



THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NON-CERTIFIED COACHES IN THE ATHLETIC MEETS

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of non-certified coaches with regards to coaching in athletic meets in Private Schools in Tagum City. Hence, participants experiences, strategies in coping-up, and insights were gathered. The theory and idea were gleaned through Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1986) Self-Determination Theory of Ryan & Deci (2011). Out of the fourteen (14) participants who participated in this study, seven (7) non-certified coaches underwent in-depth interviews (IDI) and another seven (7) non-certified coaches for focus group discussion (FGD); All participants underwent face-to-face interview. They were selected through purposive sampling technique. As to the experiences of the coaches, themes emerged: experiencing difficulty in handling student athletes and training; dealing with complex technical issues; experiencing the pressures of a compelled coaching designation; experiencing deficiency in school-provided resources and equipment; and finding reward in the success and growth of players. To address the issues and challenge, coaches mentioned ways through learning coaching and understanding student – athletes; learning to adapt coaching techniques and approaches; maintaining a positive disposition and seeking guidance and support from parents, trainers and players. They also cited insights they could share to others, themes emerged: embody positive values in coaching; equip coaches with knowledge and skills for success; valuing competence and commitment for a coaching designation; provide understanding on the unique challenges of student-athletes; provide respect on the demanding role of a coach; provision of continuous learning and adaptation in coaching roles; refining coaching skills through experience and reflection. The results are deemed essential to coaches, student-athlete, academic heads and other stakeholder.

KEYWORDS: *non-certified coaches, coaching in athletic meets, Social Learning Theory, student-athlete development, coaching challenges, secondary private school, Tagum City*

INTRODUCTION

A coach is the most essential component for successful sports achievements. Non-certified coaches are driven by their passion for sport and a strong dedication to developing athletes. Non-certified coaches may not have formal, legal contracts in place, relying more on informal agreements or voluntary arrangements. Moreover, their involvement is often fueled by a desire to contribute to the community or a particular team without the formalities associated with professional coaching. Furthermore, non-certified coaches may lack the extensive experience or certifications of their professional counterparts. Further, they are often seen as a form of mentorship, aiming to instill not just athletic skills but also values and life skills in their athletes.

In the United Kingdom (UK), behind the scenes, non-certified coaches navigate a myriad of challenges ranging from logistical hurdles to cultural nuances that impact coaching practices (North et al., 2020). Also, in the US, despite the investment to the great deal resources of hiring non-certified coaches, there is still lack of recognition among them since credentials may not be fully recognized. The study resulted in this impacting their ability to advance in their coaching careers or gain access to higher-level coaching

positions. Despite their indispensable role in nurturing athletes'

potential and guiding them towards excellence, the experiences, and perspectives of non-certified coaches in international competitions have not received professional development (Craven, 2016). Furthermore, In Indonesia, the national sports achievements have faced a prolonged scarcity in national events. One of the efforts made was conducting a training program for 100000 non-certified coaches in coaching (Rahayu et al., 2024).

In Philippines, problems still arise in the sense that the most common notion of coaching was tied to athletic pursuits. Non-certified coaches struggle to access formalized professional development opportunities such as coaching courses or workshops due to the financial constraints or eligibility requirements in giving more effective programs and services to the sports community. The Philippines Sports Institute's Sports Education and Training Program stressed that it is experiencing deterrence from continuing the program and services to the sports community, specifically in developing the competencies of coaches in schools (Sarra et al., 2025).

Moreover, in Tagum City, as observed, there are many non-certified coaches that give role to the success in local sports community particularly among high school athletes. However, the effectiveness of being a coach as non-certified is put to question. Although many non-certified coaches are competent to



guide and mentor aspiring successful athletes, non-certified coaches face ethical dilemmas related to their lack of formal training or certification. This includes questions about their ability to provide safe and effective coaching, as well as concerns about ethical conduct and professionalism in their interaction with athletes. Hence, addressing this concern is crucial to ensuring that every non-certified coach is given attention both advantages and disadvantages in the field.

In the global, international, and local context, the problem demonstrated the urgency to conduct this study. I have encountered research studies that look the same, but it only reveals how coaches either reinforce or contradict their coaching philosophies through supportive or detrimental actions (Benish et al., 2020). Furthermore, in the study of Breuer et al (2021), it focuses on the identification that some coaches are not certified and have no formal training. It seeks to investigate how to improve the quality of coaching techniques in education. However, it does not fully uncover the challenges of non-certified coaches as a long-time career. Since then, I have been a non-certified coach and as a researcher, this encourages me to explore more experiences from others who have similar endeavors. I found limited studies that highlight the perspective of non-certified coaches in meeting all aspects as certified coaches do especially in national and local setting and this urges me to conduct the study to gain more insights in this phenomenon.

