

Barriers and Enablers: Roles of Multilevel Environment in the Performance of Student-Athletes Who Excelled in Their Respective Athletic Event

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Abstract

Student-athletes received lack support in the multilevel environment. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, I explored the experiences of the student-athletes in a multilevel environment using a phenomenological approach. I conducted in-depth interviews with five (5) teacher-coaches and focus group discussions with five (5) student-athletes. I found that there was a strong microsystem and mesosystem support for student-athletes through personalized coaching, attention to diverse needs, well-being initiatives, community collaboration, positive team dynamics, and access to sports equipment and facilities. I identified barriers in the exosystem and macrosystem levels, particularly financial constraints and limited international support. This study underscores the need for strengthened multilevel interventions and future mixed-methods research to identify effective strategies for holistic student-athlete development.

Keywords: multilevel environment; student-athletes; phenomenological approach; support systems

Introduction

Student-athletes in multilevel environments face multifaceted challenges (Boquel et al., 2023). These multilevel environments, often characterized by remote locations, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to sports resources, create significant barriers (Navarro, 2022). For student-athletes, these challenges are compounded by the need to balance rigorous academic requirements with demanding athletic commitments, often without the necessary support systems in place (Gomez et al., 2023).

In the United States, student-athletes from marginalized communities often face stereotypes that question their academic capabilities, limiting their access to comprehensive educational opportunities (Barker, 2023). Furthermore, the lack of academic support and flexible scheduling can impede their ability to excel both academically and athletically. These systemic issues highlight the need for inclusive policies that address the unique challenges faced by student-athletes in geographically and socioeconomically disadvantaged settings.

In the Philippines, student-athletes in geographically isolated regions confront distinct challenges that affect their academic resilience and overall well-being. A study by Jaspe et al. (2024) revealed a positive correlation between sports enjoyment and academic resilience among Filipino student-athletes, suggesting that engagement in sports can bolster academic perseverance. However, the same study noted that the lack of institutional support, inadequate facilities, and limited access to qualified coaches in remote areas hinder the holistic development of these student-athletes. These findings underscore the pressing need for targeted

interventions that address the specific needs of student-athletes in the country's geographically challenged regions.

The compounded challenges faced by student-athletes in multilevel environments have far-reaching consequences. The lack of adequate support and resources can lead to decreased academic performance, diminished athletic development, and increased psychological stress. Braquez and Morbo (2023) found that coaching competencies and the utilization of sports facilities significantly influence the commitment and psychological well-being of student-athletes. In environments where such competencies and facilities are lacking, student-athletes may experience reduced motivation, increased burnout, and a higher likelihood of discontinuing either their academic or athletic pursuits. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to improve infrastructure, provide specialized training for coaches, and implement policies that support the dual development of student-athletes in multilevel environments.

Significance of the Study

As a researcher, I recognize the urgent need to address the unique challenges faced by student-athletes in multilevel environments, where limited access to sports facilities, and institutional support often hinders their academic and athletic development. This study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By focusing on the realities of student-athletes in remote and underserved areas, I aim to advocate for improved infrastructure, equitable resource distribution, and innovative strategies that can create inclusive and supportive learning environments. This research calls on the Department of Education (DepEd), school leaders, teachers, parents, and future scholars to take actionable steps toward addressing these disparities and ensuring that all student-athletes, regardless of their multilevel environment, are given equal opportunities to succeed on the field.

Research Question

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of student-athletes who are trying to succeed in athletic events despite training in the multilevel environment. With this, I wanted to answer the question:

1. What are the experiences of the student-athletes in a multilevel environment?

Conceptual Lens

I anchored my study on the assertion of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005). Bronfenbrenner's theory posits that an individual's development is influenced by a series of interconnected environmental systems, ranging from the immediate surroundings (e.g., family) to broad societal structures (e.g., culture). Specifically, Bronfenbrenner describes four levels of analysis that characterize the multi-level environment: (1) the microsystem, (2) the mesosystem, (3) the exosystem, and (4) the macrosystem (Balish, and Côté, 2014).

