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## Sports coaching during the pandemic: Predicaments encountered by Filipino physical education teachers and potential strategies

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### ABSTRACT

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**Background Problems:** The educational disruptions and suspension of athletic competitions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic presented sports coaches with unique challenges in maintaining coaching and training activities for the athletes. **Research Objectives:** This study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of physical education teachers who are also coaches in sports coaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. **Methods:** The study was qualitative, utilising a descriptive phenomenological design. Five participants willingly took part in an in-depth interview, ensuring the protection of informant data and maintaining anonymity. The instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide recorded via video and transcribed using Microsoft Word. Informed consent was obtained before the interview, and data analysis followed Collaizi's descriptive phenomenology for collecting, reducing, presenting, verifying, and concluding the data. **Findings/Results:** The findings of the study revealed several sports coaching predicaments: connectivity and communication issues, physical training conflict, administrative concerns, and psychosocial problems. Additionally, potential strategies were also revealed: connectivity and communication strategy, modified training method, administrative outsourcing initiative, and psychosocial initiative. Based on the results of the study, a proposed sports coaching intervention plan is highly recommended for utilisation to address several predicaments that emerged. **Conclusion:** Research shows that in grappling with pandemic-related challenges, coaches play a crucial role in maximising athletes' potential, necessitating a blend of skills and emotional resilience as they formulate effective coaching strategies for the predicaments encountered. Generally, this can contribute to more effective and well-rounded sports coaching, ultimately benefiting the athletes and the overall success of sports coaching and the school's sport-related programmes.

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**Keywords:** Sport coaching; physical education; pandemic**\*Corresponding Author**

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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in major global transformations as it interrupted several human activities, which led people to be confined, isolated, and distanced. One of its major impacts is that it created educational disruptions and the suspension of athletic competitions in the hope of preventing the spread of the virus (Wiltshire et al. 2022). According to Martins et al. (2022), sports competitions in school have been widely affected and have suffered difficulty resuming due to inconsistencies and difficulties in the implementation of safety protocols appropriate to the new scenario.

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In line with the given notion, sports training in schools was greatly affected. Like everyone else, physical education teachers who also serve as coaches were compelled to undergo at-home self-isolation, restricting their usual engagement with their profession and interaction with athletes. As highlighted by Costa et al. (2020); di Fronso et al. (2022); Jukic, et al. (2022), COVID-19 pandemic impacted athletes, coaches, and supporting staff who were kept away from their usual working environments. In addition to limiting their freedom to engage and interact, these restrained living conditions have affected teacher-coach experiences in terms of sports coaching with the athletes.

While sports coaching is crucial for coaches, its significance is even more paramount for athletes. Figus (2022) asserts that coaching is the skill of guiding individuals and teams to attain consistent goals and notable improvements in performance and development. This underscores the pivotal role of coaches, who have a substantial influence on both the physical and mental aspects of athletes, contributing significantly to their athletic success (Moen et al. 2021). As stressed by Anjum et al. (2021), coaching by its very nature, involves a physical component, but the absence of direct physical interaction or limited collaboration undermines the essence and purpose of coaching.

Yet, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it evident that it disrupted coaching sessions, leading to a lack of proper physical interaction between coaches and athletes. Consequently, conducting coaching became challenging amid the height of the pandemic (Anjum et al. 2021). Thus, it is essential to understand the coaches' experiences in this new scenario (Enage, 2023), as sports coaching faces challenges amid pandemic restrictions, prompting questions about coaching delivery, approach, and application. As a result, sports coaches transitioned from traditional to flexible approaches, predominantly utilising online and remote learning for athlete training (Aquino et al. 2023).

