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Coach-athlete relationship and interpersonal behaviour: Influence in youth athlete continuous participation in sports

Siegfried Kent D. Elicot^{abcd}, Moreno B. Java, Jr.^{abc}, Elpedio A. Arias^{abc},
Marlene E. Orfrecio^{abc}, & Ruben L. Tagare, Jr.^{bcd*}

University of Southern Mindanao, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Background Problems: The coach-athlete relationship and the coach's behaviour are vital in shaping athletes' experiences, motivation, and long-term commitment to sports. While previous studies have explored coach-athlete relationships and coaching behaviours, few have examined their combined impact on long-term sports participation. **Research Objectives:** The primary objectives of this study are to assess the influence of the coach-athlete relationship and coaches' interpersonal behaviours on youth athletes' intention to continue participating in sports and to investigate the relationships between these factors and the overall intention to persist in sports. **Methods:** A quantitative, descriptive-correlational design was used to examine the relationships between the coach-athlete relationship, coaching behaviours, and youth athletes' intention to continue in sports. The study involved 66 varsity athletes from a school in Cotabato, Philippines, selected through total enumeration, with data collected using the validated Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) and Interpersonal Behaviour Questionnaire (IBQ). Data were analysed using frequency counts, weighted means, and Spearman's rho correlation to assess variable associations and ensure reliability. **Findings and Results:** The analysis revealed a positive coach-athlete relationship, with athletes expressing strong agreement on trust, respect, and commitment. Perceptions of interpersonal behaviours were similarly positive, particularly regarding coaches' encouragement in skill development and the enjoyment of time spent with them. However, the study found no significant relationship between the coach-athlete relationship, coaching behaviours, and athletes' intention to continue participating in sports. **Conclusion:** Despite positive perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship and interpersonal coaching behaviours. This study found no significant influence on youth athletes' intention to continue sports participation, highlighting the need for further research on other factors such as athlete motivation, support systems, and environmental conditions that may affect long-term sports engagement.

Keywords: Coach-athlete relationship; interpersonal behavior; intention to continue sports; sports participation



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Corresponding Author: Ruben L. Tagare, Jr, Institute of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato, Philippines.

tagareruben@usm.edu.ph

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INTRODUCTION

Youth sports participation is widely recognised for its positive impact on physical health, social development, and psychological well-being (Pfiñero-Cossio et al., 2021). However, sustaining long-term involvement in sports remains a significant challenge, as many athletes drop out of organised sports during adolescence (Eather et al., 2023). Research has increasingly focused on the factors that influence youth athletes' continued participation, with particular attention to the coach-athlete relationship and the interpersonal behaviors exhibited by coaches (Choi et al., 2020). These interpersonal dynamics are thought to shape athletes' motivation, satisfaction, and commitment to sports, yet their combined influence on athletes' intention to persist remains underexplored in the literature (Voelker et al., 2022).

The relationship between coaches and athletes plays a critical role in shaping athletic performance, motivation, and overall sports participation (de Subijana et al., 2020). This dynamic is even more influential in youth sports, as young athletes are at a developmental stage where their motivation and enjoyment of sports can be significantly impacted by their interpersonal experiences (Wekesser, 2019). A positive coach-athlete relationship fosters trust, emotional support, and effective communication, all of which are essential for youth athletes to continue engaging in sports (Wekesser et al., 2021). Conversely, poor relationships can lead to burnout, lack of motivation, and dropout from sports participation (Martin, 2020). Exploring this relationship is vital, particularly in understanding how it affects youth athletes' continuous engagement in sports, contributing to their personal development, physical health, and overall well-being (Wendling et al., 2018).

