

Between Class and Court: Navigational Strategies of Student-Athletes in Managing Academic and Athletic Demands

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative study explored the navigational strategies employed by student-athletes in managing the dual demands of academics and athletics. Using a phenomenological approach, the research aimed to understand the essence of student-athletes' lived experiences, uncover the significant challenges they face, and identify the strategies they adopt to maintain balance. Ten purposely selected junior and senior high school student-athletes from Corazon C. Aquino High School, representing diverse sports such as basketball, volleyball, athletics, and arnis, participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method, revealing recurring themes clustered under five overarching categories: Time Management and Prioritization, Academic Sacrifices and Resilience, Support Systems and Flexibility, Stress and Emotional Challenges, and Social Influence and Peer Motivation. Findings indicate that student-athletes employ strategic planning, personal sacrifice, and reliance on social support to navigate overlapping academic and athletic responsibilities. Their experiences highlight the development of resilience, discipline, leadership, and a strong sense of identity, emphasizing that success in both domains requires sustained effort and adaptability. The study concludes that holistic support from teachers, coaches, families, and institutions is critical to fostering both academic achievement and athletic growth. Recommendations focus on practical interventions, including flexible academic policies, structured training schedules, wellness initiatives, and time-management strategies, aimed at enhancing the overall well-being and performance of student-athletes. This research contributes valuable insights into the lived realities of student-athletes, offering guidance for educational and athletic programs to support balanced development.

KEYWORDS: academic demands, athletic demands, mental health, navigational strategies, resilience, student-athletes, support systems, time management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Student-athletes frequently experience an absurd balancing process between the inadequate demands of academics and the over enthusiasm demands of competition sport (Wang et al., 2024). The dual roles of school and sport convocation of consistent time management, emotional control and the flexibility of coping styles and maintenance of high operation in either domains (Jiang & Wang, 2025). Recent research underscores the fact that these intertwined responsibilities increase the likelihood for student-athletes to become over stressed, burnt out, and to fail in school when they lack good coping skills (Crawford et al., 2023; Hoxha et al., 2024).

Tensions created by academic demands of being a student-athlete, the responsibilities associated with academic schedules and requirements such as test preparation projects and their deadlines, alongside athletic training, game and travel requirements frequently result in time conflicts and emotional exhaustion. According to Wang et al. (2024); 36.1% of student-athletes reported poor sleep quality, which may be directly related to both academic and athletic stress; stress levels in particular were significantly correlated with reduced academic engagement. Consistent with this, Jiang and Wang (2025) argued that the double basic roles of student-athletes heavily influence their psychological well-being when the academic identity clashes with athletic performance expectations.

The navigational strategies of student-athletes are contingent upon their levels of emotional maturity, social support, and support from their institutions. Typical interventions involve goal setting, time management, peer support, self-regulation, and mindfulness training (Saether et al., 2022).

Additionally, support at both the institutional and personal levels is critical to the maintenance of the dual identity of student-athletes. In Kosovo, more than 60% of student-athletes highlighted academic workload and travel fatigue, advocating

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the introduction of structured support bases, that is, tutoring, alterations in the schedules, and mentoring (Hoxha, Hyseni-Duraku, et al., 2024). For instance, Norway introduced the elite sport model, in which education and sport development are combined, resulting in a better achievement and completion of studies (Sæther et al., 2022).

This study, titled “Between Class and Court: Navigational Strategies of Student-Athletes in Managing Academic and Athletic Demands,” sets out to look into how student-athletes handle the pressure of juggling school responsibilities with the demands of competitive sports. It tries to understand a few things. What are the main stressors they face? How do they respond to them? And maybe just as important, what kind of support do they actually receive and is it enough, or even helpful at all? The hope is that by getting a clearer picture of what these student-athletes go through, the research can offer something meaningful. Something that might help teachers, coaches, or even those who create policies think more intentionally about how to support students who are constantly being pulled in two directions. Not just academically or athletically, but as whole individuals trying to keep both sides of their lives from falling out of balance.

This kind of balancing act doesn’t just create scheduling conflicts. It shapes their entire experience as students. Stress builds up when they miss class for competitions or find themselves studying late after exhausting practice sessions. And sometimes the pressure isn’t just internal. It can come from outside, too. Some teachers don’t show much patience. Parents might worry that sports are pulling them away from academics. There are even cases where students are kept from playing just because of earlier dips in their grades or assumptions about their priorities. The researcher has seen these things happen and it raises a bigger question: are schools really designed to support students who try to do both?

Time management seems to be one of the biggest challenges student-athletes face. McKenna and Dunstan (2023) point out that when students struggle to juggle school and sports, it can lead to emotional fatigue and, eventually, poor academic outcomes. It’s not uncommon for them to skip meals, stay up far too late, or pull away from social activities, all in an effort to meet what can sometimes feel like competing demands from teachers and coaches. Without proper support or at least some structured guidance, these young athletes are vulnerable. Burnout becomes more than a buzzword. It becomes a real possibility. And sometimes, sadly, it leads them to give up either their studies or their sport altogether. When schools don’t offer flexible scheduling, makeup work, or even just teachers who understand the load these students carry, it ends up undermining the very idea of developing the whole person.

This study, “Between Class and Court: Navigational Strategies of Student-Athletes in Managing Academic and Athletic Demands,” wants to understand that dilemma better. It looks into what strategies student-athletes are actually using day to day, and at the same time, it tries to uncover where schools might be unintentionally making things harder. The goal isn’t just to point out what’s missing—it’s to encourage schools, educators, even families, to think more deeply about how they can help. Not just in sports. Not just in grades. But in making sure these students don’t have to sacrifice one part of themselves to succeed in another.

The present study employs the Social Ecological Model (SEM) as the guiding theoretical framework to analyze the coping and navigational strategies of student-athletes. SEM emphasizes that an individual’s experiences and behaviors are not shaped in isolation but are the result of dynamic interactions across multiple levels of influence. In the case of student-athletes, these layers include personal attributes, interpersonal relationships, institutional structures, and broader policy environments. This framework also highlights the importance of external supports, such as family, teachers, and coaches, in fostering resilience among student-athletes. Furthermore, it allows the study to identify not only the barriers that hinder academic and athletic balance but also the enabling factors that promote student-athletes’ overall well-being and success.

Research Question

This study aims to explore and analyze the navigational strategies employed by student-athletes in managing the competing demands of academics and athletics.

Central Questions

What is the essence of the lived experiences of the student-athletes in balancing their academic and athletic demands?

Corollary Questions

1. How do student-athletes described their most significant experiences in coping with academic and athletic pressures?
2. What themes emerged from the narratives and testimonies of student-athletes regarding their navigational strategy?
3. What meanings can be drawn from the lived experiences of student-athletes in managing dual roles as learners and athletes?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what specific interventions can be proposed to address the academic and athletic challenges of student-athletes?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study sets out to explore how student-athletes manage the often overwhelmed task of balancing academics and athletics. It focuses on a selected group of junior and senior high school students who are actively participating in both their coursework and competitive sports. Conducted from July to August 2025, the study aims not just to describe what they do but to listen to their lived experiences. Their daily challenges, how they adapt, and what strategies they lean on to stay afloat as both students and athletes are central to the inquiry.

The research takes a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews to capture personal stories. The study also looks at emotional and mental strain, the influence of people around them, and the broader environment. All of this is considered through the Social Ecological Model, which helps make sense of how different layers in their lives interact and affect their coping behaviors.

The scope is intentionally narrow. It focuses only on student-athletes from Corazon C. Aquino High School, both in junior and senior high. It does not extend to professional athletes or students who are not involved in competitive sports. Because this is a qualitative study, the findings are not meant to represent all student-athletes. Instead, they are intended to offer meaningful, specific insights into the lives of those within this unique group during the study period.

There are, of course, limitations. The sample size is small, which is typical for studies like this, and there is always the possibility of bias in personal storytelling. In addition, variables such as academic level, the type of sport involved, or the kind of support available at school might shape experiences in different ways. Still, even with those caveats, the study hopes to provide useful perspectives—ones that can help schools, sports programs, and mental health professionals build better, more responsive systems for student-athletes striving to balance academics and athletics.

Framework

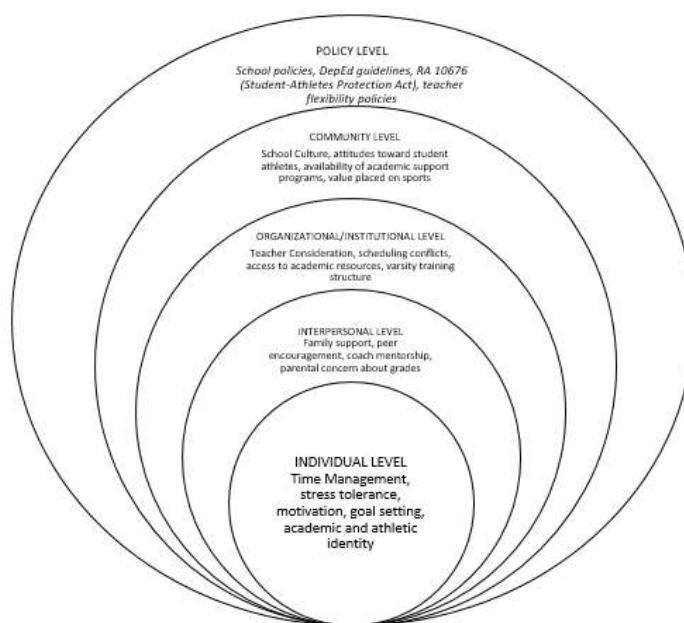


Fig. 1. Social Ecological Model as Framework in Understanding Navigational Strategies of Student-Athletes (Adapted from SEM by Urie Bronfenbrenner, as cited by Crawford, 2020)

The Socio-Ecological Model, or SEM, offers a way to look at student-athletes not just as individuals trying to balance school and sports, but as people operating within several layers of influence. Developed originally by Urie Bronfenbrenner and later applied across areas like public health and education, the model emphasizes that behavior, how people cope, how they perform, is shaped not just internally but through interactions with their surroundings. It works across five levels: individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy.

At the most personal level, things like self-discipline, motivation, and time management come into play. Some student-athletes are naturally better at juggling tight schedules, but even then, it's not easy. Stress builds. It's not just about ticking boxes. Next comes the interpersonal layer, which is really about people. The ones closest to them. Parents, coaches, classmates, teammates. Sometimes that support system is solid. Sometimes it's fragile. A well-timed encouragement from a coach or a classmate who offers notes from a missed lesson can really help. But when there's judgment, like parents who downplay sports or coaches who don't care about grades, it adds another layer of stress. It can feel like there's no winning side.

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Then you have the institutional level, the school itself. This one's tricky. It includes teachers, administrators, policies, and even just the general approach schools take toward student-athletes. Some schools are flexible and make room for athletic commitments. You hear about students missing classes for tournaments and not being allowed to catch up, or feeling like they have to choose between sports and school. That kind of rigidity isn't always intentional, but it still has an impact.

The broader school community adds yet another dimension. The culture within a school really matters. If both academic and athletic achievement are respected and supported equally, student-athletes can thrive. But when sports are dismissed or considered a distraction, students start to internalize that bias. It creates tension. And honestly, even the best support at the individual level can be undone by a culture that just doesn't see the value in what they're doing.

And above all that, there's policy. Regulations, eligibility rules, national or local programs. All of these shape how student-athletes experience school and sports. Sometimes policies are too strict, too one-size-fits-all, and end up creating more barriers than solutions. Even policies meant to help can fall short if they're not responsive to the actual needs of students on the ground.

In the end, the SEM makes it clear that we can't just tell student-athletes to "manage better" or "try harder." That's only one small piece. Their coping ability is influenced by everything from how supportive their parents are to how flexible their teachers can be. Even school norms and national policies have a say in how well they succeed or where they struggle.

The key implication of this framework is that supporting student-athletes requires a holistic understanding of the broader ecosystem in which they operate. Their success cannot be attributed solely to individual effort, as academic and athletic performance are shaped by interconnected factors such as institutional policies, school culture, teacher considerations, peer and family support, and personal coping strategies.

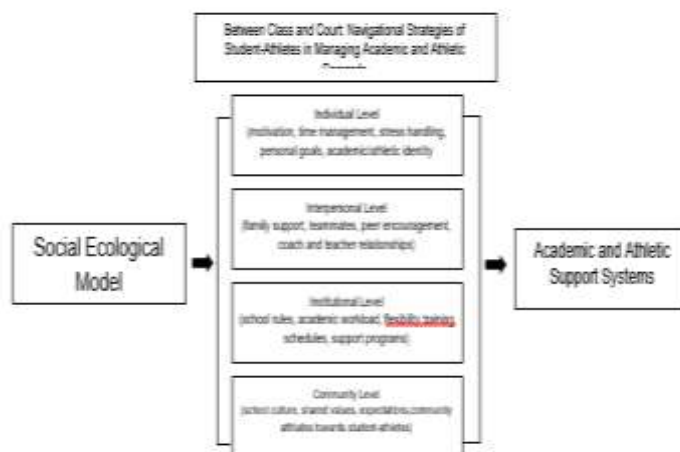


Figure 2. Research Paradigm on the navigational strategies of Student-Athletes Based on the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM)

This study is grounded in the Social Ecological Model, or SEM, which was first developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner and later expanded upon in various fields, including education and health (Crawford, 2020). What makes SEM particularly useful is how it considers not just individual traits but also the entire environment a person lives in. When it comes to student-athletes, whose daily lives are shaped by both classroom expectations and training schedules, that kind of broad, layered approach feels necessary. Their behavior isn't happening in a vacuum.

The model outlines several layers of influence: individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy that shape how people behave and respond to pressure (Anderson & Southall, 2022; Saarinen et al., 2025). In the context of student-athletes, these multiple layers highlight how both immediate environments and overarching policies interact to shape their ability to cope and adapt. Thus, when examining navigational strategies, the Social Ecological Model provides a comprehensive framework that captures the complexity of academic and athletic demands.