In the existing studies on sports coaching, researchers primarily focused on the experiences of physical education teachers who coached before the pandemic. For instance, Domfeh and Kwamena (2018) found that physical education teachers handling school teams faced significant challenges but managed their roles effectively, showcasing coaches' resilience in handling setbacks (Sarkar & Hilton, 2020). Yet a noticeable gap exists in research regarding coaches' experiences during the pandemic, specifically from the perspective of physical education teachers who serve as coaches. In essence, the experiences of physical education teachers, who also assume coaching roles, remain unknown in terms of the predicaments they faced and the potential strategies employed to remain afloat.

In light of this, the researcher is particularly interested in uncovering the lived experiences of physical education teachers in coaching during this unprecedented time, aiming to bridge this area of knowledge that is currently not well documented. This study is timely for three major reasons: firstly, it uncovers the predicaments encountered and experienced by physical education teachers in the realm of sports coaching amid the pandemic. Secondly, it unfolds the potential strategies, referring to the coping mechanisms used, which can serve as a basis for formulating new coaching methods suitable for this new normal situation. Thirdly, the findings of the study serve as the basis for crafting a sports coaching intervention plan that can be used as the basis for sports coaching appropriate to the new scenario. Through this, the research seeks to equip physical education teachers, coaches, athletes, and school administrators with the knowledge to adapt and develop resilient sports coaching and training programs. This study provides valuable information relevant to the ongoing discourse on the practice of sports coaching during challenging times through a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of physical education teachers who also serve as coaches.

This study aims to investigate the experiences of physical education teachers who also serve as coaches in sports coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it seeks to identify the challenges faced and the strategies employed by these teacher coaches amidst the pandemic. Additionally, the study aims to propose interventions based on the findings. The research questions guiding this investigation are: (i) What challenges do physical education teachers face while also serving as coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic? (ii) What strategies do physical education teachers employ in their dual roles as coaches during the COVID-19 pandemic? (iii) Based on the study results, what intervention plan for sports coaching can be proposed?

## METHOD

This qualitative study, adopting the descriptive phenomenological approach by Collizi (1978), delves into the lived experiences of physical education teachers engaged in sports coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, phenomenological research involves exploring reality through individuals' narratives of their experiences and emotions, aiming to generate comprehensive descriptions of the phenomenon (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Thus, in this study, the descriptive account of the phenomenon given by the physical education teachers, who are also coaches, during the in-depth interview was utilised in order to describe their lived experiences. Further, the study was conducted in different schools from various regions of Mindanao, Philippines, namely: Northern Mindanao, Soccsksargen, and Caraga.

## Participants and Sampling

Moreover, the participants of the study were five physical education teachers who are coaching an event or sports team in their respective schools. They were chosen using the inclusive criteria; specifically, the inclusion criteria that were followed in selecting the participants are as follows: first, the participant could be either a male or female Filipino physical education teacher who is coaching and is a regular employee in a private or public school; second, he or she should have an undergraduate degree in physical education and other related courses and be a licenced professional teacher; third, he or she must have had five years of teaching and coaching experience prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; and lastly, they could share substantial knowledge about the situation of sport coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the participants. Etikan et al. (2016) notes that purposive sampling is employed in research to select participants with specific qualities relevant to the study, ensuring access to individuals with the requisite knowledge and experience for providing information. A total of five participants were included who fit the purpose of the study, of which two are females and three are males who are identified as physical education teachers and coaches in their respective schools.

## Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide to elicit the participants' lived experiences about the different predicaments encountered and the potential strategies employed by the physical education teachers in sports coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview comprised four sections: open-ended questions for their personal information and coaching career; factual questions; probing questions to delve deeper into perspectives; and concluding questions for any additional input from participants. Data was gathered through staged informal, conversational, and semi-structured interviews to ensure participants' comfort while extracting detailed information for qualitative research on central themes in their lives. Interviews are

executed to understand the participant's perspective by interpreting the meaning of their experience (Alamri, 2019).

### Data Gathering and Analysis

For the data gathering, this study followed the pre-data, actual data, and post-data gathering procedures. An in-depth interview was conducted to gather the responses with the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. This technique of data collection helped generate an in-depth understanding of the experiences of physical education teachers who are also coaches in sports coaching during the pandemic.

