

Coaches' Lens on Student-Athletes Sports Performance: A Multiple Case Study

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Abstract. This study explored the challenges faced by student-athletes in public and private secondary schools, through the lens of their coaches focusing on cognitive and somatic anxiety and its impact on performance in sports. The research employed a multiple case study methodology, selecting twelve participants through purposive sampling from schools in Davao City. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and thematic analysis to examine the relationship between anxiety, coping mechanisms, and performance outcomes. Findings revealed that both cognitive anxiety, driven by self-doubt and external pressures, and somatic anxiety, presenting as physical symptoms, significantly hindered athletic performance. However, athletes who employed coping techniques such as mental re-framing, relaxation exercises, and resilience-building demonstrated enhanced self-confidence and improved performance. Additionally, cultural and economic factors were identified as key influences on athletes' experiences, adding complexity to their coping processes. Based on these results, the study advocates integrating comprehensive mental health programs within school sports to provide student-athletes with effective coping strategies. By addressing anxiety and promoting mental well-being, schools can support student-athletes' holistic development, fostering success in sports and beyond.

KEY WORDS

1. student-athletes 2. cognitive anxiety 3. somatic anxiety 4. coping techniques 5. mental health

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1. Introduction

The Problem and Its Setting Anxiety is a prevalent challenge that affects student-athletes in the global setting for instance, in America, it is linked to mental problems (Kaishian et al., 2021). Moreover, in the same sphere, athletics-related anxiety was a significant predictor of cannabis use and substance-related risk behaviors (Knettel et al., 2021). On the other hand, studentathletes in Ireland, the most prominent stress factor for student-athletes was found to be anxiety (Gomez, 2019). In a systematic review of studies about athletes' health and well-being, previous studies show that anxiety as a stress factor has a relationship with performance. In the Philippine setting, it was claimed that there would be no excellent performance or achievement if athletes were not in a good mental state (Fadare et al., 2022. This prevalent issue highlights the critical need for more extensive support structures to assist student-athletes in over-

coming these obstacles and performing at their best. Nonetheless, there is inadequate data on the unique challenges that studentathletes encounter in this sphere. While some researchers have looked into mental toughness, the characteristics directly affecting sports performance have been mostly disregarded (Maranan Lopez, 2021; de la Cerna Diego, 2022; Martin et al., 2023). This lack of emphasis leaves a significant vacuum in the knowledge of student-athlete issues, particularly in secondary schools at both public and private institutions. By doing a multiple case study in Davao City, I hope to fill a research gap and provide insights about anxiety that could lead to more effective strategies to help student-athletes reach their full potential.

1.1. Significance of Study—This study is of great global significance because it explores student-athletes' obstacles in achieving athletic and academic success through the perspective of their coaches, providing unique insights into underperformance—a prevalent issue worldwide. The study identifies effective coping methods that promote resilience, mental well-being, and holistic development by examining student-athlete experiences and the strategies observed and supported by their coaches. In line with SDG 3: Good Health and WellBeing, the study targets mental health issues such as anxiety and stress, increasing overall well-being through informed coaching techniques. It additionally supports SDG 4: Quality Education by highlighting coaches' roles in developing inclusive support structures that allow student-athletes to balance academics and athletics, ensuring equal possibilities for achievement. The insights gained are intended to aid educators, coaches, and sporting organizations in developing flexible frameworks to improve performance and mental health. Finally, the goal of this research is to help student-athletes reach their full potential through the direction of their coaches, thereby having a long-term impact on their growth and goals.

1.2. Statement of the Problem—This study aimed to discover the problems and issues of student-athletes in sports performance. It will specifically seek to respond to these objectives:

What are the challenges faced by student-athletes in their sports performance from the coaches' perspectives?

What coping mechanisms do student-athletes employ to overcome these challenges from the coaches' perspectives?

What insights have student-athletes gained through their experiences in sports performance from the coaches' perspectives?

1.3. Assumptions—There are assumptions about the diverse challenges that student-athletes face which significantly impact their sports performance, as observed through their coaches' perspectives. For instance, the coping mechanisms employed by student-athletes vary, but coaches may identify universally effective strategies that contribute to overcoming challenges. Furthermore, student-athletes gain valuable insights from their experiences, which, combined with their coaches' guidance, inform their future performance and growth. Next are support systems, including coaches, peers, and family, who play a critical role in helping student-athletes navigate and address challenges. It is also assumed that cultural and contextual factors, as interpreted by coaches, shape the unique experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of student-athletes.

1.4. Theoretical Lens—This study was seen through the lens of the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory of Martens, et al. (1990) which suggests that cognitive anxiety has a negative linear relationship with performance, but somatic anxiety has an inverted-U relationship, while self-confidence has a positive linear relationship with performance (Burton, 1988; Martens, et al., 1990). Concerning my study, anxiety both somatic and cognitive, was found to be present in the experience of the student-

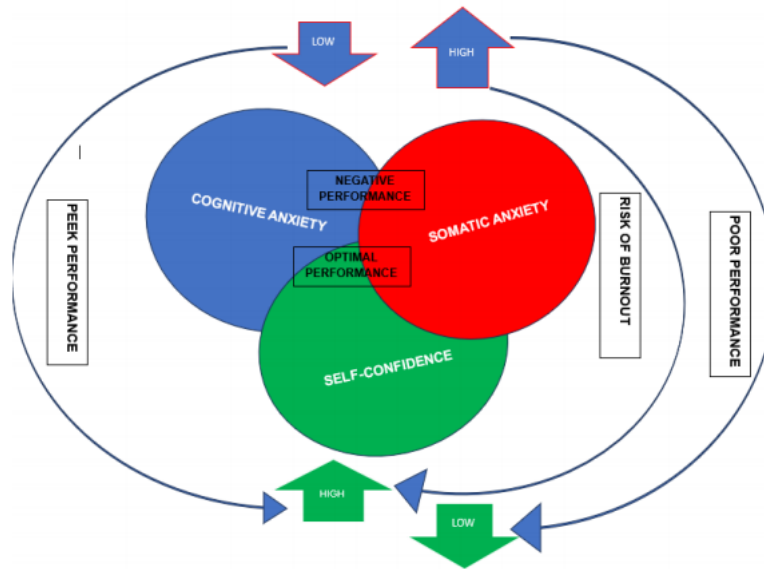


Fig. 1. The representation of the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory athletes as viewed by their coaches and confirmed by the athletes themselves. Besides that, cognitive anxiety negatively affects their performance while somatic anxiety is interconnected with cognitive anxiety, however, there are strategies to mitigate this connection. Negative views of self or negative thoughts as opposed to self-confidence cause somatic anxiety to escalate, nevertheless, when it is moderated led to optimum performance.

