A Descriptive-Comparative Analysis of Sports Coaching Styles Among Student-Athletes in Panabo City

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Abstract

This study aims to describe and compare the perceived sports coaching styles experienced by student-athletes in Panabo City, Region XI, Philippines. Using a descriptive-comparative research design, the research involved 81 student-athletes selected based on their participation and performance in various sporting events. The study explores two main coaching styles, autonomy-supportive and controlling coaching. It evaluates how athletes perceive these when analyzed across different profiles, including age, sex, year level, and type of sport. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed to identify differences in perception among respondent groups. The findings revealed notable variations in how coaching styles are experienced, with autonomy-supportive coaching generally rated more positively. Results suggest that coaching approaches significantly vary depending on athlete demographics and sport type. Based on these insights, the study proposes targeted interventions for coaching development aimed at promoting athlete-centered practices in the Davao Region's sports programs.

Keywords: coaching styles, autonomy-supportive, controlling coaching, student-athletes, comparative analysis

Introduction

Sports coaching style remains a critical concern in athletic development due to its inconsistent application and unclear effectiveness across various sporting contexts. The variability in coaching approaches contributes to unpredictable athlete experiences and outcomes, raising questions about which methods best support athlete performance and engagement. Smith and Smoll (2018) highlight ongoing difficulties in achieving consistency in coaching styles, while Horn (2019) notes that the absence of standardized methodologies complicates efforts to ensure quality coaching across sports programs.

At the international level, the diversity of coaching styles continues to present challenges in establishing universally effective practices. Although research underscores the benefits of athlete-centered coaching models (Côté & Gilbert, 2009), many sports organizations struggle to consistently implement such approaches across different cultures and competitive levels (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016). This inconsistency reflects a broader problem in adapting coaching styles to diverse athlete populations worldwide.

In the Philippines, the problem of sports coaching style is underscored by a predominance of

traditional and often authoritarian approaches. Studies reveal that coaching practices lack uniformity and structured guidance, leading to varied coaching quality and unclear standards within sports communities (Bagatsing & Fajardo, 2020). Additionally, the limited availability of formal coaching education programs contributes to persistent disparities in coaching style application across different competitive levels (Sarmiento & Mendoza, 2021).

Despite extensive research on coaching styles at international and national levels, there remains a notable gap regarding their application in specific local sports settings. This study addresses this gap by examining coaching styles in a localized context, providing insights that are currently missing from broader research. Given the critical role of sports coaching style in athlete development, this research is significant as it offers insights to schools and sports organizations in Panabo City.

Research Objectives

1. Describe the profile of respondent in terms of:

    1.1 age;

    1.2 year level;

    1.3 sex; and

    1.4 sports

2. Determine the level of Sports Coaching Styles in terms of:

    2.1 Autonomy Supportive Coaching

    2.2 Controlling Coaching

3. Determine if there is a significant difference in the level of sports coaching style based on the respondents' profile.

4. Propose an intervention based on the study's results aimed at improving or enhancing sports coaching styles.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the Self-Determination Theory by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (2000), a psychological framework that focuses on motivation and well-being. It posits that people have three basic psychological needs: autonomy (the need to feel in control of one's actions), competence (the need to feel effective at what one does), and relatedness (the need to feel connected to others). This theory explains that when these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to experience greater engagement, personal growth, and a sense of fulfilment in various areas of life, including education, work, and sports.

Conceptual Framework

Self-Determination Theory explains how people are motivated and how they can thrive in various aspects of life, such as work, education, and sports. The theory focuses on three basic psychological needs that are essential for motivation and well-being. In the context of this study, a coaching style that promotes autonomy and allows athletes to have a say in decision-making can enhance their intrinsic motivation and engagement. Additionally, a focus on competence, through positive feedback and skill development, helps athletes feel effective in their abilities. Relatedness, by fostering supportive, trusting relationships between coach and athlete, strengthens the sense of belonging and connection to the team, further motivating athletes. By satisfying these psychological needs within the coaching environment, athletes are more likely to experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation, leading to improved performance and personal growth.