The coach-athlete relationship encompasses the interpersonal bond between the coach and athlete, including trust, communication, and mutual respect (Wachsmuth & Jowett, 2020). Effective interpersonal behaviour from coaches, characterised by clear communication, supportive feedback, and positive reinforcement, is central to this relationship (Jowett & Arthur, 2019). On the other hand, youth athletes' continuous participation in sports refers to their sustained involvement in sports activities over time, which is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including their experiences with coaches (Tagare et al., 2024; Wachsmuth & Jowett, 2020). Understanding these variables and how they interact provides insight into the factors that encourage or discourage ongoing participation in sports during critical developmental periods (Vigário et al., 2020).

A recent study have explored both the coach-athlete relationship and youth athletes' participation in sports as scholars have highlighted the importance of trust, empathy, and clear communication in fostering strong coach-athlete bonds, which in turn motivate athletes to achieve higher levels of performance (Davis et al., 2019). Similarly, Tolentino (2020) examined how interpersonal coaching behaviors influence athletes' motivation, with findings suggesting that supportive coaching styles positively affect athletes' enjoyment and commitment to their sport. Regarding youth sports participation, Vollenhoven (2018) found that a positive sports environment, including a strong coach-athlete relationship, is key to retaining young athletes in sports programmes. Furthermore, studies like that of Kamachi (2020) have emphasised the role of the coach in shaping an athlete's motivation and commitment, particularly in the context of youth sports where external influences are highly significant. Despite the wealth of studies on coach-athlete relationships and youth sports participation, few studies focus on the direct influence of interpersonal behaviour between coaches and youth athletes on the latter's continuous participation in sports. Research on this topic remains limited, particularly when examining how specific coaching behaviours directly contribute to the long-term commitment of youth athletes to sports. This research aims to fill this gap by investigating the influence of the coach-athlete relationship and interpersonal behaviour on the continuous participation of youth athletes in sports. Understanding this dynamic contributes to the broader body of knowledge regarding youth sports and provides practical insights for coaches, sports organisations, and policymakers aiming to improve youth sports retention and enhance athletes' overall experiences.

This study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing youth athletes' intentions to continue participating in sports, addressing a critical issue in athletic programs worldwide—high dropout rates among young athletes. By exploring the role of coach-athlete relationships and interpersonal coaching behaviours, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how these dynamics impact long-term engagement in sports, which is essential for developing effective retention strategies. Furthermore, the findings offer practical

implications for coaches, educators, and sports administrators in fostering supportive environments that encourage sustained athletic participation and improve overall athlete well-being.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a quantitative design, specifically a descriptive-correlational research design. Quantitative research design is a systematic investigation that quantifies data and generalises results from a sample to a population. It typically involves the use of structured tools such as surveys, questionnaires, or experiments to collect numerical data, which is then analysed using statistical methods (Thomas & Zubkov, 2020). This design aims to test hypotheses, establish patterns, and make predictions about a phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2022). It is widely used in social sciences, education, and health to assess relationships between variables and determine cause-and-effect dynamics (Ruslim et al., 2020).

Further, the descriptive-correlation approach is a type of research design that aims to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon and examine the relationships between variables without manipulating them. It provides a snapshot of existing conditions and seeks to determine if and how variables are related, without implying causation (Seeram, 2019). This method is often used in social sciences to explore the strength and direction of associations between factors in naturally occurring settings (Ruslim et al., 2020).

The quantitative descriptive-correlation design was chosen for this study because it allowed for the systematic collection of numerical data on both the coach-athlete relationship and youth athletes' continuous participation in sports. This approach described the current state of these variables and helped identify significant relationships between them, providing insights into how interpersonal behaviours influenced long-term sports participation. Using this design, the study explored patterns and associations without manipulating the variables, making it practical and effective for understanding real-world dynamics in youth sports.