To analyse the data, inductive thematic analysis was utilised, specifically the seven steps in Collizzi's phenomenological method. This includes transcription and familiarisation of the data collected, identification of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clusterization of themes, composition of exhaustive themes, production of fundamental structures, and validation of findings. The transcribed and coded responses served as the basis for formulating a group of words for the responses and provided a deeper understanding of the experiences of the physical education teachers, leading to the emergence of the themes revealed in this study.

### Ethical Considerations

Thus, in the conduct of this study, the researcher adhered to ethical principles, obtaining legal permission through free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from participants. A transparent process included a request letter, a detailed explanation, and individual consent letters. Safeguards like emotional well-being checks and assurance of anonymity were implemented, and participant opinions were respected.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed two major themes, each comprising four sub-themes, which underscored the lived experiences of physical education teachers in coaching during pandemic.

### Theme 1. Coaching Predicaments Amidst Pandemic

Within the scope of this study, coaching predicaments refer to the challenges encountered by physical education teachers in sports coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the situation has led them to experience different challenges in terms of connectivity and communication issues, physical training conflict, administrative concern, and psychosocial problems.

#### Sub-Theme 1.1 Connectivity and Communication Issues

As one of the issues identified by the physical education teachers in terms of sports coaching amidst the pandemic, the difficulty of securing stable internet connectivity hampers communication with their student-athletes. As a result, this limited them from spreading information, keeping updates, and giving follow-ups and consultations. Thus, it negatively affects not just the skill development but also the motivation of the student-athlete for continuous involvement in sport. According to the coaches:

*"Poor internet connection ma'am both parties led student-athlete and including me as a coach. This also includes our proper communication ma'am because I cannot contact then right away. Some of my athletes are from the remote areas perhaps from Bukidnon."* (Participant 4, Lines 261-263).

*"Regarding the communication, we didn't have a well establish communication, it was also limited, but we have group chat and we used it to communicate each other."* (Participant 5, Lines 371-372).

According to Adnan (2020), one of the problems experienced by the student-athletes is the internet access, for they cannot easily find the signal in order to comply with the school's assignment, thereby affecting their ability to receive information and updates. Similarly, Gjoneska et al. (2022), added that due to social distancing and health restrictions, people increased their usage of the internet, resulting in slower internet connectivity. This only means that the COVID-19 pandemic caused difficulty in connectivity, which resulted in the interruption of communication, especially between coaches and student-athletes. However, one of the critical factors to consider between trainer and t<sup>41</sup>nee is communication. According to Akpetou and Furley (2017), building connections on both an individual and a team level is equally important as exhibiting talents and understanding the strategy of the sport. In addition, effective communication between coach and athlete is an important factor in establishing a successful relationship (Kim & Park, 2020). Without prop<sup>4</sup>r communication, several factors, like inaccessibility to the internet, hamper effective commu<sup>18</sup>ication between the coach and the athletes. Karafil and Ulaş (2023) asserted that the lack of p<sup>43</sup>er communication between coach and athlete can cause many problems. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic led coaches and athletes to experience difficulty in communication due to a low internet connection, resulting in limited interaction.

### Sub-Theme 1.2 Physical Training Conflict

The pandemic posed a lot of issues, which led to the difficulty for physical educati<sup>33</sup> teachers in coaching sports. Furthermore, due to the limi<sup>6</sup>d human movement as part of the effort to prevent the spread of the infection brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, this led to the closure of sports facilities, the postponement of sports competitions, and the stoppage of face-to-face training. Coaches, along with their student-athletes, experienced difficulties in continuing training, thus resulting in limited to no physical training at all. Additionally, the impact of having face-to-face training is relatively different from doing it online. The narratives of the participants are as follows:

*"But during the pandemic, what happened was everything was totally stopped, the training of our student-athlete was stopped because of the conflict of the facilities and their availability."* (Participant 1, Lines 14-15).