2. Methodology

2.1. *Research Design*—I chose a multiple case study design, as outlined by Yin (2009) and refined by Stake (2013), because it offers a deeper, more varied understanding of phenomena like the intersection of anxiety and performance in student-athletes. This approach allows me to explore diverse perspectives and uncover patterns that may not surface in a single-case study. It fits my goal of understanding complex, context-dependent experiences, recognizing the subjective nature of these experiences while maintaining a degree of objectivity (Yin, 2003). I value the close collaboration between researcher and participant, as it fosters a rich, personal exchange of stories, helping me explore how and why these phenomena unfold in real-world settings.

2.2. *Research Respondents*—The study was conducted among coaches and student-athletes in the secondary public and private high schools in Davao City. DepEd Davao City Division is the most prominent Division in Region XI which comprises three districts: District I, District II, and District III with District Supervisors as Heads. The Division has supervised 196 private schools, 170 private elementary schools, and 76 private secondary schools. Regarding sports programs, it has succeeded in several events locally, nationally even internationally.

2.3. *Research Instrument*—The qualitative research method aims to saturate the data instead of finding statistical significance (Crossman, 2020). Thus, the sample size of my participants was smaller compared to quantitative research methods. Twelve (12) participants were

interviewed for this inquiry and comprised four (2) cases as follow: Case 1: Public School Sports Coordinator/Coach. She has been coaching for several years in the same school handling combative sports athletes, but it was her first time coaching Pencak Silat and other athletes qualified for the National Competition. Before her coaching stint, she used to be a marching band coach. She is also a full-time Music, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) Teacher for students under this particular public school's Special Program for Sports (SPS). Case 2: Private School Sports Coordinator/Coach. He has been a coach for 9 years in the same school handling different student athletes qualified for National Competitions. He is a MAPEH Major teacher and teaches other subjects. The students were also interviewed to confirm the coaches' perspectives. The group of five public school student-athletes (ages 14-18) consisted of three competitors in National Pencak Silat, with one female gold medalist, and two who qualified for National Taekwondo but didn't get a medal. They come from below-average income families. A separate group of five private school student-athletes (ages 14-18), competed in sports such as Badminton, Lawn Tennis, Table Tennis, and Archery, with one participant recruited from a public school. Most of these students are from middleincome families. These groups of respondents were treated as confirmatory samples to the two coaches who were interviewed. Participants were selected using

purposive sampling based on criteria of success at regional, national, semi-pro, or professional levels (Creswell, 2014; Campbell et al., 2020). Interview Guide Questions Research questions in qualitative inquiry focus on understanding the "how and what" aspects of the experience or the phenomenon. This exploration can promote more profound openness and inquiry. Consequently, the questions I had prepared required my significant attention, and effort in designing deliberate, well-phrased qualitative but deliberate questions that thoroughly understood the subject matter and facilitated meaningful exploration of the research topic (Creswell, 2014). For validation, I asked research and topic experts to evaluate the interview guide questions that I had formulated. To do this, I sent the questions to them online for more efficiency in giving and receiving feedback. After the interview questions were ready, I utilized them to extract the opinions of the participants with utmost care. Although validation of qualitative interview questions is contested by some researchers for the reason that qualitative research has different assumptions compared to quantitative research, nonetheless, some scholars stressed the need for truth in qualitative studies (Foucault, 1972; Kirk Miller, 1986). Connected to this, as a qualitative researcher, to ensure the validity of my research, I have endeavored to be transparent, attentive to the research process, organized, and follow the appropriate procedure (Hayashi et al., 2019).

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure—This study utilized a combination of in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) as its primary data-gathering techniques, tailored to engage different participant groups effectively. The sports coordinators and coaches participated in the indepth interviews, which were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. This allowed for flexibility while

ensuring the coverage of key research topics. To gather confirmatory data, I engaged public and private high school studentathletes in separate focus group discussions (FGDs). These discussions provided valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of student-athletes, offering a richer understanding of the study's focal areas. In addition to these core techniques, I prepared a set of probe questions aligned with

the study's objectives. These questions were carefully designed to elicit responses that would directly address the research questions, enabling me to gather the necessary information. The probing questions helped in drawing out detailed responses from participants, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. To capture the conversations and interviews accurately, I employed a computer recorder. This tool allowed me to document the dialogues and interview proceedings effectively, ensuring no information was lost. Throughout the process, I remained patient and empathetic, striving to create a comfortable environment where participants felt safe and open to sharing their thoughts

2.5. *Data Analysis*—Following Creswell's (2013) guidelines for qualitative research, this study aimed to explore student-athletes' experiences within the context of Multidimensional Anxiety Theory. While verbatim transcription is typically the standard for qualitative data, it can be time-intensive and potentially delay the research process (Hill, Tawiah-Agyemang, Kirkwood, Kendall, 2022). I employed a semi-verbatim transcription approach in this study, focusing on retaining key information and omitting unnecessary fillers, thus streamlining the transcription process without sacrificing critical data (McMullin, 2023). Given the small sample size of participants, I assumed the dual role of researcher and data analyst, which allowed for a more direct and reflective engagement with the data. This process involved identifying and analyzing emerging themes through a combination of both deductive and inductive coding methods, as outlined by Creswell (2013). These methods helped capture the complexities of student-athletes' experiences in alignment with the theoretical framework of Multidimensional Anxiety Theory. For the deductive coding process, I began with anchor codes derived from the core constructs of Cognitive Anxiety

and experiences. My attentiveness and active listening ensured that they could express themselves freely, fostering an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. I made a point of recording the data promptly and efficiently, ensuring accuracy and reliability throughout the interview process. Once the data were collected, I transcribed the recordings manually. I made sure to master the use of the recording equipment, ensuring smooth operation and maximizing the efficiency of the datagathering process. This careful approach allowed me to capture and document the critical information necessary for the study's analysis. Data A

