

A Descriptive-Comparative Study on Tactical Coaching Skills of Coaches

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Abstract

Tactical coaching skills refer to the abilities a coach uses to develop athletes' understanding and execution of game strategies, decision-making, and situational awareness during competition. These skills are essential for helping athletes and teams perform effectively in dynamic and competitive environments. This study explores the tactical coaching skills employed by coaches in Davao City, focusing on how they conceptualize and apply tactics in training and competition. A non-experimental quantitative research design was employed specifically utilizing a descriptive comparative approach with complete enumeration of 50 coaches. Results showed an overall mean of 4.605, which is interpreted as very high level of tactical competence, emphasizing their ability to effectively manage and lead their teams in competitive environments. Furthermore, the findings suggests that the number of years a coach has spent in the profession does not necessarily impact their tactical coaching abilities. Coaches emphasized the importance of contextual awareness, player characteristics, and opponent analysis in shaping tactical decisions. This study contributes to the limited body of knowledge on coaching practices in Davao City and offers practical implications for coach education and development programs aimed at enhancing tactical competencies.

Keywords: tactical coaching skills; competitive; game strategies

Introduction

Tactical coaching skills are essential for enhancing athletes' decision-making and strategic performance during competitions. However, many coaches encounter challenges in effectively teaching these skills, leading to suboptimal athlete performance. For instance, the reliance on traditional methods that emphasize repetitive drilling may not adequately develop athletes' tactical understanding, as these approaches often fail to replicate the dynamic decision-making required in actual game situations (Indeed, 2025). Furthermore, the misconception that tactical skills can be developed solely through physical training overlooks the importance of mental and strategic preparedness, resulting in incomplete athlete development (Foley, 2022).

Globally, the integration of tactical coaching skills into sports training programs varies significantly. A study conducted in China demonstrated the effectiveness of implementing a tactical optimization model and decision-making strategies in football coaching. The research involved 120 male students aged approximately 13.8 years and revealed that such models substantially improved both attacking and defensive tactical-technical competencies (Wenjie et al., 2025). Conversely, in the United States, the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) emphasizes physicality and transitional play, which presents challenges for coaches accustomed to tactics-focused methodologies. Jonatan Giráldez, coach of the Washington Spirit, noted the necessity of adapting his tactical approach to align with the league's entertainment-centric style, highlighting the diverse applications and challenges of tactical coaching across different international contexts (Giráldez, 2025).

In the Philippines, the development of tactical coaching skills faces unique challenges. A study focusing on sports coaching management within Pangasinan State University identified several obstacles, including limited access to modern training facilities and financial constraints. These factors hinder the effective implementation of technical training and tactical decision-making, which are crucial for team success in competitions (IJNRD, 2024). Additionally, collaborative training initiatives between the Philippine military and international partners have highlighted the importance of tactical proficiency. For instance, joint exercises with the U.S. military have focused on enhancing tactical combat casualty care, underscoring the broader applicability and necessity of tactical skills beyond traditional sports settings (U.S. Embassy in the Philippines, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on coaching methodologies in the Philippines, there remains a significant research gap regarding the development and implementation of tactical coaching strategies. Prior studies have primarily focused on coaching behaviors and their influence on athlete satisfaction. For instance, Micua et al. (2024) examined the correlation between coaching behavior styles and sports satisfaction among collegiate athletes in Manila, emphasizing the balance between authoritarian and democratic coaching approaches. Similarly, Belleza (2021) explored coaching behaviors as predictors of athlete satisfaction, analyzing dimensions such as physical training, technical instruction, and interpersonal rapport. While these studies contribute to understanding general coaching effectiveness, they do not address the specific tactical training methodologies required to enhance athletes' decision-making and strategic adaptability in competitive settings. This gap underscores the need for research that explicitly investigates the role of tactical coaching in optimizing athlete performance.