*"So, what happened, it's like everything was in lockdown, no physical training with our athletes especially together with the coaches. That was one of our struggles."* (Participant 2, Lines 76-77).

As emphasized by Jagim et al. (2020), part of the effort to prevent community transmission and flatten the curve was the imple<sup>38</sup>mentation of several restrictions, such as social distancing and stay-at-home orders. This led to the closure of most facilities for sports training and school training centres, which prohibited the athletes from perform<sup>24</sup> physical training. So, there was a compromise relevant to student-athlete training for numerous reasons, most crucially the periods of recurring local and national lockdowns (Washif et al., 2022). Similarly, Teodorescu et al. (2021) emphasised that athletes experienced significant impacts from<sup>4</sup> lockdowns and social distancing, leading to training interruptions that resulted in the loss of specific adaptations, reduced performance capacity, and disruptions to future competitive goals. In fact, numerous

athletes experienced a modified and reduced training load as an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic (Leo et al., 2022). Jagim et al. (2020) found that athletes experienced significant decreases in training frequency and time dedicated to sport-specific activities due to restricted mobility. Thus, the challenge arose from insufficient time for athletes and coaches to develop suitable in-home training programmes and acquire appropriate exercises for an extended period.

### Sub-Theme 1.3 Administrative Concerns

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic challenged the effectiveness of handling and controlling the sports administration in relation to its effect on sports. Administrative concerns are one of the results that emerged based on the conduct of the study. According to the participants,

*"So, it is like you are the adviser in school especially if you are working in DepEd, on top of that there are lots of paperwork. It is difficult for me to balance my time as I already have my class at the same time, I also have to train my athletes."* (Participant 3, Lines 248-249).

*"There's a lot of challenges we encountered and one of those is the less financial support from the school's administration, we did not receive enough funds especially during pandemic."* (Participant 4, Lines 259-260)

On one hand, teaching and coaching represent distinct roles, presenting a dichotomy that requires balancing for PE teachers, which, while potentially rewarding, can also pose challenges, as noted by (Domfeh & Kwamena, 2018). On the other hand, Mulcahey et al. (2021) recognise the potential for individuals to excel in both roles, yet they acknowledge the significant time commitment required, which can present challenges in achieving excellence in both areas. Not to mention the fact that the physical education teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic was very hectic; coaches with high workloads have experienced higher levels of exhaustion all throughout the coaching process (Dehghansai et al., 2021). This only means that coaches encountered difficulties in time management, especially since they already have enough workload in teaching on top of their coaching responsibilities. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly created challenges for many athletic-related matters, such that sports administrators and coaches are facing budget issues caused by or related to the pandemic. Apart from the concern about the health and safety of the student-athletes and coaches, financial matters, or lack thereof, are another hurdle (Wiltshire et al., 2022). To navigate financial challenges, numerous schools have implemented cost-cutting measures in their sports programs. As mentioned by Alam and Abdurraheem (2023) one of the major impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it interrupted global democracy, particularly the financial systems. Needless to say, its impact affected the whole process of sports training, sports management, and even sporting competitions.

### Sub-Theme 1.4 Psychosocial Problem

Other issues that the physical education teachers encountered in sports coaching during the pandemic involved psychosocial aspects. This means that coaches, not just their student-athletes, experienced anxiety, frustration, depression, and psychological struggles such as being less likely to be motivated. In addition, emotional problems were prevalent among coaches and student-athletes amidst the pandemic due to a long period of inactivity and the different challenges they had encountered. Participants stated that:

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*"I felt anxious, but I think it was because we didn't know what we should do for our athletes. I was at home because of lockdown, I can't go out, I felt uneasy which was difficult for me to even sleep, I was feeling depressed."* (Participant 1, Lines 62-64).