and Somatic Anxiety as described by the theory. Sub-codes were predetermined to facilitate the identification of specific themes linked to these constructs. As I proceeded, I allowed for inductive coding to take place, using open coding to uncover new and unanticipated themes not explicitly defined by the theory. To further enrich the analysis, I utilized In Vivo Coding, which allowed me to preserve the athletes' unique language, particularly in areas related to coping strategies. This step ensured that the participants' voices were accurately represented throughout the coding process. I then organized the resulting codes into a hierarchical structure, distinguishing between overarching themes and sub-themes. Additionally, I conducted cross-case coding to compare and contrast the experiences of athletes from public and private schools, enabling the identification of shared and divergent patterns. Pattern coding was subsequently used to condense these patterns into broader themes, while theoretical coding mapped the emergent themes back to the framework of Multidimensional Anxiety Theory. This final coding stage helped to refine and deepen the theoretical framework, ensuring that the findings were both theory-driven and data-

informed. This multi-layered coding process, combining both theory-driven and data-driven approaches, facilitated a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of student-athletes' experiences. By leveraging a variety of coding techniques, I was able to extract a richer, more detailed dataset, aligning with Creswell's (2013) emphasis on thorough and flexible data analysis in qualitative research

2.6. Trustworthiness and its Importance— The discussion surrounding the willingness of participants, including the coaches and student-athletes, to engage in interviews reveals important insights into the dynamics of participant interaction and trust-building in qualitative research. Coach 1 and Coach 2 both expressed a clear willingness to participate in the interviews, suggesting an openness and comfort level with the research process. This willingness likely stemmed from their roles as authority figures in their respective athletic programs, which may have made them more accustomed to speaking about their experiences and perspectives on the student-athletes' journeys. Their readiness to participate reflects a level of trust in the research process, which was essential for establishing a foundational rapport that helped me gather valuable insights during the interviews. In contrast, the student-athletes, particularly those from public and private schools, displayed differing levels of engagement. Public school athletes, seemingly being predominantly extroverts, were initially reserved, needing time to warm up before becoming more open and verbose. I am aware of these personality differences based on the Briggs and Myers personality types inventory (Myers, 2019) This is typical of individuals who may be outgoing but still require an element of rapport-building before fully engaging with a researcher. Despite their extroverted nature, these athletes needed time to feel comfortable enough to share their experiences in a meaningful way. I navigated this by creating a relaxed, open environment and employing

rapport-building techniques, which eventually allowed them to speak more freely, providing richer data. On the other hand, private school student-athletes, often more introverted, offered concise responses. Their answers were brief, reflecting their more reserved communication style. This contrast in communication styles between the two groups speaks to the need for patience and sensitivity when interviewing different participant types. With these athletes, I had to employ strategies to encourage further elaboration, sometimes rephrasing questions or offering prompts to draw out deeper insights. The willingness of these athletes to participate, while more subtle, was still present. It required careful observation and skillful interview techniques to access the richer layers of their experiences. The willingness of participants to engage, along with the challenges in accessing certain types of data, underscores the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research. As noted, trustworthiness is fundamental because it ensures the credibility, integrity, and reliability of the study's findings. This is especially true when working with participants who may feel hesitant or reserved at the outset. Establishing trust is essential to garnering honest and authentic responses, which are key to accurate data interpretation. In this case, the trust I worked to build with both coaches and athletes, despite initial hesitations, was essential for collecting meaningful data. Trustworthiness and its Importance Confidence in the research findings is critical, and to build this confidence, I needed to capture the perceptions of my participants accurately. I ensured that the data reflected the true experiences of the athletes and coaches, making sure their voices were heard clearly, even when initially hesitant to speak. The coaches' willingness to share their insights provided a strong foundation for understanding the broader context of the student-athletes' experiences. Ensuring that the participants' experiences were represented authentically helped to produce re-

liable results, enhancing the credibility of the study. Ethical responsibility was also a major concern. I adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the school's Ethics Committee to protect participants' privacy and well-being. This was particularly important given the sensitive nature of discussing personal experiences related to athletic performance and anxiety. Ensuring the participants' comfort and understanding of the research process was crucial to maintaining the ethical integrity of the study. The advancement of knowledge was another key driver of the research. Trustworthy data collection methods and a focus on accurate representation allowed for the production of findings that advanced an understanding of student-athletes' experiences within the context of anxiety. As I purposefully selected participants who could offer valuable perspectives, I was able to generate findings that not only reflect individual experiences but also contribute to the broader field of sports studies. The potential policy impact of this study is also noteworthy. The trustworthy data collected from both public and private school athletes can inform school policies that aim to better support athletes and coaches. Reliable, authentic data is crucial for policymakers to craft interventions or adjustments to athletic programs that align with student needs. Moreover, the study's findings may help improve services provided by schools, offering insights into what can be improved in school athletic programs to support coaches and athletes more effectively. Finally, transparency was essential in maintain-

2.7. *Modified Paradigm*—As a researcher, I approached this study with the mindset of a fellow coach, eager to learn from those with more experience in the field. My journey was enriched by my interactions with student-athletes, particularly those who compete at the prestigious Palaro level. Despite their advanced competitive standing, I was struck by the realization that these athletes are still teenagers—young

ing scholarly rigor. By ensuring the study's methodologies and processes were clearly outlined, I provided the scholarly community with an opportunity to critically assess and evaluate the research. The transparent approach allows others to trust the findings and use them as a reference in future studies, which is crucial for contributing to the global body of sports research, particularly from an Asian context. Enhancing Trustworthiness through Member Checking Given that qualitative research often involves interpreting subjective experiences, the potential for bias and misinterpretation is inherent. To mitigate this, I incorporated member checking, a strategy recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). After conducting interviews, I provided feedback and clarification on aspects of the data that were unclear. This allowed participants to review and confirm their responses, enhancing the accuracy and validity of the findings. This iterative process of seeking confirmation from participants ensured that the data accurately reflected their experiences and intentions, further reinforcing the trustworthiness of the study. In summary, the varied levels of willingness to participate, influenced by personality traits and trust-building efforts, underscores the importance of maintaining trustworthiness throughout the research process. By ensuring ethical rigor, and methodological transparency, and using techniques such as member checking, I was able to enhance the credibility of my findings and contribute meaningful insights to the field.