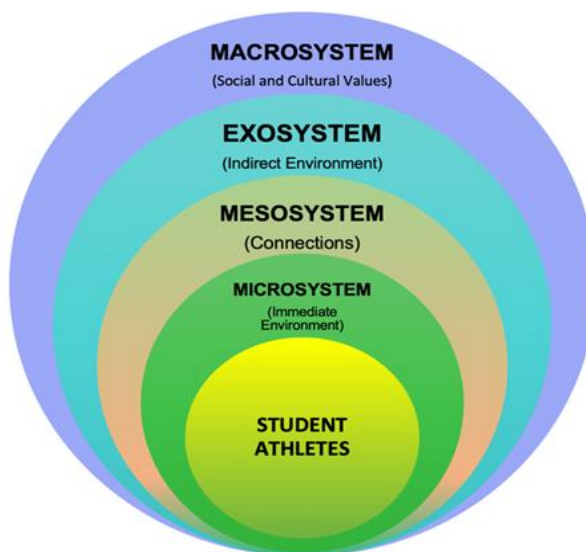


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Assumptions

As a researcher, I assumed through an ontological lens that student-athletes living in a multilevel environment experience unique and often overlooked realities that shape their athletic journeys. I believed that these individuals face limitations in accessing quality education, proper training facilities, and competitive opportunities, which require them to exert significantly more effort to succeed. I assumed that their environment not only restricts the resources available to them but also influences how they construct meaning around their struggles and achievements. Despite these constraints, I believed that student-athletes in such settings demonstrate remarkable determination, adaptability, and resilience. I assumed that their lived experiences would reveal that success in sports and education is not solely defined by access to resources, but also by the strength of their will, community support, and personal values cultivated through adversity.

Methodology

This chapter provided an outline of the research methods that were used to conduct this study. These include the research design, sample and sampling, data gathering procedure, data analysis, and the trustworthiness of the study.

Research Design

In this study, I adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to gain a deeper understanding of how participants experienced and interpreted their unique realities. This design allowed me to focus on their lived experiences within a specific context, giving voice to meanings that might otherwise remain unnoticed (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Following Moustakas (1994) phenomenological approach, I attentively listened to

student-athletes' stories while setting aside my own assumptions to better understand their perspectives.

Sample and Sampling Technique

I interviewed ten (10) participants to hear their stories firsthand: five (5) teacher-coaches with at least three years of coaching experience and competition exposure, and five (5) student-athletes who had been actively participating for at least three (3) years in athletic events across different schools. I employed purposive sampling using the abovementioned criteria. I asked for the help of the school principal to identify my intended participants. In this way, it helps ensure that the sample includes "information-rich" experiences that deepened my understanding of the circumstances I explored (Stratton, 2024).

Data Gathering Technique

In this study, I collected data by listening directly to participants' stories and experiences. After securing formal approvals from academic authorities, and from the graduate school dean. I obtained permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and parental assent. I conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with the individual coaches and focus group discussions with the student-athletes using interview guide questions, audio recordings, and notes to capture their responses (Bird, 2017).

Data Analysis Technique

In this study, I employed thematic analysis, a systematic process that involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. I began by familiarizing myself with the data by reading transcripts repeatedly and jotting down initial ideas. Next, I generated initial codes by labeling meaningful data segments, which I examined and collated into potential themes. I reviewed the themes against the coded data and the full dataset to ensure coherence. This was followed by defining and naming each theme to capture its essence. Finally, I wrote the report, integrating illustrative data extracts to convey the themes and demonstrate how they answer the interview guide questions (Ahmed, 2025).

Trustworthiness

In conducting this research, I worked to strengthen credibility by engaging deeply with participants' accounts and using strategies like verification to ensure their voices were accurately represented. I also undertook the informed consent protocol that ensured honesty, voluntary, and authentic participant engagement. To support transferability, I offered rich, contextual details so that readers can judge how the findings might resonate in similar settings. I maintained dependability by documenting the research process systematically, enabling others to see how decisions were made. Indeed, my study was subjected to review and approval of the Society of Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics. I finally secured confirmability by reflecting on my own assumptions and grounding conclusions firmly in the data rather than personal bias (Shenton, 2023).

Results

In this chapter, I presented the lived experiences of student-athletes who thrived in their sports in a multilevel environment. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, I interpreted their experiences and identified key themes. At the microsystem level, I observed coaches' dedication through personalized training, addressing diverse needs, and ensuring well-being. In the mesosystem, I noted collaboration with the community, efforts to foster positive team dynamics, and support extending beyond training and limited

access to quality equipment and facilities. The exosystem revealed barriers such as financial strain, while the macrosystem highlighted broader constraints, including limited international support. The figure below illustrates these themes within the ecological framework.