*"We were dealing with anxiety both in our role as a coach and in our personal life."* (Participant 2, Line 128).

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In the realm of sports, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic led to an unparalleled situation (Jagim et al., 2020). Serafini et al. (2020) noted that the psychological impact of past epidemics and pandemics has identified social distancing measures as notably harmful to mental well-being. Specifically, adhering to social distancing measures has been associated with a range of mental health issues, such as depression, generalised anxiety, acute stress, and the onset of intrusive thoughts (Spencer-Laitt et al., 2022). Brooks et al. (2020) concurred with this observation, identifying psychosocial symptoms like post-traumatic stress intensified by infection fears, prolonged quarantine, and feelings of frustration, anxiety, and depression. Generally, the heavy responsibilities that come along with being a teacher and a coach may lead to challenges that some educators find overwhelming, prompting them to reconsider their commitment to teaching and coaching, not to mention the job stress and burnout problems they experience (Domfeh & Kwamena, 2018). Thus, psychosocial issues impaired the interest and motivation of coaches and athletes to do training or participate in sporting competitions. However, it is important to remember that the emergence of this issue was primarily brought about by the infections caused by the coronavirus.

## Theme 2. Coaching Strategies Amidst Pandemic

In this study, coaching strategies pertain to the potential strategies employed by the physical education teachers to cope with the predicaments they encountered in sports coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies encompass connectivity and communication strategies, modified training methods, administrative outsourcing initiatives, and psychological initiatives.

### Sub-Theme 2.1 Connectivity and Communication Strategy

In order to address the prevalent issue of internet access and communication between coaches and student-athletes, physical education teachers diverted their method of communication from the traditional way of communicating, which is face-to-face into the use of several online applications and SMS or text messaging in disseminating information. With this, the participants expressed that:

*"As a coach I tried to communicate my athletes using messenger. We have group chat with my athletes and also facebook page. Before the pandemic started, we already have facebook page intended or exclusive to my basketball players in school, so basically that was our way."* (Participant P3, Lines 204-206).

*"Actually, ma'am we have group chat in messenger, we also have google classroom, so those were our ways of communication, although it was not very consistent, that's why sometimes I communicated them through text message."* (Participant 4, Lines 281-283).

In the coaching realm, effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering stronger connections with athletes, promoting teamwork, and improving overall

performance, as emphasised by Savardelavar et al. (2017). However, the challenges posed by the pandemic have led to poor communication between coaches and athletes, hindering the training process, as highlighted by Nopiyanto et al. (2023). Despite the recognised importance of communication for optimal coaching outcomes, the pandemic has presented obstacles that disrupted the usual dynamics and potentially impeded the effectiveness of athlete-coach interactions. Then, to reach out to student-athletes, coaches made use of social media to communicate. In fact, Maqbulin (2021) stated that online applications like Messenger and WhatsApp are used by the coaches to reach out to their athletes. It is a helpful tool as they share knowledge and information among themselves online (Baruah, 2012). Although they cannot meet personally, through chatting, they can already communicate. Additionally, Campbell et al. (2021) also added that text messaging is an effective way to convey updates, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, more specifically, to those individuals who are located in an area where there is no internet connection.

### Sub-Theme 2.2 Modified Training Methods

There are many activities and programmes that were postponed as a result of the devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on humans' ability to move and interact. Because of the constraints, most activities, like sports training, are shifted online. Coaches initiate the use of several virtual platforms to address the issues with the traditional method of training. In this way, students and athletes can still continue their training even from the comfort of their homes. According to the participants,

*"I asked them to make a video of their training exercise and to check their performance, I just it through the video. More on online training through videos lang among way during pandemic."* (Participant 4, Lines 319-322).

*"In terms of their training, I encouraged them to perform conditioning exercises at home. It was to divert their attention also."* (Participant 5, Lines 371-373).

