

Relaxation Levels of Junior High School Student-Athletes in Region XI, Mindanao

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Abstract

This study assessed the relaxation levels of junior high school student-athletes in Region XI, Mindanao. 100 student-athletes participated in the study, which utilized a descriptive quantitative design to examine their relaxation in two dimensions: environmental factors (e.g., family support, peer influence) and sport-specific factors (e.g., training intensity, competition pressure). Findings revealed an overall relaxation level classified as Very High ($M = 4.24$), with environmental factors rated High and sport-specific factors rated Very High. These results suggest that the student-athletes generally feel calm, focused, and less stressed in athletic settings. The study supports Herbert Benson's Relaxation Response Theory, highlighting the benefits of relaxation in enhancing mental well-being and athletic performance. Data were collected using adapted and validated questionnaires, with high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.917$). The study emphasizes the need for age-appropriate interventions, including mindfulness practices, supportive coaching, and family engagement, to sustain student-athlete well-being. It recommends that future research explore long-term effects and the integration of resilience-building strategies for junior high school athletes.

Keywords: Relaxation, Junior High School, Student-Athletes, Environmental Factors, Sport-Specific Factors, Well-Being, Relaxation Response Theory, Stress Management

Introduction

Relaxation is an important psychological skill in sports training, relevant to both health and performance. It represents a state of reduced activation in the body's stress response system, often associated with mental calmness and physical ease. Various studies have documented differing relaxation levels among student-athletes in both training and competitive environments. Alicea (2024) observed generally low relaxation levels during specific performances, while Wang et al. (2024) noted fluctuations during training phases. Nazarudin et al. (2025) identified thirty university athletes who consistently reported limited relaxation before competitions.

In the United States, Hamlin et al. (2021) documented reduced relaxation among student-athletes. At Rowan University, Bullard et al. (2025) reported low mindfulness, coping capacity, and emotional regulation during the Fall 2021 season. Japanese student-athletes were also found to exhibit lower relaxation during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hagiwara & Tsunokawa, 2021).

Meanwhile, in the Southern Philippines, Malolos et al. (2021) noted reduced relaxation among athletes. Indie (2022) recorded concerns related to motivation and focus in Davao del Norte, while Ompoc et al. (2019) found that student-athletes in Iligan City experienced generally low levels of psychological rest.

Although existing research emphasizes the importance of relaxation in athletic contexts, few studies have focused specifically on junior high school athletes in Pantukan. While studies such as Ompoc et al. (2019) have addressed emotional coping in older student-athletes, little attention has been given to the mental recovery needs of younger individuals. As junior high school athletes in Pantukan, Davao de Oro, take on increasing athletic roles, investigating their relaxation experiences is essential to support their psychological well-being and development. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relaxation experiences of junior high school student-athletes in Pantukan, Davao de Oro, to help inform future strategies for their psychological support and holistic development.

Statement of the Problem

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to describe the level of relaxation of Junior High School student-athletes. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:

1. Describe the profile of respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 year level;
 - 1.3 sex, and
 - 1.4 Specialized sports?
2. Determine the level of relaxation in terms of:
 - 2.1 environmental (family support, peer influence)
 - 2.2 sport-specific (training intensity, competition pressure)
3. To determine if there is a significant difference in the level of relaxation when analyzed across the profile of the respondents.
4. To determine the appropriate intervention based on the findings of the study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of Relaxation Response, developed by Dr. Herbert Benson in the 1970s, which can trigger a physiological state of deep rest that counters the effects of stress. Engaging in specific relaxation techniques can activate a natural physiological response that helps to reduce stress and improve overall health. The relaxation response involves a combination of focused attention, controlled breathing, and mental repetition, all of which help calm the body and mind. The Relaxation Response theory emphasizes the importance of calming the body and mind to counteract the stress response. In the student-athletes, this theory is often applied to enhance performance and recovery; by using relaxation techniques, athletes can reduce anxiety, improve focus, and promote quicker recovery from intense training or competition. The Relaxation Response helps athletes manage stress, increase mental clarity, and maintain a balanced state of mind, which is crucial for peak performance.