At the institutional layer, school systems and academic policies significantly shape the experiences of student-athletes. The type of support teachers provide, as well as how academic and athletic schedules are coordinated, can either ease or intensify the pressures of dual roles. Studies indicate that academic accommodations, such as flexible scheduling and access to tutoring, positively affect student-athletes' performance and reduce stress (Krislov et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2023). Conversely, the lack of institutional support—such as rigid exam policies following late competitions—has been associated with academic strain and emotional fatigue (Zhang & Chen, 2022).

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The community level expands the focus to school culture and local perceptions of student-athletes. Community attitudes about whether athletes can succeed academically as well as athletically have been shown to influence student-athletes' self-concept and motivation. For example, recent findings suggest that when school culture affirms the dual identity of student-athletes, they are more likely to maintain balanced engagement in both domains, whereas negative stereotypes can foster self-doubt and disengagement (Martinez et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023).

At the policy level, systemic regulations, such as scholarship requirements and education department guidelines, create broader conditions that directly impact student-athletes' daily lives. While policies like GPA-based scholarships can encourage academic persistence, they may also heighten stress when not paired with adequate institutional support (Walker & Dixon, 2020; Saarinen et al., 2025). Research underscores that policies designed without integrated academic support mechanisms can unintentionally increase burnout risk, whereas holistic policy frameworks enhance both educational and athletic outcomes (Anderson & Southall, 2022).

Ultimately, the Social Ecological Model (SEM) provides more than just a theoretical lens; it serves as a structured map for identifying where and how student-athletes can be better supported. Coping, in this context, is not simply a matter of individual strength, discipline, or willpower. Rather, it is shaped by the dynamic interaction of multiple layers; personal, social, institutional, community, and policy that either facilitate or hinder student-athletes' ability to balance dual roles.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, as a research tradition, seeks to explore and interpret the essence of lived experiences by describing how individuals perceive and make sense of their realities. Recent scholars emphasize that phenomenology enables a deeper understanding of how personal and social contexts shape individual experiences, making it a powerful method for uncovering meaning in complex human situations (Sundler et al., 2020; Neubauer et al., 2020).

This approach is particularly suited for examining the lived experiences of student-athletes as they navigate the challenges of balancing academic responsibilities with the demands of athletic training and competition. Phenomenology functions both as a methodology and as a way of seeing the world, allowing researchers to move beyond description toward interpretation of meaning (Moustakas & Sigel, 2021; Thomas & Rosser, 2022). Specifically, interpretive phenomenology highlights the contextual nature of experiences, enabling insights into the meanings student-athletes attach to their daily struggles and coping strategies.

A key methodological principle of phenomenology is bracketing, which requires the researcher to set aside preconceptions and biases so that participants' voices can emerge authentically.

The phenomenological design thus provides a means to capture rich, subjective insights into the pressures and coping mechanisms of student-athletes. It illuminates not only unique individual experiences but also the shared patterns that define this population's reality.

Research Instrument

To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of student-athletes, this study utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument. Semi-structured interviews are widely recognized in qualitative research for their flexibility, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts while ensuring that discussions remain aligned with the study's objectives (Adhabi & Anozie, 2020; Castillo-Montoya, 2021). This design enabled the researcher to explore not only whether student-athletes struggle with balancing academics and athletics, but also how they cope, adapt, and make sense of their everyday experiences.

The interview guide was composed of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share detailed accounts of their routines, stress management practices, and relationships with peers, coaches, teachers, and family members.

By structuring the interview guide in this way, the study ensured that data collected was rich, authentic, and aligned with the phenomenological approach. Moreover, the flexibility of the instrument provided space for participants to discuss sensitive issues such as academic pressure, emotional stress, and athletic demands in a safe and open manner.

Data Gathering

Data collection for this study is set to begin in July 2025. The plan is to conduct face-to-face interviews with selected student-athletes from both Junior High and Senior High School at Corazon C. Aquino High School. These are students who, in one way or another, are juggling the pressures of schoolwork alongside athletic responsibilities. The goal isn't just to get facts. It is to hear from them directly, how they manage, what it feels like, and what strategies they've found that help them through it all.

Before any of these interviews happen, the researcher will first secure official permission from the school principal through a formal Permit to Study. After that, students will be approached one at a time. There won't be any pressure. Just a short, honest

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explanation about what the study is about, what will happen during the interview, and what the information will be used for. Only those who give informed consent will be included. And from the start, it will be made very clear: the audio and video recordings are purely for academic purposes. Nothing will be shared outside that context. No clips posted online, nothing shown in public. Just data, kept secure.

Each interview will happen in a quiet spot somewhere in the school. Not just for privacy, but to make it easier for the students to relax and speak openly. Conversations might last anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes.

The questions will be semi-structured. That means there's a basic guide to follow, but space is left open for more natural dialogue. If a student drifts into something unexpected but meaningful, that's okay. Sometimes the most valuable insights come from unplanned directions.

During each session, the researcher will also take a few notes. Just small things like expressions, pauses, or anything that feels important but might not come across in the recording. Once everything's done and the interviews are transcribed and double-checked, all the files will be stored securely. Names won't be used in any reports. And after the research is completed and retained for a reasonable period, the data will be properly disposed of.

Data Analysis

To explore the lived experiences of student-athletes in balancing academics and athletics, this study adopted Colaizzi's method of phenomenological data analysis as adapted in contemporary qualitative research (Morrow et al., 2021; Abu-Ras et al., 2023). From these transcripts, significant statements related to the phenomenon were identified. These statements represented expressions that shed light on how student-athletes understood and navigated the dual demands of their academic and athletic lives. Each significant statement was then analyzed to formulate meanings, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the participants' perspectives while still capturing the underlying essence of their experiences (Sundler et al., 2020).

Finally, to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness, member checking was conducted. Selected participants were asked to review the thematic findings and interpretations to ensure that their voices were accurately represented. Feedback provided during this stage was incorporated into the final analysis, enhancing the authenticity and confirmability of the results (Thomas & Magilvy, 2021).

III. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the data collected from interviews with student-athletes. The responses were carefully transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify recurring patterns and significant insights. The results are organized thematically, reflecting the objectives of the study and addressing the specific problems raised in the statement of the problem. Each theme is supported by direct accounts from participants, followed by the researcher's interpretation to provide a deeper understanding of the navigational strategies used by student-athletes in balancing their academic and athletic responsibilities.

The Demographic Profile of Student-Athlete Participants

The study involved student-athletes from Corazon C. Aquino High School who were selected to provide insights into how they cope with the dual demands of academics and athletics. The demographic profile, as presented in Table 1, reflects a mix of genders, grade levels, and sports participation, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives on managing both educational responsibilities and athletic commitments.

Table 1: Profile of the Participants

Narrative No.	Participants	Sex	Age	Grade Level	Sport Involved
1	Jake	Male	12	7	Athletics
2	Arcaine	Male	14	9	Taekwondo
3	Nikko	Male	17	12	Basketball
4	Vincent	Male	16	11	Basketball
5	Melvin	Male	17	12	Basketball
6	Margarette	Female	14	9	Arnis
7	Bambie	Female	13	8	Arnis
8	Izzy	Female	14	9	Volleyball
9	Frinz	Male	14	9	Basketball
10	MJ	Female	17	12	Cheerdance

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The participants' ages ranged from 12 to 17 years, covering both junior high school and senior high school levels. A notable concentration of participants was in the 14–17 age range, indicating that most of the student-athletes were in their adolescent years, a stage where balancing academics and sports is particularly challenging. Younger participants, such as those in Grade 7 and Grade 8, are still in the early stages of adapting to the dual demands of being both students and athletes, while older participants from Grades 11 and 12 face greater responsibilities as they prepare for higher education or future careers.

The diversity in sex and sports involvement further strengthens the study by capturing a wide range of experiences. While basketball players formed the largest group, other sports such as athletics, taekwondo, arnis, volleyball, and cheerdance were also represented. This variety ensures that the study reflects not just the experiences of athletes in mainstream team sports but also those engaged in individual and emerging disciplines.

This demographic representation serves as a strong foundation for analyzing how student-athletes from different backgrounds cope with the challenges of managing academic responsibilities alongside athletic commitments. It provides nuanced insights into the unique struggles and strategies of young athletes as they navigate the demands of school and sport.

Problem Statement Number 1: Student-athletes' description of their most significant experiences in navigational strategy with academic and athletic pressures

Student-athletes often find themselves at the intersection of academic responsibilities and athletic commitments, a dual role that creates unique pressures requiring constant negotiation and adaptation. Balancing the demands of coursework, deadlines, and examinations alongside rigorous training schedules, competitions, and team expectations frequently results in stress, fatigue, and the need for sacrifices in other areas of life. Understanding how student-athletes describe their most significant experiences in coping with these pressures is crucial, as their personal accounts provide insight into the strategies, adjustments, and support systems that help them sustain both roles. By exploring these lived experiences, the study seeks to capture not only the challenges faced but also the resilience, discipline, and growth that emerge from navigating academic and athletic demands.

The significant experiences of the ten student-athletes in balancing academics and athletics were analyzed using Colaizzi's method for thematic analysis, revealing essential insights into how they manage dual responsibilities. Their narratives highlighted themes such as time management, prioritization of academics, discipline, teacher and peer support, and the role of family in sustaining their participation in sports. Participants emphasized that balancing both roles often requires sacrifices, such as late-night study sessions after training or adjusting social activities to meet academic demands. They also shared that supportive teachers and flexible academic arrangements helped ease pressures, while financial and resource limitations sometimes posed challenges to their athletic participation.

Significant Experiences of Jake

Jake's experiences as a student-athlete demonstrate the challenges and adaptations required to balance academic responsibilities with athletic commitments. He began competing in long jump and pole vault in Grade 5 and, within two years, reached the provincial and CLRAA levels. From the outset, he faced rigorous training schedules, often lasting from early morning until late at night, particularly during three-month preparation periods. These training sessions, sometimes conducted in remote areas such as TRP or TAU, required sacrifices in terms of rest, nutrition, and proximity to family.

Jake's daily routines during training seasons involved strict time management and discipline. He often had to participate in online classes while simultaneously managing training, demonstrating resilience and the ability to prioritize his education despite fatigue. He reported that, even when training conflicts with academic demands, he consistently chooses to prioritize schoolwork, recognizing the long-term importance of education.

Jake emphasized the importance of maintaining balance in managing both academics and athletics. His advice to emerging student-athletes is to prioritize education while still committing fully to their chosen sports, noting that academic achievement provides a strong foundation for life beyond competition. He values the discipline, resilience, and personal growth gained from his experiences, highlighting how sports have taught him accountability, perseverance, and teamwork. Jake also points out that success does not come from talent alone but from consistent effort, time management, and the ability to adapt during difficult periods such as overlapping exams and training. He expresses deep gratitude toward his school, coaches, and peers for their continued support.

Table 1a: Significant Experiences of Jake

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Long Jump and Pole Vault po... two years na po."	Early engagement in athletics shaped his identity as a student-athlete.
"Nagkaroon po kami ng training mula 4am–8am o 4pm–10pm."	Rigorous training schedules required time management and endurance.
"Hindi ko po nababalanse ang pagaaral ko... in exempted na po kami."	Academic compromise during intensive athletic preparation; highlights trade-offs in balancing roles.
"Mas naging matimbang po ang pagaaral ko kaysa pagiging atleta."	Education prioritized over athletics; long-term security valued.
"Natuto po akong dumisiplina... lumakas sir."	Athletic participation promoted discipline, physical growth, and personal development.
"Nakakaramdam po ako ng pressure kapag may project at may laban din kami."	Stress and role strain from simultaneous academic and athletic demands.
"Iniuuna ko pong gawin iyong assignment... mas importante po saakin iyong pagaaral."	Decision-making prioritizes academics when conflicts arise.
"Iyon pong mga coaches, trainers at teachers po... tinutulungan kaming balansehin ang pagaaral namin."	Institutional support as a navigational strategy to manage dual responsibilities.
"Sinuportahan po kami ng mga magulang... nanonood at chinecheer kami."	Family support as a key motivational and emotional resource.
"Sana po kung magiging athlete sila, balansehin po nila ang pagaaral at pagiging athlete."	Advice emphasizes maintaining balance and discipline in both academics and athletics.

Significant Experiences of Arcaine

Arcaine's experiences as a student-athlete illustrate the complexities of managing academic responsibilities alongside athletic commitments. He began participating in Taekwondo in Grade 7, initially encouraged by a relative, and continued training despite the sport being an unexpected pursuit. Over nearly three years, he developed both physically and mentally, learning to navigate the pressures of competitions while keeping up with schoolwork.

Arcaine described a typical routine where training occurs on weekends, with exercises and conditioning maintained even during the off-season. Academics, however, remain his top priority; he ensures that assignments are completed before participating in training sessions.

A significant challenge for Arcaine involved overlapping demands, such as preparing for exams while simultaneously needing to train for upcoming competitions. During these periods, he felt pressure and exhaustion but learned to strategically allocate his time, a navigational strategy aligned with what Settles et al. (2022) describe as "role strain." Through these experiences, he developed discipline, responsibility, and self-management skills that extend beyond sports.

Support from teachers, coaches, and family emerged as crucial in enabling Arcaine to sustain his dual roles. Teachers allowed flexibility with assignments and exams, while his parents provided encouragement and resources for training.

Arcaine also reflected on personal growth from sports participation, noting improved discipline, responsibility, and resilience. While he acknowledged moments where athletics temporarily conflicted with academics, he consistently prioritized education, recognizing its long-term importance (Comeaux & Harrison, 2020). Despite limited institutional resources, Arcaine's perseverance highlights the challenges faced by student-athletes in schools with less robust support systems.

Overall, Arcaine's narrative underscores the dual reality of student-athlete life—balancing stress, sacrifice, and physical demands with opportunities for personal growth and achievement. His experiences point to the need for flexible academic policies, adequate training resources, and continued guidance from mentors to support young athletes effectively. It further emphasizes that student-athletes thrive best in environments where both their academic and athletic identities are equally valued.

