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Ready for transition: understanding the experiences of student-athletes' participation in intercollegiate sports

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ABSTRACT

Background: Various studies have examined the transitional experiences of student-athletes from specific sports; however, there is a scant amount of literature analysing how student-athletes dealt with the transition from high school to intercollegiate sports participation in the Philippine context. **Research Objective:** This study aims to examine the transition of student-athletes from high school to intercollegiate sports participation. **Methods:** This study explored the beneficial experiences of six athletes at the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology in the transition from high school to intercollegiate sports participation. The study used an explanatory, descriptive qualitative design with data obtained through semi-structured interviews. **Finding/Result:** The results of the study found challenges in managing the transition: focus and commitment, and the coach-athlete relationship. Additionally, this study has identified a support system that has had a significant impact on their overall athletic performance: it increases motivation and boosts morale. The study found the differences between the transitions in terms of training, dealing with coaches, and working with fellow athletes; the effect of the transition on the overall performance of student-athletes; the support system from different people and organisations; and the impact of the support system on the arrangements of student-athletes. The study's results emphasise the importance of support systems in mitigating the challenges experienced in the transition from high school to intercollegiate sports participation. **Conclusion:** These findings suggest that the transition and support systems have a substantial influence on the development of athletes. The findings showed that the participants exhibited a preference for prioritising their academic pursuits over attempting to balance academic and sports careers. This study provides quality results that could help the university develop its sports programme.

Keywords: Transition; intercollegiate; sports participation; support

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INTRODUCTION

Transitioning from high school to college is a momentous milestone for every student, but student-athletes encounter specific challenges as student-athlete manage the difficulties of juggling academic responsibilities, sports engagement, and personal growth (Huml et al., 2019; Gomez et al., 2018). Transitioning from the structured realm of high school sports to the highly demanding and competitive realm of college sports, student-athletes are required to adjust to new training regimens more rigorous academic obligations, and heightened social and emotional pressures (Huml et al., 2019).

Making the transition to college sports can be particularly difficult for student-athletes, as they must not only adapt to a new academic setting but also handle the increased physical and psychological pressures of their sport at a more advanced level of competition (Russell, 2021; Gerlach, 2018). The increased time dedication necessary for training, practice, and competition can impose a substantial burden on a student-athlete's capacity to uphold their academic achievement while also potentially resulting in exhaustion, physical harm, and psychological well-being difficulties (Gerlach, 2018).

College life has greater challenges compared to high school, primarily due to the demanding curriculum and more extensive subject matter. Upon entering inter-collegiate sports, student-athletes are required to adjust to distinct modifications and assume greater obligations (Choi & Kim, 2021). Students may encounter challenges throughout the transition, particularly if the environment they were accustomed to in high school differs from what they experience in college (Gayles & Baker, 2015; Hansen et al., 2019).

The process of transitioning from high school to college can be quite a learning experience for many students, particularly in athletic endeavors. For many students, playing sports in high school is a rite of passage. Previous research has found that students who were involved in recreational sports reported higher levels of life satisfaction (Forrester, 2015). Moreover, participation in recreational activities in college can contribute to perseverance, wellness, and contentment with college (Alasinrin et al., 2021; Puhakka, 2021). A study by Gayles & Baker (2015) stated that athletes, especially freshmen students, should learn how to balance time between coursework loads, training, playing the sport, and having a personal life. When participating in intercollegiate sports, student-athletes must adapt to specific adjustments and take on more substantial duties in school (Smith & Hardin, 2020).