Modified Paradigm

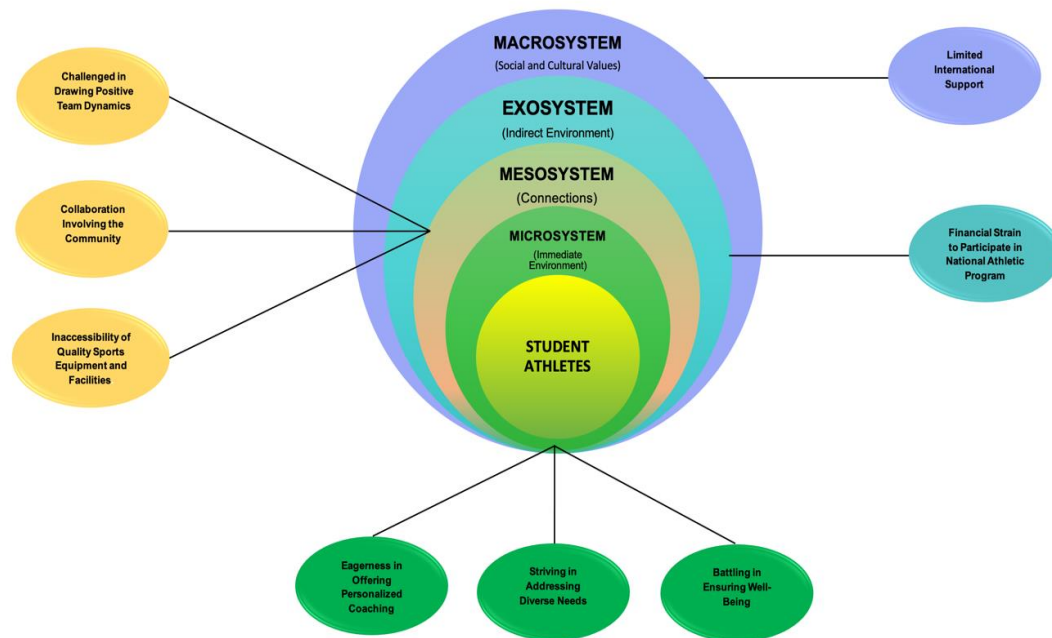


Figure 2. Roles of Multilevel Environment in the Performance of Student-Athletes Who Excelled in Their Respective Athletic Event

The Influence of Microsystem Environment on Student-Athlete

I saw how profoundly the immediate environment of the microsystem shapes student-athletes, especially those from remote, resource-limited areas. Families, schools, coaches, and communities become their foundation, teaching resilience and adaptability. Yet, when facing broader competitive arenas, they often encounter unseen barriers favoring athletes from better-funded programs. Their journey is not just about talent but about overcoming these challenges with personal effort and community support. From these experiences, key themes emerged: eagerness in personalized coaching, striving to meet diverse needs, and battling to ensure well-being.

On Eagerness in Offering Personalized Coaching. Through my conversations with participants, I realized that coaching in remote, challenging environments is much more than teaching sports; it serves as a lifeline for student-athletes. Coaches dedicate their time and energy, often sacrificing rest, to create

personalized programs that teach responsibility, perseverance, and balance, showing how guidance and belief can transform lives. This dedication was reflected in coaches' own words as they recalled:

Ahmm... Ma'am, Sa kanang vacant time nako naga.buhat gyud ko ug program para sa training maam unya ginahatag nako sa ilaha ug nagsalig nga matinud-anon sila sa pagsunod sa ilang iskedyul (I give them individual schedules and trust them to be honest about following their schedule). IDI-P1-L23

Kinahanglan namo balansehon ang ilang oras sa academics ug training sa ilang sports (We need to balance their time between academics and their sports training). IDI-P2-L116

Ginapahinumduman nako sila na seryosohon ang training ug drills kada adlaw. (I reminded them to take training and drills seriously). IDI-P5-L334 – 335

Through personalized coaching, student-athletes learned to manage their time better. I was informed by no less than the students-athletes that they learned from these personalized coaching. For instance, they developed discipline and motivation to keep going both in the classroom and on the field. I remembered their faces when they echoed:

Maglisod sapag balance sa pag-eskwela ug sa pag-training wala pud koy enough support gikan sakong parents (It's also hard to balance studying and training without enough support from my parents). FGD-P3-L13

Mag focus sa training, magseryoso sa drills ug mo sunod sa coach para mo batac (Focus on training, take drills seriously, and follow the coach in order to improve). FGD-P1-L41

Need ang jud time management ug pag sunod sa instruction sa coach (Time management, ma'am. I feel like time management is necessary for a student-athlete). FGD-P2-L44

On Striving in Addressing Diverse Needs. I learned that athletes have diverse needs. These needs should be addressed in the immediate environment to help them grow, perform well, and thrive both in sports and in life. I realized how deeply the school cares for its student-athletes. Meal programs, community involvement, and encouragement create belonging, strengthen bonds, and support both personal and athletic growth. Coaches shared how this care helps them thrive and reach their full potential, as they reiterated:

Ang among eskwelahan nag gahin ug pondo para sa mga atleta kani gikan sa canteen. Nagahatag og pagkaon para masiguro ang kabaskog sa panlawas sa mga atleta. Dako na kining tabang (Our school allocates funds for the athletes from the canteen. They provide meals to ensure the athletes' health and strength. This is a big help). IDI-P3-L227 – 228

Makita jud nako nga lain-lain ang panginahanglan sa mga atleta... Naay uban nga kinahanglan gyud pag giya sa academics, uban kinahanglan tabang sa

nutrition ug training, ug uban pud emotional support. Mao nga among gi-prioritize nga matagad ang matag usa sa ilahang panginahanglan para sa ilang paglambo. (I can really see that athletes have different needs. Some need guidance with academics, others need support with nutrition and training, and some also need emotional support. That's why we prioritize addressing each of their needs for their growth) IDI-P1-L26

Student-athletes faced real challenges, especially when school and government support are limited. Lacking proper nutrition, financial, and emotional support. Yet, they show remarkable resilience, finding ways to keep pursuing their goals. This was echoed by the student-athletes themselves, who shared:

Lisod gyud usahay, ma'am, kay kulang mi og support sa eskwelahan ug sa gobyerno. Usahay walay sakto nga pagkaon ug kinahanglan pa gyud namo ug financial assistance. (It is really difficult sometimes, ma'am, because we lack support from the school and the government. Sometimes we don't have proper meals and we really need financial assistance). FGD-P3-L12

Uhm lisod pud siya for me from the school or kanang mga gamit nga kailangan po. Especially kay layo baya mi maam. (It's also hard for me, ma'am, especially if there's not enough equipment, and if there's no support from the school or the government, especially since we're far away). FGD-P2-L9

Furthermore, a participant remarked...

