

A Student-Athlete Tales on Gender Coaching Mismatch

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Abstract. In sports, gender disparity in coaching has created challenges for both male and female athletes, affecting their performance and development. This phenomenological study investigates the experiences of 12 student-athletes in Davao City facing gender coaching mismatches. Using the snowball sampling technique, participants were selected and their narratives analyzed to uncover four key themes: the influence of social structures and expectations on behavior, the role of sociology in understanding interactions, the significance of society role theory shaped by gender roles, and the exploration of alternative educational approaches to challenge traditional gender norms. The findings highlight cultural disparities in gender education and suggest actions to promote equality and inclusion in sports coaching.

KEY WORDS

1. gender coaching mismatch 2. gender roles 3. social role 4. flexibility

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1. Introduction

In a sports setting, it has been evident that there are challenges to gender coaching mismatch. Gender coaching mismatch is a prominent issue across various sports and professional settings (Padavic et al., 2020). Moreover, gender coaching mismatch is practiced by sports coaches in sports training (Norman, 2021); in addition, it is emphasized that this phenomenon is observed today as a significant problem in coaching student-athletes in the academe (Guiaselon, 2022). In the United States, 75% of the coaches reported having mismatches (Grove, 2021). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, particularly within niche sports, 60% of athletes encounter difficulties locating coaches of the same gender, highlighting the issue of gender coaching mismatches. Moreover, 65% of athletes globally in Australia reported encountering challenges related to gender coaching mismatches (Skellern, 2023). Despite geographical and cultural differences, the issue of coaching mismatch, affecting millions of athletes worldwide, persists across the global sporting community. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, a notable discrepancy exists between the genders of coaches and athletes, with only 30% of coaches being female despite women comprising approximately 50% of the population. This glaring incongruity highlights a pervasive problem wherein female athletes may lack adequate representation and mentorship, impacting their development and opportunities within sports and other fields (Ambag, 2017). In addition, the underrepresentation of female coaches limits the diversity of perspectives and role models available to aspiring athletes and perpetuates gender stereotypes and biases within the sporting community (Sanches, 2021). This inequality

goes beyond sports and influences how society views women's leadership and abilities. Even though gender inequality in training is recognized as a major problem in sports, there is still a lack of comprehensive research examining the long-term effects of this inequality on the career development and psychological well-being of female athletes. Studies like Norman (2021) and Guiaselon (2022) focus on gender differences in teaching, but neglect to examine the factors and obstacles that contribute to this variation. Gender coaching should be examined through student athletes' experiences to reveal the intricate personal effects of this prevalent issue and guide policy initiatives that promote equitable coach-student relationships. A more inclusive and supportive athletic environment is necessary to promote the development, performance, and well-being of student-athletes by addressing the research deficit.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of college athletes in Davao City dealing with gender coaching mismatches. By employing a phenomenological approach, this research aims to provide insights into how gender disparities in coaching affect athletes' performance, well-being, and development. The study also seeks to inform future policies and educational practices that promote gender equality and inclusivity in sports.

1.2. Research Questions—This study aimed to determine the experiences of student athletes who have transitioned to different sports during training. It has a specific research question:

- (1) What are the gender congruity and role flexibility played and experienced by the student-athletes in terms of gender coaching mismatch?

1.3. Significant of the Study—This study holds significance for a range of stakeholders. For Department of Education Officials, the findings can inform policy decisions that create a more inclusive and supportive environment for student-athletes, with a particular focus on addressing the gender gap in coaching positions. School leaders, such as principals and administrators, will gain valuable insights into the challenges faced by student-athletes. This knowledge can be used to develop strategies that empower student-athletes and enhance their development and performance. Stakeholders beyond the educational system will also benefit from this research. The study equips them with valuable information on how to support and empower school administrators in building a sports culture that embraces gender inclusivity. Finally, future researchers will have access to a rich resource of data and insights, providing a springboard for further investigations into gender mismatches in coaching and related topics.