A study conducted by Streno et al. (2019) emphasised that international student-athletes (ISA) face not only the usual challenges of adjusting to college life, such as navigating campus, socialising, dealing with homesickness, and adapting to the academic structure, but also the additional difficulty of integrating into a new sports system within an unfamiliar cultural environment and investigated the perceptions of the type of resources, training, and positive interventions that were deemed beneficial for international student-athletes as they transitioned into collegiate sports. The transition can pose challenges for students, particularly, if the college environment differs from their high school experience (Gayles & Baker, 2015; Khan et al., 2021). The scenario can be daunting due to academic strain. Managing time effectively is crucial in college, as it requires making wise choices about priorities. The physical well-being of student-athletes is impacted by the demanding schedules of both their athletic and academic commitments. 1

Researches from numerous countries, such as the United Kingdom (Brown et al., 2015), Belgium (De Brandt et al., 2018), and Italy (Brustio et al., 2020), has analysed multiple aspects of transitioning from school to university among elite student-athletes (i.e., demands of combining sports and study, the importance of dual career assistance systems, and competencies such as time management, gender differences, academic qualifications, and perception of transitional experiences). Additionally, college sports present a mental and physical challenge because of how demanding college life can be. Coaches have reported that athletes are not well-prepared, particularly with regard to strength, flexibility, and lifting techniques (Wade et al., 2014). Consequently, there is a higher chance of injury and a decline in the overreaching achievements of college freshmen athletes. 1

Existing research primarily emphasises the psychological aspect of student athletes during the transition to intercollegiate sport participation, yet it tends to overlook the varied experiences that occur in different contexts (Khan et al., 2021; Gavala-González et al., 2019; Mateu et al., 2020). In the Philippine context, student-athletes faced various problems during the transition, such as balancing academic and athletic responsibilities (Butlig et al., 2023), training demands, and family financial stress (de la Cerna & Diego, 2022). This research provides extensive insights into the complex and multifaceted transition experienced by athletes, drawing from a diverse sample across various sports. The findings have significant implications for athletic programmes, academic institutions, and mental health support services. Thus, this study aimed to explain student-athletes' transition from high school to intercollegiate sports, including the support system and its impact on sports performances. Moreover, this study answers the following research questions: (1) How did the high school-to-intercollegiate transition influence sports participation among student-athletes? (2) How does the support system help improve the student?

METHOD

Design

This study employed a descriptive explanatory approach, which is viewed as an appropriate method for explaining how athletes dealt with the transition from high school to intercollegiate sports participation. It helped researchers identify how the participants experienced the transition and the types of support systems they received. This study involves semi-structured interviews to obtain insights from the participants about the phenomenon.

Participants

The participant selection for this study employed non-random sampling, a method commonly used in qualitative research. Non-random sampling involves purposefully selecting individuals to enhance their comprehension of the topic under investigation. Specifically, the research utilised maximum variant sampling to select six varsity athletes from MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology for the study. The participants must have a minimum of five years of sports experience since high school and must also have participated in national sports competitions. The participants were required to meet specific criteria due to their extensive experiences and insights relevant to the discussed problem. Participants were given complete transparency and assurance of anonymity regarding their involvement in the study.

Table 1. Background Information of the Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Sports	Years of Sports Participation	Level of Competition Attended
Grace	Female	Swimming	11	National
Mark	Male	Football	17	National
Leah	Female	Swimming	10	International
Trisha	Female	Badminton	12	National
Mae	Female	Arnis	8	National
Miles	Female	Arnis	7	National

Data Collection

Prior to the data collection, a group of experts carefully evaluated the questionnaire guide and made modifications to its wording and sequence in accordance with the objective of the study. The interview for each participant was done through in-person

interviews, with semi-structured and open-ended questions. Researchers conducted interviews with the participants to ascertain their strategies for navigating the transition from high school to participating in intercollegiate sports. Prior to the interview, the researcher provides the participant with a consent form, a self-introduction, and an overview of the study. The researchers deliberated and ensured the confidentiality and ethical considerations of the study. The results will be examined subsequent to the successful completion of the interviews. This data serves as the foundation for thematic analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis

The researcher initiated the analysis of his data by initially arranging the field notes and interview transcripts. The researcher had to carefully review materials multiple times, enabling him to deeply engage with the data and gain a comprehensive understanding of the fit. The data analysis continued during the initial coding procedure. The process of coding was considered to be of utmost importance as the researcher split the extensive data gathered from the participants (Lester et al., 2020). The researcher attached tags or labels to the data according to the primary theme and sub-themes identified in the study. The researcher manually performed this procedure, documented it on paper, and subsequently transferred it to MS Excel for the purpose of categorising and colour-coding the data. After the themes were established, the researcher dedicated time to thoroughly analyse the transcripts and immerse themselves in the data (Mezmir, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the themes and subthemes that were found by the researchers in this study. These were drawn from answering the two research questions. (1) How did the high school-to-intercollegiate transition influence sports participation among student-athletes? (2) How does the support system help improve the student-athlete's performance?

Transitioning into Intercollegiate Sports

Transition can be triggered by several events, such as retirement, injury, or deselection, which can lead to obstacles for student-athletes and professional athletes (Saxe et al., 2017). These challenges may include a lack of preparedness for life after sports, a feeling of loss, a period of personal development, and the need to adjust. The majority of participants have emphasised that training in college tends to be less intense compared to high school training and that academic priorities often take precedence. The dual role of student athletes makes it challenging to maintain a balance between all responsibilities. Similarly, the process of transitioning to college is a significant milestone in adolescence that is widely recognised as being both challenging and stressful (Huml et al., 2019).

As a result, high school athletes frequently dedicate over 20 hours a week to training and participating in sports (Gayles & Baker, 2015). Many athletes develop a prominent sports identity during their high school years as they consistently and rigorously engage in this demanding movement (Fuller, 2014). Moreover, student-athletes frequently acquire a higher level of recognition, establish more favourable connections with their peers and teachers, and achieve a higher rate of college acceptance compared to their non-athlete counterparts. Thus, this study revealed that the high school-to-intercollegiate transition had allowed them to explore the experiences that influenced

their sports participation. Particularly, these discovered two sub-themes that provide challenges in managing the transition: (1) focus and commitment; and (2) coach-athlete relationships.

Focus and Commitment

The athletes demonstrate their dedication to their chosen sports through their focus and commitment. Various studies influence athletes' motivation to continue training, including time management, academic obligations, training methodology, and social influence (Brustio et al., 2020; Donald et al., 2022; Indriani & Ashfaq, 2021; Mateu et al., 2020). One of the challenges faced by players when shifting from high school to intercollegiate sports is maintaining their focus and commitment.

Ms. Leah expressed her opinion, saying:

"... We put a lot of emphasis on training in high school. Our daily routine is already divided. Our academics take place in the morning and afternoon, while our intensive training takes place in the evening. We only get seasonal training while in college. When there is a competition coming up, we usually have training.

A student athlete since high school in the field of arnis, Ms. Mae also expressed the same opinion towards her personal experience in this particular category, saying:

"... We always had intense training during high school because there were so many competitions. We don't have a coach who can train us intensively in college. We are most likely the ones who train those members who do not yet have the necessary skills."

The participants have provided explanations for the factors that influenced the impact of the change. One of the main factors is their efficient allocation of time. Attending college requires a substantial amount of time and entails greater academic commitments. The majority of the participants prioritised their academic performance over maintaining a balance with their devotion to sports. The reduced focus and dedication to their selected sport have also been influenced by training methodologies.

Participants have expressed that the training methods they experienced in college differed significantly from those in high school. This difference had a negative impact on their interest in sports, as they were still required to achieve certain training methods. Based on the theory of transition (Schlossberg, 1981), it appears likely that the situation, self, support, and strategies all play a role in the athlete's transition.

In particular, it talks about how the athlete's commitments to school, their new surroundings, and other duties affected their transition. Similarly, the players had their own ways of handling the transition. Some of them still did their best to balance sports and schoolwork, while others chose to focus more on schoolwork because of the pressure from the educational institution (Choi & Kim, 2021).