Lisod pud Ma'am kung walay ika hatag imong pamilya, biskan emotional support nalang dili pa mahatag. Padayon gihapon ko nkay naa among mga coach ug school motabang labi na sa kalisod. (It's also difficult, Ma'am, when your family cannot provide anything, not even emotional support. I still keep going, Ma'am, because of the help of our coaches and school, especially during tough times). FGD-P5-L16

On Battling in Ensuring Well-being. As a teacher-coach, I've seen that supporting student-athletes goes far beyond training; it's about caring for their whole well-being. Coaches and educators often go the extra mile, providing food, equipment, and emotional support, sometimes even from their own resources, to help athletes thrive. Their dedication shows that success in sports isn't just about skill but about nurturing resilience, health, and growth. This holistic care empowers student-athletes to excel both on the field and in the classroom, as coaches shared:

Naa mi funds sa amoang canteen na amoa silang ginatagaan ug budget para ilahang mga food or snacks (We allocate funds from our canteen to provide food or snacks for them). IDI-P3-L227

Muagamit jud me sa among sarili nga budget... amidst sa kabusy kay teacher mi at same time coach mi (We end up using our own money... Even if we're busy being teachers and coaches, we make time for their training). IDI-P2-L125

Pagkaon, kung wala silay sapatos, medyas, kana murag naa pay ing-ana (We provide food, shoes, socks, and other needs for the athletes because they don't have these things). IDI-P4-L279 – 280

Hearing these remarks, I came to realize that supporting student-athletes goes beyond training; it requires a community where teachers and coaches step in to meet basic needs, often using personal resources. Success depends not just on talent, but on nutrition, equipment, and emotional support. Student-athletes emphasized strong personal drive to succeed and achieve victory through hard work and perseverance, as student-athletes echoed:

Gusto pud namo ipakita sa tanan nga naga paningkamot gyud mi ug kaya jud namo biskan ing-ani lang, kaya sa kwarta namo ug sa among school. (We want to show everyone that we are striving and that we can achieve something despite the lack of resources.) FGD-P2-L63

Naninkamot ma'am, push ang sarili kay gusto man maka daog (We push ourselves, ma'am, because we want to win). FGD-P1-L60

Influence of Mesosystem Environment on Student-Athletes

The mesosystem shapes student-athletes' experiences, especially in geographically challenged areas, as I witnessed during my interviews. Their interactions with family, school, coaches, and peers become a crucial support system, helping bridge gaps caused by limited resources. From their stories, key themes emerged: community collaboration, navigating team dynamics, and offering support beyond training.

On Collaboration Involving the Community. During the period of my discussions with my study participants, I learned that involving the community is essential for student-athletes in a multilevel environment. Coaches emphasized the role of local leaders, like the barangay head, in securing sports equipment. Involving the community fosters shared responsibility, making student-athletes feel valued and supported, and helps create an inclusive environment that nurtures both their academic and athletic growth, as coaches stated:

Part samong ginabuhay diri is naa mi funds sa amoang canteen na amoa silang ginatagaan ug budget para ilahang food or snacks (Part of what we do here is allocate funds from our canteen to provide food or snacks for them). IDI-P3-L227-228

Ang tribal head sa community kay naga extend pud ug tabang ba. So, dapat ang kanang tanan namo activity, tanan namo ginabuhay sa skwelahan. Kanang noted jud na sa dato kanang mananghid jud mi sa iya (We coordinated with the community leaders... we borrow equipment from the barangay). IDI-P4-L283-284

Lacking proper equipment and institutional backing forces athletes to improvise, which can hinder their growth and competitiveness. These challenges show how vital community involvement is in bridging gaps and providing resources. Collaboration among schools, local leaders, and stakeholders can offer training,

guidance, and encouragement, helping athletes thrive academically and in sports. I am really touched by the following narratives of the student-athletes, as they emotionally shared:

Lisod sad siya for me ma'am kay dili gyud enough ang equipment especially sa among school unya kay layo sad mi sa syudad maam ba lisod wla mi kahulaman (It's also hard for me, ma'am, especially if there's not enough equipment, especially since we're far away). FGD-P2-L9-10