Research Respondents and Sampling

The respondents for this study were 66 youth athletes from an integrated school in Cotabato, Philippines, who were varsity athletes actively participating in higher-level meets. The sample consisted of male and female athletes, aged 18 to 22 years, with body weights ranging from 45 to 60 kilograms. These characteristics made them an ideal sample for the study's focus on competitive sports participation, as they were experienced and involved in athletic competitions at a high level. To ensure comprehensive representation, a total enumeration procedure was employed, which included all eligible varsity athletes, thereby minimising sampling bias. The sample size of 66 was considered adequate for meaningful analysis of the relationships between the variables while maintaining practical feasibility for data collection. Additionally, the homogeneity of the sample, with athletes sharing similar backgrounds, competitive experiences, and age ranges, reduced the need for a larger sample size, enhancing the study's reliability and focus.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in the study was adopted from the work of Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) and included the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q), which consists of 11 items. The internal consistency of the CART-Q was strong, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high reliability across its subscales. Additionally, the study utilized the Interpersonal Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) developed by McCarthy (2020), consisting of 24 items. The IBQ also demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. Both questionnaires employed a 5-point Likert Scale, where a score of 5 indicated that the coach-athlete relationship and the interpersonal behavior of coaches were highly effective in influencing youth athletes' continued participation in sports, and a score of 1 indicated no effectiveness. This robust measurement approach ensured reliable data collection on the core variables of the study.

Statistical Analysis

The responses to each item were carefully tabulated and interpreted to address the study’s objectives. Data analysis involved the use of frequency counts, averages, and weighted means to summarise the overall trends and characteristics of the respondents’ answers. Spearman's rho correlation was employed to assess the relationships between the coach-athlete relationship, the interpersonal behaviour of coaches, and the athletes’ intention to continue participating in sports. This non-parametric statistical method was used to determine the strength and significance of the relationships between the variables, given that the data were ordinal and did not necessarily meet the assumptions of normal distribution. This approach provided insights into the degree of association between the quality of coach-athlete interactions and the likelihood of youth athletes’ sustained engagement in sports.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents the assessment of the coach-athlete relationship and its influence on youth athletes' intention to continue sports participation. It highlights key dimensions such as trust, respect, and commitment, which are essential in fostering a positive sporting environment. The findings provide insights into how the quality of coach-athlete interactions may impact an athlete’s long-term engagement in sports.

Table 1. Coach-Athlete Relationship as Influence Among Youth Athlete to Continue Sports Participation

Item	Mean	Verbal Description
8. I respect my coach	4.56	Strongly Agree
9. I trust my coach	4.53	Strongly Agree
9. I appreciate my coach sacrifices in order to improve my performance	4.48	Strongly Agree
10. When I am coached by my coach, I am ready to do my best	4.36	Strongly Agree
3. I like my coach	4.30	Strongly Agree
7. When I am coached by my coach, I am responsive to his/her efforts	4.30	Strongly Agree
1. I am close to (not distant from) my coach	4.27	Agree
1. When I am coached by my coach, I adopt friendly stance	4.08	Agree
6. I think that my sport career is promising with my coach	4.05	Agree
2. I am committed to my coach	3.98	Agree
4. When I am coached by my coach, I am at ease	3.88	Agree
Overall Mean	4.25	Agree

Table 2 examines the influence of coaches' interpersonal behaviors on youth athletes' intention to continue sports participation. It explores key aspects such as motivation, encouragement, and support, which play a crucial role in shaping athletes' experiences and commitment to sports. The results offer valuable insights into how coaching behaviors contribute to sustained athletic engagement.

Table 2. Interpersonal Behavior of Coaches as Influence among Youth Athlete to Continue Sports Participation

Item	Mean	Verbal Description
15. Encourage me to improve my skills	4.03	Agree
22. Acknowledges my ability to achieve my goals	3.98	Agree
14. Honestly enjoys spending time with me	3.97	Agree
20. Takes the time to get to know me	3.97	Agree
16. Supports my decision	3.92	Agree
21. Provides valuable feedback	3.86	Agree
2. Relates to me	3.83	Agree
10. Supports the choices I make for myself	3.82	Agree
1. Tells me that I can accomplish things	3.80	Agree
4. Is interested in what I do	3.71	Agree
17. Is distant when we spend time together	3.71	Agree
24. Questions my ability to overcome challenges	3.64	Agree
18. Impose their opinions on me	3.53	Agree
5. Encourage me to take my own decisions	3.48	Neutral
19. Limits my choices	3.48	Neutral
13. Doubts my capacity to improve	3.45	Neutral
3. Gives me the freedom to make my own choices	3.38	Neutral