Coach-Athlete Relationship

A sports team's coach is the individual who instructs and prepares the players as well as making choices regarding the team's strategy during competitions. A coach has the ability to change an athlete, helping them reach their greatest potential and become a better athlete. It is essential to do research on coaching effectiveness to ensure that players' athletic experiences and development are optimised. In the lives of the athletes they deal with, particularly the younger athletes, coaches have a crucial role to play.

Ms. Trisha was able to share her experiences about dealing with her coach, which merely talks about their bond with one another, saying:

... Unlike in college, my high school coaches already knew me because I met them in other competitions when I was a kid, so it's already easier for them to guide me. We're already close, so we can train more comfortably.

Also, Ms. Leah shares the same struggle about how she deals with their coach. She expresses her thoughts genuinely, saying:

... College is very different; it's difficult for us to approach our coaches because we're not that close, and we only have training when there's sports competition.

Thus, knowing what qualities and leadership styles make a successful coach can support positive youth development and ensure that young athletes have the best chance to develop their skills and attributes (Harry & Weight, 2021). A sports team's coach is the individual who instructs and prepares the players as well as making choices regarding the team's strategy during competitions. A coach has the ability to change an athlete, helping them reach their greatest potential and become a better athlete. It is essential to do research on coaching effectiveness to ensure that players' sports experience and development are optimised.

In the lives of the athletes they deal with, particularly the younger athletes, coaches have a crucial role to play. Thus, knowing what qualities and leadership styles make a successful coach can support their skills and attributes (Harry & Weight, 2021). Recent studies have demonstrated that interactions between coaches and athletes have a significant impact on sports engagement and result in a reduction of burnout (McGee & Defreese, 2019). A study by Longakit et al. (2023) demonstrated that when coaches develop stronger relationships with athletes, the athletes' enthusiasm for sports increases. The mutual support between coaches and athletes enhances their energy levels, as athletes can rely on coaches openly and perceive them as a crucial source of motivation in their sports lives.

Ms. Miles has been an arnis player since she was in high school. Upon her transition going to college, she discovered something about their coach and the coaching techniques, saying:

... Our coach from high school is much more knowledgeable about a particular sport than our coach from college, who is still learning and catching up with this one since it is not his primary sport.

Another participant whose name is Ms. Ella expresses the same opinion about her coach, saying:

... When it comes to our coaches, there is a significant difference. Our high school coaches are knowledgeable about this sport, whereas our college coach isn't as proficient.

Consequently, a study by McGee & Defreese (2019) found a strong connection between coaches' relationships with student-athletes and their performance and positive results. This study demonstrated the necessity for coaches to have the skills to engage with their student-athletes, or at the very least, to be proficient coaches who possess a deep understanding of the sport they are responsible for. The participants also conveyed that the team's atmosphere played a crucial role in facilitating a seamless transition and

adjustment to engaging in sports activities. Furthermore, athletes derive a sense of cohesiveness within a team through the social environment, including interaction with coaches and teammates (Weiss et al., 2021).

A study conducted by Fuller (2014) highlighted the significance of their interactions with their coaches, categorising them as either supportive or unsupportive. When it came to transitions, it was easier for athletes who had a coach who supported and encouraged them. Similarly, previous studies indicate that challenges with coaches can result in athletes feeling resentful (Weiss et al., 2021). Conversely, a strong bond with a coach is associated with a smooth and effective transfer (McGee & Defreese, 2019).

Support System

It is critical to understand how various forms of support influence athletes' motivation and morale. A study by Fraina & Hodge (2020) postulates that academic mentorship offers student-athletes valuable counsel and support to help them achieve their long-term objectives. This partnership enables athletes to maintain their concentration on their educational and professional goals, thereby preserving athletes drive and determination.