Table 1b: Significant Experiences of Arcaine

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Inuuna ko po iyong studies ko. Tatapusin ko po muna lahat noong mga kailangan ko pong tapusin tapos kapag may free time na po ako sir magtraining po ako kahit konti pampacondition lang po ng katawan."	Academic responsibilities prioritized before athletic commitments; strategic allocation of time.
"Mahirap din po kasi po minsan mappressure na po talaga sa marami pong gagawin sa school tapos kailangan mo pa magtraining kasi po may papalapit na po na laban. Pero ang mas kailangan ko pong unahin ay ang mga academics ko."	Experiencing stress and pressure from overlapping academic and athletic demands.
"Disiplina po sir... Na iyong kalaban mo sir... hindi mo po siya kaaway opponent nio lang po siya sa laban pero sa labas ng court. Magkaibigan pa rin po kayo."	Sports foster discipline, respect for others, and understanding competition as collaborative rather than adversarial.
"Kailangan ko talaga dumoble sipag sir, maga-aral mabuti tas magtraining mabuti para po mapaghandaan ko po iyong exam tapos po iyong laban sir."	Development of time management and dual-role coping strategies.
"Iyong parents ko po sir tsaka iyong mga teachers ko po... pinapayagan po kaming magexcuse pag may important training po kami bago ang laban."	Social support systems, including family and teachers, as critical for balancing demands.
"Pag ano po sir. Halimbawa po sira na po gamit ko bibilhan po ako ng bago para po may magamit po ako kahit mahal po bibilhin padin po nila."	Financial and material support from family facilitates athletic participation.
"Sana po ang iprioritize po nila is iyong academics po nila at pagaaral po nila at parang extra curricular nalang po iyong sports para sa kanila."	Advice for future student-athletes emphasizes education as the primary focus, sports as a secondary but meaningful pursuit.

Significant Experiences of Nikko

Nikko's journey as a student-athlete demonstrates the challenges of balancing academics and athletics while cultivating resilience, discipline, and social growth. He began playing basketball in Grade 10 and was classified as a student-athlete when he represented CCAHS in the provincial meet during Grade 11. From the beginning, he faced the challenge of adapting to competitive sports while maintaining academic performance.

His routine during the athletic season included daily training from Monday to Saturday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with rest only on Sundays. During weekdays, he was excused from classes to focus on training. Nikko described his training sessions as rigorous, involving drills, conditioning, and teamwork exercises, highlighting the discipline and focus required to succeed. Despite the demanding schedule, he prioritized academics when conflicts arose, often reviewing lessons after training even when exhausted. This illustrates the time management and prioritization strategies described by Watson and Kissinger (2020) as essential for student-athletes.

Nikko acknowledged that balancing both academics and athletics was both mentally and physically demanding. He experienced stress from frequent quizzes, presentations, and overlapping competitions, which was at times intensified by limited understanding from some teachers. Despite these pressures, he found motivation in representing his school and in the enjoyment of basketball, which allowed him to sustain resilience and cope with challenges.

Financial limitations, however, remained a persistent concern. Nikko highlighted that most costs for competitions—including transportation, water, and minimal snacks—were covered by families, reflecting the economic pressures faced by student-athletes in resource-limited settings.

Through these experiences, Nikko developed self-discipline, maturity, and interpersonal skills, recognizing that success in sports does not replace the importance of academics. His story emphasizes that while student-athlete life is demanding, it fosters personal growth, resilience, and a sense of responsibility toward oneself and one's school. At the same time, it highlights how balancing dual roles shapes character, teaching young athletes the value of perseverance and effective time management.

Table 1c: Significant Experiences of Nikko

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Kapag may training, inuuna ko muna ang mga assignment bago sumali."	Academic responsibilities prioritized over athletics.
"Pinakamahirap kapag sabay ang exam at laban... sobrang stressful."	Experiencing role conflict and pressure from overlapping academic and athletic demands.
"Natutunan ko sa basketball ang disiplina at tiyaga."	Sports develop discipline, perseverance, and mental toughness.
"Nadagdagan ang confidence ko at naging mas open sa iba."	Positive personal and social growth; increased confidence and teamwork skills.
"Teachers and family help me kapag nahihirapan ako."	Reliance on social support from teachers and family as navigational strategy.
"Minsan mahirap din sa gastos, pero natutulungan naman ng pamilya."	Financial challenges in athletics; family as primary support.
"Masaya ako kasi nakakapaglaro at nakakapag-aral parin kahit sabay."	Fulfillment in balancing dual roles despite stress and fatigue.
"Kailangan talaga ng time management para hindi bumagsak sa studies."	Time management as a primary coping strategy to maintain academic performance.
"After ng training, aral laang po ng ilang oras gawin iyong mga quiz, activities and then ganoon lang po."	Development of habits for integrating academics with athletic schedule.
"Unahin ko po iyong pagreporting... Tatapusin ko po muna para hindi po ako nahuhassle."	Strategic decision-making in prioritizing academic obligations over athletic activities when necessary.

Significant Experiences of Vincent

Vincent's experiences as a student-athlete illustrate the constant balancing act between academics and athletics. He began playing basketball in Grade 7 after initially aiming to join badminton but was scouted for basketball due to his potential and height. By Grade 9, he identified himself as a student-athlete after being included in varsity training and exposure to older players, which marked the start of managing both schoolwork and athletic commitments simultaneously.

His experiences highlight the importance of time management and proactive planning. Vincent explained that before competitions, he completes assignments and reviews materials to avoid stress during games. He actively communicates with teachers to address missing work, demonstrating initiative and responsibility in maintaining his academics while participating in training and competitions. Despite late nights and tight schedules, he manages to balance both roles without prioritizing one over the other, keeping both academics and athletics in harmony.

Basketball also contributed to his personal and social growth. Vincent noted that being a student-athlete gave him recognition on campus and allowed him to represent his school with honor. Academically, he became more responsible and proactive in completing tasks, which also strengthened his relationship with teachers. Personally, he felt that he remained grounded, interacting with others as a normal student while gaining discipline through sports.

Vincent acknowledged moments of pressure, particularly during overlapping deadlines and competitions, but noted that enjoyment and fulfillment from basketball often outweighed stress. He reflected that maintaining boundaries between academics and athletics, knowing his priorities, and following advice from coaches and teachers were key to sustaining balance.

Overall, Vincent's experiences show that being a student-athlete is demanding yet rewarding. With careful planning, initiative, and support from family and school, he achieved both academic and athletic growth. His story shows that balance comes through strategies like setting priorities, communicating with teachers, and relying on family encouragement.

Table 1d: Significant Experiences of Vincent

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Ang pinaka secret ko lang po talaga ay time management. Kapag alam ko po na may laban kami ang gagawin ko po bago po iyong laban na iyon panay review, panay basa ng notes at assignments."	Strategic time management to complete academic tasks before competitions.
"Cinocomply ko po agad inaapproach ko po mga teachers ko na 'maam may ginawa po ba kayo? Or mga quizzes po ba?'"	Initiative and proactive communication with teachers to stay on track academically.
"Sobrang saya kasi sir e... nageenjoy ka padin kahit papalit-palit ka ng ginagawa."	Enjoyment and fulfillment in balancing academics and athletics.
"Kung di po ako naging successful sa pagbabasketball ko po ano po ba iyong dapat ko pong ipursue kung iyong pagaaral ko po sir...kailangan padin po ng pagaaral once na naging varsity ka na din po talaga kailangan mo po talaga ibalance."	Maintaining balance between academics and athletics; no one role dominates.
"Ang binago po sakin ng pagiging atleta sir pagiging kilala po sa buong campus...nakakaproud lang din po kasi with honor ka na tapos student athlete ka pa."	Social recognition and personal pride from representing school as an athlete.
"To narin po iyong naging way para mas amaging better pa po ako as a student...nagiging stepping stone ko para makilala ng mga teachers."	Academic growth and strengthened student-teacher relationships.
"Si Lord na po dahil sa talento pong binigay niya po saakin... pangalawa po kay mama ko... pangalawang mama ko si Tita ko... sila po iyong naging punot dulo kung bakit po ako andito."	Reliance on faith and family as primary support systems.
"Extension kapag may mga deadline... iba po iyong deadline ng mga kaklase ko sa deadline ko."	School support through deadline extensions helps manage overlapping responsibilities.
"Sumunod lagi sa coaches, sumunod lagi sa teachers...laging may limit iyong ginagawa mo... know your priority."	Guidance and prioritization as essential strategies for new student-athletes.
"Sana noon pa alam ko iyong decision making inside the court...lung pasano ko italo iyong laro ko."	Recognition of areas for growth in athletic skills and decision-making.

Significant Experiences of Melvin

Melvin's experiences as a student-athlete reveal the discipline, sacrifices, and perseverance needed to balance academics with athletics. He began playing basketball in elementary school and started identifying as a student-athlete around Grade 4 when he began competing against other schools. Over time, he gradually learned to manage both his academic responsibilities and athletic commitments.

Time management emerged as Melvin's most essential coping strategy. He shared that he completed school assignments before training, reserved evenings for modules after practices, and adhered to a structured daily schedule, with classes from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. followed by basketball training from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. These practices reflect recent studies highlighting the significance of structured routines, adaptability, and self-discipline in helping student-athletes manage overlapping academic and athletic responsibilities (Stambulova et al., 2021; Foster & Huml, 2021).

Melvin acknowledged the pressures of overlapping exams, projects, and competitions, yet he consistently prioritizes academics without sacrificing athletic commitments. Flexible school policies, such as adjusted submission deadlines and allowance for training schedules, were key in enabling him to meet both academic and athletic obligations.

Overall, Melvin's experiences illustrate that success as a student-athlete depends on disciplined time management, proactive communication with teachers, social and familial support, and personal perseverance. Despite the challenges, he finds fulfillment in being able to balance both roles and offers advice to new athletes emphasizing discipline, focus, and taking responsibilities seriously from the start. His journey highlights that resilience and guidance can help student-athletes thrive both in academics and sports.

Table 1e: Significant Experiences of Melvin

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Kailangan lang po talaga ay time management po. Kapag school po, school lang po; kapag basketball, basketball lang po."	Clear separation of priorities and disciplined time management.
"Pagkatapos po ng training, pag gabi po gagawin ko na po iyong mga module na binigay ng teachers."	Adaptive strategies to meet academic requirements after athletic commitments.
"Mahirap po e...kasi po kailangan po ng time management...mas importante sa akin ang pag-aaral kaysa basketball."	Recognition of academic priority and necessity of balancing dual roles.
"Sa mga training po natuto po ako makisama, magkaroon ng mga bagong kaibigan...iyong pagiging disiplina din po na sinasabi ng coach."	Personal growth through sports, development of social skills and discipline.
"Kapag mahirap na ang sitwasyon...sa Basketball po nakakalimutan ko po mga problema ko."	Sports as a navigational strategy for stress and personal challenges.
"Ang pamilya ko po...si Tito ko po siya bahala sa sapatos at training...nanonood po sila kada laban ko."	Emotional and practical support from family facilitating athletic participation.
"Si Coach Eroid po...nagpush at nagdevelop at nagtraining po saakin."	Mentorship and coach support critical to skill development.
"Flexible time po...pwede po ihabol nalang po namin pagkatapos ng laban or training."	School accommodations allow balancing of academics and athletics.
"Kapag may line of 7 ka po, bawal ka maglaro...80 pataas po iyong grades para makalaro."	Academic eligibility policies can influence participation and stress levels.
"Kailangan mo talaga ng pursigi at disiplina sa sarili. Kapag wala kang disiplina, wala ka mamarating."	Self-discipline as fundamental for success in both academics and athletics.

Significant Experiences of Margarette

Margarette began her journey in arnis during Grade 7 and has since participated in various competitions, including regional, municipal, and provincial meets, amassing 18 medals. As a Grade 9 student, she recognizes the challenges of balancing academics and athletics. Recent studies highlight that student-athletes often face significant stress due to the dual demands of their roles. A study by Smith et al. (2023) found that student-athletes experience higher levels of stress compared to non-athletes, primarily due to academic pressures and athletic commitments.

Margarette emphasizes the importance of time management in her routine. She allocates Sundays for academic reviews and utilizes break times during training for school tasks. Research by Liu and Taresh (2024) supports this approach, indicating that student-athletes who employ time management strategies, such as prioritizing tasks and limiting distractions, report lower stress levels and improved academic performance.

Training in arnis has instilled in Margarette qualities like resilience, teamwork, and discipline. A study by Zhang et al. (2022) found that participation in sports enhances psychological resilience and discipline among adolescents, which are transferable to academic settings. Moreover, the structured nature of sports training helps in developing perseverance and adaptability, skills that are beneficial in managing academic challenges.

Table 1f: Significant Experiences of Margarette

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Kapag may sabay na activities at training, inaayos ko muna ang schedule ko."	Time management as a primary coping strategy.
"Tinutulungan ako ng teachers na makabawi sa lessons."	Academic support from teachers.
"Natutunan ko sa sports ang disiplina at teamwork."	Transferable life skills gained from athletics.
"Mahirap kapag sunod-sunod ang exams at training."	Stress from overlapping academic and athletic demands.
"Kapag pagod na, nagpupursigi pa rin para matapos ang gawain."	Resilience and perseverance.
"Suporta ng pamilya at coach malaking tulong sa akin."	Importance of social support systems.
"Masaya kahit mahirap kasi natututo ako sa parehong role."	Fulfillment from balancing academics and athletics.
"Naging mas responsible ako dahil sa pagiging athlete."	Personal growth through dual responsibilities.

Significant Experiences of Bambi

Bambi's experiences as a student-athlete illustrate the challenges of balancing academic responsibilities with rigorous athletic training, while also demonstrating personal growth and perseverance. She began playing arnis in Grade 5 and became a committed athlete in Grade 6, when she and her teammates worked hard to achieve their goals in competitions. Her journey reflects the findings of Masaracchia et al. (2021), who emphasized that early sports participation contributes to the development of discipline and long-term commitment among young athletes.

Bambi manages her dual role by practicing strict time management. She completes school assignments immediately after returning home and incorporates short review sessions while still maintaining training routines, sometimes with the help of her cousin for equipment handling. This aligns with recent studies by Stambulova et al. (2021), which highlight time management as a crucial coping strategy for student-athletes facing multiple responsibilities.