Method

In the study of Bloomfield, J., & Fisher, M. J. (2019), quantitative research design refers to the use of numerical data and statistical methods to gather information and test hypotheses. Focuses on objective measurements and quantifiable data to understand patterns, relationships, and trends. Descriptive means focuses on describing the characteristics of a population or phenomenon Siedlecki, S. L. (2020). At the same time, comparative that involves comparing two or more if there are differences or similarities. Haspelmath, M. (2018).

In this study, 100 respondents will be selected through a purposive and stratified random sampling technique. This technique allows researchers to look for appropriate respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information (Palinkas et al.2015). For this reason, the criteria will specifically target junior high school students' academic year 2024-2025.

In gathering data, I used to adapt and modify existing instruments to create questionnaires for the study, a Likert scale with 30 items. In analyzing the data, the Mean will be utilized to characterize the level of relaxation of junior high school student-athletes. Put simply, it is calculated by adding up all the numbers in the set and then dividing by the total number of values in the set. The t-test statistical test used to compare the means of participants' responses. ANOVA, determining if there are significant differences between the average values of student-athletes or if the differences are likely due to random chance, will be utilized.

Results and Discussion

This chapter outlines the discussion of the results and the analysis of the data. By employing suitable statistical methods, the gathered information was examined to address the issues outlined in the introduction of this study. The discussion is organized according to the order of the research objectives. Related literature is integrated to support and provide context to the findings.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Junior High School Student-Athletes for Age, Sex, Year Level, and Specialized Sports Frequency

| Category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Age | | |
| 13 | 20 | 20.0 |
| 14 | 10 | 10.0 |
| 15 | 27 | 27.0 |
| 16 | 40 | 40.0 |
| 17 | 3 | 3.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 |
| Sex | | |
| Female | 52 | 52.0 |
| Male | 48 | 48.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 |
| Year Level | | |
| Grade 7 | 23 | 23.0 |
| Grade 8 | 13 | 13.0 |
| Grade 9 | 17 | 17.0 |
| Grade 10 | 47 | 47.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 |
| Specialized Sports | | |
| Arnis | 9 | 9.0 |
| Athletics | 12 | 12.0 |
| Basketball | 18 | 18.0 |
| Badminton | 12 | 12.0 |
| Sepak Takraw | 9 | 9.0 |
| Swimming | 8 | 8.0 |
| Volleyball | 20 | 20.0 |
| Others | 12 | 12.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 |

The table highlights the demographic characteristics of the Junior High School student-athletes categorized by age, sex, year level, and specialized sports. The largest age group is 16-year-olds, comprising forty percent of the student-athletes, followed by 15-year-olds at twenty-seven percent. The sex distribution is nearly equal, with females slightly outnumbering males at fifty-two percent of respondents compared to forty-eight percent. The majority of the student-athletes are in Grade 10, forty-seven percent, followed by Grade 7, twenty-three percent. The most popular sports are Volleyball, twenty percent, Basketball, eighteen percent, and Athletics, twelve percent. Other sports like Arnis, Sepak Takraw, and Swimming is less represented. The profile indicates that the Junior High School Student-Athletes are mostly in Grade 10, predominantly female, and the most common sports are Volleyball and Basketball.

Table 2. Level of Relaxation of Junior High School Student-Athletes

| Relaxation | SD | Mean | Interpretation |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Environmental | .11 | 4.12 | High |
| Sport-specific | 1.32 | 4.36 | Very High |
| Overall Mean | .72 | 4.24 | Very High |

Table 2 presents the Level of Relaxation of Junior High School Student-Athletes, specifically focusing on two indicators of relaxation: Environmental and Sport-specific, along with an Overall Mean. The overall relaxation has a mean of 4.24, which is interpreted as Very High, meaning that the relaxation of junior high school student-athletes is always observed. It suggests that the students likely feel calm, focused, and stress-free in their day-to-day activities and sporting events, contributing to their overall well-being.