Item	Mean	Verbal Description
6. Pressures me to adopt certain behaviors	3.29	Neutral
11. Pressure me to do things their way	3.17	Neutral
12. Sends me the message that I am incompetent	3.17	Neutral
9. Points out that I will likely fail	2.94	Neutral
7. Does not comfort me when I am feeling low	2.71	Neutral
8. Does not connect with me	2.50	Disagree
23. Does not care about me	2.41	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.49	Neutral

Table 3 presents the findings on youth athletes' intention to continue sports participation. It highlights their commitment, motivation, and future engagement in competitive sports based on their experiences with coaches and overall athletic environment. These results provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing long-term participation in sports.

Table 3. Intention to Continue Sports Participation

Item	Mean	Verbal Description
3. I am determined to participate in this sport one year from now.	4.62	Strongly Agree
2. I plan to participate in this sport one year from now.	4.55	Strongly Agree
1. I intend to participate in this sport one year from now	4.44	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.54	Strongly Agree

Table 4 illustrates the statistical relationship between the coach-athlete relationship and youth athletes' intention to continue sports participation. It examines whether the quality of interactions between coaches and athletes significantly influences their commitment to long-term athletic involvement. The findings offer insights into the role of coaching dynamics in sustaining youth engagement in sports.

Table 4. Significant Relationship between Coach-Athlete Relationship and Intention to Continue Sports Participation

Correlations				
		Coach Athlete Relationship	Intention to Continue	Interpretation
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.038	
CoachAthRel	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.762	No Significant Relationship
Spearman's rho	N	66	66	
	Correlation Coefficient	.038	1.000	
IntentionCont	Sig. (2-tailed)	.762	.	
	N	66	66	

Legend: NSR= Not Significant at 0.5 level of significance

Table 5 presents the statistical analysis of the relationship between coaches' interpersonal behaviors and youth athletes' intention to continue sports participation. It explores whether the way coaches interact with their athletes plays a significant role in fostering long-term commitment to sports. The results provide valuable insights into the impact of coaching behaviors on sustained athletic engagement.

Table 5. Significant Relationship between Interpersonal Behaviour of Coaches and Intention to Continue Sports Participation

Correlations				
		IntentionCont	InterPersBeh	Interpretation
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.017	
IntentionCont	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.898	No Significant Relationship
Spearman's rho	N	66	60	
	Correlation Coefficient	-.017	1.000	
InterPersBeh	Sig. (2-tailed)	.898	.	
	N	60	66	

Legend: NSR= Not Significant at 0.5 level of significance

Coach-athlete Relationship

Table 1 shows the coach-athlete relationship as an influence among youth athletes to continue sports participation. The statement, “I respect my coach,” got the highest mean of 4.56, with the verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree,” indicating a positive response among the respondents. It means that they have a deep respect for their coach. As a result, a positive influence of coach and athlete relationships has a high level of respect. In that case the athletes may build commitment and trust with their coach. Furthermore, the athlete with a strong connection and a deep respect for their coach influences them to continue sports participation, which the coach and athlete lead to a stronger relationship and success.

However, the statement, “When I am coached by my coach, I am at ease,” got the lowest mean of 3.88 with the verbal interpretation of Agree. A coaching environment that maximises athletes comfort and improves their overall experience by putting these strategies into practice; also, coaches can build a coaching environment that respects athlete choices and improves the relationship between the coach and the athlete as a whole. These methods will help to maintain the athletes’ experience getting better.