The urgency of this study stems from the increasing demands of modern sports, where tactical proficiency is a critical determinant of competitive success. Without structured tactical coaching, Filipino athletes may struggle to adapt to high-level competition, both regionally and internationally. Furthermore, the lack of empirical research on tactical coaching within the local context limits the ability of sports organizations and academic institutions to develop evidence-based training programs. By addressing this gap, this study aims to provide a foundation for improving coaching education, ultimately fostering the strategic growth and competitiveness of Filipino athletes on a broader scale.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to describe the level of tactical coaching abilities of the coaches. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:

1. Describe the profile of respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Educational Attainment
 - 1.4 Years of experience as a Coach
2. To determine the level of tactical coaching abilities of a coach in terms of:
 - 2.1 Flexibility in coaching
 - 2.2 Emotional intelligence on the court
 - 2.3 Problem-solving during matches
 - 2.4 Empowerment of players
3. Is there a significant difference on the level of tactical coaching abilities when analyzed across the profile of the respondents?
4. What intervention can be proposed based on the results of the study?

Theoretical Framework

This study is a coaching and learning theory introduced by Karl Newell (1986) that focuses on how movement and decision-making skills develop through the interaction of constraints. It is widely used in sports coaching to teach tactical skills by modifying task, environmental, and individual constraints to encourage learning and adaptability.

The Constraints-Led Approach (CLA), introduced by Karl Newell (1986), is a modern framework for skill acquisition and tactical coaching that emphasizes learning through interaction with constraints rather than prescriptive instruction. Rooted in Ecological Dynamics, CLA suggests that an athlete's decision-making and movement skills are shaped by three types of constraints: task (rules, equipment, game conditions), environmental (weather, playing surface), and individual (physical and cognitive abilities). This approach is particularly relevant in tactical coaching, where players must develop adaptability and game intelligence by exploring different solutions rather than memorizing set plays. By modifying constraints, coaches create authentic, pressure-based scenarios that encourage players to self-organize, problem-solve, and make decisions in real-time, mirroring the unpredictable nature of competitive sports. CLA is widely used in elite coaching, from soccer and basketball to rugby and hockey, as it fosters creativity, adaptability, and tactical awareness—essential qualities for success in dynamic sporting environments.

Conceptual Framework

Role theory explains that when non-music teachers are required to teach music, Role Theory can explain the challenges they face in adapting to this new responsibility. These teachers experience a shift in role expectations, moving from their established expertise in physical education to the unfamiliar domain of music instruction. In the context of this study, competence and commitment can influence music teaching readiness. Commitment becomes crucial as they need to demonstrate adaptability in learning new content and instructional methods and maintain strong work performance in this expanded role.

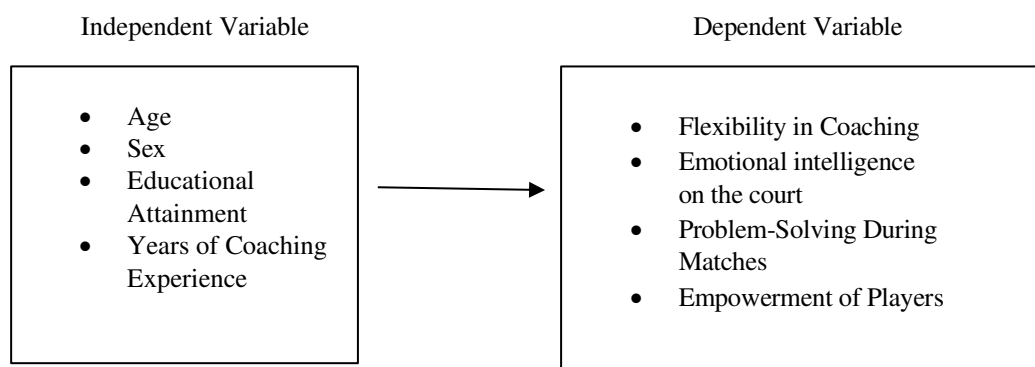


Figure 1. Level of Tactical Coaching Skills of the Coaches

Method

This quantitative research utilized the descriptive-comparative design which examines differences between two or more groups based on a specific variable without manipulating any conditions. This approach focuses on identifying variations by measuring and comparing characteristics, behaviors, or outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is commonly used in education to compare student performance across different teaching methods or in healthcare to assess treatment effects on patient groups. Its strength lies in providing objective data for identifying trends, though it does not establish causation.