The result of this study will be of great help in the current state of sports coaching. Possible findings will be useful to the non-certified coach particularly in the context of individual and team sports. Moreover, the findings may be presented to the school's administration as well for the annual conference of faculty. Lastly, this will be an accomplishment through presentation or maybe publish to SMCTI and recognized research journal.

Purpose of the Study

The sole purpose of this phenomenological study is to seek and understand the lived experiences of non-certified coaches in coaching as regards coaching in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. Herein, the lived experiences of non-certified coaches in athletic meets and their perspective have been defined as a coach who has not acquired a certain training certification to become a certified coach in those specific sports.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of non-certified coaches in Athletic Meets?
2. How do the non-certified coaches cope with the challenges with regard to coaching?
3. What are the insights that can be drawn from the participants with regard to coaching?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Nature of Coaching

Coaching is the process of guiding individuals or groups in achieving specific goals or improving performance. According to Lofthouse (2019), it is a dynamic interaction that requires coaches to act as facilitators of growth, helping athletes or learners reach their full potential. The nature of coaching occurs in various contexts including education, sports, and professional development, but the principle of effective coaching is multifaceted, encompassing a range of roles as teaching, guiding, and mentoring, all of which demand a deep understanding of both the subject matter and the individuals being coached. In the study of Martens & Vealey (2024), it states that a coach must be flexible, adapting their approach to meet the unique needs and personalities of their athletes.

One significant aspect of coaching is its focus on the development of both technical and personal skills. Effective coaches not only teach technical skills relevant to the sport or task at hand but also foster personal development, including motivation, confidence, and resilience. In sports, for example, research has shown that the nature of coaching involves enhancing athletes' physical abilities while also nurturing their mental toughness and emotional intelligence (Vella et al., 2013). A coach's ability to balance these technical and personal components is crucial for maximizing performance and ensuring long-term development. Moreover, the ability to adapt to different learning styles and developmental stages is key to the success of any coaching process (Horn, 2008).

Coaching in Athletic Meet

Success in sports coaching requires adaptability to individual and group dynamics, situation, goals, and athlete development (Micua et al., 2025). In the Philippines, the experiences of coaches in preparing student-athletes are influenced by various cultural, social, and institutional factors unique to the local context. Research by Ambag & Camarador (2018) highlights the significance of the coach-athlete relationship in Filipino sports culture, where coaches are often viewed as mentors and authority figures

Experiences Non-Certified Coaches in Coaching

Research about non-certified coaches lacks appreciation of coaches' education across coaching fields knowing that coach education is the first opportunity for non-certified or novice coaches. Using experience alone as the main learning method for inexperienced coaches can perpetuate specific interpretations of knowledge and practice in a problematic manner. As coaches gain experience, their attitudes and preferences toward coaching are influenced by social pressures. Consequently, novice coaches' attitudes toward coaching are not neutral but rather influenced by the values prevalent in their coaching environment, often rooted in ingrained beliefs about coaching and learning (Cushion, 2019).



Challenges in Sports Coaching

Transitioning from a coach-centered approach to a coach-environment approach challenges the role of coaches to become a designer of coaching tasks, facilitating a coach-environment way of building a theoretical foundation for the mentored non-certified coaches. As coaches, this shift requires them to adapt from delivering instructions to become developers of coaching tasks which lead to challenging roles from creating environments conducive to development and learning for both themselves and the student-athletes. For non-certified coaches in coaching, the challenge lies in their lack of formal training, which often leaves them with a limited theoretical foundation to develop and implement a coach-environment approach. This gap can lead to difficulty in applying long-term strategies for the growth and development of their coaching practices (Strafford et al., 2021).

Insights in Coaching

In sports associations, a competent coach should follow a code of conduct grounded in ethics that prioritizes the rights and needs of their athletes over their own. This involves building a supportive and enduring relationship with the athletes they train. Sports involvement is collaborative journey, and coaching plays an important role in positively shaping the lives of athletes through social interaction and dynamic leadership (Guo et al., 2022).

Coaching in sports is heavily influenced by various contextual factors. It primarily involves social interaction, necessitating

coaches to establish and sustain numerous relationships with athletes. For some, sports coaching is viewed as a profession, while others see it as a voluntary action. Some engage in academic studies of sports coaching for personal growth or to share knowledge, while others pursue vocational studies to attain certification showcasing their level of confidence (Santalla-Banderali & Alvarado, 2022).