Generally, the overall mean of Table 1 is 4.25 with a verbal interpretation of Strongly Agree. Strong and positive response among the relationship between coach and athlete. The majority of athletes strongly agree with the statements in the survey, a positive response to the relationship of an athlete to their coach, very consistent based on their responses. Many areas, such as closeness, commitment, trust, respect, appreciation, willingness, and taking a friendly stance. That means that the impact of the coach-athlete relationship was very effective in terms of their influence to continue participating in sports. An important element that has a good impact on young athletes’ decision to stay involved and pursue sports is how well they believe their relationship with their coaches.

According to [Williams \(2023\)](#), the coach-athlete relationship plays a pivotal role in youth athlete development and retention in sports. The study examines various aspects of this relationship, including closeness, commitment, trust, and respect, highlighting how these factors influence the overall experience of young athletes. Survey data from young athletes indicate that coaches are crucial in developing athletes’ skills and fostering a positive and supportive environment ([Rout, 2021](#)). Strong, trusting relationships between coaches and athletes significantly contribute to athlete satisfaction and motivation ([McEvoy, 2022](#)). Effective communication and mutual respect are key components that lead to increased athlete commitment ([Ronkainen et al., 2022](#)). Supportive coaching behaviours enhance the psychological well-being of athletes, making them more likely to continue participating in sports ([Currie, 2019](#)). The quality of the interpersonal relationship between coaches and athletes directly influences the athletes’ motivation and long-term engagement in sports. Collectively, these studies underscore the essential role coaches play in establishing strong and trusting relationships that significantly contribute to youth athletes’ development, satisfaction, and retention in sports ([Gapa & Tagare, 2023](#)).

Interpersonal Behaviour

Table 2 shows the interpersonal behaviour of coaches’ as an influence among youth athletes to continue sports participation. The statement, “Encourage me to improve my skills,” with verbal interpretation of “Agree,” had the highest mean of 4.03. This item indicates a positive response among the surveyed athletes. It means that a good and encouraging role that their coach plays in helping them improve their skills. The athletes believe their coach actively encourages and supports them in developing their abilities. The athletes showed that they feel encouraged and empowered by their coach to pursue improvement. Positive reinforcement of the athlete’s skill development boosts athletes’ self-confidence and improves their performance. This coordination strengthens the interpersonal behaviour as they develop skill improvement. The athlete believes their coach and encourages them in their efforts to get better. This positive coaching also creates a supportive and inspiring training atmosphere for all athletes to continue sports participation.

The statement “Does not care about me” had the lowest mean of 2.41, and the verbal interpretation of “Disagree” shows that the athletes who responded to the survey felt that their coach genuinely cared about them. This lowest mean indicates that the players strongly disagree with the statement that their coach doesn’t value them. This suggests that there is a healthy and encouraging interaction between the coach and the player.

Athletes believe in their coach and genuinely care about their overall experience and growth. Motivating the athletes can be positively approached by a coach who is seen as kind and driven to do well and participate fully in training. Positive experiences with sports involvement are more common among athletes who feel well cared for. Athletes believe that their coach was really concerned and caring. This helps to build a relationship between coach and athlete and that is trustworthy and supportive. Creates an atmosphere where athletes feel appreciated and inspired with their involvement in sports. The coach-athlete connection provided by the coach enhances the players' motivation and wellbeing, which improves the whole athletic experience.

With an overall mean of 3.49, all items in the Interpersonal Behaviours Questionnaire in Sport show mixed to moderate levels of agreement. This puts the results in the category of "Neutral." The means of items 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22 are in the "Agree" range. This shows that responses about positive interpersonal behaviours, support, encouragement, and appreciation are agreed upon or strongly agreed upon by athletes. The means of items 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 19 are classified as "Neutral." The athlete's response on freedom of choice, pressure, comfort, and doubts is mixed or moderately agreed with. The means of items 8 and 23 might be classified as "Disagree." The athlete's response to the statement really shows that their coach cares and connects to them. That means that there is an empathy and connection between the coach and the athlete.