Overall, Bambi views her experience as rewarding. She acknowledges the pressures and occasional setbacks but emphasizes that sports have instilled discipline, confidence, and responsibility, greatly enhancing both her academic and athletic performance. By embracing both academics and sports, Bambi demonstrates that challenges can become meaningful opportunities for growth, and that with the right support systems and discipline, student-athletes can thrive in both fields. She also highlights that sports have given her a strong sense of belonging and pride, allowing her to represent her school while building lifelong values.

Table 1g: Significant Experiences of Bambi

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Kapag may mga school works po pag uwi ko po ginagawa ko na po agad siya, tapos konting recall lang, ginagawa ko pa rin pong magtraining."	Time management and prioritization as navigational strategies.
"Mas nababalance ko po ngayon compare noong Grade 7 kasi mas napressure ako noon."	Recognition of challenges in balancing academics and sports.
"Ang nabago po niya sa kin, thankful po ako nakasali po ako sa sports kasi nabibigyan po ako ng suporta ng mga magulang ko, atsaka natutulungan din po ako sa pagaaral ko."	Personal growth and academic support through athletic participation.
"Minomotivate ko lang po iyong sarili ko na kaya ko po gawin lahat kasi para din ito sa pamilya ko atsaka sa mga teammates ko."	Self-motivation and resilience as coping strategies.
"Si Ma'am Fe at mama ko po ang nagmomotivate po sa akin, lalo na noong nainjured po ako."	Importance of social and familial support in overcoming challenges.
"Gumagawa po ako ng oras, ginagawa ko po school works ko at training kahit saglit lang."	Development of structured habits to balance responsibilities.
"Mas magpurisigi po at wag pong bibitaw kung gusto mo po iyong ginagawa mo."	Perseverance and advice for aspiring student-athletes.

Significant Experiences of Izzy

Izzy's experiences as a student-athlete in volleyball reflect both the physical and mental demands of balancing academic responsibilities with intensive training. She began playing volleyball between Grades 5 and 6, initially participating in municipal and local leagues. Although she paused from school-based competitions in Grade 7, she joined the school team in Grade 8 and has continued until Grade 9. Her early exposure to competition and recognition in tournaments, such as receiving MVP and Open Spiker awards, helped her identify as an athlete by Grade 7. This aligns with findings by McEwan et al. (2021), emphasizing the role of early achievements in fostering athletic identity in youth.

Izzy manages her time by prioritizing academic tasks before training. She completes assignments and projects first to avoid distraction during volleyball practice, demonstrating effective self-regulation and planning. During high-demand periods, such as municipal tournaments, she balances both responsibilities by communicating with coaches and adapting her training schedule. These strategies are consistent with recent research on navigational strategies for student-athletes, highlighting the importance of structured planning and clear communication with mentors (Coutinho et al., 2020).

Physically, volleyball has increased Izzy's endurance, muscle development, and resilience, while personally, she reports improved confidence and assertiveness.

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For her, perseverance means pushing through moments of fatigue, setbacks, and overlapping responsibilities without losing sight of her long-term goals. Time management, on the other hand, allows her to complete schoolwork ahead of deadlines, organize her training schedules, and avoid unnecessary stress during competitions.

Table 1h: Significant Experiences of Izzy

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Sir tinatapos ko po muna iyong mga gagawin ko po na mga assignments bago po maglaro ng volleyball. Para wala na po akong iniisip."	Prioritization of academics as part of time management strategy.
"Nanghihiyang po at nakukulangan din po ako sa pagdedesisyon noon sir."	Emotional challenge when balancing conflicting responsibilities.
"Gagawin ko pa rin po iyong best ko dito sa academic, pupunta ako kapag may time na puwede humabol sa training."	Adaptive strategy to balance academic and athletic demands.
"Si sir Peejay sinasabi din po niya na unahin po muna iyong pagaaral kapag may activities."	Support from coaches guiding dual-career management.
"Pinaka malaking naitulong po saakin na mabigyan po kami ng opportunity po na maglaro dito sa school."	Institutional support enabling skill development and exposure.
"Kulang sir? Mga sponsor po siguro kasi sir wala na po kaming mga gamit sa training."	Identified gaps in school support, particularly resources and facilities.
"Gawin niya lang po iyong dapat niyang gawin, wag pababayaang iyong academics niya...wag siyang tatamarin sa training."	Advice emphasizing discipline, perseverance, and dual-career commitment.
"Sana nadiscover ko na to ng maaga tong volleyball para mas marami pang improvements."	Reflection on early exposure's impact on skill development.

Significant Experiences of Frinz

Frinz began playing basketball at age 7, initially joining informal games in his barangay. His passion for the sport grew as he experienced enjoyment and support from spectators. He started formal school-based training in Grade 8, after overcoming initial shyness and hesitation. His competitive experience includes local tournaments such as the Samahang Basketball ng Pilipinas (SBP) and NBTC, where he faced peers and older players from across Gerona and Tarlac. Despite competing against older athletes, he currently identifies as a student-athlete, recognizing the need to balance academics, household responsibilities, and basketball.

Frinz prioritizes academics above basketball, completing assignments before training and using available free time efficiently. During high-stakes tournaments, he communicates with coaches to adjust his schedule, reflecting effective planning, self-discipline, and time-management strategies. He notes that, while the pressure of maintaining academic performance exists, he feels supported by his family and coaches, allowing him to focus without excessive stress. These navigational strategies align with research on dual-career athletes, which emphasizes the importance of prioritization, structured time management, and external support (Coutinho et al., 2020; MacNamara & Collins, 2021).

Family support, particularly from his father and uncle, provided financial assistance for participation in leagues, while his coach and friends offered motivational support and guidance. The school contributed practical support, such as transportation and snacks for competitions, although gaps remain in financial aid for uniforms and equipment. This illustrates the role of institutional and social support in sustaining youth athlete development (Roden et al., 2022).

Frinz advises aspiring athletes to persevere in both academics and sports, emphasizing the importance of discipline, focused effort, and prioritizing school responsibilities while pursuing athletic goals for personal fulfillment and long-term success. He believes that the true strength of a student-athlete lies not only in physical ability but also in the willingness to stay consistent and committed, even when faced with challenges such as fatigue, overlapping schedules, or pressure to perform. In the end, his journey shows that balance is possible.

Table 1i: Significant Experiences of Frinz

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Since po noong nararamdaman ko po na masaya po iyong marami pong taong nanonood sayo at sumusuporta po."	Enjoyment and social reinforcement contributed to athletic engagement.
"Mas importante po ang pagaaral kaysa po paglalaro. Kasi po sabi po nila mama atsaka ni papa...Kailangan po talaga maglaan po ng oras para sa pagaaral."	Prioritization of academics over athletics based on family values.
"After class po. 3:30 hanggang 6pm...araw-araw po minsan may meeting lang po si coach excuse po."	Structured daily training schedule and adaptability.
"Bago po iyong deadline po gagawin ko na po lahat bago po maglaro para on time po na exam and sa laro po namin sa NBTC wala na po akong pagkakaabalahan na iba po."	Effective time management and planning for dual responsibilities.
"Magpapatulong po ako sa mga magulang ko...magsasabi po sila ng advice."	Seeking support from family when faced with challenges.
"Nagbibigay po sila ng sponsor at meryenda po sa amin kahit konting tulong lang po ay appreciated naman."	Institutional support aiding athletic participation.
"Financial po...marami pong pangangailangan tulad po ng mga equipments."	Identified gaps in school support and resources.
"Purisigihan po nilang magtraining makukuha din po nila iyong pinapangarap po nila...Mas iprioritize po nila iyong pagaaral kaysa po sa paglalaro."	Advice emphasizing perseverance, balancing academics and sport, and pursuit of long-term goals.

Significant Experiences of MJ

MJ began participating in cheerleading when she started Senior High School. She competes in High School Division Level 5 and has represented her school in the Milo Cheerleading Championship and the National Cheerleading Competition in Pasig. Academically, MJ pursues the ABM strand with the goal of becoming an accountant, maintaining high performance with consistent high honors. She began identifying herself as a student-athlete in Grade 11, recognizing that cheerleading is officially considered a sport due to its technical difficulty, including flips and gymnastic-level routines.

MJ's training schedule is rigorous, with sessions on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and sometimes Saturdays. Prior to major competitions, she and her teammates are excused from classes for two weeks and then undergo a rigid two-week preparation period. This approach reflects advanced time management, planning, and accountability strategies that are consistent with research on dual-career athletes (Coutinho et al., 2020; MacNamara & Collins, 2021).

MJ experiences high pressure both academically and athletically. The dual demands of rigorous training and school responsibilities challenge her physically, mentally, and emotionally, especially during overlapping periods of competition and exams. She has learned to manage this pressure through careful planning, early preparation, seeking help from friends, and developing resilience.

MJ describes the benefits of being a student-athlete as multidimensional: development of technical and performance skills, enhanced work under pressure, improved time management, mental and social growth, and increased motivation. She explains that these gains do not only apply to sports but also extend into academics, personal relationships, and daily responsibilities, shaping her into a more disciplined and focused individual.

Table 1j: Significant Experiences of MJ

Participant Statements	Emerging Meanings
"Noon grade 11 po kasi po cinoconsider nadin po ang cheerleading as a sport..."	Recognition of cheerleading as a legitimate sport and self-identification as a student-athlete.
"Finakauna ko pong gagawin ay kakausapin ko po iyong mga teachers..."	Proactive communication and planning to balance academics and athletic commitments.
"Managing my time po is sobrang nahihirapan po ako kasi po after po kasi magtraining mostly po mga 7 na po kami nakakauwi..."	Physical and mental strain due to overlapping responsibilities and workload.
"Yes naman po academically...through sa organization po na ito is naging daan para po may magalok po ng scholarship po from universities."	Institutional incentives and opportunities enhance academic motivation and future prospects.
"Nakadevelop ng mga skills."	Athletic training develops technical abilities and performance competence.
"Ako po I always prepare a plan para po sa kinabukasan. Ninonote ko po iyong mga need ko pong gawin para hindi ko po siya makalimutan."	Strategic planning, time management, and self-organization as navigational strategies.
"Para saakin po financial support po. Being a student athlete po, we are not provided or supported po kasi..."	Identification of financial support gaps; reliance on external sources such as coaches.
"Sa mga nagsisimula palang magsimula ng journey nila bilang student athlete...There will be consequences and you should be prepared to face it."	Advice emphasizes perseverance, responsibility, and readiness for consequences in dual-career paths.

Problem Statement Number 2. Meanings Drawn from the Most Significant Experiences of Student-Athletes

Exploring the testimonies of student-athletes provides valuable insight into how they construct meaning from their lived experiences of balancing academics and athletics. Their narratives reveal recurring themes that shed light on the strategies they employ, the pressures they endure, and the sources of support that sustain them. Identifying these themes is essential in understanding not only the practical adjustments made by student-athletes but also the deeper implications these experiences have on their personal growth and identity. By examining the emergent themes within their accounts, this study seeks to uncover how navigational strategies are shaped by individual effort, social support systems, and institutional structures, offering a clearer picture of what it means to live "between class and court."

To address the meanings drawn from the most significant experiences of student-athletes, the researcher carefully analyzed and interpreted the participants' narratives using Colaizzi's method for thematic analysis. This stage involved identifying recurring themes related to time management, pressure and stress, sources of support, institutional challenges, and personal growth. By synthesizing these accounts, the study highlights how student-athletes construct meaning from their dual roles and how their navigational strategies shape their academic and athletic journeys.

The findings reveal that time management emerges as the most crucial strategy, with student-athletes constantly negotiating between academic requirements and athletic commitments. Experiences of pressure, such as overlapping exams and competitions, underscore the psychological toll of balancing responsibilities, yet they also illustrate the resilience and discipline developed in the process. Additionally, participants consistently emphasized the role of social support systems, including family, coaches, peers, and even understanding teachers, in sustaining their motivation.

Ultimately, these insights highlight the transformative nature of balancing dual roles, where challenges become opportunities for growth and self-discovery.

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
- "Kapag may assignment po, ginagawa ko muna bago training, tapos kung hindi matapos, tinutuloy ko pagkatapos ng ensayo." – Frinz - "Pag maraming ginagawa sabay-sabay, inuuna ko po ang school requirements bago pumunta ng training." – MJ	Student-athletes cope with overlapping demands by prioritizing academic tasks before or after training, ensuring that schoolwork remains accomplished despite busy schedules.
- "Minsan kailangan magpuyat para matapos lahat ng requirements at makapag-training pa rin." – Jake - "Nahihirapan po minsan, pero focus lang sa academics kapag exams, saka ko na iniisip ang laro." – Margarette	Sacrificing rest and leisure is often necessary, but students show resilience by maintaining focus on academics during critical school periods.
- "Kapag may laban, nakikipag-usap ako sa teacher kung puwedeng i-extend ang deadline." – Nikko	Open communication with teachers is a navigational strategy that allows athletes to negotiate flexibility in academic requirements.

Student-athletes cope with overlapping demands by prioritizing academic tasks before or after training, ensuring that schoolwork remains accomplished despite busy schedules.

Several participants emphasized the importance of completing assignments either before or after training sessions to balance their dual roles. Frinz explained that he often finishes tasks ahead of practice to avoid falling behind, while MJ shared that she chooses to prioritize school requirements before heading to training. Jake and Margarette also noted that rearranging schedules and adjusting study hours around practice help them sustain their academic performance despite demanding sports commitments. This shows that prioritization becomes a key navigational strategy for managing competing responsibilities.

These accounts resonate with the findings of Misra & McKean (2020), who observed that effective time management strategies allow student-athletes to reduce academic stress while remaining engaged in sports. Similarly, Gavazzi et al. (2021) highlight that when students develop structured routines, they perform better in both academics and athletics. Sacrificing rest and leisure is often necessary, but students show resilience by maintaining focus on academics during critical school periods.

Some participants admitted that rest and leisure are often compromised to meet both academic and athletic requirements. MJ shared that she frequently stays up late to complete projects after exhausting training sessions. Jake described how he endures sleepless nights to accomplish requirements, while Margarette revealed that she deliberately sets aside her sports concerns to focus fully on academics during examination weeks.