Mag lisod ko ma'am kay dili sad kaayo maka support ang school sa unsa man akong ginabuhay kay kulang gyud maam tapos syempre lisod pud kay lisod mi sa pamilya maam ba kulang mi ug kwarta gyud." (It's hard for me, ma'am, because there's not much support from the school for what I'm doing.) FGD-P3-L12

Lisod sa amoa ma'am kay wala mi gamit biskan isa so naga improvise na lang mig amoa. Then ang coach pud namo is dili siya kanang always maka ano sa amoa kay naa man siyay klase gud (It's difficult for us, ma'am, because we don't have any equipment, so we have to improvise. Our coach can't always attend to us because he has classes). FGD-P4-L16

On Being Challenged in Drawing Positive Team Dynamics. Managing team dynamics relies on collaboration and understanding the influences on student-athletes. Participants shared how coaches guide them through peer pressures, fostering focus and aligned team goals. Coaches and student-athletes work together to navigate team dynamics and stay focused despite challenges. Their experiences showed that collaboration between coaches, teammates, and athletes builds resilience, commitment, and team cohesion, even in geographically challenged areas, as the coaches reiterated:

Madala sa barkada. So, mao na nga gina challenge, namo as coach ... ginapapili jud namo ma'am kung unsa jud ilang focus (They get influenced by their friends... we had to make him choose). IDI-P2-L106

Lisod usahay i-manage ang grupo kay lain-lain ang personalidad sa mga atleta, pero amo silang gina-guide nga magtinabangay ug mag-focus sa goals sa team (It is sometimes difficult to manage the team because each athlete has a different personality, but we guide them to collaborate and focus on the team's goals). IDI-P1-L12

Exposure, gina engage nako sila sa mga pisikal activities nga same-same ug goal sa training nga need nila... mang reklamo lge pero gina encourage jud pirmi para sa ilang pangandoy sa kinabuhi (I expose them to physical activities with similar goals to their training needs... I constantly remind them of their"

Limited coaching availability and the lack of recognition for some sports show how important teamwork is for creating better training conditions. Supporting one another, student-athletes build a resilient, encouraging team culture that helps them grow despite external challenges. Yet, despite these challenges, their drive remains strong. "Laban lang" reflects their determination to succeed in both athletics and life. This collaborative spirit was reflected in the students' own experiences, as they shared:

Usahay lisod kay daghan kaayong distractions gikan sa uban teammates, pero gi-guide mi sa coach unsaon pag-focus sa team goals (Sometimes it's difficult because of distractions from other teammates, but our coach guides us on how to stay focused on the team goals). FGD-P3-L13

Ako ma'am maglisod ko for sakong sports kay tungod kay dili kaayo mi focus sa among trainor, then kanang kami-kami lang pud mag practice mao nang dili kaayo mi maka learn ug new techniques, ma'am (It's hard for me, ma'am, because our trainer doesn't focus much on us, and we must practice on our own, so we don't learn new techniques). FGD-P4-L14

Ang coach pud namo is dili siya kanang always maka ano sa amoa kay naa man siyay klase gud. Kanang dili siya kanang focus sa amoa ba na, tas dili enough ang time kay dili pud ilado among sport (Our coach can't always attend to us because he has classes. He can't focus on us, and we don't have enough time because our sport isn't well-known). FGD-P5-L16-17

Inaccessibility of Quality Sports Equipment and Facilities. In my conversation with the coaches, I discovered that there is limited access to proper sports equipment or safe training spaces, yet coaches have shown remarkable creativity, turning roads into tracks and repurposing everyday materials to keep training going. This reality was deeply felt by teacher-coaches assigned in a multilevel environment, who shared the following experiences:

So, padagan mi, sa track na mga training namo usually diri jud mi sa kalsada ... naka develop man ta ug mga materyals improvise lang hinuon pero kaya ra (For our track training, we usually run on the road... we've managed to develop some materials) IDI-P1-L12 – 13

Naa mi mga gibuhad na improvise na mga materials... gina gawas namo among bata most specially every weekend kay wala man mi klase ana (We improvised materials for our athletes... we take our athletes outside, especially on weekends when there are no classes) IDI-P3-L242

Mugamit mig bato which is daghan man makita sa school (We use whatever resources we have, like stones for weights) IDI-P5-L330.

As I delved into the experiences of the student-athletes, there were hindrances in their athletic performance due to limited access to quality equipment and training venues. This often result to slow progress and limit their potential, as they echoed:

Maglisod pag training, ma'am, kay walay tarong na mga gamit ug lugar para praktisan (It's difficult to train because there is no proper equipment, and a proper place for the training). FGD-P1-L6

Mag-improvise mi ug gamit para sa among training, ma'am. Magpuli-puli lang mi gamit bisan gamay ra, dili na mi maghulat naay maabot na bag-o (We

improvise our equipment for training, Ma'am. We take turns using whatever little we have, and we no longer wait for new equipment to arrive). FGD-P2-L9

Experiences of Student-Athletes within Exosystem Environment

The experiences of student-athletes in an exosystem environment became evident through the participants' reflections on external factors that indirectly shaped their academic and athletic experiences. Decision made national sports bodies quietly influence their chances to train, compete, and succeed. What stood out most in their experiences were the constant financial strain on athletic participation and the inaccessibility of quality sports equipment and facilities.