1.4. Theoretical Lens—The study was conducted using the social role theory approach proposed by Alice Eagly and Linda Carli (2007). According to the theory, social expectations and norms regarding gender roles are believed to impact behavior and interpersonal interactions.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative design, specifically phenomenological research. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a process of understanding based on different methodological research traditions that investigate a social or human problem. Moreover, Creswell (2007) acknowledges the significance of multiple individuals' encounters with a concept or phenomenon

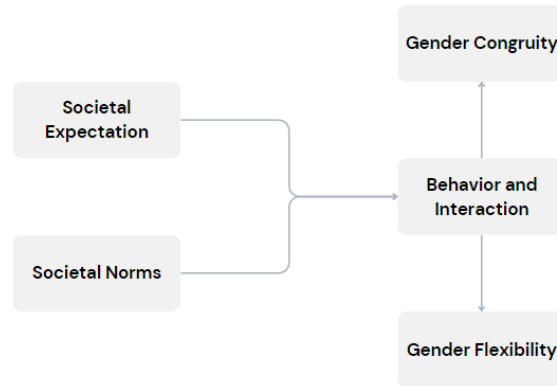


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

through phenomenological research. In other words, it describes a phenomenon that all the participants have experienced, such as learning a second language in a school system. Additionally, the design will give information on their experiences and challenges when experiencing gender-coaching mismatch. More so, it sought to gain a deep understanding of complex, context-specific phenomena, develop or refine theories, and explore the experiences of college athletes on gender coaching mismatch. It is also worth noting that the researcher used artificial intelligence in the proofreading of the article, this statement is an additional ethical practice in this era of AI.

2.1. Research Participants—The participants of this study were student-athletes in selected community Catholic Colleges in Davao City. The research participants were college athletes aged 18-25 with at least three years of experience in gender coaching mismatch. The target participants are 12 college athletes, with six in the in-depth interview and six in the focus group discussion. A purposive sampling was utilized to identify the study participants. The researcher used purposive sampling in determining the participants since the chosen participants were selected college athletes willing to provide information by knowledge and experience.

Creswell (2014) suggests being purposeful in identifying participants that might provide insight into the research question. Purposeful sampling involves selecting participants because the researcher believes they might contribute something to the analysis. Often, multiple interviews are done with the participants so that they can fully describe the phenomenon. Depending on the topic you are studying and the diversity you are attempting to capture, Creswell (2013) suggests that a reasonable sample size may range from 3 -25 participants for a phenomenological study. Hence, 12 is an adequate number for the study.

2.2. Role of Researcher—In this research, the primary role of the researcher was to gather information; the researcher was the primary collector of the data. The interview was done using the interview guide among twelve college athletes. Also, I do other tasks like interviewing participants, writing down what they say, taking

notes, organizing data, and helping with discussions. Still, the most crucial role was leading the effort to collect facts and make sense of them. I also thoroughly gathered and reviewed the participants' responses, ensuring an objective analysis. As the researcher, I was responsible for transcribing the data collected from the participants.

2.3. *Research Instrument*—In conducting this study, the researcher meticulously crafted a semi-structured interview guide to serve as a foundational tool for data collection. Prior to the dissemination of the questionnaire, it underwent a rigorous process of editing, review, and validation. This critical phase was undertaken to ensure the reliability and integrity of the research instruments. Notably, the validation process enlisted the expertise of two internal and one external professional research validators, embodying a comprehensive approach to ensuring the questionnaire's rigour. The collaborative efforts of these validators culminated in an impressive average validation result of 4.83, signifying a robust endorsement of the question-

naire's validity.

Moreover, the study's data collection methodology was further deepened through the conduct of in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. Specifically, six participants were engaged in in-depth interviews, allowing for the elicitation of nuanced insights and perspectives. Concurrently, focused group discussions were organized with another cohort of six participants, thereby enabling the exploration of collective viewpoints and fostering a rich dialogue on the subject matter. Such methodological strategies were paramount in amplifying the depth and breadth of the data collection process, thereby enriching the study's empirical foundation and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the investigated phenomenon.

3. Results and Discussion

The data gathered from the participants were transcribed and read several times. Significant statements related to the research problems were extracted, clustered, and formulated meanings. The meanings from the significant statements were then constructed and analyzed to construct a theme. To explicitly connect the coverage of the study, each participant was allowed to speak in their dialect language to express their experiences verbally. These were translated for general readability and understanding. Likewise, all the statements from the participants were selected from the transcribed interview. From each significant statement extracted, formulated meanings were created and coded to reflect a comprehensive description of the participant's experience.