individuals shouldering significant responsibilities for their families. For many of them, winning competitions is not just about personal glory but a way to provide financial support to their loved ones, particularly because they come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, whether in public or private schools. This deeper understanding of their lives profoundly influenced my perspective on the impact of anx-

ity on their performance. The Multidimensional Anxiety Theory (MAT), developed by R. Scott Martens and his colleagues, served as the theoretical foundation for my study. This theory highlights two distinct components of anxiety: cognitive anxiety, which relates to worry, and somatic anxiety, which pertains to the physical symptoms of anxiety. According to the theory, cognitive anxiety typically undermines performance, while somatic anxiety follows an inverted-U relationship: moderate levels can enhance performance, but excessive anxiety may hinder it. However, based on the findings from my thematic analysis, I propose a modification to the MAT, which better reflects the real-world experiences of student-athletes (SAs) as viewed through the lens of their coaches. The data revealed that additional factors—such as motivation, coping strategies, and individual athlete characteristics—also play critical roles in shaping sports performance. More importantly, I argue that cultural and economic factors significantly influence how student-athletes perform, extending beyond traditional conceptions of anxiety. Nonetheless, I also notice that cultural values and societal norms are particularly important in shaping both attitudes and subjective norms—essentially, how individuals perceive what is expected of them. For example, in cultures that emphasize community and group success, such as in the Philippines, athletes may feel motivated to perform not only for their gain

The central theme Challenges Faced by SAs in the public school through the lens of Coach 1 has three main themes: Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, and Interconnection between Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety. Under the first main theme are two sub-themes: Financial Pressure and Self-Worth and Fear of Failure and Negative Self-Perception. The second main theme, however, has two sub-themes: Physical Symptoms and Optimal Somatic Anxiety

but also to contribute to the collective success of their team or community. Even when competing individually, Filipino athletes often embody a sense of shared responsibility, reflecting the communal values ingrained in their culture. On the other hand, economic factors—such as income levels, job security, and access to resources seem to directly impact the student-athlete’s perceived behavioral control or confidence in their ability to achieve their goals. These Filipino student-athletes who are from a low-income background felt driven to win competitions because of the potential financial rewards, which could alleviate some of their family’s economic struggles. Conversely, student-athletes from more affluent backgrounds—often in private schools—may feel more confident in their ability to succeed due to access to better resources, such as superior training facilities and educational opportunities. However, those from less privileged backgrounds may face barriers, such as inadequate support or financial strain, which could hinder their perceived control and, ultimately, their performance. Figures 2, 3, and 4 present the central theme, main themes, and sub-themes from Case 1: Public School Coach’s Perspectives on Student-Athletes, Their Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Insights on Anxiety and Sports Performance, offering a comprehensive view of how these dynamics play out in the context of public school athletics

for Performance. The third main theme that emerged under Challenges Faced by SAs is the Interconnection Between Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety with its sub-themes: the Influence of Worry on Physical Symptoms and Effect on Muscle Memory. In addition, the central theme of Coping Mechanisms of SAs in a public school through the lens of Coach 1 has two main themes: Control Over Anxiety and Resilience. The first main theme has four sub-themes: Spirituality



Fig. 2. A schematic representation of the central theme, main theme, and sub-themes of the Challenges that faced Public School Student-Athletes on Anxiety in sports Performance through the lens of Mother Coach

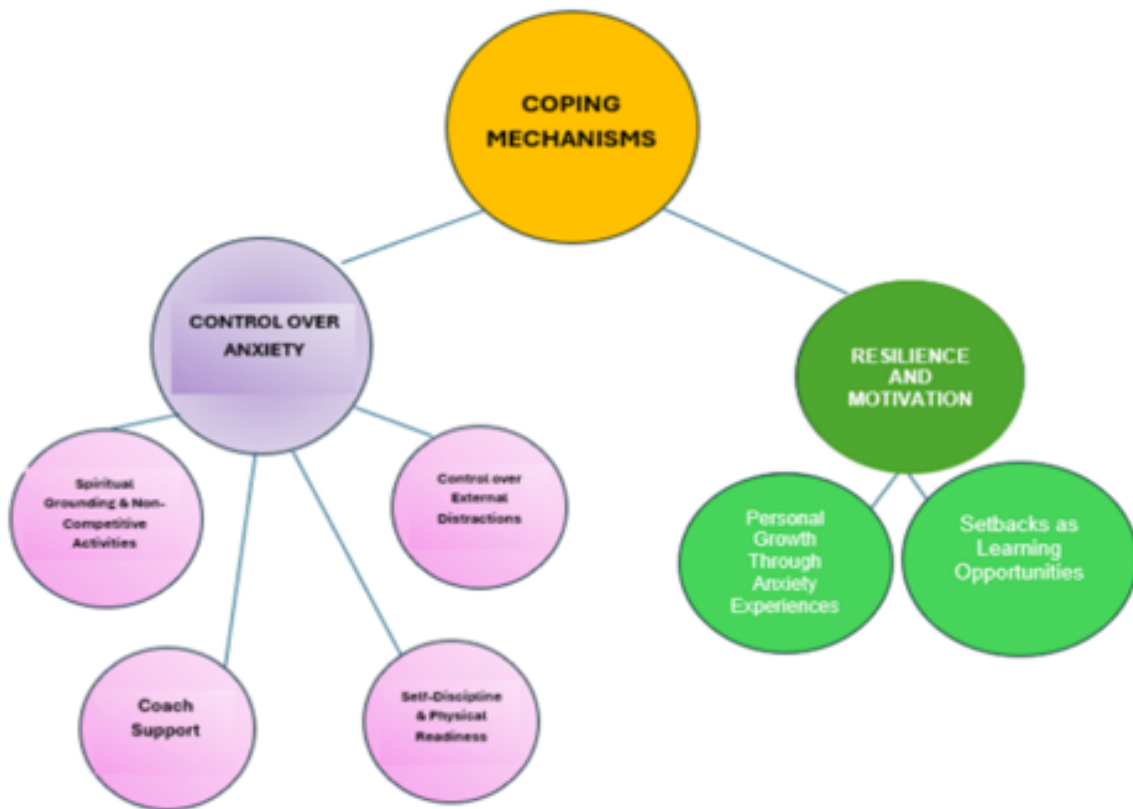


Fig. 3. A schematic representation of the central theme, main theme, and sub-themes of the Coping Mechanisms of Public School Student-Athletes on Anxiety in sports Performance through the lens of Mother Coach



Fig. 4. A schematic representation of the central theme, main theme, and sub-themes of the Insights of Public School Student-Athletes on Anxiety in sports Performance through the lens of Mother Coach



Fig. 5. A schematic representation of the central theme, main theme, and sub-themes of the Challenges that faced Private School Student-Athletes on Anxiety in sports Performance through the lens of Brother Coach

tual Grounding and Non-Competitive Activities, Control Over External Distractions, Coach Support, and Self-discipline and Physical Readiness. The last main theme under the central theme of Coping Mechanisms is Resilience and Motivation with sub-themes: Personal Growth Through Anxiety Experiences and Setbacks as Learning Opportunities. The central theme In-

sights has two main themes: External Influences and Influence of Socio-economic Status. Figures 5, 6, and 7 present the central theme, main themes, and sub-themes of Case 2: Private School Coach's Perspectives of Student Athletes, Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Insights on Anxiety and Sports Performance.