On Financial Strain to Participate in National Athletic Program. In my interviews with the coaches it revealed that they are working tirelessly to train student-athletes despite serious financial constraints. Coaches were dedicated to finding ways to motivate and support their athletes. Their stories show that while resources may be limited, the impact of passionate, resourceful coaching extends far beyond skill, shaping resilience, character, and perseverance in student-athletes. These realizations came up when coaches reflected:

Lisod gyud usahay kay kulang ang budget para sa pamasahe, registrion fee sa tournament sa mga private sectors mao ng maningkamot mi maka apil sa national tournaments (It is really difficult sometimes because there is not enough budget for transportation and the registration fees for tournaments in the private sector, which is why we strive hard to participate in national tournaments). IDI-P1-L33

Gina-engage nako sila sa mga libre na kalihukan nga parehas ug tumong sa ilang training nga kinahanglan nila. (I engage them in free activities that align with their training needs.) IDI-P5-L328

I learned from the student-athletes' experiences in under-resourced schools that they have remarkable resilience, pushing themselves to grow despite financial constraints, as they shared:

Nagapaningkamot mi makadaog sa mga local tournament Ma'am para makaabot mi sa national level, kay para madungagan among exposure ug confidence. (We strive to win in local tournaments, Ma'am, so that we can reach the national level, as it helps increase our exposure and confidence). FGD-P1-L28

Apilan jud nako ug paningkamot, ma'am, bisan mao ra ni ang makaya na ma provide sa akong eskwelahan. Paningkamotan gihapon nimo kay gusto man namo maka abot sa higher meets (I will definitely join and do my best, Ma'am, even if this is all that my school can provide. I will still strive hard because we want to reach the higher-level meets.). FGD-P2-L33

Influence of Macrosystem Environment on Student-Athletes

I saw how social and cultural values deeply shape the lives of student-athletes, influencing access to scholarships, sponsorships, and educational opportunities. In the world of sports where athletic success can open doors to bigger opportunities from the national to the international podium. Their stories revealed how cultural pride and social expectations motivate athletes to work harder, yet also show how limited resources and opportunities can either enable or constrain their dreams.

On Limited International Support. It became clear from the experiences of coaches that there is a scarcity of scholarship and limited sponsorship for exceptional student-athletes in international level. These have been clearly reflected in the shared experiences of the coaches, as they voice out their frustrations:

Kung aduna lang untay daghang international partners na pwede makahatag ug scholarship ug sponsorship, mas daghan pa ang maingganyo sa athletics (If there were more international partners who could provide scholarships and sponsorships, more people would be encouraged to engage in athletics). IDI-P1-L23 – 24

Bisan naay talento ang mga atleta, lisod molampos kung walay klarong scholarship ug sponsorship programs labi na sa international level (Even if the athletes have talent, it's hard for them to succeed without access to international scholarship and sponsorship programs) IDI-P2-L111

I heard from the experiences of student-athletes that access to scholarships and sponsorships was a necessity that significantly boosted their motivation, performance, and overall commitment to their sports. Supporting this data, student-athletes conveyed:

Kung naa lang untay daghang sponsorship, mas dali ang pag-apil sa mga international competitions (If there were more sponsorships, it would be easier to participate in international competitions). FGD-P2-L44

Lisod kaayo Ma'am kay gamay ra ang naga offer ug scholarship ug walay mga mo sponsors sa among mga dula mapa local o international. (It is very difficult, Ma'am, because only a few offer scholarships and there are no sponsors for our sports, whether at the local or international level) FGD-P4-L45

Viewpoints and Standpoints

From my viewpoint, the performance of student-athletes is shaped by multiple environmental levels, from immediate coaching support to broader systemic structures. At the microsystem level, athletes received physical support through tailored training, emotional and moral support from coaches, and guidance to address diverse needs, fostering discipline, motivation, and well-being. At the mesosystem level, collaboration between schools, teams, and communities provided physical support via shared facilities, financial support for programs and travel, and moral support through encouragement, helping athletes overcome resource limitations. In the exosystem, financial constraints restricted access to national programs, highlighting the need for financial support and moral encouragement to persevere despite barriers. At the

macrosystem level, limited international scholarships and sponsorships further constrained advancement, requiring financial, emotional, and moral support to sustain ambition and growth. From my standpoint, student-athlete success emerges not only from talent and effort but from the complex interplay of supportive microsystems, collaborative mesosystems, and structural limitations at the exosystem and macrosystem levels, each providing essential forms of physical, emotional, moral, and financial support.