To proceed with gathering the necessary quantitative data, the researchers requested authorization directly from the school administration. The intended quantitative data was elicited using a survey instrument, which included the adapted questionnaires that is modified specifically designed to evaluate the variables.

Respondent selection strictly adhered to the inclusion criteria, considering only those who provided informed consent containing comprehensive study details. After receiving written approval, the researchers requested permission to conduct the research from coaches. The researchers ensured the confidentiality of respondent identities and securely collected and safeguarded questionnaires containing significant data. Following data retrieval, meticulous encoding with proper labeling procedures was diligently conducted.

The researcher will use an adapted questionnaire that is modified to fit a new context or population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is a 10-item instrument with the following indicators: Flexibility in Coaching, Emotional Intelligence on the Court, Problem-Solving in Matches and Empowerment of Players. In evaluating, the respondents will used the following rating: 5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree. The research has a total of 10 items. Part 1 for the demographic profile of the respondents. Part 2 for the variables, which has 10 items and a panel of specialists has validated the questionnaire.

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 for the findings.

Tables 1 provide a detailed demographic profile of the Sports Coaches involved in the study. Outlined in the table are age, sex, educational attainment and years of experience as a coach.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the coaches for Age, Sex, Educational Attainment and Years of Experience as a Coach

Category	Frequency	Percent
18	1	2%
20	1	2%
21	1	2%
22	2	4%
23	4	8%
24	4	8%
25	2	4%
26	5	10%
27	7	14%
28	7	14%
29	3	6%
30	2	4%
31	2	4%
33	3	6%
35	1	2%
36	1	2%
37	2	4%
40	1	2%

44	1	2%
Total	50	100
Sex		
Male	30	60%
Female	20	40%
Total	50	100%
Educational Attainment		
Master's Degree	10	20%
College Degree	31	62%
Undergraduate Degree	9	18%
Total	50	100%
Years of Experience as a Coach		
1	9	18%
2	17	34%
3	10	20%
4	2	4%
5	6	12%
6	1	2%
7	1	2%
8	2	4%
9	1	2%
10	1	2%
Total	50	100

The table highlights the demographic characteristics of the sports coaches, categorized by age, sex, educational attainment and years of experience as a coach. The demographic profile of the coaches shows that their ages range from 18 to 44 years old, with the majority between 26 and 30 years old. The most common ages are 27 and 28 years old, each representing 14% of the total sample, suggesting that most coaches are in their early to mid-career stages. In terms of sex, 60% of the coaches are male, while 40% are female, indicating a higher representation of men in the coaching profession. Regarding educational attainment, the majority (62%) hold a college degree, while 20% have a master's degree, and 18% are undergraduate degree holders, reflecting a generally well-educated coaching workforce. When it comes to coaching experience, 34% have two years of experience, and 20% have three years, showing that most coaches are relatively new to the profession. Only a small percentage have more than five years of experience, with 2% having 10 years, suggesting that the field is composed mostly of early-career professionals. This distribution highlights the importance of continued professional development and mentorship opportunities to support younger and less experienced coaches in their careers.

Level of Tactical Coaching Skills of Sports Coaches

The tactical coaching skills of Sports Coaches are an essential result from the variable of this study.