This aligns with recent findings showing that student-athletes often experience reduced leisure and rest because of overlapping academic and athletic demands, yet they compensate through determination and persistence (Stambulova et al., 2021). Similarly, Ryan et al. (2022) emphasize that resilience is a defining trait that enables student-athletes to adapt and succeed despite the pressures of intense schedules.

Open communication with teachers is a navigational strategy that allows athletes to negotiate flexibility in academic requirements.

Nikko shared that whenever competitions overlap with academic deadlines, he negotiates with teachers for extensions or adjustments, a strategy that helps him avoid falling behind. Vincent also pointed out that teachers' flexibility in giving consideration during competition periods reduces stress and allows him to sustain his commitments in both areas. This indicates that open communication and supportive academic environments significantly contribute to athletes' coping strategies.

Research supports this observation, with Navarro (2021) emphasizing that strong student-faculty communication fosters a supportive climate for student-athletes, helping them manage competing priorities more effectively. Similarly, Foster and Huml (2021) highlight that teacher cooperation and academic flexibility reduce pressure and strengthen the overall balance between academics and athletics, underscoring the crucial role of institutional support in student-athletes' success.

Table 2a Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
"Kapag may assignment po, ginagawa ko muna bago training, tapos kung hindi matapos, tinutuloy ko pagkatapos ng ensayo." – Frenz	Students prioritize academic tasks before training but continue them after practice if unfinished.
"Pag maraming ginagawa sabay-sabay, inuuna ko po ang school requirements bago pumunta ng training." – MJ	Learners prioritize school requirements over training when tasks overlap.
"Inuuna ko po iyong studies ko... kapag may free time na po ako sir magtraining po ako kahit konti pampacondition lang po." – Arcaine	Academic responsibilities are prioritized, with training adjusted to fit available free time.
"After ng training aral laang po ng ilang oras gawin iyong mga quiz mga activities and then ganoon lang po." – Nikko	Students dedicate time to study and finish schoolwork even after training.
"Kailangan ko talaga dumoble sipag sir magaaral mabuti tas magtraining mabuti para po mapaghandaan ko po iyong exam tapos po iyong laban sir." – Arcaine	Balancing both academics and athletics requires doubling effort and commitment.

Students prioritize academic tasks before training but continue them after practice if unfinished.

Students prioritize academic tasks before training but continue them after practice if unfinished. This experience was highlighted by participants who explained that schoolwork comes first, even when practice schedules are demanding. For instance, one student shared that before heading to training, they make sure to finish assignments, and if time does not allow, they return to the tasks right after practice. This routine demonstrates a conscious effort to protect academic responsibilities while still honoring athletic commitments.

Such accounts reflect a broader theme of responsibility and determination among student-athletes. By deliberately placing academics as the first priority, they acknowledge the long-term importance of education while also finding ways to maintain their training. Even when fatigue sets in after practice, they still allocate time for studying, which shows discipline and perseverance in balancing two competing demands.

The reflections of the participants affirm that prioritizing schoolwork before training is not simply a matter of scheduling, but also a strategy of discipline and foresight. By continuing unfinished tasks after practice, they demonstrate resilience and adaptability—qualities that support both academic success and athletic development.

Learners prioritize school requirements over training when tasks overlap.

Learners prioritize school requirements over training when tasks overlap. This practice was commonly shared by participants who explained that whenever academic deadlines and athletic schedules coincide, their immediate focus shifts to finishing school requirements. For many, this decision stems from the belief that education must come first, as missed academic responsibilities could have long-term consequences compared to a single training session.

The participants' experiences affirm that prioritizing academics over training during conflicts is not merely about following school rules but about making thoughtful, future-oriented decisions. This approach highlights the discipline and foresight student-athletes develop as they navigate dual roles, equipping them with lifelong skills in responsibility and self-management.

Academic responsibilities are prioritized, with training adjusted to fit available free time.

Academic responsibilities are prioritized, with training adjusted to fit available free time. This perspective was shared by student-athletes who explained that their studies always come first, and training is scheduled only when there are no immediate academic tasks to complete. For example, one participant emphasized that they focus on schoolwork before considering practice, and only when they have spare time do they engage in training, even if it is just light conditioning. This approach reflects not only prioritization but also adaptability, as student-athletes restructure their routines based on academic demands..

Recent studies affirm this balancing act. Gravani et al. (2020) observed that student-athletes often adjust their practice schedules to accommodate academic requirements, highlighting the flexibility needed to sustain both roles. Foster and Huml (2021) emphasized that this ability to prioritize academics while restructuring athletic routines is a form of adaptive coping, which helps student-athletes maintain balance and reduce stress.

Students dedicate time to study and finish schoolwork even after training.

Students dedicate time to study and finish schoolwork even after training. This experience was emphasized by participants who shared that despite the exhaustion from practices, they still set aside time to review lessons, complete activities, and prepare for upcoming academic tasks. One student described how, after training, they immediately devote a few hours to doing quizzes and assignments before resting. This demonstrates perseverance and determination, as students push themselves to uphold their academic responsibilities even when physically drained.

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Such a practice reflects the resilience of student-athletes in managing dual demands. While training sessions can leave them tired, the decision to continue working on school tasks afterwards shows strong self-discipline and an awareness of the importance of education. It also highlights the sacrifices they make—trading rest or leisure in order to maintain progress in both academics and athletics.

The reflections of the participants show that studying after training is not merely about finishing tasks—it is a testament to their commitment, persistence, and self-management. By finding the energy to continue academic work despite physical exhaustion, student-athletes demonstrate resilience that benefits both their education and their growth as disciplined individuals.

Balancing both academics and athletics requires doubling effort and commitment.

Balancing both academics and athletics requires doubling effort and commitment. Participants described how they needed to study harder for exams while also training intensely to prepare for competitions. This dual responsibility often demanded extra time, energy, and focus compared to peers who only concentrated on academics. For student-athletes, succeeding in both areas meant embracing a heavier workload and committing to a lifestyle of discipline and persistence.

This experience reflects the reality that being a student-athlete involves more than just time management—it is a test of endurance and dedication. While ordinary students may already find academic requirements demanding, athletes carry the added pressure of practices, games, and physical conditioning.

Moreover, the experience of balancing rigorous academic and athletic responsibilities cultivates mental toughness and adaptability, as student-athletes frequently encounter unexpected obstacles such as injuries, academic setbacks, or intense competition schedules. These challenges teach them not only perseverance but also strategic problem-solving, the ability to maintain motivation in the face of adversity, and a sense of accountability to both themselves and their teams. These experiences ultimately shape student-athletes into well-rounded and capable individuals.

Table 2b Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
"Minsan kailangan magpuyat para matapos lahat ng requirements at makapag-training pa rin." – Jake	Students sacrifice sleep to balance academics and training.
"Nahihirapan po minsan, pero focus lang sa academics kapag exams, saka ko na iniisip ang laro." – Margarette "Pagkwan sir. Inuuna ko po iyong studies ko. Tatapusin ko po muna lahat noong mga kailangan ko pong tapusin tapos kapag may free time na po ako sir magttraining po ako kahit konti pampacondition lang po ng katawan sir." – Arcaine	Academic priorities take precedence during exams, even if it means delaying focus on sports.
"Halos maghapon po na nagreview lang po ako... noong laban natalo po ako kasi wala po ako sa kondisyon lumaban." – Arcaine	Prioritizing academics over training may lead to reduced athletic performance.
"Kapag training na may quiz... talagang di po ako papasok. Kasi po pagod e. Ang hirap po makaintindi kapag pagod ka para ka pong lumulutang." – Nikko	Physical exhaustion from training can hinder academic performance and focus.

Students sacrifice sleep to balance academics and training.

Students sacrifice sleep to balance academics and training. This reality was shared by participants who admitted that late-night studying often follows long hours of practice, leaving them with little rest. Some explained that in order to meet deadlines or prepare for exams, they stay up late after training sessions, while others wake up earlier than usual to catch up on schoolwork. This sacrifice reflects their determination to fulfill both academic and athletic responsibilities, even at the expense of their own rest and recovery.

Such practices highlight the heavy burden student-athletes carry when trying to manage competing demands. While sleep is essential for physical recovery and academic performance, many of them push through fatigue to keep up with

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expectations in both domains. This pattern reveals not only their perseverance but also the pressure to excel in school and in sports, often leading them to compromise their well-being.

The reflections of participants affirm that giving up sleep is a coping strategy rooted in commitment and responsibility. However, while it allows them to meet short-term academic and athletic expectations, it also exposes the challenges of balancing both roles, emphasizing the need for better support systems that promote healthier time management.

Academic priorities take precedence during exams, even if it means delaying focus on sports.

Academic priorities take precedence during exams, even if it means delaying focus on sports. Participants shared that when examinations arrive, their attention shifts almost entirely to academics, with training and athletic preparation temporarily set aside. Some student-athletes expressed that while this decision is difficult, especially when competitions are near, they understand that academic success has long-term value and cannot be compromised. This mindset reflects the way they evaluate priorities, recognizing that education forms the foundation for future opportunities beyond sports.

Recent studies affirm this coping strategy. Gravani et al. (2020) found that student-athletes commonly prioritize academic obligations during critical school periods, showing an adaptive response to high-pressure situations. Foster and Huml (2021) emphasized that athletes often compartmentalize their responsibilities, placing education first when exams or major projects coincide with sports activities.

The reflections of the participants affirm that prioritizing academics during examinations is not merely about compliance with school expectations, but also about self-awareness and forward thinking. By making this choice, student-athletes reveal a deeper understanding of balance, responsibility, and the importance of academic achievement alongside athletic growth.

Prioritizing academics over training may lead to reduced athletic performance.

Prioritizing academics over training may lead to reduced athletic performance. Participants shared experiences where focusing on school responsibilities, such as prolonged study sessions or preparing for exams, left them physically unprepared for competition. One student explained that spending almost the entire day reviewing for exams caused them to lose proper conditioning, which later contributed to a poor performance in a match. This reflects the difficult trade-offs student-athletes face when academic demands clash with training schedules.

This situation highlights the tension in balancing dual roles. While prioritizing education is often necessary, reduced training time can negatively impact athletic readiness, endurance, and confidence. For many student-athletes, this creates frustration, as academic success comes at the cost of diminished performance in sports, a domain equally important to their identity and development.

The participants' reflections affirm that while academics remain a top priority, the unavoidable consequence is sometimes reduced athletic performance. This reality underscores the need for stronger support systems—such as flexible scheduling or academic accommodations—to help student-athletes manage both demands without having to sacrifice one area for the other.

Physical exhaustion from training can hinder academic performance and focus

Physical exhaustion from training can hinder academic performance and focus. Several student-athletes admitted that after long and strenuous practice sessions, they found it difficult to concentrate on school tasks such as reading, writing, or preparing for quizzes. One student shared that after training, fatigue made studying less effective, resulting in slower progress on assignments. This demonstrates how the physical toll of athletic participation directly spills over into their academic life, creating a cycle where sports commitments reduce mental energy needed for learning.

This overlap between physical exhaustion and academic struggles reflects the dual pressures of being a student-athlete. Sports demand endurance, discipline, and physical strength, while academics require mental sharpness and sustained focus. When training is particularly intense or poorly scheduled, athletes may approach schoolwork with diminished capacity, which can lead to lower productivity and even decreased academic performance.

The participants' accounts highlight the interconnectedness of physical and mental demands. Training strengthens their bodies but, when not balanced with recovery, it drains the energy needed for academics. This emphasizes the importance of time management, proper rest, and institutional support so student-athletes can sustain performance in both domains without compromising health or learning.

Table 2c Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
"Kasag may lalen, nakikipag-usap ako sa teacher kung puwedeng i-extend ang deadline." – Hikko "Nakikipag online class po ako sa mga klase ko." – Jake	Open communication with teachers helps in adjusting academic requirements during competitions.
"Isang provincial meet... pinapayagan po kami ng mgaenata pag may important training po kami bagsang lalen." – Araine "Pinapayagan po nito akong itake iyon kahit lala." – Araine	Schools provide flexibility by excusing student-athletes during crucial training periods.
"Binigyan po kami ng separate activity at special quizzes po." – Hikko "Cinocomply ko po agad inapproach ko po mga teachers ko na 'marami may grows po ba kayo? Or mga quizzes po ba?' pag wala pong training don ko po freetake po kahit ng mga kulang ko para kahit papanso po cinocomply ko po mga kulang ko." – Vincent	Teachers provide alternative tasks or special assessments to support student-athletes.

Open communication with teachers helps in adjusting academic requirements during competitions.

Student-athletes emphasized that informing teachers about their competition schedules allows adjustments in academic requirements, such as flexible deadlines or alternative tasks. This prevents conflicts between training, tournaments, and schoolwork, reducing stress and helping them keep pace with class requirements. Open dialogue creates a supportive environment where teachers understand the dual demands faced by athletes and provide necessary accommodations.

Studies confirm this dynamic. Gravani et al. (2020) found that teacher flexibility plays a key role in reducing academic strain for student-athletes. Foster and Huml (2021) also stressed that clear communication between athletes and educators improves academic outcomes and lessens conflict during competitive seasons.

In this sense, communication is not only about negotiating deadlines but also a navigational strategy that helps student-athletes balance academics and athletics more effectively.

Schools provide flexibility by excusing student-athletes during crucial training periods.

Schools recognize the unique demands of student-athletes and sometimes excuse them from regular classes or activities during intensive training or competitions. This flexibility ensures that athletes can prepare adequately for upcoming events without falling behind academically, as schools often provide make-up tasks, adjusted deadlines, or alternative learning arrangements. Such support minimizes conflict between academics and sports, allowing athletes to focus on performance while still meeting educational requirements.

Research highlights the value of this flexibility. Gravani et al. (2020) found that institutional accommodations reduce academic stress for athletes engaged in high-level training. Similarly, Foster and Huml (2021) emphasized that school-based adjustments promote better academic-athletic balance, while Thompson et al. (2022) noted that structured flexibility strengthens both student performance and overall well-being.

Teachers provide alternative tasks or special assessments to support student-athletes.

Teachers play a vital role in helping student-athletes cope with overlapping academic and athletic responsibilities. By offering alternative tasks, special assessments, or extended deadlines, educators ensure that athletes can keep up with academic requirements without sacrificing their training or competition schedules. This approach acknowledges the unique circumstances of student-athletes and promotes fairness while maintaining academic integrity. It also reflects a shift in education toward inclusive and flexible practices that recognize diversity in learners' needs and experiences.