Discussions

Elaboration of Findings

The Influence of Microsystem Environment on Student-Athletes

On Eagerness in Offering Personalized Coaching. Immediate environment, particularly the coach–athlete relationship within the microsystem, plays a vital role in shaping student-athletes’ resilience, discipline, and holistic development, especially in challenging contexts. Supportive and personalized coaching has been found to strengthen athletes’ resilience and collective efficacy, helping them cope with academic and athletic demands more effectively (Adiloğulları et al., 2025). Similarly, interpersonal coaching styles that emphasize encouragement, trust, and guidance positively influence young athletes’ resilience, performance, and long-term commitment to sport, highlighting the importance of coaches who invest time and care beyond technical training (Llanos-Muñoz et al., 2023). Moreover, autonomy-supportive coaching has been shown to enhance psychological resilience and optimism among youth athletes, reinforcing how individualized guidance empowers athletes to manage time, stay disciplined, and pursue long-term goals despite limited resources (Zhang et al., 2025). Together, these claims affirm my current study that personalized coaching within the microsystem is not merely about performance, but about nurturing responsibility, balance, and personal growth in student-athletes.

On Striving to Address Diverse Needs. In a microsystem environment, supporting student-athletes requires addressing their diverse needs beyond athletic training. Meeting students athletes’ basic needs and offering guidance and community opportunities fosters belonging, strengthens bonds, and supports their academic, personal, and athletic growth. Research shows that structured support systems, including mentorship, inclusive programs, and interprofessional collaboration, enhance resilience, focus, teamwork, and psychosocial development, contributing to holistic welfare of the student-athletes (Smith et al., 2025; Steins et al., 2024). Resource constraints and systemic gaps can undermine motivation and development, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions to ensure equitable access to facilities, mentorship, and support networks (Boquel & Junsay, 2023). This current study affirms these insights that personalized care, community involvement, and institutional support are critical in enabling student-athletes to thrive academically, socially, and athletically, ensuring their holistic growth and long-term success.

On Battling to Ensure Well-Being. Student-athletes’ well-being thrives when immediate environment provide holistic support that integrates physical, psychological, and social care. Research shows that holistic frameworks encompassing physical, psychological, and social well-being help student athletes balance athletic demands with academic and personal development, validating the experiences of educators who go the extra mile to provide food, equipment, and emotional support (Sato et al., 2023). School-based team sports and supportive environments enhance emotional resilience, social integration, and overall wellness, reinforcing that success emerges from community and care, not just physical training (Kang, Meng, & Su, 2024). Interprofessional approaches that integrate health, academic, and psychological support can

further improve athletes' holistic well-being, suggesting sustainable solutions beyond individual sacrifice (Steins et al., 2024). Finally, autonomy supportive coaching styles nurture psychological resilience and optimism, highlighting the importance of nurturing environments in fostering long term growth (Frontiers in Psychology, 2024). Together, this study affirms these claims that student-athletes well-being is cultivated through comprehensive support, involvement, and intentional care of immediate environment.

Influence of Mesosystem Environment on Student-Athletes

On Collaboration Involving the Community. Student-athletes' experiences in a multilevel environment challenged contexts are profoundly shaped by the interactions between their family, school, coaches, and athletic community, reflecting the mesosystem's influence on their development. Research shows that social support and community involvement positively influence sports participation, commitment, and overall engagement, underscoring how supportive networks help bridge gaps caused by limited resources (Zhang et al., 2025). The presence of family, peer, and teacher support is linked to higher levels of physical activity and mental well-being (Frontiers in Psychology, 2025). Social support also plays a crucial role in reducing academic burnout by providing emotional and practical resources that help adolescents manage stress and maintain participation in sports (Gao, 2025). Furthermore, positive mesosystem environments, where school and family resources are combined, strengthen students' attachment to their institutions and promote consistent activity and learning outcomes (Rodriguez et al., 2025). The findings of the current study affirms that collaboration among schools, local leaders, families, and communities is essential for nurturing student-athletes' holistic growth and resilience.

On Challenges in Drawing Positive Team Dynamics. Supportive coaching and positive team dynamics play a crucial role in fostering resilience, commitment, and social cohesion among student-athletes in a multilevel environment. Research shows that supportive coaching behaviors, where coaches encourage, provide constructive feedback, and emotional support, significantly boost athletes' resilience and collective efficacy, enabling teams to cope better with challenges and stressors (Adiloğulları et al., 2025). Team sports participation also contributes to emotional and social cohesion, helping athletes adapt to adversity and reinforcing a sense of "we are in this together" (Kang et al., 2024). Positive peer relationships and social identity further support adaptive motivation, important when athletes face both internal and external pressures (Rosario, 2026). Additionally, team cohesion directly enhances mental toughness through social support and shared identity, reflecting how collaboration among teammates and coaches fosters accountability and commitment even in challenging environments (Xu, 2025). The findings of this study affirms these claims that positive team dynamics arise not from ideal conditions, but from supportive interactions, shared goals, and mutual trust, helping student-athletes stay focused, resilient, and motivated despite obstacles.