The central theme of Challenges that Private School Student-Athletes faced in Athletic Performance, two main themes emerged from the perspective of Case 2: Brother Coach, and these are: Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety (Physical Symptoms), and Interconnection between Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety. The sub-themes of Cognitive Anxiety are Worry, Family Pressure, Fear of Failure and Personal Expectations.

Moreover, the sub-themes for Somatic Anxiety (Physical Symptoms) are: Impact on Performance, Physical Manifestations, Physical Responses to Competition Pressure, and lastly, Endurance Affected by Emotional State. Lastly, on the main theme Interconnection Between Cognitive and Somatic Anxiety, the sub-themes are: Influence of Cognitive Worry on Physical Symptoms and Mental State Impacting

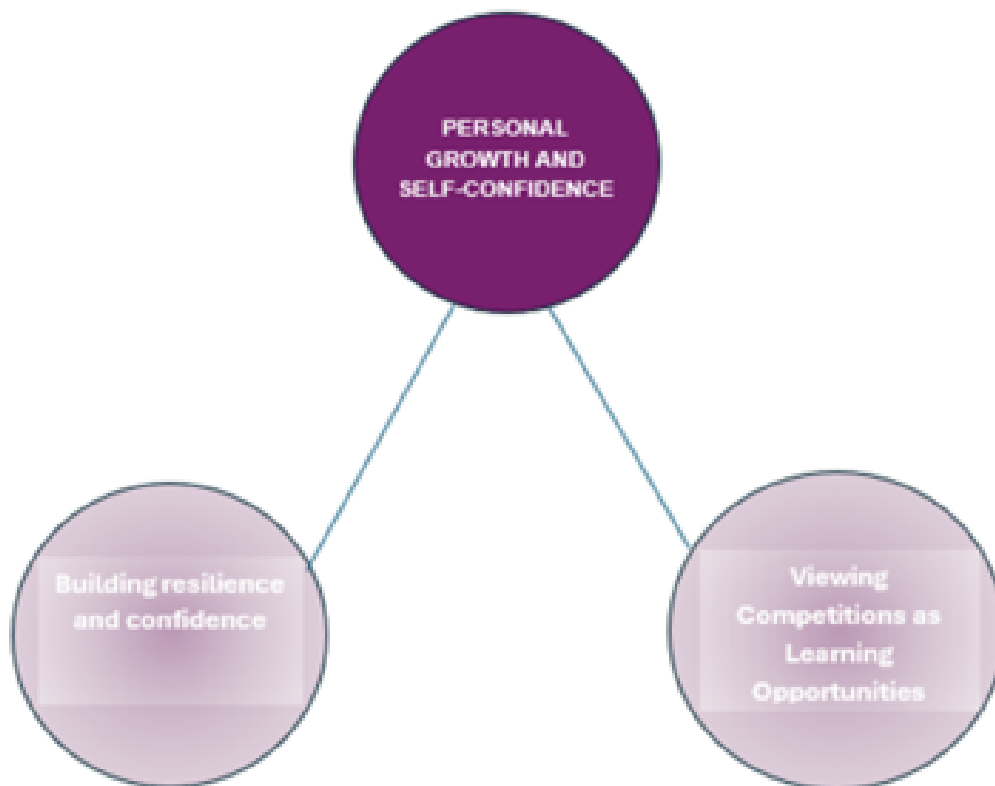


Fig. 6. A schematic representation of the central theme, main theme, and sub-themes of the Insights of Private School Student-Athletes on Anxiety in sports Performance through the lens of Brother Coach

Performance. Moreover, the central theme on Coping Mechanisms, one main theme emerged: Managing Anxiety Through Mental Reframing with sub-themes: Relaxation Techniques and Positive Recall. Finally, to answer Research Question 3 (RQ3), the central theme on Insights of the private school SAs about

their anxiety in sports performance based on the perspectives of Brother Coach, have one main theme that emerged: Personal Growth and Self-Confidence with two sub-themes: Building Resilience and Confidence, and Viewing Competitions as Learning Opportunities.

2.8. *Viewpoint and Standpoint*—I believe that reality is shaped by the way people interact with and make sense of the world around them. Each participant’s story is a reflection of their unique experiences, and these experiences are influenced by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they live. To truly understand their stories, it’s essential to take into account these contexts, as they play a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive and interpret their lives. In other words, we cannot fully grasp the meaning of their experiences without considering the broader social and cultural factors that impact them. Since qualitative research upholds constructivism’s worldview, it also believes that as people experience the world reflectively, they develop their representations of the experiences and integrate new knowledge into their knowledge beforehand or schemas (Kamal, 2019). So, my main role as a researcher is to gather data. Moreover, I used a semi-structured instrument made up of questions designed purposely to answer the questions of this study. It included a sequence of open-ended questions and objectives with probing questions. In the data-gathering procedure, I remembered to show patience and empathy to my participants and make them feel safe as they went through the interview procedures. I have been attentive during the interview

process and created an atmosphere where they can be free to express their thoughts and feelings, as well as I will be able to grasp all the necessary data and record them promptly, effectively, and efficiently during the process. After collecting the data, I transcribed them using a cross between a semi-verbatim and intelligent verbatim transcription method which omitted unnecessary, noise or fillers in the conversation while retaining pertinent information of the data (McMullin, 2023). To do this, I mastered the use of the recorder efficiently and effectively. I made sure pertinent information shared by the participants was captured and expressed since in qualitative research this is necessary and crucial. As the data analyst, I extracted significant statements by coding the data to describe what it contained. Once it was done, I reflected and analyzed the research data to generate themes. I also ensured that the generated themes were helpful and accurately represented the actual data. Lastly, I connected the themes to the current studies to reflect on their relevance. This allowed me to find meanings to the answers and to compare the relevance of the inquiry to other existing studies. Reviewing these roles in advance helped me face possible challenges effectively and proactively along the way in the actual conduct of my research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Case 1 – Mother Coach* —The first case in this study is referred to by the pseudonym “Mother Coach.” She is a middle-