The result of this study supports the result of Taren (2017), which suggests that participants experienced significantly higher levels of relaxation, resulting in a very high perceived relaxation state, which can be managed and enhanced to improve relaxation and well-being. Additionally, research by Liang et al. (2021) demonstrates a significant reduction in perceived stress and promotes relaxation, leading to a state of calm and peace. This increased relaxation can enhance feelings of well-being, all of which play a crucial role in contributing to the success of student-athletes in sports.

Environmental. In this variable, the indicator environmental relaxation with a very low standard deviation of 0.11 shows that the majority of student-athletes feel relaxed and at ease in their environment, whether it be at school or in their sporting setting. The environment has a mean of 4.12, categorized as High, which means that the relaxation of junior high school student athletes is often observed. This indicates that student-athletes experience a positive and supportive atmosphere that contributes significantly to their well-being and overall relaxation.

In Schary, D. P. (2019), the study highlighted the positive impact of environmental factors that increased, such as the influence of peers, family, teammates, and coaches, in reducing stress and enhancing relaxation. These factors play a crucial role in improving the overall performance and mental well-being of student-athletes. Similarly, according to Pagani (2023), factors like training conditions and home life were found to affect the relaxation levels of junior high school student-athletes. The study revealed that a positive, supportive environment significantly improved relaxation, with the mean relaxation score classified as High. This, in turn, contributed to better relaxation, well-being, and supported the athletic performance and emotional health of the participants.

Sport-specific. Further, sport-specific with a standard deviation of 1.32 reflects that, on average, Junior High School Student-Athletes experience very high relaxation during their sports activities, with a mean score of 4.36 is interpreted as Very High that meaning that the relaxation of junior high school student-athletes is always observed. This indicates that sports are generally a source of positive relaxation for most students, contributing to their enjoyment and performance in athletics.

The study by Meggs, J., & Chen, M. (2021) demonstrated that sport-specific relaxation strategies have a positive effect on athletes' mental states, resulting in improved performance during both competitions and practices. The results showed that participants experienced a notable increase in relaxation, reaching an exceptional level. Similarly, the research by Petterson, H., & Olson, B. L. (2017) found that when junior high school student-athletes practice sport-specific relaxation techniques, they achieve a heightened state of relaxation, which boosts their performance and overall well-being.

Table 3. The Difference in the Level of Relaxation of JHS Student-Athletes when analyzed according to Demographic Profile.

| Demographic Profile | F-value | P-value | Decision @ 0.05 Alpha Level | Interpretation |
|---------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Age | 30.23 | 0.0001 | Reject the null hypothesis. | There is a significant difference. |
| Sex | 24.39 | 0.692 | Fail to reject the null hypothesis. | There is no significant difference. |
| Year Level | 50.18 | 0.0002 | Reject the null hypothesis. | There is a significant difference. |
| Specialized Sport | 1.89 | 0.164 | Fail to reject the null hypothesis. | There is no significant difference. |

Presented in Table 3 are the results of the relaxation of Junior High School student-athletes. The ANOVA was used to assess differences in relaxation based on age, while the T-test was applied to examine differences between sexes, year levels, and specialized sports. The analysis revealed that the p-value for age is 0.0001, which rejects the null hypothesis. This result indicates that there is a significant difference related to age, meaning that age plays a role in the variable being analyzed, indicating strong evidence suggesting that age significantly affects the outcome.

In terms of sex, the p-value 0.692, failing to reject the null hypothesis, suggests that sex does not have a significant impact on relaxation levels for JHS student-athletes, implying that both male and female athletes might experience similar levels of relaxation despite any gender-related factors. The p-value for the year level is 0.0002, reject the null hypothesis. This result demonstrates that the year level of the respondents, whether they are Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9, or Grade 10, there is a significant difference related to year level, which strongly suggests that year level significantly influences the relaxation being evaluated.

In specialized sports, the p-value is 0.164, which fails to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference, but to test the difference in the level of relaxation between athletes specializing in different sports. This suggests that whether or not a student-athlete specializes in a particular sport does not notably affect their relaxation levels.