METHODS

Research Design

This research study utilized a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to gain more insights from the lived experiences of non-certified coaches. One approach utilized in this qualitative study was phenomenological inquiry, which aims to describe the significance of several experiences and phenomenon of every human individual within a specific event or context.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This study employed fourteen (14) participants, and they are non-certified coaches in private secondary education in Tagum City. The number of participants gleans on the study of Polinghorne (2005) that the sample size of data ranges from 5-25 subjects. To find the participants, they were selected through purposive sampling. To ensure reliability and validity of my data, seven (7) non-certified coaches were selected with in-depth interviews, the remaining seven (7) participants were part of the focus group discussion (FGD).

RESULTS

Table 1

Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Non-Certified Coaches in Athletic Meets

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Experiencing Difficulty in Handling Student Athletes and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty in adjusting and learning how to manage the team cannot really tell effectiveness in coaching. zero knowledge
Dealing with Complex Technical Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenges in understanding and memorizing sports rules challenge without a background in coaching struggling with strategizing for games lacking knowledge to address situations requiring experienced coaches difficulty familiarizing oneself with the rules of the sport struggles due to no formal coaching background minimal knowledge about specific sports lacking ideas and knowledge in coaching methods
Experiencing the Pressures of a Compelled Coaching Designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being assigned to coach because no one else was available being automatically designated as a coach due to being a PE teacher accepting coaching roles out of necessity. having no choice but to take on coaching responsibilities obligated to step up when no other options were available
Experiencing Deficiency in School-Provided Resources and Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dealing with the lack of equipment and resources for training facing challenges due to inadequate facilities and students must fill in to provide lacking resources, tools, and equipment and the struggle of filing of requirement no basketball court struggling with financial constraints affecting coaching resources



<p>Finding Reward in the Success and Growth of Players</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the rewarding part is when student-athletes win • seeing the student-athletes light up with happiness winning • when players win in the tournament • when players win a game especially during TCAPS • student-athletes' happiness and growth • when players were also aiming to reach DAVRAA • witnessing student-athletes' victories is the most rewarding aspect • winning moments during TCAPS and seeing student-athletes warm smiles
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Experiencing Difficulty in Handling Student Athletes and Training

As IDI-07 mentioned:

“As a coach, since this is my first year handling a team sport event. Still, naga adjust gihapon ko, naga adopt gihapon ko unsaon nako pag handle sa team and especially kung unsaon nako sila paghimo as effective players.”

(As a coach, since this is my first year handling a team sport event, I'm still adjusting and learning how to manage the team, especially in terms of developing them into effective players.)

Furthermore, IDI-05 points to a perceived deficiency in essential coaching skills by stating that:

I can't truly assess whether I am effective in coaching, especially since I am not always present during their training sessions. This is because I have my own classes, and their training typically takes place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, but I am not able to attend all of those sessions.

Dealing with Complex Technical Issues

It is evidently stated by that by FGD-01 by saying:

“Then, siguro ang pagsabot sa ruling labi na if lahi ang manual sa taekwondo, lahi ang naa natong LPSS (electronic) and naa silay mga point system nga maka ingon ko sakong kaugalingon, makakita ko. So dili diay nako sya ma gets at some point.”

(Additionally, understanding the rules is challenging, especially since the manual for taekwondo is different from what we have in LPSS (electronic), and they have their own point systems. I find it tough to manage this on my own.)

Experiencing the Pressures of a Compelled Coaching Designation

IDI-02 highlights the institutional reliance on PE teachers to fulfill roles outside their expertise by stating:

“Naging coach ko Sir tungod sa need sa school. So, wala may laing mu-handle nga ana nga sports so ako ang gihatagan nga coach, sa akua gihatag ang katong pag coach ato nga sport.”

(I became a coach because the school needed it, Sir. There was no one else to handle that sport, so they assigned me as the coach for it.)

Experiencing Deficiency in School-Provided Resources and Equipment.

FGD-02 illustrates how resource constraints compel coaches to depend on students to fill the gaps by saying:

“Okay, the most challenging part. Una, wala mi'y gamit. Of course, so nag-rely lang ko sa gamit na ginadala sa isa ka player na mo. Isa ra pagyud among gamit.”

(The most challenging part. First, we don't have any equipment. So, I relied solely on the equipment that one player brought.)

Same sentiment from FGD-03 by stating:

“The gamit, ang gamit mismo from, unless ang stick, pwede makaprovide ang students, pero in terms of padding, in terms of matting, kana siya is wala magigamit sa RMC ana.”