On Inaccessibility of Quality Sports Equipment and Facilities. Many student-athletes in remote schools face the daily reality of training without proper equipment or safe practice spaces, forcing teachers and coaches to transform roads into improvised tracks and everyday materials into training tools. Research consistently shows that inadequate sports facilities and equipment significantly limit athletes' participation, skill development, and overall sports engagement (Peter-Ajayi & Olarewaju, 2020). Studies in both developing and under-resourced contexts find that when schools lack adequate equipment and facilities, students have fewer opportunities for competitive participation and holistic athletic growth, which can negatively affect motivation and performance (Magalona et al., 2025). Similarly, the shortage of equipment and facilities is shown to undermine the effectiveness of coaching and athletes' performance outcomes (Tianio et al., 2024). Research also highlights that insufficient sports infrastructure in primary schools

hampers students' physical, social, and skill growth (Sanni et al., 2018). This study affirms these claims that without adequate equipment and spaces, student-athletes' training is compromised and hindered athletic performance, even as they show remarkable resilience.

Experiences of Student-Athletes within Exosystem Environment

On Financial Strain to Participate in National Athletic Program. The exosystem environment exerts a powerful but often unseen influence on student-athletes' academic and athletic journeys, shaping opportunities far beyond what they can control. Research on youth sports reveals that socioeconomic disparities significantly affect sports participation (Pandya, 2021). Studies show that socioeconomic status directly predicts sport participation, with lower socioeconomic status linked to higher attrition and reduced access to sport opportunities (Grasaas et al., 2025). Financial barriers including costs related to travel, registration fees, and equipment have been found to restrict sport participation and contribute to disparities in sports (Limbd, 2021; Cost of participation). These claims were supported by the findings of this study that student-athletes from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face financial barriers that limit sports participation, increase sports dropout rates, and create unequal access to opportunities.

Influence of Macrosystem Environment on Student-Athletes

Limited International Support. In the macrosystem environment, plays a decisive role in access to scholarships and sponsorships of student-athletes. Structural barriers within broader sociocultural contexts influence the availability of financial support and institutional pathways, making international competition and advancement challenging (Ha, 2025). Nations with supportive cultural orientations toward sport achieve higher performance outcomes (Sava et al., 2024). Studies on global sport systems further indicate that international mobility for athletes such as securing scholarships in foreign institutions or being sponsored by multinational brands is closely tied to broader policy frameworks, national sport governance, and economic priorities, which can systematically disadvantage athletes without structural backing (Agergaard & Soloef, 2023). Moreover, macrosystem factors constrain or enable developmental pathways for student-athletes (Kovács & Szakál, 2024). Thus, these claims were supported by the findings of this study that international scholarship and sponsorship limitations revealed the powerful influence of macrosystem forces on student-athletes' dreams and participation.

Future Directions

Future research should focus on tracking student-athletes from a multilevel environment to better understand the academic and athletic challenges they face, including limited facilities, guidance, and competition opportunities. Mixed-methods research, combining interviews with surveys, can identify which support systems, financial, mentorship, or community-based, most effectively promote holistic development. Comparative studies between athletes with varying levels of support can reveal the impact of different interventions, while examining successful regional programs may highlight best practices. These insights can guide targeted strategies to ensure student-athletes in remote areas have the resources and opportunities needed to reach their full potential.

Challenges

Strengthening the multilevel environment of student-athletes means building care and support around them at every level of their experiences. At the microsystem, coaches and schools should focus on

personalized, autonomy-supportive coaching that values well-being as much as performance; at the mesosystem, strong collaboration among families, schools, and communities can foster positive team dynamics and help address gaps in equipment and facilities. Beyond this, financial assistance at the exosystem level and supportive policies and international opportunities at the macrosystem level are essential to reduce inequality and ensure that student-athletes are not limited by circumstances beyond their control.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

Research Title: Barriers and Enablers: Roles of Multilevel Environment in the Performance of Student-Athletes Who Excelled in Their Respective Athletic Event

Research Objectives	Guide Questions	Probing Questions
To investigate the experiences of the student-athletes in a multilevel environment.	1. What are your experiences as a student-athlete in a multilevel environment?	1.1 What are your experiences as a student-athletes in a multilevel environment? 1.2 What are your training programs as a student-athlete in a multilevel environment. 1.3 How do you prepare your-self as a student-athlete in a multilevel environment? 1.4 How it affects to your performance as a student-athlete in a multilevel environment?
To discuss the coping mechanisms of student athletes in a multilevel environment.	2. What are the challenges and struggles that you faced as a student-athletes in a multilevel environment.	1.1 What are the strategies did you use to address the challenges you experienced? 1.2 Among those strategies, which one do you consider effective? Why? 1.3 How these challenges motivate you despite being a student-athlete in a multilevel environment?
To know the learning insights that could be drawn from the results of the study of the lived experiences of student athletes in a multilevel environment	3. What are your insights as a student- in a multilevel environment?	1.1 What realizations can you share as a student-athlete who lives in a multilevel environment? 1.2 What are your reflections as a student-athlete who lives in a multilevel environment?