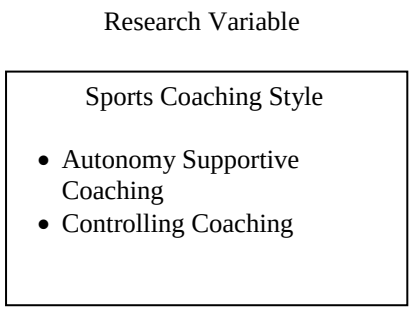

Figure 1. The Sports Coaching Style of Student-Athletes in Panabo City

Method

In this study, the data-gathering procedure follows a systematic approach to ensure that the research addresses the specific variable related to sports coaching styles in Panabo City, Region XI, Mindanao, Philippines. The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive-comparative design, which allows the researcher to compare two indicators across different groups or conditions. The focus is on understanding the behavior and experiences of the student-athletes in various contexts through their coach's coaching style. The researcher chose Panabo City due to its strong reputation for fostering inclusive and supportive sports development, making it an ideal setting for the study. The 81 respondents were selected based on their athletic performance, ensuring that they were representatives of the group of student-athletes with a higher level of involvement in sports activities.

The researcher used purposive sampling, a non-probability technique, to select student-athletes who met specific criteria relevant to the research question. A survey questionnaire, adapted from Barnes (2003) and Gocotano (2018), was employed for data collection, ensuring the instrument's validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, and T-tests, were used to analyze the data, allowing comparisons between groups and identification of patterns. These statistical treatments helped evaluate the variable and test hypotheses regarding the sports coaching style and the student-athletes' experiences.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the discussion of the results and the analysis of the data. Using appropriate statistical methods, the collected information was examined to address the issues outlined in the introduction of this study. The discussion is organized according to the research objectives, with relevant literature integrated to support and contextualize the findings.

Table 1 provides a detailed demographic profile of the student-athletes involved in the study, including age distribution, sex, and year level.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Athletes for Age, Sex, Year Level, and Sports Frequency

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
18	8	9.6
19	26	31.3
20	15	18.1
21	6	7.2
22	7	8.4
23	8	9.6
24	4	4.8
25	1	1.2
26	3	3.6
29	1	1.2
31	1	1.2
33	1	1.2
Total	81	100.0
Sex		
Female	38	.47
Male	43	.53
Total	81	100.0
Year Level		
1st Year	36	44.5
2nd Year	26	31.3
3rd Year	10	12.1
4th Year	9	12.1
Total	81	100.0

Sports		
Arnis	1	1.2
Badminton	8	9.6
Combat Sports/Boxing	3	3.7
Football/Futsal	1	1.2
Softball	1	1.2
Soccer	3	3.7
Sepak Takraw	1	1.2
Table tennis	3	3.7
Tennis	1	1.2
Track and Field	1	1.2
Volleyball	44	55.2
Basketball	14	16.9
Total	81	100.0

The table presents the demographic profile of the student-athletes, categorized by age, sex, year level, and sports participation. The majority of the respondents belong to the 19-year-old age group, making up 31.3% of the total, followed by 20-year-olds at 18.1%. The least represented age groups are 25, 29, 31, and 33, each contributing only 1.2% of the sample. This indicates that most student-athletes fall within the traditional college-age range, with only a few older participants.

Regarding sex distribution, the sample consists of 53.1% male and 46.9% female athletes, demonstrating a relatively balanced representation between genders.

In terms of academic year level, first-year students form the largest group, accounting for 44.5% of the respondents. Second-year students represent 31.3%, while third- and fourth-year students each make up 12.1% of the total. The dominance of first-year and second-year students suggests a higher level of engagement in sports among younger students, possibly due to greater opportunities for participation or institutional recruitment strategies.