(The equipment itself is lacking; unless it's the sticks, the students can provide those, but in terms of padding and matting, we don't have any of that at RMC.)

Finding Reward in the Success and Growth of Players

IDI-01 emphasizes how personal satisfaction as a coach stems from witnessing the players' development and achievements, providing intrinsic motivation despite the challenges. The participant states that:

“So ang rewarding part is kuan jud siya sir, kanang maka win or actually para sa atoa man gud dapat maka daug jud sila”

(So, the rewarding part is really when they win or, more importantly for us, they should really win.)

IDI-03 added by saying:

“I believe the most rewarding part of being a coach is during that time, it has been rewarding kasi nakita ko kung gaano nag-light up ang mukha ng mga bata when it has been announced that they got the third place.”



Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanism of the Non-Certified Coaches

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Maintaining a Positive Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a lot of patience • maintaining a positive outlook • learning from the losses • getting support from peers and other connections in sports community • encouraging players that there are still many games ahead • staying positive and focus on the brighter things ahead for our players • maintaining a positive outlook to achieve victory • telling oneself that it's okay as long as the game was enjoyed • pushing athletes that there are still many games ahead • reminding student-athletes that there are many competitions they can join • reminding student-athletes that there are still many inter-school competitions
Understanding Student - Athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attending seminars and adopting to what the other coaches are doing • watching YouTube videos and looked at other resources • studying the students learn the techniques and guidelines related to the sport • needing to learn the strengths and weaknesses of your student-athletes • studying more and analyzing team's strengths and weaknesses • learning the fundamentals or basic skills of the sports
Learning to Adapt Coaching Techniques and Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aligning with the laissez-faire approach • offering guidance and advice during the coaching process • enforcing authoritarian style • extending practice sessions

Maintaining a Positive Disposition

IDI-06 emphasized the importance of recognizing each player's individuality and maintaining open communication to create a supportive environment:

“ako gibuhay lang gyud baban lang gyud pasensya and saboton sila kay lahi lahi mn gud sila lahi lahi ug individuality ang mga player mag sinabtanay lang gyud mi”

(I tried to understand them since each player is different and has their own individuality. I focused on communicating with them and making sure we understood each other.)

Understanding Student – Athletes

IDI-04 emphasized the importance of communication with athletes to understand the dynamics of the game saying:

“So ang ako lang ginabuhay ato that time is makig communicate ko sa akong mga athletes kung unsa jud ang dagan sa dula anang swimming kay mas sila man ang nay knowledge and nga dula

and also nag tan-aw ko sa mga youtube and sa other stuff kung unsaon ang pamaagi sa dula.”

(During that time, what I did was communicate with my athletes to understand the flow of the swimming game because they know more about it. I also watched YouTube videos and looked at other resources to learn how is played.)

Learning to Adapt Coaching Techniques and Approaches

This was supported by the statement of FGD-04, who said:

“Actually, gina enjoy lang jud nako. Actually, malingaw raman pud ko bisan unsaon nako. Tinood trabahoso jud siya pero wala jud nako na feel nga daghan kog designations kay tungod gina enjoy raman gud nako. Siguro makita sa uban nga gikapoy nako, pero gina enjoy lang jud”

(I get to enjoy my designations. Despite the daunting tasks, I still find joy in accomplishing each assigned task. Others may see me tired at times, but still I am enjoying my designation.



Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of the Participants with regard to Coaching Athletics

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Embodying Positive Values in Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating the spirit of camaraderie and not take things personally • humbling oneself • being open-minded and acceptance of your role • having the motivation and mindset • coping with the challenges and obstacles to be able to help
Equipping Coaches with Knowledge and Skills for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importance of knowing the rules and regulations • learning the rules of the game, the mechanics, and the game regulations • becoming prepared to achieve success in sports • having knowledge about the sport • practicing discipline and time management
Valuing Competence and Commitment for a Coaching Designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having some background knowledge of the sport • learning how to handle situations, understand the strengths and weaknesses of student-athletes • embracing the role and enjoying the journey • needing to learn the basics to avoid cheating
Recognizing Effort to Foster Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning that one shouldn't be quick to fail student-athletes • losing student-athletes' motivation if they find out that some subject teachers don't consider their attendance • appreciating the effort of students and players
Refining Coaching Skills Through Experience and Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hoping to see that there's still room for improvement for coaches. • being able to observe one's fault leading to betterment • knowing the papers needed to prepare • discovering the best coaching style that will be used in the future • learning basic knowledge • learning a bit about technicalities • developing coaching skills through experience and further training

Embody Positive Values in Coaching

IDI-01 shared:

“So sports as the world itself, sports gyud, we have to accept if we win or we lose ...And, maka gain ta ug kanang kuan jud siya, dapat naa jud tay spirit of camaraderie, naa jud tay spirit di ta malain.”