aged female coach at a public school in Cluster 4, known for her nurturing, motherly nature. Her unique ability to treat her athletes as if they

were her own children has fostered a warm, supportive relationship between them. This bond has proven to be particularly valuable, as it has allowed her to become a trusted confidant for her student-athletes. Mother Coach is not just an experienced educator; she is deeply committed to her athletes' well-being. She consistently monitors their physical, emotional, and academic conditions, ensuring their development extends beyond their sports performance. In addition to training them in their respective sports, she takes it upon herself to guide them in building strong character. Whenever she notices any challenges—whether related to family issues, school pressures, or sports struggles—she encourages and exhorts them, providing much-needed support and mentorship. To triangulate

3.1.1. Challenges of Public Student-Athletes on Anxiety in Sports Performance in the lens of Mother Coach—Mother Coach shared her observations and perspectives on the Challenges faced by public school SAs when I asked her what problems or issues she has encountered (as a coach) that affect her athletes' performance, especially those related to self-confidence. Moreover, Mother Coach shared a scenario where nervousness prevented athletes from hearing the coach's instructions clearly. During high-pressure moments, one student-athlete could only perceive a buzzing sound whenever the coach spoke. While muscle memory can sometimes help them regain focus, those who are struggling tend to block out the coach's guidance, making the same mistakes over and over. On the other hand, Mother Coach pointed out the difficulties faced by student-athletes, especially those with financial problems, and how it affects their confidence and performance. Some athletes, for example, may not have enough food at home, so when there's a buffet, they tend to eat a lot. This can be a problem for sports like Pencak Silat, where ath-

her observations, the student-athletes she mentors were interviewed through a Focus-Group Discussion (FGD). This allowed me to confirm and gain additional insights into the dynamics of their relationship with their coach. The FGD involved five senior high school students from the same public school in Cluster 4. All participants had begun their athletic journeys in elementary school and had represented their school in the prestigious Palarong Pambansa, an annual multi-sport event for student-athletes in the Philippines, organized by the Department of Education (DepEd). Their participation in such a competitive event highlighted the depth of their athletic experience and provided further context to their relationships with their coach.

letes need to control their weight. Overeating can mess up their diet and affect their performance. In short, these athletes face challenges like money issues, weight control, and stamina. But with time and support, they learn to manage these problems and become stronger, both physically and mentally. On one hand, a student athlete explained the importance of self-confidence in achieving success. The speaker is saying that without self-confidence, it's difficult to perform well or excel in anything. For instance, if someone is expected to do well at a task but lacks confidence in themselves, they are unlikely to succeed because they won't believe in their ability to do it. Another issue is that some athletes don't keep up with exercises like jogging, which weakens their physical strength. This makes them tired quickly during sparring, lowering their confidence. However, as they compete in higher-level events, they start to understand the importance of staying fit and jogging regularly, which helps them handle anxiety and improve their performance.

3.1.2. Coping Mechanisms of Public Student-Athletes on Anxiety in Sports Performance

in the lens of Mother Coach—Mother Coach claimed that student-athletes cope with anxiety in different ways, often based on their personal situations. For some, family problems can make anxiety worse. To confirm the role of their coach as they navigate through the challenges of their life as student-athletes in relation to anxiety and sports performance, one of them shared that the coach also critique their performance, which helps them identify areas for improvement. In these case, Mother Coach also perceived the importance of creating a supportive space where athletes feel comfortable sharing their struggles. By building a strong connection with the athlete, it is possible to work through personal issues along with sports performance, which can help reduce some of the anxiety they feel during competition. Nonetheless, based on the perception of Mother Coach, student-athletes from less privileged backgrounds feel a strong pressure to succeed in their sport because they believe winning will help support their family financially. Part of the coping mechanism whenever she sense negativity, stress, or anxiety in these athletes, was to take the time to talk to them. In another way, Mother Coach discussed other approaches to manage and support her student-athletes. She mentioned grounding the athletes spiritually or in the Filipino context, meeting their spiritual needs. She also believes in a higher power and wants her student-athletes to be guided. To prevent social media from affecting the athletes' emotions, the speaker limits phone use to specific times, allowing phones only from 6 to 8 pm, with any violations affecting the whole group as a way to promote discipline.

3.1.3. Insights of Public Student-Athletes on Anxiety in Sports Performance in the lens of Mother Coach—Mother Coach observed valuable lessons that athletes, particularly those from challenging financial backgrounds, learn through their sports journey. The first insight is about resilience, as many athletes realize that

their performance could help support their families. This understanding drove them to push through difficulties, building their determination and teaching them to work harder than they originally thought possible. Mother Coach observed that initially, athletes may not fully understand the importance of regular physical training, such as jogging. However, as they advance to higher levels of competition, they begin to see how stamina contributes to both confidence and success. As a result, they become more disciplined and take greater responsibility for their own training, understanding that every effort, no matter how small, strengthens them. For Mother Coach and her student-athletes, the journey of development in sports involves both physical preparation (like training and stamina) and mental growth (like self-confidence or learning from setbacks). Both require discipline, consistency, and the ability to learn from every experience to improve.

3.2. Case 2 – Brother Coach—The second case in this study is that of a coach known by the pseudonym "Brother Coach." This key informant is in his late 20s, a coach at a private school in Cluster 4 for 9 years, handling different student-athletes qualified for National Competitions. He is a MAPEH Major teacher and teaches other subjects. The confirmatory data were taken from the focus-group-discussion (FGD) participants who are a group of five public school student-athletes (ages 14-18) who competed in sports such as Badminton, Lawn Tennis, Table Tennis, and Archery. Most participants began their athletic journeys in elementary school and had the honor of representing their school at the prestigious Palarong Pambansa, an annual multi-sport event in the Philippines organized by the Department of Education (DepEd). In contrast to the open and confident responses of public-school Coach 1, Private School Coach 2 revealed a more nostalgic and reserved tone. The coach reflected his experiences with a few athletes, recalling past encounters, but his re-

sponses were generally less elaborate. I had to clarify and rephrase questions to ensure his understanding.