The sports distribution reveals that volleyball is the most popular sport among student-athletes, with 55.2% of participants engaged in this discipline. Basketball follows as the second most played sport, representing 16.9% of the sample. Badminton accounts for 9.6%, while other sports, including combat sports, soccer, table tennis, and sepak takraw, have a smaller representation of 3.7% each. Meanwhile, sports such as arnis, football/futsal, softball, tennis, and track and field have the lowest participation, with only one athlete each, contributing 1.2% to the total. This highlights volleyball's dominance in the athletic community, potentially due to institutional support, cultural preferences, or available facilities.

Overall, the demographic data suggest that student-athletes are primarily young, with a slight male majority, and the most engagement is observed in volleyball and basketball. The distribution across year levels implies that participation is strongest in the early years of college, which may be influenced by factors such as time availability and academic workload.

Level of Sports Coaching Styles of Athletes

The sports coaching styles of student-athletes are an essential result of the variables of this study.

Sports Coaching Style	SD	Mean	Interpretation
Autonomy Supportive Coaching	0.92	4.44	Strongly Agree
Controlling Coaching	1.31	2.67	Neutral
Overall Mean	***1.04***	***3.56***	***Agree***

The table presents the descriptive statistics on the sports coaching styles experienced by student-athletes, categorized into autonomy-supportive coaching and controlling coaching, along with the overall mean.

The results reveal that autonomy-supportive coaching received the highest mean score of 4.44 (SD = 0.92), interpreted as Strongly Agree. This indicates that student-athletes perceive their coaches as highly supportive, encouraging independence, motivation, and personal growth. Autonomy-supportive coaching fosters a positive learning environment where athletes feel empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their development.

On the other hand, controlling coaching received a lower mean score of 2.67 (SD = 1.31), interpreted as Neutral. This suggests that while some elements of a controlling coaching style may be present, athletes do not overwhelmingly experience their coaches as overly authoritative or restrictive. A controlling coaching approach, characterized by rigid instruction and external pressure, may limit athletes' self-confidence and overall enjoyment in sports.

The overall mean score for coaching styles is 3.56, interpreted as Agree, indicating that, in general, athletes experience a positive and supportive coaching environment. This suggests that while coaching methods are effective, further improvements can be made to enhance athlete autonomy and reduce controlling behaviors that may negatively impact motivation and performance.

These findings align with research by Mossman, Slemp, and Vella (2022), which highlights that autonomy-supportive environments contribute to better psychological well-being, including lower levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout. Furthermore, studies suggest that a positive coaching approach enhances cognitive function, resilience, and motivation, leading to improved performance and personal satisfaction.

Overall, the results emphasize the importance of autonomy-supportive coaching in fostering athlete motivation, confidence, and well-being. While controlling coaching is not dominant, efforts to further reduce restrictive coaching behaviors and promote self-directed learning and decision-making can contribute to even greater psychological and athletic development among student-athletes.

Significant Difference of the level of sports coaching style of student-athletes when analyzed according to profile

Table 3. The Difference in the Level of sports coaching style of student-athletes when analyzed according to Demographic Profile.

Demographic Profile	Psychological Outcome of BPE Students			
	F-value	**P-value**	**Decision @ 0.05 Alpha Level**	**Interpretation**
Age	0.747	0.633	Accept null hypothesis	There is no significant difference.
Sex	1.546	0.217	Accept null hypothesis	There is no significant difference.
Year Level	0.828	0.365	Accept null hypothesis	There is no significant difference.

Table 3 presents the analysis of the differences in sports coaching styles among student-athletes when examined according to their age, sex, and year level. The study employed ANOVA to assess differences based on age, while a T-test was used to analyze variations across sex and year levels.

The results indicate that the p-value for age is 0.633, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that there is no significant difference in the level of sports coaching styles based on age. This implies that regardless of whether student-athletes are younger or older, their perception of coaching styles remains consistent. The findings suggest that coaching strategies are applied similarly across different age groups, ensuring uniform experiences among athletes.

For sex, the p-value is 0.217, which also exceeds 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of coaching styles between male and female student-athletes. The results suggest that coaches apply their methods consistently, irrespective of gender, providing equal levels of autonomy support or control to both male and female athletes.