A study of Smith et al. (2017) that comparing relaxation levels in athletes from contact sports (e.g., armis) with non-contact sports (e.g., athletics) found that athletes in contact sports often report higher levels of pre-competition anxiety, which might be linked to lower relaxation scores compared to athletes in non-contact sports. On the other hand, Anderson & Williams (2021) found that various sports, relaxation help handle the pressures of competition, although there may be differences in the sources of stress between sport types, athletes are typically trained in similar methods of coping, leading to no significant difference in overall relaxation levels.

4. To determine the appropriate intervention based on the findings of the study.

Intervention Plan for Improving the Level of Relaxation Among Junior High School (JHS) Student-Athletes.

Given that age and year level are significant factors impacting the relaxation levels of student-athletes, this intervention plan will focus on creating age-appropriate and year-level specific strategies to enhance relaxation, well-being, and mental health among JHS student-athletes. Here’s an intervention plan to support JHS student-athletes' relaxation:

| |
|---|
| Objective |
| To improve the relaxation levels and well-being of student-athletes by modifying environmental factors, including elements, to create a supportive, calming, and performance-enhancing atmosphere. |
| Target Group |
| Student-Athletes across all year levels (Junior High School and High School) Specific Focus: Student-athletes involved in sports that require both mental focus and physical performance (e.g., basketball, athletics). |
| Key Interventions |
| Promote Positive Peer Interactions: Organize team-building activities that encourage communication, trust, and emotional support among student-athletes. Activities like group discussions, team challenges, and mutual goal-setting can foster a sense of camaraderie, which enhances relaxation through a supportive atmosphere. |
| Develop Positive Coaching Practices: Train coaches to adopt a supportive, empathetic approach, focusing on positive reinforcement and mental well-being in addition to athletic performance. Coaches should be trained in mindfulness practices to encourage relaxation during training sessions. Introduce regular debriefing sessions where coaches and athletes reflect on performance and relaxation techniques. These sessions should focus on mental well-being, not just physical outcomes. |
| Family and Community Involvement: Organize workshops or informational sessions for families and guardians, explaining how they can contribute to creating a relaxing home environment for student-athletes. Topics might include managing expectations, encouraging healthy sleep habits, and promoting emotional support. |
| Peer and Coach Check-ins: Establish a regular system for coaches and peers to check in with student-athletes about their emotional well-being. Coaches should ask students how they are feeling and offer solutions if they are experiencing stress, burnout, or anxiety. |
| Implementation Timeline |
| Month 1: Begin training coaches on positive communication and relaxation-focused coaching techniques. Introduce basic relaxation activities (e.g., stretching, mindfulness) during team practices. |
| Months 2-3: Start team-building activities focused on emotional support and relaxation. Implement a check-in system where student-athletes can share their stress levels and relaxation needs. |
| Months 4-6: Introduce family workshops and community sessions focused on supporting the student-athletes' relaxation. Regularly monitor the relaxation levels of student-athletes through surveys or feedback forms. Evaluate the impact of environmental changes on both relaxation levels and performance. |
| Expected Outcomes |
| Improved Relaxation: Students will report increased levels of relaxation due to changes in their training environment, with a focus on reducing physical and mental stress. |
| Better Performance: As relaxation increases, student-athletes will demonstrate improved focus, reduced anxiety, and enhanced performance in both practice and competition. |
| Increased Well-being: Student-athletes will experience improved emotional health, with reduced feelings of burnout and anxiety, leading to greater overall well-being. |

Conclusion

This study, aimed at investigating the impact of relaxation techniques on junior high school student-athletes, these develop healthy coping mechanisms for stress, improve their ability to focus and it can help reduce anxiety, and improve focus, leading to better athletic performance and overall well-being. Thus, strongly affirm the Relaxation Response theory by Dr. Herbert Benson (1970) that relaxation is beneficial in young athletes, contributing to improved well-being and athletic performance.

Recommendation

This piece of work would be of significant value to the following within the preview of this chapter: Numerous studies and research have demonstrated the effectiveness of relaxation techniques in enhancing the well-being and performance of student-athletes. JHS student-athletes encourage athletic programs to integrate relaxation techniques into training routines. Provide access to mental health professionals who can offer individual support and guidance for student athletes struggling with stress and anxiety. In addition, future research on the relaxation of junior high school student-athletes should adopt a holistic approach that considers the various stressors they face, the effectiveness of different relaxation techniques, and the role of resilience and support systems.