In fact, Schneider et al. (2022) found that online training sessions offer a viable means to sustain physical activity, especially during periods of required isolation, so individuals can engage in fitness routines remotely through virtual platforms. Aside from that, online training programmes can also provide opportunities for coaches and athletes to gain new insights and improve abilities, apart from physical training. Moreover, the internet has been integrated into a tool used to complement learning activities (Martins et al., 2022). Podorescu et al. (2021) emphasised that, due to the pandemic, athletes attended training sessions via the internet for several months. He also added that in Norway, a study on boxing revealed athletes and coaches utilised three digital tools during the lockdown: live-streamed sessions, virtual resources through digital registration, and online training sequences, emphasising the use of remote platforms for distance activities. Due to the pandemic, coaches, together with their student-athletes, shifted their utilisation of online or virtual platforms to continue their training. Thereby, significantly modifying their training habits and environment, although sudden, at least they are still able to do sports training through developing a structured strategy to adapt to the change and to move forward (Jagim et al., 2020). Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic left coaches and athletes with no other option but to continue their practice and continue being physically active at home, following the mandate of the government to keep social distance and prevent the possible spread of the virus (Maugeri et al., 2020).

### Sub-Theme 2.3 Administrative Outsourcing Initiative

In the field of sports coaching, one of the issues encountered by the physical education teachers who are also coaches is financial concerns, especially during pandemics. It is for this reason that they used other sources of funding, like sponsorship or donations, to help save on their expenses relative to sports training and sports-related activities. In addition, a lesser workload is an advantage for them to become more efficient and effective coaches and teachers. The participants expressed that:

*"In my experience, if I have activity or competition to join, I initiate to do solicit from my sponsors specially to major ones because they helped me a lot as they can relate to me."* (Participant 3, Lines 194-196)

*"Actually, we tried to ask our department head also our sports coordinators to reduce our load because have lots of paperwork then we also have trainings. It is difficult to manage our time."* (Participant 5, Lines 353-354)

Like many industries grappling with financial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are no exception, leading to repercussions on financial aid for sports programmes (Alam & Abdurraheem, 2023). In return, this became a challenge for the coaches as to how to fund their athletes both in training and competing. Furthermore, in the study of Enage (2023), he suggested that financial support should be provided by the administrators to the athletes. Thus, sponsorship is another source for fund generation. Sports sponsorship is an act between resource providers and sports activities or organisations that have shared interests (Yu & Tan, 2017). So, even though they seemed to face financial issues, coaches tend to look for sponsorship to aid and address the problem. Moreover, another issue raised is the workload given to the physical education teachers who, at the time, were handling a team or student-athlete. In the study conducted in Ghana, it was found out that PE teachers commonly engage not only in teaching but also frequently combine their profession with coaching responsibilities within their schools. Given the circumstances, the teacher-coach should be de-loaded to lessen their burden and for them to become effective with their work. Dehghansai et al. (2021) stated that consideration from their administrators and head by reducing their workload is one of the solutions to their dilemma on top of time management to do their responsibilities.

### Sub-Theme 2.4 Psychosocial Initiatives

Another major negative effect that the pandemic has brought is that it has affected the psychosocial aspects of both coaches and athletes, where they feel less motivated to train and compete, anxious, and frustrated due to the inability to train the way they used to. So, some re-enforcements were manifested. With this, the participants stated:

*"I think, what really helped me was myself because I did self-talk, then my family especially my wife. They motivated me including my friends, colleagues and my athletes."* (Participant 3, Lines 213-214)

*"Aside from family, one of the things that helped me was my master's class because I continued my study in masters at that time. So, my focus got diverted for self-betterment."* (Participant 4, Lines 307-310)