Similarly, when analyzed by year level, the p-value is 0.365, which is also above the 0.05 significance level, confirming that no significant difference exists in coaching style perceptions across different academic levels. This suggests that whether student-athletes are freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors, their experiences with sports coaching remain comparable. This finding implies that coaching strategies do not vary significantly based on academic progression, ensuring a stable coaching environment throughout an athlete's college years.

Overall, the results demonstrate that age, sex, and year level do not significantly influence the perception of sports coaching styles. This uniformity suggests that coaching approaches are consistently implemented across all demographic groups, reinforcing the effectiveness of a structured and balanced coaching system within the sports program.

Table 4. The Difference in the Level of Controlling Coaching Style when analyzed according to Demographic Profile

	Controlling Coaching Style			
Demographic Profile	**F-value**	**P-value**	**Decision @ 0.05 Alpha Level**	**Interpretation**
Age	1.855	0.056	Accept the null hypothesis	There is no significant difference.
Sex	2.006	0.049	Reject the null hypothesis	There is a significant difference.
Year Level	0.853	0.517	Accept the null hypothesis	There is no significant difference.
Sports	0.902	0.566	Accept the null hypothesis	There is no significant difference.

The table presents the statistical analysis of the controlling coaching style among student-athletes based on their age, sex, year level, and sport. ANOVA was used to analyze differences across age, year level, and sport, while a T-test was applied to assess differences between sexes.

The results indicate that the p-value for age is 0.056, which is slightly above the 0.05 significance level. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that age does not significantly influence the perception of controlling coaching. This implies that regardless of their age, student-athletes have similar experiences with controlling coaching methods, indicating a uniform coaching approach across different age groups.

Regarding sex, the analysis yielded a p-value of 0.049, which is below the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the perception of controlling coaching based on sex. The results suggest that male and female athletes may experience different levels of control in coaching, with possible variations in feedback style, discipline, or expectations. This finding highlights the need to examine gender-related differences in coaching strategies to ensure fairness and effectiveness.

For year level, the p-value is 0.517, which is greater than 0.05, meaning that the null hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is no significant difference in controlling coaching style based on academic year level. Whether student-athletes are freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors, they experience similar levels of controlling coaching, implying that coaching strategies remain consistent regardless of academic progression.

Similarly, when analyzed by sport, the p-value is 0.566, which is also above 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This result suggests that the type of sport played does not significantly affect how student-athletes perceive controlling coaching. Whether athletes participate in individual or team sports, contact or non-contact sports, they report similar experiences with controlling coaching methods.

To address the differences in coaching styles and their impact on student-athletes, an intervention plan focusing on gender-sensitive coaching, athlete well-being, and policy implementation is necessary. To ensure fair and effective coaching, a gender-sensitive training program should be implemented to promote autonomy-supportive techniques and minimize controlling behaviors. A coaching feedback system will allow athletes to share their experiences, ensuring a more balanced approach. Additionally, mental well-being programs such as counseling and mentorship can help athletes manage stress and stay motivated. A coaching oversight committee should monitor and enforce inclusive coaching policies. These strategies will create a more supportive and equitable sports environment for all student-athletes.

Conclusion

The study successfully described the level of sports coaching styles, revealing that autonomy-supportive coaching was strongly present, while controlling coaching was perceived neutrally. Additionally, the results showed no significant differences in coaching styles based on age, year level, or sport, but a significant difference was found based on sex. Furthermore, the study affirms Self-Determination Theory by demonstrating that autonomy-supportive coaching enhances athlete motivation and well-being, whereas controlling coaching may limit confidence and enjoyment.

Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, coaches should undergo training in autonomy-supportive coaching to enhance athlete motivation and reduce controlling behaviors. Sports program administrators must establish strong feedback systems and implement gender-sensitive coaching initiatives to ensure fairness and effectiveness. Additionally, athletic organizations should enforce firm policies promoting balanced coaching styles and mentorship programs that inspire both coaches and athletes to excel. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore the long-term impact of coaching styles on athlete development. By embracing these final recommendations, we can build a thriving sports community where athletes feel valued, supported, and driven to achieve greatness.

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