(So, sports, as the word itself suggests—it's really sports—we have to accept whether we win or lose. And we can gain something from it, but we really need to have the spirit of camaraderie and not take things personally.)

Equip Coaches with Knowledge and Skills for Success

“The advice for those who are non-certified coaches in sports education is before tayo pumunta talaga sa mga games, importante na alam talaga natin ang mga rules and regulations, ang do's and don'ts ng laro.”

(The advice for non-certified coaches in sports education is that before we go to games, it's important to really know the rules and regulations, as well as the do's and don'ts of the game.)

Valuing Competence and Commitment for a Coaching

One of them is FGD-03 stating that:

“So, another thing is that mahimo pud gyud nga even if non-certified coach, kailangan nga naay background knowledge regarding ana nga sport.” (Another thing is that, even as a non-certified coach, you should at least have some background knowledge of the sport.)

Recognizing Effort to Foster Motivation

FGD-01 mentioned that:

“Pero after atong naka experience mi sa coaching, mas ma appreciate nimo ba na dapat diay dili nimo siya dayon ibagsak, kay naa pud diay siyay lahi nga struggle as a student athlete.”

(However, I also learned that we shouldn't be quick to fail student-athletes, as they face unique struggles.)

Refining Coaching Skills through Experience and Reflection

FGD-02 emphasizes the need for expanded learning opportunities to better equip aspiring coaches by stating:

“Of course, first insight is naay natun-an gamay about sa sports nga gi assign saamoa, gamay pud nga technicalities, actually, pero dili gyud siya kanang broaden gyud kaayo among learnings.”



(The first insight I gained is that we learned a bit about the sport we were assigned to, and some small technicalities. However, our learning wasn't really broadened that much.)

IMPLICATION FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

Based on the data I collected, my study findings suggest a key role of non-certified coaches in the athlete development context, reinforcing concepts such as ongoing learning, resilience, and adaptability. And all these findings can be used to support a solid basis and real experience and commitment to improvement that ensures effective coaching. The relevance of this research reaches multiple stakeholders surrounding the development of non-certified coaches, the success of student-athletes, and the general education and sports systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is evident that this research achieved its aim of understanding the lived experiences of non-certified coaches in private senior high school education and the coping strategies and the insights they have developed all throughout their career. Future research could evaluate how coaching practices, such as mentorship, flexibility and communication, affect the student-athletes' performance, resilience and well-being. It could also examine how these coaching practices encourage motivation, engagement, and also the academic achievement of the student-athletes in college.

One potential avenue for future investigation may include exploring the impact of professional development for non-certified coaches on athlete experience and development. Differences between certified and non-certified coaches could be explored in a comparative study to inform us of the specific skills and knowledge gaps non-certified coaches present, as well as how gaps in coaching knowledge would affect their coaching quality. Research could also examine the benefits of different types of training programs (workshops, seminars and peer mentorship) for the non-certified coach's ability to improve their coaching, such as developing better relationships with their athletes.

Lastly, my research could further shed light on the support systems available for the student athletes. The role of school administrators, DepEd, and other stakeholders in creating environments that can provide support for the student-athletes at a holistic level. It includes flexible academic policies, personalized support, and mentorship programs that help the college student-athletes manage both academics and athletics. It could also provide recommendations for school and policymakers for more inclusive and supportive environments.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As I reflect on my endeavor to conducting this research, I feel a sense of gratitude for all the lessons that it has taught me both in personal and career growth. The process was challenging and overwhelming knowing that I also work as a college instructor and a non-certified coach at the same time. However, through

these circumstances, I gained resilience and patience, despite also the fact that this complex task was too hard to bear.

I further realized that this study isn't just about fulfilling my graduate academic requirements, but the thought that it will contribute to a meaningful insight in the field of sports in education, I am thrilled to think how my study open opportunities for betterment – both for non-certified coaches and the student-athletes.

My dialogue with my participants made me understand their personal experiences as I reflect on mine. I have come to appreciate their dedication and sacrifices helping me to understand my own experiences too. This study fulfilled me and opened my eyes to the critical role of non-certified coaches. Finally, this experience has been transformative in many aspects of my life. It tested me, polished me, and expanded my knowledge about coaching and coaching styles. As I finish this study, it will give me a new sense of purpose of becoming a certified coach someday.

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