In a Philippine sports setting, supporters of school varsity athletics claim that the time commitments involved provide structure and routine, which can contribute to academic success and minimise risk factors (Cuzzamu & Salcedo, 2022). Participating in athletics offers non-conventional education that promotes the holistic development of young individuals and enhances the academic achievement of student-athletes.

Conversely, others contend that an excessive emphasis on academic support may unintentionally diminish the academic standards of athletes, thereby failing to prepare for post-sports life. Another study by Sawiuk et al. (2016) evaluate the efficacy of various mentoring systems, as traditional mentoring has been viewed as a simplistic and limited relationship. This study also examined the developmental, educational, and interpersonal dimensions of mentorship. Moreover, the participants faced different challenges during their transition from high school to college sports participation. This assistance can be analysed into subthemes such as (1) increasing motivation and (2) boosting morale.

Increases Motivation

The findings of the study indicate that the support system provided to athletes has two notable benefits, namely, an enhancement in their motivation. The greater the amount of intrinsic or extrinsic support they receive, the higher their level of motivation towards their craft. The support they have received suggests that they are esteemed and adequately attended to. Thus, the provision of motivational support will result in an increase in morale. Athletes' confidence grows as they engage in games not only for personal gain but also for the benefit of the school (Thompson et al., 2022).

Ms. Leah expounded on her experiences according to the financial support she received in high school and college. She said:

... Let me begin with the school's assistance. They have supported us in high school, but I cannot say that it is complete support because they have not shown any support for us during national and international competitions because we are not bringing the name of the school at all. While in college, it is less, which we may not realize yet because we haven't participated in any competitions, we are still very fortunate because we received financial support in college, which allows us to meet our needs for this sport.

Ms. Grace also shared her short but direct opinion as to the financial support that she has received, saying:

...I've received allowance, and for transportation in high school while only stipend in college.

The athlete's motivation was significantly influenced by the extrinsic motivation provided by the school and the intrinsic support offered by the teacher (Aoyagi et al., 2020). The provision of school support has the potential to impact the whole development of athletes (Sulz et al., 2021). Not only does it facilitate the enhancement of their skills, but it also contributes to the cultivation of their overall well-being as athletes. The findings of this study highlighted the significance of financial assistance in facilitating their anticipated educational pursuits. This could provide an opportunity to consistently attend training sessions or to acquire the necessary equipment for skill development.

In addition, athletes have expressed that increased recognition serves as a catalyst for their sustained motivation to pursue their passion. Obtaining acknowledgement from the university, particularly in relation to sports, is intricate since they prioritise other aspects. Acknowledging athletes is essential, as it fosters a sense of appreciation from the institution. One of the determinant factors in increasing the motivation of athletes is the perception of the teachers' support (Sulz et al., 2021; Aoyagi et al., 2020).

Ms. Mae expounded on her experiences from high school to college about the support that she has received from her teachers, saying:

... Our teachers in high school appreciate that their students participate in competitions, so they show their support for us by excusing us from class and giving us consideration for our missed activities. Far alike from college.

Teachers that provide academic mentorship offer student-athletes valuable counsel and assistance to help them achieve their long-term goals (Huml et al., 2019). This partnership enables athletes to maintain their concentration on their academic and professional goals, thereby preserving their drive and determination. Scholarships and financial aid play a crucial role in motivating student-athletes. These types of support help athletes concentrate more on their training and academic endeavours by reducing financial burdens. This emphasis can result in enhanced performance in both academic and athletic pursuits, cultivating a culture characterised by exceptional achievement.

Boosts Morale

On the other hand, encouraging an athlete is crucial to helping increase their confidence (Cho et al., 2020). A stronger interaction between coaches and athletes is something that can only be attained through effective communication (Donald et al., 2022). The participant in this study emphasises that dream coaches should be immediately accessible and able to answer any questions or concerns they may have about their training or anything else. A coach must be knowledgeable about what he is doing in order to transfer the skills to athletes.