3.2.1. Challenges of Private School Student-Athletes (SAs) on Anxiety in Sports Performance in the lens of Brother Coach—Echoing what Mother Coach observed previously, Brother Coach described how personal struggles, particularly family issues, can impact an athlete's motivation and performance. He shared an example of a student who began engaging in unhealthy behaviors, like getting into vices, due to ongoing arguments with his mother. These conflicts at home led to a loss of motivation, which, in turn, affected his commitment to practice. This highlights the significant role that family dynamics can play in an athlete's mental and emotional well-being, ultimately influencing their sports performance. Interestingly, none of the private school SAs broached the subject of family pressure during the interview to confirm this observation. Probably this was due to the fact that this batch of confirmatory FGD participants were more reserved than that of Case 1. As observed, I also find Brother Coach a little reserved in personality, and apparently, his student-athletes resembled him. On navigating the challenge of cognitive anxiety, he emphasized the connection between the mind and the body. He explained that mental stress or overwhelming worries can have a direct impact on an athlete's ability to focus and stay motivated. When the mind is consumed by concerns, it can cause a loss of concentration, which ultimately affects performance. On the issue of losing, Brother Coach described his SA feeling pressure, particularly when competing against opponents they are already familiar with. The familiarity with the competitors might increase the pressure, possibly because of expectations or past experiences with them, which can affect the athlete's performance. To confirm his observation, two FGD participants expressed how seeing their opponents, especially strong

or top competitors, makes them feel nervous. The first speaker mentioned that simply seeing the opponent caused him to feel anxious. The second speaker agreed, adding that the nervousness is particularly heightened when the opponent is highly skilled or a top contender in the sport. This highlights the pressure and anxiety that can come from competing against strong rivals. Remarkably, Brother Coach took note of incidents that he perceived as family issues causing his student athletes cognitive anxiety which influences somatic anxiety and affecting sports performance. However, none of the SAs mentioned this matter during the interviews.

3.2.2. Coping Mechanisms of Private School Student-Athletes (SAs) on Anxiety in Sports Performance in the lens of Brother Coach—Brother Coach firstly mentioned that one of his SA used past experiences of overcoming challenges as motivation, helping manage cognitive anxiety by re-framing negative thoughts when playing under high pressure. This was implied in one of the SAs when he described his personal mindset and motivation. He reminds himself of the hard work and effort he has put into training, using that as a source of strength and determination. By focusing on his past training, he motivated himself to keep going and refuse to give up, even in challenging situations. On top of this coping mechanisms mentioned, Brother Coach observed that his SAs employ deep breathing as a way to relax and manage stress while another SA sometimes plays Mobile Legends (ML), a mobile game, to unwind and take a mental break before returning to practice. In addition, they agreed that to cope with anxiety can be done through self-confidence and positivity. These strategies are about boosting self-confidence and maintaining a positive mindset. Whether through self-talk, affirmation, or remembering past efforts, they strengthen their belief in their abilities to overcome challenges. Lastly one student-athlete did active techniques for focusing and releasing negative

feelings. These techniques involve actively engaging the body, such as focusing on the task at hand or using physical actions like jumping or shouting to release negative emotions and regain focus.

3.2.3. Insights of Private School Student-Athletes (SAs) on Anxiety in Sports Performance in the lens of Brother Coach—Brother Coach’s insights on what private school SAs’ learned in their experiences of anxiety in sports performance include the importance of resilience in facing challenges and adapting to new environments in order to overcome obstacles. Further, he recognized the role of self-confidence in success. Competing regularly, coupled with receiving incentives, has significantly boosted the athlete’s confidence, which contributes to their overall performance. With this is the perception that changed in a person’s environment, specifically his transition from a public school to a private school, with its higher levels of competition and increased social interactions, has allowed his athlete to grow and develop stronger self-belief. To verify this observation, the student-athlete reflected on the importance of managing pressure and anxiety, particularly in high-focus sports like archery. He recognize that even small physical reactions can negatively affect performance. By learning to trust himself and remain calm under pressure, he has been able to improve his consistency in sport. This highlights the significance of mental control and self-confidence in achieving better performance. Another noteworthy insight based on Brother Coach’s perception is in addition to building confidence, the athlete has received

financial support through cash incentives for participating in events like DAPRISA or Batang Pinoy. These incentives serve as both motivation and a practical source of support, helping with the athlete’s educational expenses. The athlete feels that their hard work is being rewarded in a meaningful and tangible way. Consequently, this building up of confidence, the student-athlete has learned to manage pressure by focusing on his strengths and past successes. An example is given from the DCAA competition, where the athlete used the motivation to win and advance as a driving force to perform well, despite feeling pressured. This points out the athlete’s ability to draw strength from past achievements and use that motivation to succeed in high-pressure situations. In addition, Brother Coach reflected on the importance of mental control in sports. He realized that when a student-athlete is mentally calm and focused, his body performs better. However, if he becomes overwhelmed by worries, his focus and motivation decrease, negatively affecting performance. This insight has taught the person to manage his emotions and stay composed during competitions in order to perform at his best. Finally, the second sub-theme on insights is Viewing Competitions as Learning Opportunities. Based on the perception of IDI Participant 2: Private Coach, the private school SA gains insight into using each event as a growth opportunity, reinforcing resilience and reducing fear of failure. This sub-theme supports the notion that managing anxiety positively can enhance long-term performance and personal development.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study highlights several challenges that require further research and actionable solutions to enhance the performance and well-being of student-athletes. One pressing issue is the limited access to tailored anxiety management programs, especially for under-resourced schools. Future research could design and evaluate interventions like mindfulness training and cognitive-behavioral techniques, answering questions such as: “What are the most effective methods for

managing cognitive and somatic anxiety in student-athletes?” Practical actions could include developing training modules and workshops that integrate these techniques, ensuring they are accessible to both public and private school athletes. Similarly, the socioeconomic disparities in access to proper coaching, facilities, and mental health support also warrant investigation. Studies could explore how these inequities impact anxiety and performance, leading to advocacy for equitable funding and resource allocation or partnerships with private organizations to sponsor sports programs.