The respondents indicated a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, on whether the interpersonal behavior of coaches influences their intention to continue sports participation. Various factors significantly impact coaches' behaviours, including time management, work-life balance, professional development, interactions with parents, teammates, and athlete motivation (McCarthy, 2020). Similarly, the effectiveness of interpersonal behavior is often mediated by external stressors and the coach's ability to manage these pressures (Dixon et al., 2023). The alignment between coaches' interpersonal styles and athletes' needs plays a critical role in influencing athlete motivation and retention (Trevor & Vidya, 2021). Supportive coaching behaviours significantly affect athletes' perceptions of autonomy and competence, which are crucial for sustained participation in sports (Delgado, 2022). Finally, the quality of the coach-athlete relationship directly impacts athletes' satisfaction and their intentions to remain engaged in sports, suggesting that the influence of interpersonal behaviours can vary widely based on individual contexts and perceptions (Williams, 2023).

Intention to Continue Sports Participation

Table 3 shows the intention to continue sports participation. The statement "I am determined to participate in this sport one year from now" had the highest mean of 4.62, with the verbal interpretation of strongly agree. Athletes' response to the statement has been positively strong, and they are interested in continuing to compete in the sport in a year. The highest mean of 4.62 indicates a strong agreement from the athletes, a strong commitment to the sport, a strong feeling of commitment, and accountability for their ongoing involvement. The athletes are actively interested in participating in the sport, and their willingness will bring them to dedication and success. In order for athletes to continue competing, they must do hard work and determination. This helps to create a more stable and committed sports community. Committed athletes make a significant and lasting contribution to the sports community and players' commitment to go on with their sport in a year. This encourages students to participate in sports consistently, supporting them to be strong and active in sports engagement.

The general overall mean of 4.54 shows a strong and continuous desire to keep playing sports. One year from now, athletes expressed a high level of intent and planning to stay actively involved in the sport. The overall mean indicates the participants' positive intention to continue participating in sports. The athletes who responded to the survey are probably going to stay involved in sports activities and make a good result on the sports culture and the general success of an athlete's participation in sports. The high overall mean indicates positive prospects for athletes' long-term involvement in the sport. Their agreement demonstrates a persistent dedication, which is very effective in general well-being, and a positive intention to continue playing sports.

Cid et al. (2019) found that both motivational orientations and types of motivation are significantly correlated with the intention to continue participating in sports. Specifically, autonomous motivation was positively predicted by a task-involving orientation, which emphasizes personal improvement and mastery of

skills, while autonomous and controlled motivations were positively influenced by an ego-involving orientation focused on outperforming others. The study demonstrated a strong positive relationship between autonomous motivation and future intentions to participate in sports, highlighting the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation for long-term engagement. These findings align with research indicating that task-oriented climates promote greater autonomous motivation and intention to continue among athletes (Castillo-Jiménez et al., 2022). Additionally, the critical role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining athletic participation has been emphasised, suggesting that environments fostering personal growth over competition lead to better long-term outcomes (Almagro et al., 2020). Moreover, supportive task-involving climates have been shown to enhance motivation, contributing to greater enjoyment and reduced dropout rates (Gomez-Lopez et al., 2019). Overall, motivational orientations directly affect athletes' persistence and the quality of their sports experience, reinforcing the notion that task-involving climates positively influence future participation intentions (Duan et al., 2020).

Significant Relationship Between Coach-athlete and Intention to Continue Sports Participation

The coach-athlete relationship and intention to continue were examined using Spearman's rank correlation analysis. There was only a very slight positive result (0.038) between the two variables. This positive connection indicates that there is a minor tendency for athletes' intention to continue participating in sports to grow when the quality of the coach-athlete relationship improves on average. However, the p-value, which was determined to be 0.762, was used to evaluate the statistical significance of this link. The analysis shows that the observed association is not statistically significant, with a p-value larger than the traditional significance level of 0.05. The coach-athlete relationship and intention to continue do not significantly correlate. As the coach-athlete relationship increases, the intention to continue may also increase or decrease.

