, athletes who received less acknowledgment reported lower motivation and increased frustration, underscoring the need for equitable recognition across all athletes to sustain motivation and mental resilience.

The study also underscores the vital role coaches play in fostering athletes’ mental resilience and motivation. Coaches who prioritize mental as well as physical preparation positively influence athletes’ confidence, motivation, and stress management. By setting realistic goals, offering constructive feedback, and focusing on personal improvement, these coaches contribute to athletes’ self-esteem and mental toughness. Research by Panna et al.<sup>[37]</sup> highlights that coaching enhances both skill development and mental fortitude by offering psychological support alongside technical teaching and strategy development. This multifaceted support plays a crucial role in maintaining athletes’ physical, mental, and emotional health, which in turn helps them perform effectively and avoid injury. However, a gap exists in the availability of structured psychological resources, such as counseling or workshops, which could further support athletes’ resilience. While coaches play a critical role in this area, these findings indicate a need for more structured mental health resources to bolster resilience across competitive environments.

Athletes face psychological challenges related to balancing academic demands, managing physical exhaustion, and dealing with limited training resources. These stressors contribute to feelings of overwhelm and self-doubt, which can erode psychological resilience, particularly during high-stakes competitions. Lopes et al.<sup>[38]</sup> note that the burdens of academic performance, social demands, adjusting to life away from home, and financial challenges compound these psychological pressures, often leading to stress and burnout. Yet, athletes who receive consistent encouragement and structured feedback from coaches demonstrate greater capacity to manage these pressures, highlighting the importance of support systems in building mental toughness. This aligns with the study’s objective of identifying specific psychological challenges and suggests that enhancing support for balancing academics and training could alleviate stress.

The study points to opportunities for enhancing psychological support within the sports management program. The current lack of sufficient mental health resources, such as counseling or workshops, indicates a gap in preventing burnout and maintaining morale, particularly during intensive training periods. Additionally, sports policies and incentives—such as academic eligibility requirements and performance-based selection—positively influence athletes’ motivation by fostering a growth-oriented mindset. However, gaps in support areas like insurance coverage and academic assistance highlight areas for improvement. Simons and Bird<sup>[39]</sup> discuss how the coach-athlete relationship and social support are essential in managing stress and enhancing well-being. However, most research in this area focuses on the relationship between these variables and burnout, suggesting that a more balanced approach to support can help improve resilience and athletic performance. Implementing structured mental health support and refining policies to ensure a supportive environment would likely enhance both mental resilience and athletic performance.

## 7. Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of psychological support in the enhancement of the well-being and performance of high school athletes in the Samar Division sports management program. Even though intrinsic motivation, based on self-improvement and recognition, is essential for the mental resilience of athletes, there are various stressors, such as balancing academics with training, managing physical exhaustion, and coping with limited resources, that athletes have to face. These stressors can weaken psychological readiness and create a sense of overwhelm.

Coaches have a very important role in helping athletes, by providing encouragement, setting realistic goals, and giving constructive feedback, which strengthens the confidence and stress management of the athletes. However, this study shows that athletes require structured mental health resources, such as counseling and workshops, to support them further and prevent burnout.

Refining program policies might include increasing academic support, providing insurance coverage, and making recognition systems more inclusive in a way that would also facilitate a better psychological climate. This will help towards holistic sports management, that considers both mental resilience as well as athletic performance. Eventually, by including integral mental health services along with the physical training, the young athletes will benefit more from such a balanced environment in sports and afterwards too.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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