3.1. *Lived Experiences of College Athletes on Gender Coaching Mismatch*—I extracted themes from the data collected, drawing upon the participants' responses. The theme focuses on Gender Roles, which I aligned with the research theory. Four indicators of the themes emerged from this analysis: societal expectations, societal norms, gender congruity in coaching, and role flexibility in coaching. College athletes often encounter significant challenges when faced with a gender coaching mismatch, wherein the coach's gender differs from their own. This difference can take many forms and present barriers that affect an athlete's performance, well-being, and overall experience in

their sport. Gender roles typically entail aiding people to explore and understand their gender identity, expressions, and roles. The imbalance in gender roles can result in society's notions or assumptions of gender being less representative of individual preferences. Furthermore, to resolve such imbalances, sexuality education should create a supportive environment where people can freely express and explore their gender identities without social conditioning and expectations. The outcome may be to encourage individuals to embrace their gender roles, bridging the gaps in differences in their sense of self and sexual identity while also strengthening their confidence and empow-

erment. The social expectations surrounding gender sports are a significant concern. The influence of traditional gender roles and cultural expectations can be significant in mentoring practice. Female coaches may be marginalized or undervalued due to stereotypes associated with leadership and authority, especially in male sports. As a result of participants' discussions on this main topic, they developed supplementary topics about education and gender. Also, social conventions concerning the representation of genders in training shape the relationship between coaches and athletes. These mismatches can manifest in a number of ways, including differences in communication styles, training methods, and gender-specific management methods. One of the main themes was centered on inclusive educational practices for gender. At the same time, regarding role congruence in supervision, it is believed that individuals are more likely to be perceived as competent and suitable for a particular role if their characteristics, behaviors, and characteristics match the stereotypes associated with that role. Gender instruction and role conformity indicate that individuals may face challenges or prejudice when their gender identity or expression does not conform to society's expectations or stereotypes associated with their perceived gender. Two subthemes emerged within this major theme: gender roles related to competencies and

evaluation of gender-based teaching. Moreover, role flexibility in training refers to the ability and willingness to explore and embrace different roles and expressions outside of traditional gender norms and stereotypes. When there is a conflict between an individual's gender identity or expression and societal expectations, role flexibility becomes essential to navigating one's gender journey authentically and comfortably. The role flexibility of gender mentoring allows people to develop a sense of empowerment, agency, and authenticity as they express their gender identity and navigate the complexities of social expectations. This main theme was divided into two sub-themes: the difference between athletes and coaches as well as adjustable coaching styles. Collegiate athletes who experience gender differences in training may encounter overarching themes and subthemes that reflect their personal experiences. It is possible that athletes need to engage with coaches who have had contrasting experiences or opinions. Certain coaching techniques can reinforce narrow doubts about gender roles or expectations, causing coaches to feel marginalized or misunderstood, and enhance their cultural competence through more effective communication. In addition, this approach allows players to maintain their preferences and requirements in the training partnership.

3.2. *Societal Expectation*—The perceptions, skills, or performance of coaches and athletes in many sports are influenced by social expectations, leading to training disorders. Lavalley (2020) suggests that social norms and gender-based expectations often shape educational opportunities and recognition. Female coaches are often undervalued or insecure and need help to achieve their goals in the sport. Gender bias can be a source of frustration for male coaches. They coach female athletes be-

cause they may struggle to understand and respond to their athletes' unique needs and experiences. In the field, traditional gender formations are reinforced by social dynamics that promote a lack of diversity and inclusion in practice. Additionally, athletes are deprived of necessary training and support due to the absence of multiple training components, which can hinder their potential growth and success. Addressing the social impact of gender inequality in coaching by addressing and reducing harmful stereotypes,

providing equal opportunities for coaches of all genders (Vargas-Tonson 2021), and creating conditions that foster inclusion and diversity.

3.3. Gender Awareness Education—The importance of gender awareness is recognized by sports coaches or managers in learning about gender and the dynamic nature of sports environments. The purpose of this training is to increase awareness and reflection on how a person’s gender affects their experiences, opportunities, or outcomes in their athletic performance. Sharing information and acknowledging barriers caused by stereotypes, prejudice, or inequality in sports are the components of gender awareness, a concept. Its objective is to dispel old gender stereotypes and obligations, promote equal opportunities for all sexes, foster inclusivity, and create a more positive and motivating environment for both men and women in the movement.

3.4. Societal Norms—Social norms are shared expectations and rules that guide the behavior of people in social groups. These norms encompass a wide range of behaviors, including gender roles, which dictate the expected attitudes, behaviors, and responsibilities of individuals based on their gender (Bonder, 2021). Furthermore, in the context of gender differences in training, social norms play a crucial role because they influence perceptions and biases that can lead to incompatibility between coaches and athletes. Male sports may have fewer female coaches due to traditional gender norms, while male sports often experience communication and coaching issues. These conflicts can affect the effectiveness of training because the gender expectations of society can create obstacles in the understanding and cooperation between the coach and the athlete, which ultimately affects performance and development (Guzon, 2019).