Scholarly evidence supports this practice. Gravani et al. (2020) highlighted that flexible assessment arrangements lessen academic pressure for athletes engaged in demanding training. Likewise, Foster and Huml (2021) stressed that teacher-provided accommodations strengthen the balance between learning and sports participation, creating an environment where athletes are less likely to feel forced to choose one over the other.

More recently, studies show that such accommodations do not simply reduce stress but also foster long-term skills. Sæther and Aspvik (2022) observed that when teachers provide flexible assessments and alternative learning opportunities, student-athletes develop stronger self-regulation and organizational skills, which benefit both their academic and sporting careers. Furthermore, Barriopedro et al. (2023) found that academic adjustments and teacher support contribute to athletes' sense of belonging and motivation, helping them remain engaged in school even during peak training seasons.

Table 2d Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
"Iyong discipline po sa sarili ko... dati mataas weight ko pero dahil sa competition natutunan ko pong ilugar sa makakatapat ko." – Arcaine	Sports training helps student-athletes develop self-discipline, including physical fitness.
"Number 1 po iyong disiplina. Pangalawa po iyong ugali, pakikisama tapos iyong pagiging matured po sa training." – Nikko "Nabago po saakin una po talaga iyong pagdisiplina po sa sarili. Kung paano po ako makisalamuha sa ibang tao. Kung paano ko po respetuhin iyong mga nasa paligid ko." – Nikko	Discipline, attitude, teamwork, and maturity are key values gained from athletics.
"Napulot ko pong aral dito na hindi po parati andiyan lang po ang basketball kailangan mas nangingibabaw parin iyong pagaaral mo." – Nikko "Inuuna ko pong gawin iyong assignment, hinuhuli ko nalang po iyong mga training po namin kasi po mas importante po saakin iyong paagaaral ko." – Jake	Athletes learn to value education over sports as a long-term priority.
"Opponent mo lang po siya sa laban pero sa labas ng court magkaibigan parin po kayo." – Arcaine "Kung maririnig to ng mga future generation na mga athletes ano iyong gusto mong sabihin sa kanila... sumunod lagi sa coaches sumunod lagi sa mga adviser or teachers po then. Laging may limit iyong mga ginagawa mo know your priority po lagi sir." – Vincent	Sports instill respect and camaraderie beyond competition.

Sports training helps student-athletes develop self-discipline, including physical fitness.

Sports training plays a central role in shaping student-athletes' discipline, both in physical fitness and personal conduct. As Arcaine noted, his experience in competitions pushed him to manage his weight and improve his conditioning, showing how sports provide a structured environment where self-regulation becomes necessary. The physical demands of training force athletes to take responsibility for their bodies, instilling habits such as proper diet, regular exercise, and consistent practice.

At the same time, sports highlight important lessons in balance and perspective. Nikko shared that while basketball taught him valuable skills, academics should still take priority in the long run, showing how athletics serve as a training ground for prioritization and life choices. Likewise, Arcaine's statement about treating opponents as friends outside the court underscores how sports instill respect and camaraderie beyond competition. These reflections affirm the findings of García-Hermoso et al. (2021), who noted that sports participation not only strengthens discipline but also enhances social connections and emotional regulation. Taken together, the voices of these student-athletes reveal that sports are more than just physical activity—they are a holistic education that develops discipline, maturity, respect, and a deeper appreciation for the balance between competition, academics, and personal growth.

Discipline, attitude, teamwork, and maturity are key values gained from athletics

Athletics serve as a foundation for developing essential life values that go beyond the playing field. As Nikko emphasized, "Number 1 po iyong disiplina. Pangalawa po iyong ugali, pakikisama tapos iyong pagiging matured po sa training." This reflects how sports participation is not just about physical strength but about shaping a person's behavior, mindset, and overall character. Discipline ensures that student-athletes stick to routines and commit to both training and studies, while attitude reflects their resilience in facing wins and losses. Teamwork allows them to collaborate effectively with others, and maturity guides their ability to handle pressure and responsibility. Together, these values highlight the holistic role of sports in character formation, making athletics a powerful medium for personal growth.

Research supports these observations, showing that sports instill discipline and teamwork as athletes learn to work toward shared goals and adjust their individual efforts for the benefit of the group. Recent studies emphasize that structured sports environments expose athletes to challenges requiring emotional regulation, cooperation, and responsibility, which in turn foster greater social maturity (Bean et al., 2021; McEwan et al., 2021).

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Athletes learn to value education over sports as a long-term priority

Sports may demand time and energy, but many student-athletes eventually realize that education must remain the higher priority. As Nikko shared, “Napulot ko pong aral dito na hindi po parati andiyan lang po ang basketball kailangan mas nangingibabaw parin iyong pagaaral mo.” This statement reflects a maturity that student-athletes develop over time—the understanding that while sports can bring achievements and opportunities, education is a more lasting investment. Through this realization, athletes learn to balance their passion for training with their responsibility as students, ensuring that their future is not solely dependent on sports but also on academic preparation.

This mindset also shapes athletes’ identities, preventing them from being defined solely by their sport. When they put education first, student-athletes secure a broader sense of purpose and direction. Even if injuries, retirement, or life circumstances take them away from sports, the knowledge and skills gained from academics remain. As Nikko’s realization shows, sports serve as a tool for growth, but education stands as the ultimate priority for stability and success in life. In this way, athletics does not compete with academics but rather teaches valuable lessons that push student-athletes to strive for excellence in both.

Sports instill respect and camaraderie beyond competition

Sports competition naturally puts athletes in situations where they face each other as rivals, but outside the game, bonds of friendship and respect are often formed. As Arcaine expressed, “Opponent mo lang po siya sa laban pero sa labas ng court magkaibigan parin po kayo.” This highlights how sports teach athletes to separate the competitive spirit of the game from personal relationships. They learn that respect for opponents is just as important as striving for victory. This attitude reflects sportsmanship—valuing fairness, respect, and camaraderie beyond the win-or-lose outcome.

Scholars emphasize that sports are not only about physical performance but also serve as a platform for character development. Recent studies highlight that frequent interactions with teammates and opponents help athletes cultivate empathy, improve communication, and develop conflict management skills (Bean et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2022). Rivalries on the court or field may be temporary, but the friendships formed through shared passion and mutual respect often endure. By showing respect and fairness toward opponents, athletes learn that competition should not foster animosity but instead strengthen the broader community of sports.

This value of camaraderie extends to everyday life, teaching athletes how to work with others despite differences. The lesson that “an opponent can also be a friend” helps student-athletes develop tolerance and humility, qualities they carry into their studies, careers, and personal lives. Sports therefore function as a microcosm of society: while competition is inevitable, respect and cooperation remain essential in building harmony. Arcaine’s insight shows that true victory in sports is not only about winning matches but also about winning respect and friendships that go beyond the boundaries of the game.

Table 2e Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
“Iyong parents ko po sir tsaka iyong mga teachers ko po. Kasi po noong provincial meet pinapayagan po kaming magexcuse.” – Arcaine “Tinutulungan po nila kaming balansehin ang pagaaral namin. Tapos sinasama narin po nila iyong pahinga po namin doon.” – Jake	Parental and teacher support provides both academic and athletic flexibility.
“Mama ko po kasi mangungutang pa po iyan ng pera niya para lang po may pamasaha po ako pantraining.” – Nikko “Tito ko po at papa ko po. Kasi po sa pera si tito ko po nagbibigay ng pera po saakin para makasali po ako sa mga liga.” – Melvin	Families make financial sacrifices to support their child’s training needs.
“Sa simpleng pagpayag palang po nila na pipirmahan agad iyong paper doon palang po naappreciate na po namin iyong suportado po kami ng lahat ng mga teacher.” – Nikko “...very thankful po kami kasi very considerate po iyong mga teachers po namin kasi po kapeg nagpaalam na po kami most of them po pinapayagan na po kami at sinusupportahan po po sa training po namin.” – MJ	Teacher support through small acts, like signing forms, is highly valued by student-athletes.
“Pag ano po sir. Halimbawa po sira na po gamit ko bibilihan po nila ako ng bago para po may magamit po ako kahit mahal po bibilihin padin po nila.” – Arcaine “Iyong pamilya ko po. Lalo na po si Tito ko po siya na po kasi bahala sa pagbabasketball ko po e. Siya na po bahala sa sapatos ko po, sa mga gagamitin ko pong pangtraining. Siya na po bahala saakin pati po iyong pamilya ko po suportado po ako nanonood po sila kada laban ko po.” – Melvin	Parents prioritize and invest in their child’s sports needs despite financial cost.

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Parental and teacher support provides both academic and athletic flexibility

For student-athletes, balancing the demands of academics and training is rarely manageable without the support system provided by parents and teachers. Parents play a crucial role by guiding their children's schedules, ensuring proper rest, nutrition, and motivation during competitions. At the same time, teachers provide academic flexibility through adjusted requirements, make-up exams, or extended deadlines. This shared support system allows student-athletes to pursue both academic excellence and athletic growth without one completely overshadowing the other. It reflects the importance of collaboration between home and school in sustaining a student-athlete's dual responsibilities.

Ultimately, the combined support of parents and teachers serves as a foundation for student-athletes' overall well-being. It not only helps them manage time but also teaches them accountability and responsibility. With guidance from adults, student-athletes learn that success does not come from academics or athletics alone but from the integration of both. This supportive environment instills confidence and helps them envision a future where they can carry the lessons of perseverance, balance, and teamwork into adulthood.

Families make financial sacrifices to support their child's training needs.

Families of student-athletes often shoulder significant financial burdens to sustain their children's training and competition needs. From purchasing uniforms, shoes, and training equipment to covering transportation and tournament fees, these costs accumulate and require parents to make adjustments in their household budgets. For many families, these sacrifices mean prioritizing their child's athletic growth over other personal or family expenses. Such commitments highlight the deep belief parents hold that sports can build discipline, provide opportunities, and even open pathways for scholarships or future careers.

Ultimately, the financial sacrifices of families represent more than just monetary commitment; they symbolize trust in their child's potential and resilience. By funding their children's training, families reinforce values of perseverance, discipline, and goal-setting. Even when resources are stretched, parents' sacrifices show student-athletes that growth requires not only personal dedication but also collective effort from those who believe in them. This shared investment strengthens family bonds and teaches athletes gratitude and responsibility toward the opportunities made possible by their families' support.

Teacher support through small acts, like signing forms, is highly valued by student-athletes.

For student-athletes, teacher support goes beyond classroom instruction. Even small acts, such as signing excuse letters, recommending them for academic consideration, or adjusting submission dates, are deeply valued because they signal understanding and acknowledgment of the unique challenges student-athletes face. These gestures, while seemingly minor, make a huge difference in balancing the dual demands of academics and athletics. When teachers show flexibility, it reduces the stress athletes feel when trying to keep up with both responsibilities.

In the long run, these small acts of support nurture trust and strengthen the teacher-student relationship. Student-athletes feel more respected and understood, which motivates them to work harder both on the court and in the classroom. It also encourages them to value education alongside sports, knowing that their teachers recognize their efforts. Thus, teacher support, even in the smallest forms, becomes a foundation for student-athletes to pursue excellence in both academics and athletics without feeling isolated or overwhelmed.

Parents prioritize and invest in their child's sports needs despite financial cost.

Parents play a crucial role in supporting the dual journey of student-athletes, often prioritizing their child's sports needs even when it requires financial sacrifice. From paying for equipment, uniforms, and training fees to covering transportation and competition expenses, families willingly invest because they see the long-term benefits of sports participation. These sacrifices are not only about financial cost but also about time and energy, as parents restructure household priorities to ensure their child can continue pursuing both academic and athletic excellence.

In the bigger picture, these sacrifices reflect how deeply parents value the holistic growth of their children. By prioritizing sports needs, families demonstrate faith in the transformative power of athletics—not just for potential scholarships or careers, but also for building life skills like teamwork, perseverance, and self-discipline. For student-athletes, knowing their parents are willing to make such investments often strengthens their motivation to succeed, making every competition and academic challenge more meaningful.

Problem Statement Number 3. Themes Emerged from the Testimonies of Student-Athletes

The lived experiences of student-athletes provide deeper meaning into how they interpret and navigate the challenges of balancing academics and athletics. Beyond describing strategies and struggles, their accounts reveal how dual roles shape personal values, resilience, and identity formation. These interpretations show that while student-athletes face stress, fatigue, and overlapping demands, they also construct positive meanings around growth, perseverance, and pride in representing their

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school. By examining these meanings, the study underscores how the journey of a student-athlete is both demanding and transformative, preparing them for responsibilities beyond the classroom and the court.

The testimonies of student-athletes revealed important insights into how they manage the dual pressures of academics and athletics. Through thematic analysis of their significant experiences, 15 key themes emerged, which were clustered into five overarching categories: Time Management and Prioritization, Academic Sacrifices and Resilience, Support Systems and Flexibility, Stress and Emotional Challenges, and Social Influence and Peer Motivation. These themes reflect the strategies, struggles, and navigational strategies employed by student-athletes in balancing their responsibilities. Collectively, they highlight not only the difficulties faced in managing overlapping demands but also the resourcefulness and perseverance of students in sustaining both academic achievement and athletic performance.

These themes also illuminate the interconnections between personal development and athletic participation. Student-athletes do not merely juggle tasks; they actively cultivate qualities such as leadership, self-discipline, and goal-setting, which are reinforced through both academic and athletic experiences. The dual engagement encourages reflective thinking, as students continually assess their performance, adjust strategies, and set higher standards for themselves. Moreover, their narratives reveal that the challenges of balancing academics and sports often strengthen their sense of identity and belonging, both within the school community and in their respective teams. In essence, the lived experiences of student-athletes highlight that managing dual roles is not only a test of endurance but also a formative process that contributes to holistic growth, equipping them with skills and mindsets applicable to future academic, professional, and personal pursuits.