Ms. Grace expounded her thoughts about the support he received from her coaches, both in high school and in college, saying:

... During high school, my coaches provided moral support. They show it by motivating us during training and supporting us during competitions. I only received a little moral support while in college.

Mr. Mark expressed his experiences with regards to the support that he has received from his coaches from high school and college, saying:

... I'll start with my high school coach because he shared his knowledge, expertise, and skills with us, which was very helpful because most of my high school teammates are now playing for various universities outside of Iligan City. The intense discipline he instilled in us has made us better football players. Now that I'm in college, I can say that our coach also supports us. He occasionally helps us financially, especially with food and transportation during tournaments. He always motivates us, which is why our game isn't as good when our coach isn't there.

Additionally, encouragement from peers may also have an impact on the athletes' morale. A study by [Cho et al. \(2020\)](#) found that peer support is one of the essential sources of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in sports. Various studies claimed that athletes will perform better through encouraging remarks, messages of hope, and the struggles they have faced together with teammates or peers ([Brustio et al., 2020](#)). According to a study ([Newton, 2020](#)), in order for students to reach their full potential, they require a support system made up of numerous individuals and organisations.

Participants have highlighted how their teammates helped them boost their confidence and performance as athletes, inside and outside the court.

Ms. Trisha expressed her opinion towards the support that she received from her teammates both in college and in high school, saying:

... Both in college and high school, it's the same, even though we're not that close, they're still there to cheer us on and motivate us during competitions.

Strong connections among teammates foster a nurturing atmosphere in which athletes have a sense of worth and drive. The feeling of belonging is essential for keeping a positive state of mind ([Baghurst et al., 2018](#)).

Mr. Mark was able to expound his opinions also with regards to the support that he received from his fellow athletes, saying:

... During high school, my teammates and I were always there for each other emotionally. We share personal problems because we are already very open and comfortable. In college, it is more about helping one another, especially during competitions when we assist our fellow athletes in being excused from their respective classes, especially during ROTC.

Student-athletes should have outstanding support from the school, coaches, teammates, government, friends, and family in order to realise their full potential. With this strategy, student-athletes will be more motivated to successfully manage their time so they can balance their academic and sports commitments ([Russell, 2021](#)). They will also be more committed to achieving their athletic objectives. Coaches' leadership is essential for the athletes' skill development since coaches can impart new knowledge on improving one's skills ([Donald et al., 2022](#)).

Coaches should also develop their relationship with the student-athletes in a way that creates more bonds and must remember to be a coach, teacher, friend, or parent ([Rezania & Gurney, 2014](#)). Support from teammates has played a crucial role in athletes' development ([Donald et al., 2022](#)). The participants thought that the more motivational

words they got from their teammates, the more powerful the athletes became. Additionally, it was thought that cheering on new teammates would help a student athlete's confidence and growth (Cho et al., 2020).

Theoretical Implications

The transition of student-athletes from high school to college sports participation can be a challenging experience, often marked by significant changes in their academic, athletic, psychological, and social environments (Brown et al., 2015). To better understand this complex transition process, Schlossberg's transition theory, proposed in 1981, offers a valuable framework. Transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981) defines a transition as a process that leads to alterations in routines, assumptions, and responsibilities within a given scenario. Schlossberg's model highlights four key factors that influence an individual's adaptation to a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies.

Situation refers to the characteristics of the transition itself, such as the role change, the timing, and the individual's perception of the transition as positive or negative (Choi & Kim, 2021). For student-athletes, the shift from being a high school start to becoming a college-level competitor can be a significant role change that requires adjustments to new expectations and competitive demands. The timing of this transition, often coinciding with other major life changes such as leaving home and starting college, can further complicate the experience (Huml et al., 2019). This study identifies that the student-athletes' transition is mostly influenced by academic responsibilities, scheduling conflicts, the relationship with coaches, and task-related challenges. These factors may have an impact on their performance in sports.