According to Anas et al. (2022), motivation is <sup>39</sup> important in sports. Whether you are a coach or an athlete, you need to be motivated. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic,

which interrupted both the coaching and training processes, coaches have to find inspiration to continue with their role as coaches. In this study, coaches found their family as their support system to keep being inspired. According to Newhook-Bailey et al. (2015) the role of family is vital in society through providing individuals with a means of financial, social, and emotional support as well as personal development. This means that coaches were emotionally supported by their family members, which enabled them to continue to carry out their task. Specifically, strong family support has a positive impact on sports individuals, especially in terms of their welfare, mood, comfort, and even the quality of sleep (Mandan et al., 2024). In addition to family support, one of the initiatives taken by the physical education teachers was to enrol in their graduate studies. In fact, Ambag and Camarador (2018) argue that coaches become effective through their acquired knowledge and learning from continuing their graduate degrees, as well as their gained experience from several athletic exposures. Thus, coaches are believed to need a good understanding of practical teaching methods to help athletes learn well, along with having specific knowledge about their sport (Mason et al., 2020).

### **Proposed Intervention Plan**

**Rationale:** This proposed sports coaching intervention plan has been constructed based on the data gathered from the experiences of physical education teachers and coaches in sports coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the predicaments revealed were those experienced by the teacher-coach. This is crafted in order to improve the quality of coaching despite unprecedented situations like the pandemic. Furthermore, the intervention plan has the following components: areas of concern, suggested action, persons involved, and success outcomes. These components are tailored to the study of Enage (2023), where he only emphasised important aspects. In this study, the focus is to help provide possible solutions to the predicaments identified by the teacher-coach. Thus, it is only limited to the components mentioned above. The target beneficiaries of this intervention plan are the following: Firstly, school administrative officials, based on the findings of the study, experienced administrative concerns such as overloaded workloads, sports funds, and issues with internet connections. Secondly, coaches, because they are the ones who will train the athletes and implement the said intervention plan. Thirdly, the athletes are to be trained.

### **Plan of Implementation:**

1. The proposed sports coaching intervention plan is presented to the schools' administration and implementers for approval and adoption.
2. Conduct a school-based orientation on the utilisation of the proposed sports coaching intervention plan.
3. Provide a copy of the approved proposed sports coaching intervention plan to the schools.
4. Implement the proposed sports coaching intervention plan within the span of one semester.

**Table 1. Proposed Sports Coaching Intervention Plan**

Areas of Concern	Objectives	Suggested Action	Persons Involved	Success Outcome
Connectivity and Communication Issues	To provide monthly training allowance to the athletes	Proposed monthly allowance to athletes	School Admin Officials Coaches Athletes	Provided a training allowance to the athletes
Physical Training Conflict	To continue the training of the athletes	Organize an Online Training  Conduct of At-home Training	School Admin Officials Coaches Athletes	Athletes were able to continue training online and at home
Administrative Concerns	To create a venue to a talk about different concerns.	Organize an Open Forum involving coaches and Admin officials	School Admin Officials Coaches	100% participation of the school admin officials and coaches to the webinar
Psychosocial Problem	To provide mental health awareness and management methods.	Conduct a webinar about mental health awareness and proper management	School Admin Officials Coaches	100% participation of the coaches to the webinar

<sup>3</sup> Based on the result of the study, several areas of concern, which refer to the predicaments of physical education teachers and coaches in coaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, were revealed. So, in order to provide solutions to these problems, this study has presented different actions with individual objectives to make sure the suggested action is aligned with the areas of concern. Moreover, the persons involved pertain to the beneficiaries of this sports coaching intervention plan as well as the concerned personnel relevant to the implementation of the said plan. Lastly, the success outcomes are provided to indicate if the area of concern has been addressed properly through the suggested action presented.

Regarding the connectivity and communication issue, it is suggested that schools' administrative officials, together with coaches, should provide a monthly allowance, not only for the athletes to have a source of funding for internet use in training but also to serve as their motivation to train and, in return, perform well. According to Haeruddin et al. (2022), a well-compensated athlete is motivated to perform better. Interestingly, the effects of incentives or rewards given to the athletes were found to be a motivational factor for an individual to perform an action (Deemua & Ifeoma, 2020). With this, providing a monthly allowance to the athletes will not only make them accessible to the internet, but they will also be motivated to train and perform well. In return, coaches will also have no difficulty communicating with them and will implement online training.