3.5. Gender- Inclusive Coaching Practices—Educators who employ strategies that are equitable, supportive, and open to women. Social expectations can impact the perceptions, skills, or performance of coaches and athletes in many sports, resulting in training disorders. Gender-based social expectations and norms often impact educational opportunities and recognition (Lavallee, 2020). Female coaches are often undervalued or insecure and need help to achieve their goals in the sport. Gender bias can be a source of frustration for male coaches. They coach female athletes because they may struggle to understand and respond to their athletes’ unique needs and experiences. In the field, traditional gender formations are reinforced by social dynamics that promote a lack of diversity and inclusion in practice.

3.6. Behavioral and Interaction—In various situations, social norms, personal experiences, and individual characteristics dictate the behavioral or relational dynamics of behavior and communication. This has particular significance in a training atmosphere where coaches and athletes, regardless of gender, encounter unrealistic standards and lack of performance (Calibre,2021). In addition, it is possible that male trainers may subconsciously adopt a more authoritarian approach that is contrary to the wishes of women. Athletes cooperate, which impairs performance and development. Furthermore, considering these differences can help to develop teaching strategies that take into account the unique behavioral and communication

tion patterns of each sex, leading to a more conducive learning environment. (Theeboom, 2019).

3.6.1. Role Congruity—The compatibility of social expectations for specific roles with the characteristics or behaviors that are appropriate for those roles. According to gender equality theory, there are socially imposed standards regarding the traits and actions that are considered appropriate for men and women in specific roles or occupations. In the context of sports coaching or leadership roles, role congruity theory suggests that male coaches are more likely to be viewed as competent or effective because their leadership style aligns with social norms. Nevertheless, female coach leaders may exhibit

3.6.2. Gender roles associated with competencies—Social norms and expectations that define specific skills, abilities, and roles for both genders. The expectations vary widely across different cultures and historical eras, but some competencies are typically associated with mas-

3.7. Gender-based coaching assessment—Using gender discrimination and inequality as a tool for measuring educational performance. The evaluation may be influenced by social conventions concerning masculinity and femininity, as well as leadership styles, control, and communication. Evidence suggests that even coach-embedded men are perceived as more competent and authoritative than women coaches de-

3.8. Role Flexibility in coaching—Sportsmanship refers to the ability of athletes to adapt and work together based on their position, role, or style of play. This is known as a team or individual sport. One reason is the ability of athletes to change roles according to game de-

bias or control by shifting their focus away from traditional leadership styles. According to Moledar (2020), masculinity is commonly associated with the gender expectations that society places on coaches, particularly in terms of qualities such as self-confidence and authority. The stereotype that successful coaches are characterized by masculine traits, such as assertiveness and authority in their coaching style, is prevalent in many cultures. In education, gender biases should be eliminated, and educators should understand that they can receive diverse and effective training regardless of gender.

culinity or femininity. It is important to comprehend that stereotypes can limit people's opportunities and perpetuate inequality as a result of gender roles. To promote equal treatment and acknowledge the potential for improvement, it is essential to challenge stereotypes.

spite their actual performance in the sport. Conversely, female coaches may be challenged to gain recognition and respect, especially in traditionally male sports. Evaluation criteria can vary depending on the sport and its perceived gender associations, and male coaches often receive more favorable evaluations in male sports. The gender differences in coaching can persist and hinder the career advancement and development of female coaches due to these biases..

mands, team strategies, or special situations. Depending on the player's playing style, tactics, or roles, the role can be easily customized to suit their preferences. The playing style or approach of athletes can be modified based on the team's requirements or the opponent's strengths

and weaknesses. This can include switching from an attacking to a defensive role, taking the lead at crucial moments in a game, or supporting and encouraging teammates. Players can play as many different roles during a match, known as role flexibility in sports. Scoring in football involves not just defending your own goal but also having a hand in shaping the game. Also, team sports like volleyball or basketball

can force players to excel both offensively and defensively. Role flexibility in sports emphasizes the adaptability, versatility, and willingness of athletes to contribute to the team's success in different roles. This allows teams to optimize their performance by using the various skills and abilities of individual athletes to meet ever-changing competition demands (Ratwerk, 2020).