The study found that while the coach-athlete relationship and athletes' intention to continue participating in sports have been examined independently, in various combinations, and from different perspectives, no consistent or meaningful relationship has been established between the two variables (Wekesser et al., 2021). This suggests that the influence of the coach-athlete relationship on athletes' participation intentions may be more complex than previously thought, requiring further exploration of mediating or moderating factors that could impact this dynamic. Similarly, variations in coaching style and individual athlete differences often dilute the perceived effect of the coach-athlete relationship on participation decisions (Wekesser, 2019). Moreover, external factors such as team dynamics, peer influence, and personal goals could overshadow the direct impact of the coach-athlete relationship on athletes' intentions to continue (Stephen et al., 2022). Therefore, while the coach-athlete relationship is recognized as an important factor, its direct influence on sports participation remains inconclusive and warrants further investigation.

Significant Relationship Between Interpersonal Behaviour of Coaches and Intention to Continue Sports Participation

The intention to continue participating in sports and interpersonal behaviours was examined using Spearman's rank correlation analysis. For this data, the correlation coefficient, or Spearman's rho, is given as -0.017, a very weak negative connection. Nevertheless, the p-value, representing the significance level, is reported as 0.898, surpassing the standard cutoff of 0.05. Consequently, the study comes to the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between interpersonal behaviours and intention to continue. Based on the given p-value, the very weak negative correlation indicates a slight propensity for these variables to go in opposite directions. The results show that athletes' evaluations of interpersonal behaviours in the setting of sports do not significantly relate to their intention to continue sports participation. The findings of this study align with previous research that has also identified weak or non-significant relationships between interpersonal behaviours and athletes' intentions to continue participating in sports. For instance, Wekesser (2019) reported similar results, indicating that although coaches' interpersonal behaviours play a role in the athletic experience, they do not significantly influence athletes' intentions to persist in their sport. Additionally, a study by Pulido et al. (2018) found that while positive interpersonal interactions are important for athlete satisfaction, they do not necessarily translate into a commitment to continued participation.

Moreover, Gapa and Tagare emphasized that factors such as personal motivation and external influences often overshadow the impact of interpersonal behaviours, leading to inconclusive relationships with intentions to continue. Collectively, these studies reinforce the notion that while interpersonal behaviours are relevant in the context of sports, their direct effect on athletes' intentions to persist is limited.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that while a supportive coach-athlete relationship creates a positive environment and contributes to short-term athlete satisfaction, it does not significantly impact young athletes' long-term intentions to remain in sports. Many varsity athletes view their coaches as essential in skill development and creating a supportive atmosphere. However, these relationship qualities alone appear insufficient to guarantee sustained participation, suggesting that other factors likely play a more pivotal role in athletes' decisions to continue. This finding indicates that while influential in enhancing immediate experiences, coaches' interpersonal behaviours may not alone drive long-term sports engagement.

This study is limited by its small sample size of 66 youth athletes from a single integrated school in Cotabato, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to a broader population of youth athletes. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw conclusions about causality between the coach-athlete relationship, coaching behaviours, and athletes' intention to continue sports participation. Finally, the reliance on self-reported data from questionnaires introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may have provided socially desirable answers or misinterpreted questions.

Given these insights, future research should investigate additional factors such as intrinsic motivation, peer support, and institutional resources that may better predict continued participation. Recognising the limitations of this study's scope, future studies could explore diverse age groups, varying competitive levels, or differing athletic environments to understand the broader, context-specific factors affecting athlete retention. Furthermore, examining the role of intrinsic motivational factors in combination with external influences could yield a more nuanced understanding of how to encourage enduring sports participation among youth athletes. These findings underscore the complexity of athlete retention and highlight the need for a multifaceted approach in sports programming, where fostering skill, motivation, and supportive networks could prove essential for youth athletes' sustained involvement.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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