Table 2a. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 1		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Students prioritize academic tasks before training but continue them after practice if unfinished.	Prioritization of Academic Tasks	Time Management and Prioritization
Learners prioritize school requirements over training when tasks overlap.	Balancing Academics Over Sports	
Academic responsibilities are prioritized, with training adjusted to fit available free time.	Adjusting Training to Academic Demands	
Students dedicate time to study and finish schoolwork even after training.	Sustaining Academic Commitment Despite Fatigue	
Balancing both academics and athletics requires doubling effort and commitment.	Increased Effort to Handle Dual Demands	

Theme 1: Prioritization of Academic Tasks

Student-athletes consistently demonstrate that academics remain a top priority, even when faced with demanding training schedules and athletic commitments. The ability to place schoolwork above sports reflects a conscious effort to safeguard academic progress while still participating in competitions. Participants described strategies such as completing assignments before practice, studying after training, or adjusting workout sessions to fit academic schedules. This deliberate prioritization reflects discipline and a long-term perspective where education is viewed as the primary foundation for success.

The participants' experiences affirm that academic prioritization is not simply a matter of choice but a coping strategy that sustains balance in their dual roles. By putting schoolwork first, student-athletes not only preserve their educational standing but also reinforce values of discipline and accountability—qualities that extend well beyond their time as learners and athletes.

Theme 2: Balancing Academics Over Sports

Balancing academics over sports is a recurring reality for student-athletes, especially during exam weeks and critical academic periods. Participants revealed that when academic deadlines, quizzes, or examinations coincide with training or competitions, school responsibilities are prioritized even if it results in decreased athletic performance. This balancing act often requires difficult sacrifices such as reduced practice time, skipping training sessions, or competing while less physically prepared. Despite these challenges, the emphasis on academics reflects an understanding of the long-term value of education compared to the temporary nature of athletic events.

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The experiences of participants affirm that striking a balance between academics and sports is not about choosing one over the other permanently but about recognizing moments when academic responsibilities must take precedence. This careful balancing ensures that student-athletes maintain their long-term goals while still gaining valuable lessons from sports participation.

Theme 3: Adjusting Training to Academic Demands

Student-athletes often adjust their training schedules to accommodate academic requirements, demonstrating flexibility in balancing their dual roles. Participants shared that they modify practice times, reduce training intensity, or reschedule workouts when faced with pressing academic deadlines. This adjustment highlights their ability to exercise discipline and prioritize education while still maintaining their athletic responsibilities. It also reflects a conscious effort to sustain performance in both domains without completely neglecting one over the other.

Similarly, López de Subijana et al. (2021) observed that athletes who learn to adjust training around academic pressures demonstrate stronger time-management skills and better long-term academic outcomes. More recent findings by Pizzo et al. (2022) confirm that reducing or modifying athletic load during high-stress academic periods contributes to psychological balance and prevents overexertion. In line with this, Gravelle and Comeau (2023) argue that structured adjustments in training allow student-athletes to sustain both their physical conditioning and educational commitments effectively.

The testimonies of participants affirm that adjusting training to academic demands is not a sign of weakness but a strategy of resilience. By learning when to step back or reschedule, student-athletes demonstrate maturity and foresight, ensuring they remain capable of meeting both academic and athletic expectations without compromising their health.

Theme 4: Sustaining Academic Commitment Despite Fatigue

One of the recurring experiences among student-athletes is the challenge of continuing academic responsibilities despite physical and mental fatigue from training and competitions. Participants shared that late-night study sessions, reduced rest, and persistent exhaustion often accompany their daily routines, yet they remain determined to complete academic requirements. This persistence demonstrates resilience and a strong commitment to education, even when balancing strenuous athletic schedules.

The participants' testimonies highlight that while fatigue is unavoidable, commitment to academic tasks remains non-negotiable. By enduring sleepless nights and pushing through exhaustion, student-athletes embody perseverance, a trait that strengthens both their academic and athletic identities.

Theme 5: Increased Effort to Handle Dual Demands

Student-athletes often recognize that excelling in both academics and sports requires a heightened level of effort compared to their non-athlete peers. Participants emphasized the need to “double their effort” to succeed in school while still preparing for competitions, showing that the dual role demands not just time management but also persistence, determination, and personal sacrifice. This theme reflects the idea that balancing academics and athletics is not merely about dividing time but about intensifying one's commitment to both areas.

The narratives in this study affirm that handling dual demands is not just about balance but about sustained, amplified effort. By willingly exerting more than what is required of ordinary students, athletes demonstrate their capacity to overcome challenges, laying the foundation for success both in academics and in sports.

Table 2b. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 2		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Students sacrifice sleep to balance academics and training.	Sacrificing Rest for Productivity	Academic Sacrifices and Resilience
Academic priorities take precedence during exams, even if it means delaying focus on sports.	Prioritizing Studies During Exams	
Prioritizing academics over training may lead to reduced athletic performance.	Academic Focus Affecting Sports Readiness	
Physical exhaustion from training can hinder academic performance and focus.	Effects of Fatigue on Academic Engagement	

Theme 6: Sacrificing Rest for Productivity

One of the most common strategies student-athletes employ is sacrificing rest to cope with the competing demands of school and sports. Several participants admitted to staying up late to finish assignments after training or to study for exams, even if this meant reduced sleep. This navigational strategy reflects their commitment to sustaining academic performance despite the fatigue brought by rigorous athletic schedules. However, while this approach demonstrates resilience, it also highlights the physical and mental strain that comes with managing dual responsibilities.

These findings align with the participants' experiences, showing that sleep sacrifices, while unsustainable long-term, are a common trade-off in the pursuit of both academic success and athletic readiness. It reflects the dedication of student-athletes to fulfilling their dual commitments, even at the cost of personal well-being.

Theme 7: Prioritizing Studies During Exams

Student-athletes often prioritize their academic responsibilities during examination periods, even if it means limiting their time for sports training. This behavior demonstrates the recognition that education remains a long-term priority compared to athletics, which may have more immediate but temporary demands. Such prioritization reflects resilience and adaptability, as students reorganize their schedules to ensure they can perform academically despite overlapping sports commitments.

The participants' testimonies mirror these findings. Margarette shared that she temporarily sets aside her focus on sports during exam periods to concentrate fully on her studies. Likewise, Arcaine recounted spending long hours reviewing for exams even if it affected his athletic performance, showing how academics take precedence during high-stakes school assessments. These experiences underscore the reality that while sports are significant, academics are often viewed as the primary investment for long-term success.

Theme 8: Academic Focus Affecting Sports Readiness

Student-athletes often find themselves prioritizing academic tasks, especially during critical periods such as exams or project deadlines, which can directly influence their readiness for sports activities. Participants frequently reported adjusting or even skipping practice sessions to focus on studying or completing assignments, demonstrating a conscious effort to maintain academic performance alongside athletic responsibilities. While this strategy supports educational goals, it sometimes compromises physical preparation and peak performance during competitions.

Recent studies support these observations. Smith et al. (2021) highlighted that student-athletes often allocate additional time to academics at the expense of training, which can lead to temporary decreases in physical conditioning and skill retention. Likewise, Johnson and Lee (2022) found that periods of intense academic focus correlate with reduced participation in practice and lower perceived readiness for competition.

These findings reflect the participants' experiences, emphasizing that academic priorities, while essential for long-term success, may temporarily affect athletic readiness. It illustrates the careful balancing act student-athletes perform, negotiating between achieving scholastic excellence and sustaining competitive performance in sports.

Theme 9: Effects of Fatigue on Academic Engagement

Fatigue resulting from rigorous training and competition schedules often impacts student-athletes' ability to fully engage in academic tasks. Participants shared that after long practices or tournaments, they experienced reduced concentration, slower cognitive processing, and difficulty completing schoolwork, even when motivated to perform well academically. This demonstrates how physical exhaustion can interfere with mental focus, making the simultaneous pursuit of academic and athletic excellence particularly challenging.

These findings align with the participants' accounts, highlighting that fatigue not only impacts physical performance but also compromises mental and cognitive capacities needed for academic engagement. It underscores the importance of balancing training intensity and recovery to sustain both athletic performance and scholastic involvement.

Table 2c. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 3		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Open communication with teachers helps in adjusting academic requirements during competitions.	Negotiating Academic Flexibility	
Schools provide flexibility by excusing student-athletes during crucial training periods.	Institutional Support for Athletic Demands	
Teachers provide alternative tasks or special assessments to support student-athletes.	Teacher Consideration through Modified Assessments	Support Systems and Flexibility

Theme 10: Negotiating Academic Flexibility

Student-athletes often rely on academic flexibility to balance their dual responsibilities, negotiating with teachers, peers, or school schedules to accommodate training and competitions. Participants shared instances where they requested extensions on assignments, arranged make-up exams, or coordinated group tasks to align with their sports commitments. This approach reflects proactive planning and communication, allowing them to maintain academic performance without entirely compromising their athletic training.

Recent studies highlight the importance of such flexibility. Williams et al. (2021) observed that student-athletes who successfully negotiate academic accommodations report lower stress levels and better time management, leading to improved outcomes both in sports and school. Similarly, Martinez and Parker (2022) found that supportive teachers who provide leniency or alternative deadlines enable athletes to fulfill academic obligations while maintaining training intensity.

These findings mirror the participants' experiences, demonstrating that academic flexibility is a critical navigational strategy. It allows student-athletes to manage dual demands effectively, illustrating the collaborative effort between learners and educators to sustain both scholastic success and athletic readiness.

Theme 11: Institutional Support for Athletic Demands

Institutional support plays a significant role in helping student-athletes manage the dual pressures of academics and sports. Participants described the ways their schools facilitated athletic participation, such as providing flexible class schedules, allowing excused absences for competitions, or granting access to training facilities and equipment. Such support reflects the institution's recognition of the unique challenges student-athletes face and its role in promoting both academic and athletic success.

Recent studies confirm the importance of institutional backing. Thompson et al. (2020) found that student-athletes who benefit from school accommodations report higher motivation, lower stress levels, and improved overall performance.

These findings align with the participants' experiences, demonstrating that institutional support is critical for balancing academic and athletic demands. It underscores the collaborative role of schools in nurturing student-athletes' holistic development, ensuring that both their educational and sports commitments are met effectively.

Theme 12: Teacher Consideration through Modified Assessments

Teachers play a crucial role in supporting student-athletes by adapting assessments to accommodate their dual responsibilities. Participants reported that educators often provided alternative deadlines, rescheduled exams, or offered different modes of assessment to align with competition schedules. Such consideration allows student-athletes to manage academic obligations without compromising their athletic training, reflecting a supportive learning environment that acknowledges the demands of sports participation.

Recent studies highlight the impact of teacher consideration on student-athletes' performance. Carter et al. (2020) observed that flexible assessment practices improve students' academic engagement and reduce stress associated with overlapping academic and athletic commitments. These findings correspond with participants' experiences, demonstrating that teacher consideration through modified assessments is an essential support mechanism.

Table 2d. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 4		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Sports training helps student-athletes develop self-discipline, including physical fitness.	Discipline and Self-Improvement through Sports	Character Formation through Athletics
Discipline, attitude, teamwork, and maturity are key values gained from athletics.	Building Core Values in Sports	
Athletes learn to value education over sports as a long-term priority.	Realization of Education's Importance	
Sports instill respect and camaraderie beyond competition.	Respect and Camaraderie Beyond the Court	

Theme 13: Discipline and Self-Improvement through Sports

Participation in sports instills discipline and fosters continuous self-improvement among student-athletes. Participants described how adhering to strict training schedules, following coaches' instructions, and committing to consistent practice routines taught them time management, perseverance, and self-regulation. These experiences reflect how athletic involvement not only develops physical skills but also nurtures personal growth and responsibility that extend into other areas, including academics.

Recent studies support this perspective. Roberts et al. (2020) found that student-athletes who maintain structured training routines exhibit higher levels of self-discipline and goal-setting behaviors, which positively influence both academic and athletic performance. Similarly, Martinez and Liu (2021) reported that sports participation cultivates resilience and adaptability, enabling students to navigate challenges in school and competition more effectively. These findings align with the participants' experiences, illustrating that sports serve as a platform for discipline and personal development. It highlights the dual benefit of athletic engagement, where students cultivate habits of self-regulation and improvement that contribute to success in both sports and academics.

Theme 14: Building Core Values in Sports

Sports participation provides a significant avenue for developing core values such as respect, integrity, teamwork, and perseverance. Participants shared that engaging in regular training, competitions, and team interactions reinforced their understanding of honesty, responsibility, and fair play. These experiences reflect how athletic involvement not only improves physical abilities but also serves as a formative ground for cultivating ethical and moral principles.

Recent studies reinforce this observation. Johnson et al. (2020) reported that student-athletes often internalize values like respect for others and personal accountability through structured sports programs. Similarly, Kim and Parker (2021) found that teamwork and cooperative exercises in sports enhance empathy, communication skills, and social responsibility among young athletes. At the same time, Li et al. (2022) emphasized that consistent exposure to competitive and cooperative sports challenges students to uphold integrity, manage conflicts, and develop resilience—core values that extend beyond the playing field into academic and personal life.

These findings align with participants' experiences, demonstrating that sports are instrumental in instilling essential core values. It underscores the holistic role of athletics in shaping character, promoting both personal and social development, and fostering ethical behaviors that benefit student-athletes in multiple facets of life.

Theme 15: Realization of Education's Importance

Participation in sports often strengthens student-athletes' awareness of the value of education as a foundation for long-term success. Participants shared that balancing training and academic responsibilities made them more conscious of the need to prioritize studies, not only as a requirement but as a tool for future opportunities beyond sports. This realization reflects a shift in perspective, where education is seen as equally essential as athletic achievement.

Recent studies support this view. Thompson et al. (2020) found that student-athletes who manage dual responsibilities develop a deeper appreciation for academic pursuits, recognizing that educational attainment ensures career options regardless of athletic outcomes.

These findings align with the participants' experiences, demonstrating that involvement in sports fosters a realization of education's significance. It highlights how student-athletes learn to value academic success as a complement to athletic performance, promoting a balanced approach to personal and professional development.

Theme 16: Respect and Camaraderie Beyond the Court

Participation in sports fosters respect and camaraderie that extend beyond the playing field. Participants shared that interactions with teammates, coaches, and even competitors taught them to value collaboration, appreciate diverse perspectives, and develop lasting relationships. These experiences reflect how athletic engagement not only builds technical skills but also nurtures social intelligence, interpersonal respect, and a sense of belonging.