Table 2. Level of Tactical Coaching Skills of Sports Coaches

Tactical Coaching Skills	SD	Mean	Interpretation
Flexibility in Coaching	0.633	4.624	Very High
Emotional Intelligence on the Court	0.642	4.564	Very High
Problem-Solving in Matches	0.655	4.602	Very High
Empowerment of Players	0.690	4.630	Very High
Overall Mean	0.655	4.605	Very High

Presented in the table 2 are the descriptive statistics for the tactical coaching skills of Sports Coaches, measured across four dimensions: flexibility in coaching, emotional intelligence on the court, problem-solving in matches, and empowerment of players, as well as the overall mean.

The overall mean of tactical coaching skills has a mean of 4.605, which is interpreted as very high level of tactical competence, emphasizing their ability to effectively manage and lead their teams in competitive environments.

The result of this study supports the result of Jones, Edwards, & Viotto Filho, 2016, which indicated that tactical coaching skills are essential for strategic decision-making, adaptability, and player development, all of which contribute to team success. A high level of tactical expertise allows coaches to analyze game situations, adjust strategies, and make informed decisions under pressure, which is crucial in sports performance (Harvey & Light, 2015). Additionally, research suggests that coaches with strong tactical skills enhance player confidence, motivation, and overall team cohesion, leading to better game execution and long-term athlete development (Schempp, McCullick, & Mason, 2014).

In this variable, the indicator flexibility in coaching achieved the highest mean score of 4.624, this indicates that tactical coaching skills in terms of flexibility are rated Very High. A high mean score suggests that coaches demonstrate adaptability in their strategies, adjusting their approach based on the need of their athletes or the demands of the game.

In this study of Lindsay & Spittle, 2024, underscore the importance of this flexibility, highlighting that successful coaches often integrate both traditional and contemporary approaches to tailor their methods to specific contexts, thereby enhancing their effectiveness. Additionally, this finding aligns with research emphasizing the importance of a supportive and adaptable coaching style in enhancing athletes' performance and resilience (Vidigal et al., 2022).

Further, emotional intelligence on the court, with a mean score of 4.564, interpreted as Very High interpretation suggests that coaches demonstrate strong emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills when managing athletes on the court. Emotional intelligence enables coaches to effectively handle stress, communicate with players, and foster a positive team environment. Such qualities are crucial in maintaining team cohesion, resolving conflicts, and enhancing overall athletic performance.

Research supports these findings, indicates that emotional intelligence in coaching can positively influence factors such as self-efficacy and anxiety in athletes, which are directly linked to performance outcomes (Barlow & Banks, 2014). Additionally, a meta-analysis by Laborde et al. (2016) found a small but significant relationship between emotional intelligence and sports performance, further emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence in athletic contexts.

Further, problem-solving in matches, with a mean score of 4.602, interpreted as Very High level of proficiency. This suggest that coaches demonstrate exceptional ability in analyzing game situations, making quick and effective decisions, and adjusting strategies to overcome challenges during matches. Their capacity to think critically under pressure allows them to respond to opponents' tactics, optimize team performance, and maximize winning opportunities. A high level of problem-solving in matches reflects their deep understanding of the sport, adaptability, and leadership, which are crucial for guiding athletes to success.

The study by Viciana and Mayorga-Vega (2014) examined the instructions delivered by youth soccer coaches during competitions, focusing on how coaching experience and tactical versus technical coaching models influenced these instructions. The findings revealed that coaches employing a tactical approach provided more effective guidance in emotional and tactical dimensions, which are essential for problem-solving during matches. This underscores the importance of tactical coaching strategies in enhancing coaches' ability to analyze game situations and make effective decisions under pressure.

Lastly, empowerment of players with a mean score of 4.630, interpreted as Very High, indicates that sports coaches excel in fostering an environment where athletes feel confident, motivated, and capable of making decisions on the court. By encouraging autonomy, instilling trust, and providing constructive feedback, coaches enable players to take ownership of their performance and growth. Such empowerment not only enhances individual skills but also

strengthens team cohesion and resilience in competitive settings. The high rating suggests that coaches prioritize player development, ensuring that athletes are equipped with both the technical and mental skills needed to succeed.