The second factor, self, encompasses the personal and demographic characteristics that influence an individual's resources. Student-athletes may bring different levels of confidence, maturity, and emotional intelligence to navigate the challenges of this transition. For instance, a study by Mateu et al. (2020) explores the experiences of young high-level athletes found that the possession and deployment of specific psychological characteristics, such as self-awareness and resilience, facilitated their successful transition to university life. The participants are facing difficulties during the transition because of their different points of view. Participants understand that college might be stressful and must make mindful decisions about their priorities. Most participants indicate a desire for support with properly managing their time, leading to a reduced level of commitment to their activity as they prioritise their academic goals.

The third factor, support, encompasses the social and institutional resources that are accessible to the individual during the period of transition. The support of family, coaches, teammates, and university resources is vital for student-athletes to adjust to their new surroundings and effectively balance their academic and athletic commitments (Choi & Kim, 2021). In this study, participants indicated that emotional support is essential for their continuing progress, even in the presence of financial support. Nevertheless, their lack of motivation hinders their ability to reach their full potential and establish themselves as significant athletes.

Finally, strategies are the coping processes and adaptive actions that individuals use to handle the shift. Student-athletes employ diverse tactics, including effective time management, setting clear objectives, and seeking assistance from support networks, to successfully handle the responsibilities of their dual roles. In order to overcome unforeseen obstacles, they have stated their desire for assistance, which has a negative impact on their love for the sport. Most participants address this issue by emphasising

their academic endeavours above attaining a balance between the two and acknowledging the difficulties they face as a result of their present circumstances. The Schlossberg transition theory offers a valuable perspective for comprehending the challenges faced by student-athletes as they navigate the intricate rules of competing in intercollegiate sports. Universities and athletic departments can create complete support systems to help this particular group of people adjust more easily by taking into account the situational, personal, social, and strategic factors that influence their adaptability.

CONCLUSION

The intersection of transitions and support systems within the realm of sports elucidates the intricate interplay of multiple factors that impact athletes' achievements both within and beyond the sporting arena. Through the examination of the subthemes of focus and commitment, coach-athlete relationships, and the broader support system, we may get insight into the all-encompassing structure that is essential for athletes to flourish.

The challenge of transition involves substantial obstacles associated with focus and commitment, especially in balancing reduced training with academic responsibilities. The coach-athlete relationship is essential since it directly impacts an athlete's capacity to effectively navigate transitions. Engagement, competence, and training style are key factors that influence this relationship. By considering and dealing with these aspects, athletes can effectively handle the intricacies of transitioning between various phases of their academic and athletic pursuits, ultimately resulting in a more harmonious and satisfying experience.

Support systems that include both external and internal influences are essential for cultivating motivation and enhancing morale among athletes. Schools offer crucial external assistance through resources and recognition, which inspire athletes to achieve outstanding performance. Teachers provide intrinsic support by delivering encouragement and academic flexibility, assisting athletes in managing their responsibilities.

Coaches have a crucial role in enhancing morale by providing mentorship, demonstrating leadership, and offering positive reinforcement. Peer support fosters a nurturing atmosphere where athletes benefit from shared experience and reciprocal encouragement, eventually enhancing their overall well-being and performance.

Essentially, athletes require a comprehensive support system that includes school resources, instructor motivation, effective coaching, and peer support. This comprehensive strategy not only enhances motivation but also greatly enhances morale, allowing players to effectively manage both of their responsibilities and reach their maximum potential both academically as well as in sports.

The findings presented in this study should be considered in light of some limitations. First, this study had a small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population of student-athletes. A larger sample size would provide a broader perspective on the transition experiences. Second, a significant number of research studies depend on data that is self-reported, which is susceptible to bias. Athletes may inaccurately report their experiences due to factors such as the need to conform to social expectations or difficulties in recalling details. Lastly, future studies may examine the impact of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds on the process of transitioning. This may entail analysing the disparities in transitioning experiences among student-athletes belonging to different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest to declare by the authors.

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