Cultural differences and stigma surrounding mental health in sports also pose significant challenges. Research could examine how cultural norms influence anxiety management and coping strategies, enabling the development of culturally sensitive approaches for coaches and educators. Addressing mental health stigma through awareness campaigns in schools could normalize seeking psychological support. Additionally, technological tools like wearable biofeedback devices and mental health apps could be explored to monitor and manage anxiety in real-time, helping athletes regulate their physiological and cognitive responses. Finally, bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks like the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory and practical coaching strategies is essential. Coaches could benefit from manuals or toolkits that translate theoretical insights into actionable techniques for managing anxiety, ultimately fostering resilience and improving performance in student-athletes.

4.1. Findings—Drawing from the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory and the insights shared by IDI Participant 2, several key themes and sub-themes emerged. These findings either reinforce or expand upon the existing variables in the theory, particularly about cognitive and somatic anxiety and their impact on sports performance. Under the central theme on Challenges, the first main theme is Cognitive Anxiety with three sub-themes, Family Pressure, Worry, Fear of Failure and Personal Expectations. Based on his perspectives private school SAs’ performance is impacted by concerns about family pressures, especially family conflicts, which generate significant cognitive anxiety among private school athletes. Consequently, these experiences affect the athletes’ focus and motivation. This aligns with the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory’s notion that cognitive anxiety (worry) tends to interfere with concentration and reduces performance quality.

4.2. Conclusions—To conclude Case 1, the themes that emerged from the Coach’s perspectives and experiences, or perceptions of public school student-athletes’ in relation to anx-

iety and performance validated and extended the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory, particularly the interplay between cognitive and somatic anxiety and their distinct but interconnected impacts on performance. The student’s cognitive anxiety, driven by concerns about failure, self-worth, and financial pressure, often exacerbates their somatic symptoms, reinforcing the theory’s premise that both forms of anxiety are interdependent. Their somatic anxiety, if maintained at a moderate level, is found to be beneficial, aligning with the theory’s inverted-U model. Their coping mechanisms identified—such as spiritual grounding, discipline, and re-framing setbacks—serve to moderate the intensity of both types of anxiety, helping public school athletes achieve an optimal state of performance. Studies highlight the close link between cognitive anxiety (worry) and somatic anxiety, with worry often exacerbating physical symptoms, ultimately impacting athletic performance (Groen et al., 2021). Nonetheless, managing worry through techniques like relaxation or cognitive restructuring can help reduce these physical symptoms and improve performance.

The second sub-theme is Mental State Impacting Physical Performance. When the mental focus is compromised, physical performance also suffers. This indicates that cognitive anxiety can intensify somatic responses, confirming the theory's idea that both forms of anxiety are interrelated. Related to this, mental fatigue can significantly hinder the performance of high-level athletes, particularly by impairing both technical abilities and decision-making skills. Research indicates that the effects of mental fatigue are more pronounced in offensive skills than in defensive ones, suggesting that athletes' roles may influence how fatigue impacts their performance (Sun et al., 2021). Although none of the private SAs mentioned this experience, he vividly remembers how it happened to one of the team members. Regarding coping mechanisms, one main theme emerged: Managing Anxiety through Mental Re-framing with sub-themes: Relaxation Techniques, and Positive Recall. Based on the perspective of Brother Coach, one of the team members uses past experiences of overcoming challenges as motivation, helping manage cognitive anxiety by re-framing negative thoughts. This strategy aligns with the theory's emphasis on cognitive regulation to reduce anxiety. This can also imply the resilience of the athlete since this skill can increase the likelihood of athletes using adaptive coping strategies to manage sport-related stressors (Sullivan et al., 2023). The first sub-theme under Mental Reframing is Relaxation Techniques. The private SA practices deep breathing to calm nerves before or during competitions. This physical relaxation method helps manage somatic anxiety, aligning with the theory's emphasis on somatic arousal management to avoid performance decline. The data from the private school SAs also highlights these facts by mentioning coping strategies to combat anxiety such as shouting from the top of their lungs to release negative emotions. Deep breathing and drinking water were repeatedly mentioned during the

FGD with them, which confirmed Coach 2's perspectives. Current literature records that to help athletes relax during competitions, coaches utilize effective relaxation techniques such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) and Autogenic Relaxation (AGR). This has been found to reduce anxiety in beginner athletes, improving their focus. Both techniques indicated efficacy in lowering anxiety, but the study suggests that coaches should consider extending training in these methods and exploring other techniques for even better results (Jermaina et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2021). Regarding the insights of private SAs based on the perspectives of Brother Coach, there emerged one main theme which is Personal Growth and Self-Confidence Through Anxiety Experiences, and the two sub-themes: Building Resilience and Confidence, and Viewing Competitions as Learning Opportunities. Through competition experience, the private school SA gains resilience and a stronger sense of self-confidence, they also understand that setbacks are learning opportunities. These reinforce the implications of the Multidimensional Theory based on its understanding that moderate arousal is beneficial. In this case, through the skill of resilience, personal growth in managing both cognitive and somatic anxiety became possible. To corroborate Mother Coach's perspective, private school SAs mentioned that eventually, they worry less about winning or losing before the game starts so that they can concentrate on what they need to do in the competition.

4.3. Recommendations—This study has highlighted the intricate dynamics between cognitive and somatic anxiety and their profound impact on student-athletes' performance. An assumption that student-athletes face unique challenges impacting performance was affirmed, as the findings underscored anxiety's dual role as both a barrier and a motivator in sports settings. Moreover, the study validated the effectiveness of coping mechanisms like mental reframing,

relaxation techniques, and self-confidence enhancement, aligning with the Multidimensional Anxiety Theory.

Future research could build upon these findings by exploring interventions tailored to specific sports, cultural contexts, and resource availability. For instance, a longitudinal study could examine the long-term impact of structured anxiety management programs, such as mindfulness-based interventions or resilience training, on both public and private school athletes. Additionally, comparative research across different regions or countries could deepen understanding of how socioeconomic and cultural factors influence the interplay between anxiety, coping mechanisms, and performance out-

comes.

Moreover, integrating technological tools like biofeedback devices or mobile apps designed to monitor and manage anxiety levels could provide innovative insights into real-time anxiety regulation. By leveraging these tools, future studies can offer actionable strategies for coaches, educators, and policymakers to create holistic support systems that address both cognitive and somatic anxiety, thereby empowering student-athletes to achieve their full potential in competitive environments. This would significantly contribute to a globally relevant framework for enhancing athletic performance and well-being.

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