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Appendix A. Research Instrument

(Adapted and modified from Thompson, K. J., 2024, Smith, D. A., 2024., Sweeney, B. J.,2024)

General Instruction: Please check the corresponding numbers of each item in accordance with your personal observation. Part I profile of the respondents, Part II deals with the relaxation of the student-athletes. Be truthful with your answers. Use the scale below to assess objectively:

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The Likert scale below was used to analyze the result:

| Range of Means | Description | Interpretation |
|----------------|-------------|--|
| 4.20 – 5.00 | Very High | This means that the relaxation of junior high school student athletes is always observed. |
| 3.40 – 4.19 | High | This means that the relaxation of junior high school student athletes is often observed. |
| 2.60 – 3.39 | Moderate | This means that the relaxation of junior high school student-athletes is sometimes observed. |
| 1.80 – 2.59 | Low | This means that the relaxation of junior high school student-athletes is rarely observed. |
| 1.00 – 1.79 | Very Low | This means that the relaxation of junior high school student athletes is never observed. |

Part 1: Profile of the respondents

Age:

Sex:

Year Level:

Specialized Sports: _____

Part II. Relaxation of Student-Athletes

| A. Environmental (family support, peer influence) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. I receive emotional, practical, or financial support from my family. | | | | | |
| 2. I feel comfortable turning to my family when I'm stressed. | | | | | |
| 3. I believe having calm and supportive family environment helps me manage stress as a student-athlete. | | | | | |
| 4. I spend time relaxing with my family members. | | | | | |
| 5. I feel that my family environment contributes my relaxation and mental | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| well-being. | | | | | |
| 6. I engage in relaxation practices together. (e.g., group stretching, medication, or cool down activities). | | | | | |
| 7. I feel that my coach or team leader promotes relaxation as part of the training or competition routine. | | | | | |
| 8. I feel stressed or anxious before competition, my teammates help me relax and cope. | | | | | |
| 9. I engage in relaxing activities with my teammates to reduce stress and improve performance. | | | | | |
| 10. I spend time with teammates outside of training, such as social events or group hangouts. | | | | | |
| B. Sport-specific (training intensity, competition pressure) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I feel my training intensity is well-balanced or it feels overwhelming at times. | | | | | |
| 12. I find relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing, mindfulness, stretching) in reducing my stress levels after intense training. | | | | | |
| 13. I am experiencing incredible mental resilience and strength as I overcome the intense training. | | | | | |
| 14. I get enough quality sleep to recover from training. | | | | | |
| 15. I regularly use exercises like breathing or visualization to calm down after a workout. | | | | | |
| 16. I practice deep breathing to relax before a competition. | | | | | |
| 17. I use mental imagery to calm myself before stressful situations. | | | | | |
| 18. I learn to manage competition pressure and enhance my performance. | | | | | |
| 19. I find it easy to manage my emotions (e.g., stress, frustration) after a poor performance or loss. | | | | | |
| 20. I can balance my academic, athletic, and social responsibilities during competition periods. | | | | | |
| 21. I am not relaxed when I'm in a bad | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| mood. | | | | | |
| 22. I experience negative emotions (e.g., pressure, anxiety) related to my athletic performance. | | | | | |
| 23. I experience stress or anxiety before the competition. | | | | | |
| 24. I feel fatigued or mentally drained due to negative emotions. | | | | | |
| 25. I believe lack of sleep affects my mood and relaxation. | | | | | |
| 26. I feel mentally clear and focused during training or competition. | | | | | |
| 27. I engage in activities that help my mind (e.g., meditation, deep breathing) to improve relaxation. | | | | | |
| 28. I feel that my mental clarity impacts my ability to relax after intense training. | | | | | |
| 29. I believe having a clear mind improves my athletic performance. | | | | | |
| 30. I believe a happy and motivated athlete can focus during training or competition. | | | | | |