Finally, a study by Cho and Baek (2020) found that coach autonomy support positively influenced the coach–athlete relationship and team efficacy in youth sports, highlighting the importance of fostering an environment where athletes feel empowered and capable. Similarly, research by Occhino et al. (2014) emphasized that adopting an autonomy-supportive pedagogical approach in sports coaching can lead to improved athlete outcomes by encouraging autonomy and providing constructive feedback. These findings suggest that when coaches prioritize empowering their players through supportive behaviors, it not only enhances individual skills but also strengthens team cohesion and resilience in competitive settings.

Table 3. The Difference in the Level of Tactical Coaching Skills of Sports Coaches when analyzed according to Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	Tactical Coaching Skills of Sports Coaches			
	F-value	P-value	Decision @ 0.05 Alpha Level	Interpretation
Age	0.199	0.658	Accept Null Hypothesis	There is no significant difference
Sex	1.612	0.211	Accept Null Hypothesis	There is no significant difference
Educational Attainment	0.123	0.885	Accept Null Hypothesis	There is no significant difference
Years of Experience as a Coach	0.023	0.879	Accept Null Hypothesis	There is no significant difference

Presented in Table 3 are the results of the tactical coaching skills of sports coaches. The ANOVA was used to assess differences in tactical coaching skills based on age, while the T-test was applied to examine differences between sexes and year levels.

The table presents the difference in the level of tactical coaching skills of sports coaches when analyzed according to their demographic profile, specifically age. The results indicate an F-value of 0.199 and a P-value of 0.658. Since the P-value is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the tactical coaching skills of sports coaches based on their age. In other words, age does not appear to be a determining factor in the variation of tactical coaching skills among sports coaches.

In terms of sex, analysis of the difference in the level of tactical coaching skills of sports coaches based on sex reveals an F-value of 1.612 and a P-value of 0.211. Since the P-value is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the tactical coaching skills of sports coaches when categorized by sex. In other words, male and female coaches demonstrate similar levels of tactical coaching skills, suggesting that sex is not a determining factor in their ability to develop and implement tactical strategies in sports coaching.

The analysis of the difference in the level of tactical coaching skills of sports coaches based on educational attainment shows an F-value of 0.123 and a P-value of 0.885. Since the P-value is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in tactical coaching skills among coaches with different levels of educational attainment. This suggests that formal education does not play a decisive role in a coach's ability to apply tactical coaching strategies.

Similarly, the analysis based on years of experience as a coach reveals an F-value of 0.023 and a P-value of 0.879. With the P-value exceeding the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating no significant difference in tactical coaching skills based on coaching experience. This suggests that the number of years a coach has spent in the profession does not necessarily impact their tactical coaching abilities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and results of the study, the following conclusions are presented: The study found that sports coaches exhibit a very high level of tactical coaching skills, particularly in flexibility, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and player empowerment. These skills are crucial for effective game management, decision-making, and athlete development. However, statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in tactical coaching skills based on demographic factors such as age, sex, educational attainment, or years of experience. This suggests that these demographic factors do not determine a coach's tactical competence, implying that other elements, such as training programs, mentorship, or personal development, may play a more significant role in shaping a coach's tactical skills.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommended that coaching organizations enhance professional development programs to further develop tactical coaching skills, as demographic factors such as age, sex, educational attainment, and years of experience were found to have no significant influence. Implementing mentorship and peer learning initiatives can help less experienced coaches gain valuable insights from seasoned professionals. Additionally, adopting modern coaching strategies, such as the use of game analysis tools and strategic decision-making techniques, can improve flexibility and problem-solving skills. Emotional intelligence training should also be incorporated into coaching programs to enhance communication, conflict resolution, and motivation techniques, which are crucial for effective team management. Lastly, further research should be conducted to explore other influencing factors, such as psychological traits, leadership styles, and training methodologies, that may contribute to the development of tactical coaching skills.

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