3.9. Disjunction between Athletes and Coaches—Collegiate athletes have encountered a need for improved communication, understanding, or alignment between athletes and their coaches within collegiate sports programs. The disruption is present in a range of ways and has significant implications for team dynamics, performance levels, or the overall athletic experience. One common disconnect occurs when

expectations or communication styles do not align between athletes and coaches. Athletes may feel that their coaches need help understanding their needs, goals, or concerns, while coaches may need help communicating their expectations or strategies to athletes. This lack of clarity or mutual understanding can lead to frustration, confusion, and disconnect among team members.

3.10. Adjustable Coaching Styles—College athletes reflect the recognition of the diverse needs, abilities, and preferences of athletes within collegiate sports programs. With athletes coming from various backgrounds, skill levels, and learning styles, there is a growing

acknowledgment that a one-size-fits-all coaching approach may only effectively meet every athlete's needs. Therefore, the call for an adaptive coaching style emphasizes the importance of coaches being flexible, responsive, and attuned to each athlete's unique characteristics and circumstances.

4. Implications and Future Directions

In this part, I provided an overview of the study and its implications. First, I provided a summary of the study, followed by the implications of my research question. Afterwards, I also expressed future directions.

4.1. Findings—College athletes' experiences with gender coaching mismatch training are complex and impact their athletic journey. Such differences can hinder effective communication and understanding between athletes and coaches by reducing differences in communication style, expectations, and cultural norms that result from deviating from the coach's gender

to the athlete's gender. These matches shape the athletic performance of the athletes and increase their resilience in the face of adversity. The study delved into collegiate student-athlete experiences through qualitative phenomenological research in a small private Catholic school in Davao City, involving in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. Data analysis

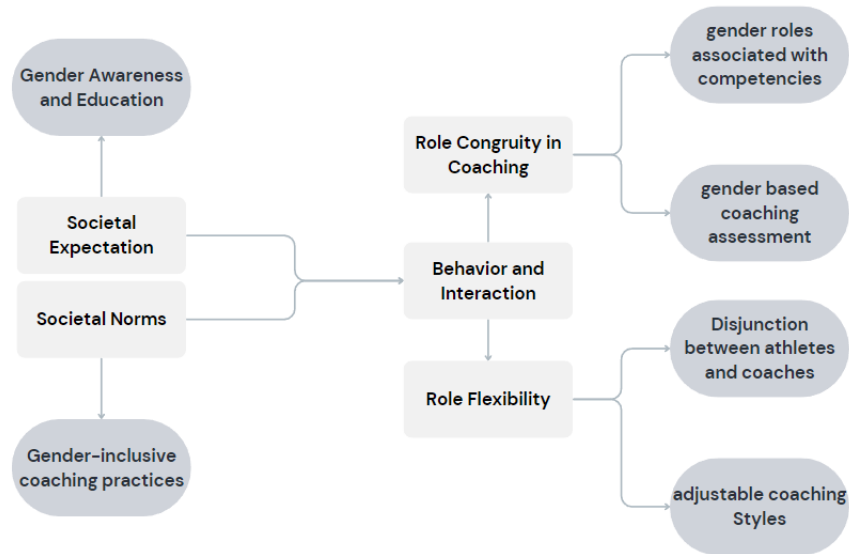


Fig. 2. Emerging Themes on the Experiences of College Athletes On Gender Coaching Mismatch

revealed themes: societal expectation, societal norms, behavior and interaction, gender congruity, and role flexibility, each with several sub-themes highlighting issues like gender awareness and education, gender-inclusive coaching practices, gender roles associated with competencies, gender-based coaching assessment, the

disjunction between athletes and coaches and adjustable coaching styles. These findings underscore the importance of bridging the gap between athletes and coaches through adaptable coaching approaches and a commitment to inclusivity and improvement.

4.2. *Implications*—Reflecting on my research, I find that societal expectations, norms, role congruity, and role flexibility resonate strongly with social role theory rather than expanding upon it. From my perspective, Social Role Theory affectingly illustrates how societal expectations and norms associated with gender roles shape behavior and interactions. As I explore societal expectations and norms deeper, I

see how they directly influence how genders are perceived and expected to act. In my view, role congruity and role flexibility further support this theory by demonstrating the alignment (or misalignment) of behaviors with these societal gender expectations and the capacity to adapt these roles within different contexts. These themes reinforce that gendered behavior is deeply rooted in societal constructs and expectations, central to Social Role Theory.

4.3. *Future Directions*—Future directions of this study encompass research focused on investigating alternative coaching models that challenge traditional gender norms and examining how gender coaching alignment varies

across different cultural contexts. In addition, by acknowledging and addressing the influence of gendered behaviors and societal expectations, interventions could be developed to promote greater equity and inclusion across various domains.

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