In connection with the physical training conflict, this study suggests two actions that involve the school administration for financial support and sport management, coaches as implementers, and athletes as being the ones to be trained. The first is to organise online training, and the second is to conduct at-home training. Schneider et al. (2022) stated that an online training programme or session can be utilised in order for individuals to be able to continue and resume healthy sports practice. Likewise, online training sessions have been one of the few options in most countries affected by the COVID-19 lockdown (Teodorescu et al., 2021).

Moreover, at-home training is also recommended. Due to the closure of sports facilities or their inaccessibility, athletes can perform exercises at home (Kemala et al., 2020). Similarly, Paludo et al. (2022) highlighted that, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, athletes are urged to conduct their training sessions at home. However, the challenge for coaches lies in effectively planning, structuring, and implementing training sessions that are suitable for athletes to carry out in a home setting.

With regards to administrative concerns, it is highly suggested that the school's administrators, together with the coaches, organise an open forum to establish communication between involving parties, such as coaches and administrative officials. According to Bucăța and Rizescu (2017), communication facilitates the interaction among members of a group, enabling collaboration and information exchange. In this way, each person can voice out and express their sentiments and ideas that need to be addressed. One of those is the workload issue. As mentioned by Dehghansai et al. (2021) a consideration from physical education teachers, coaches' administrators, and heads by reducing their workload is one of the solutions to the dilemma they are facing. Maslikha et al. (2022) further explained that efficient and effective interpersonal communication is key to increasing work productivity through increased work force performance. This only means that physical education teachers and coaches can improve their work effectively if they are given the opportunity to communicate well with their administrative officers. Thereby, allowing them to be more understanding, considerate, and creative.

Lastly, in terms of psychosocial problems, this study suggests that schools' administration officials should provide coaches and athletes with a webinar or seminar about mental health awareness and proper management. As they suffered the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, having proper awareness on how to manage stress and mental health is beneficial to them the same way it is beneficial to their athletes as well. The COVID-19 pandemic raised concerns about heightened stress and anxiety in people's lives (Bebetsos et al., 2023). Thus, increasing awareness of how to manage it is beneficial to them. Therefore, these suggested actions and the objectives presented can only be achieved if the persons involved in this sports coaching intervention plan will put this into reality. Thereby, successful outcomes in each area of concern are achieved.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the research sheds light on the challenges coaches faced during the pandemic and the strategies they employed to navigate these difficulties. The coaching landscape became arduous as coaches grappled with pandemic-related issues, impacting both their own well-being and the athletes' performance. Despite sports coaching being acknowledged for maximizing athletes' potential, this process demands a blend of skills and emotional resilience. Consequently, coaches find themselves compelled to devise effective potential strategies to cope with the predicaments they have encountered. Additionally, the predicaments encountered during the pandemic resulted in a noticeable decline in both coaches' and athletes' performance and motivation. Therefore, it is suggested that researchers delve into the efficacy of coaching during difficult times. Moreover, the utilisation of the proposed sports coaching intervention plan is highly encouraged as a recommendation, for it will help in addressing several predicaments encountered by physical education teachers in sports coaching.

Furthermore, the study recommends prioritising support measures such as improved internet access for athletes, adaptive training approaches, heightened awareness of mental health, and increased allocation of sports funds. These measures are crucial in

aiding coaches in fulfilling the roles and continuously offering opportunities for athletes to realise their full potential. This study, limited to the lived experiences of five Filipino physical education teachers in coaching during the pandemic, underscores the need for precision in data collection and analysis, directly influencing the significance and substance of the study's findings. Lastly, for future research, a careful selection of the appropriate methodology is encouraged, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of coaches' experiences.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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