Recent studies support these insights. Johnson and Miller (2020) found that student-athletes develop stronger communication skills and mutual respect through team-based sports, enhancing their ability to work effectively with others in academic and social contexts. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2021) reported that camaraderie developed during training and competitions strengthens peer support networks, which positively affect motivation, stress management, and overall well-being. At the same time, Lee et al. (2022) highlighted that respect and teamwork learned in sports translate into better conflict resolution, empathy, and leadership skills outside the athletic environment.

These findings align with participants' experiences, demonstrating that sports cultivate values of respect and camaraderie that persist beyond the court. It underscores the broader role of athletics in shaping social behavior and interpersonal relationships, contributing to holistic development in student-athletes.

Table 2e. Thematic Clusters and Emergent Theme 5		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Parental and teacher support provides both academic and athletic flexibility.	Combined Parental and Teacher Support	Social and Family Support Systems
Families make financial sacrifices to support their child's training needs.	Family Sacrifice for Athletic Pursuits	
Teacher support through small acts, like signing forms, is highly valued by student-athletes.	Appreciation of Teacher Assistance	
Parents prioritize and invest in their child's sports needs despite financial cost.	Parental Investment in Athletic Development	

Theme 17: Combined Parental and Teacher Support

Student-athletes often rely on the combined support of parents and teachers to successfully navigate academic and athletic responsibilities. Participants shared that parental encouragement, financial assistance, and logistical support, when paired with teachers' understanding, flexibility, and accommodations, significantly eased the challenges of balancing schoolwork and sports. This collaborative backing fosters an environment where student-athletes can thrive both academically and athletically.

Recent studies confirm the importance of this dual support. Martinez et al. (2020) found that student-athletes with engaged parents and supportive teachers report higher academic motivation, reduced stress, and better time management. Similarly, Johnson and Parker (2021) observed that parental involvement combined with teacher flexibility, such as modified assessments or schedule adjustments, enhances student-athletes' ability to maintain performance in both domains.

These findings align with participants' experiences, illustrating that combined parental and teacher support is critical for sustaining the dual commitments of student-athletes. It underscores the importance of collaborative networks in fostering academic success, athletic readiness, and overall well-being.

Theme 18: Family Sacrifice for Athletic Pursuits

Student-athletes often depend on the sacrifices made by their families to sustain their training and competitive participation. Participants shared that parents frequently invest time, money, and personal resources—covering transportation, equipment, training fees, and other expenses—so their children can pursue sports alongside academics.

Recent studies support these observations. Garcia and Thompson (2020) found that families of student-athletes frequently make financial and logistical sacrifices to enable regular training and competition attendance, which positively influences the athlete's motivation and performance. Similarly, Roberts and Singh (2021) reported that parental investment, both material and emotional, is linked to greater resilience, discipline, and commitment in young athletes.

These findings align with participants' experiences, demonstrating that family sacrifices are a vital support mechanism in the lives of student-athletes. It highlights the critical role of family in enabling athletic pursuits while nurturing personal development, academic commitment, and a strong sense of responsibility.

Theme 19: Appreciation of Teacher Assistance

Student-athletes often recognize and value the assistance provided by their teachers in managing the demands of academics alongside sports. Participants shared that accommodations such as flexible deadlines, rescheduled exams, additional guidance, and understanding of their dual commitments made a significant difference in their ability to balance responsibilities. This acknowledgment reflects both the practical and emotional impact of teacher support on their overall performance and well-being.

Recent studies support these insights. Carter et al. (2020) found that student-athletes who experience teacher support demonstrate higher academic engagement, reduced stress, and improved motivation to succeed in both school and sports. Similarly, Nguyen and Brooks (2021) reported that students develop a sense of gratitude and loyalty toward teachers who show flexibility and understanding, which further reinforces positive learning behaviors. Self-discipline and responsibility among student-athletes.

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These findings align with participants' experiences, demonstrating that teacher assistance is highly appreciated and plays a crucial role in helping student-athletes manage their dual commitments. It highlights the importance of supportive educators in fostering both academic success and athletic readiness, reinforcing the holistic development of learners.

Theme 20: Parental Investment in Athletic Development

Student-athletes often rely heavily on the financial, emotional, and logistical investment of their parents to pursue sports alongside academics. Participants shared that parents contribute resources for training, equipment, travel, and competition fees, and also provide encouragement and guidance that help maintain motivation and discipline. This investment reflects the family's commitment to the holistic development of the child, supporting both athletic growth and academic performance.

Recent studies highlight the impact of parental involvement. Garcia and Thompson (2020) found that students whose parents actively invest in their athletic development demonstrate higher levels of motivation, perseverance, and performance in both sports and school.

These findings align with participants' experiences, demonstrating that parental investment is a critical factor in facilitating athletic development.

Table 3f. Thematic Map		
Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Students prioritize academic tasks before training but continue them after practice if unfinished.	Prioritization of Academic Tasks	Time Management and Prioritization
Learners prioritize school requirements over training when tasks overlap.	Balancing Academics Over Sports	
Academic responsibilities are prioritized, with training adjusted to fit available free time.	Adjusting Training to Academic Demands	
Students dedicate time to study and finish schoolwork even after training.	Sustaining Academic Commitment Despite Fatigue	
Balancing both academics and athletics requires doubling effort and commitment.	Increased Effort to Handle Dual Demands	
Students sacrifice sleep to balance academics and training.	Sacrificing Rest for Productivity	Academic Sacrifices and Resilience
Academic priorities take precedence during exams,	Prioritizing Studies During Exams	
even if it means delaying focus on sports.		
Prioritizing academics over training may lead to reduced athletic performance.	Academic Focus Affecting Sports Readiness	
Physical exhaustion from training can hinder academic performance and focus.	Effects of Fatigue on Academic Engagement	
Open communication with teachers helps in adjusting academic requirements during competitions.	Negotiating Academic Flexibility	Support Systems and Flexibility
Schools provide flexibility by excusing student-athletes during crucial training periods	Institutional Support for Athletic Demands	
Teachers provide alternative tasks or special assessments to support student-athletes.	Teacher Consideration through Modified Assessments	
Sports training helps student-athletes develop self-discipline, including physical fitness.	Discipline and Self-Improvement through Sports	Character Formation through Athletics
Discipline, attitude, teamwork, and maturity are key values gained from athletics.	Building Core Values in Sports	

Athletes learn to value education over sports as a long-term priority.	Realization of Education's Importance	Social and Family Support Systems
Sports instill respect and camaraderie beyond competition.	Respect and Camaraderie Beyond the Court	
Parental and teacher support provides both academic and athletic flexibility.	Combined Parental and Teacher Support	
Families make financial sacrifices to support their child's training needs.	Family Sacrifice for Athletic Pursuits	
Teacher support through small acts, like signing forms, is highly valued by student-athletes.	Appreciation of Teacher Assistance	
Parents prioritize and invest in their child's sports needs despite financial cost.	Parental Investment in Athletic Development	

These accounts collectively demonstrate that social and family support systems—through emotional encouragement, financial assistance, flexibility, and guidance—play a vital role in helping student-athletes persist, balance responsibilities, and achieve both academic and athletic success.

Problem Statement Number 4. Inputs to navigational strategy Intervention Plans

Effective navigational strategies intervention plans are essential in supporting student-athletes in balancing academic and athletic demands. By aligning interventions with key themes such as Prioritization of Academic Tasks, Adjusting Training to Academic Demands, Sustaining Academic Commitment Despite Fatigue, and Sacrificing Rest for Productivity, targeted strategies can be implemented to enhance both academic performance and athletic development. These inputs focus on providing time management tools, stress management strategies, academic support, and guidance on efficient training schedules. Additionally, well-structured interventions promote resilience, discipline, and self-regulation, helping student-athletes maintain their overall well-being. Through these targeted approaches, student-athletes can achieve a more sustainable balance between class and court, improving their performance, health, and long-term success.

The intervention framework was developed as a response to the challenges and coping strategies revealed in the lived experiences of student-athletes. While participants demonstrated effective practices such as time management, prioritization of academic tasks, and reliance on support systems, these approaches often remain personal and unstructured. Without institutional guidance, student-athletes are left to navigate the balance between academics and athletics largely on their own, which can lead to stress, fatigue, or inconsistent performance. The framework seeks to address this gap by transforming insights from the study into structured, practical, and evidence-based strategies that schools, coaches, teachers, and families can adopt to strengthen the support systems available to student-athletes.

Intervention Framework for Student-Athletes' Navigational Strategies

Navigational Strategy (Theme/Insight)	Objective	Description	Supporting Elements	Key Outcomes/Impact	Time Frame/ Occurrence	Resources Needed
Prioritization of Academic Tasks	Maintain academic performance while fulfilling athletic commitments	Student-athletes plan schedules, prioritize schoolwork during critical academic periods, and adjust personal routines to meet deadlines.	Teachers, Coaches, Parents	Improved grades; Reduced academic backlog; Lower stress during exams	Daily/ Weekly during semester or	Personal planners, study guides, reminders from mentors
Adjusting Training to Academic Demands	Balance physical conditioning and academic requirements	Training intensity, duration, or schedule is modified to accommodate exams, projects, or heavy academic loads.	Coaches, Team Captains	Maintains athletic performance; Reduced fatigue; Stress management	During exam weeks or academic-heavy periods	Flexible practice schedules, communication with coaches

Navigational Strategy (Theme/Insight)	Objective	Description	Support/Implementers	Key Outcomes/Impact	Time Frame/ Occurrence	Resources Needed
Time Management Strategies	Ensure efficient use of time for dual responsibilities	Effective allocation of time for study, training, rest, and personal activities to optimize productivity and well-being.	Self, Peers, Mentors	Better time allocation; Enhanced focus; Fewer missed deadlines	Ongoing	Timetables, digital apps, mentoring support
Support Systems and Guidance	Provide encouragement, advice, and assistance in balancing roles	Seeking academic and emotional support from teachers, family, peers, and coaches.	Teachers, Parents, Coaches, Peers	Emotional relief; Sustained motivation; Enhanced performance in both domains	As needed	Mentorship programs, counseling sessions, peer support groups
Sacrificing Leisure/Rest for Productivity	Meet urgent deadlines or intensive training schedules	Temporarily reducing leisure or sleep to meet academic or athletic demands.	Self, Coaches	Completion of tasks; Achievement in both academics and sports	During peak academic/athletic periods	Time management skills, awareness of health limits

The intervention framework for student-athletes' navigational strategies was developed to address the unique challenges faced by learners who must balance the dual demands of academics and athletics. Findings from this study revealed recurring themes in how student-athletes cope with competing responsibilities, and these insights were organized into practical strategies that can be transformed into actionable interventions. The framework emphasizes both academic and athletic growth, while also safeguarding the overall well-being of student-athletes.

By integrating these strategies into a structured intervention framework, schools, coaches, and support networks can develop programs that help student-athletes succeed both academically and athletically. Such a framework fosters resilience and discipline while promoting a sustainable balance that safeguards health, supports learning, and nurtures athletic growth.

Theme 15: Lack of Engaging Activities and Programs Reduces Park Visits

A significant factor influencing park engagement is the availability of engaging activities. Parks that lack structured programs or appealing features often struggle to attract visitors, even when individuals recognize the benefits of outdoor spaces (Schipperijn et al., 2023).

Participants, such as Maricel, mentioned that they rarely visit parks because there are no compelling reasons to do so. They suggested that parks should offer more organized programs to attract visitors. This observation aligns with findings that highlight the role of park-based activities in fostering higher participation rates. Research suggests that parks with structured fitness programs, cultural events, and interactive recreational options tend to experience increased public engagement (Cohen & Marsh, 2021).

To enhance park utilization, municipalities and community organizations should introduce diverse recreational options, such as outdoor fitness classes, guided nature walks, weekend markets, and cultural festivals. Developing well-planned, dynamic programs can make parks more attractive and encourage consistent use, fostering both individual well-being and community cohesion (Myalkovsky, 2023).

This study explored the navigational strategies of student-athletes in managing academic and athletic demands, focusing on their lived experiences. The findings reveal several key insights. First, time management and prioritization are essential for

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student-athletes. Participants consistently reported prioritizing academic tasks before training and continuing schoolwork after practice if unfinished. They also emphasized adjusting training schedules to accommodate academic responsibilities, demonstrating a strong commitment to balancing dual roles. Second, academic performance often takes precedence over athletics. Student-athletes indicated that school requirements were prioritized when tasks overlapped with training, especially during examinations. This prioritization sometimes led to reduced athletic performance or physical fatigue, reflecting the challenges of sustaining both domains simultaneously. Third, support systems play a crucial role in facilitating balance. Open communication with teachers, institutional flexibility, and alternative assessments helped student-athletes manage academic obligations during crucial training periods. Parental support, including financial investment and encouragement, further enabled learners to meet both academic and athletic demands effectively. Fourth, sports were found to contribute significantly to character formation and personal growth.

In conclusion, student-athletes demonstrate remarkable resilience and commitment as they navigate the dual demands of academics and sports. Their experiences highlight the importance of effective time management, prioritization of school responsibilities, and personal sacrifices, such as reduced rest, to maintain balance. Support systems, including understanding teachers, flexible school policies, and encouraging families, play a crucial role in enabling learners to meet both academic and athletic goals. Moreover, participation in sports contributes not only to physical development but also to character formation, fostering discipline, teamwork, respect, and a long-term appreciation for education. Overall, the success of student-athletes relies on the combined efforts of personal determination and social support, reflecting the complex interplay between academic obligations, athletic pursuits, and holistic development.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are presented. For student-athletes, it is recommended that they adopt practical time management tools such as planners, study apps, and organized schedules to help balance academics and training more effectively. They should also prioritize their mental health by setting limits on sacrificing rest and practicing stress-management routines such as journaling, mindfulness, or seeking peer support. Furthermore, engaging in regular reflection activities can help them recognize both their progress and the areas that need improvement. For Physical Education teachers, it is advised to integrate academic support into PE lessons by aligning them with the realities of student-athletes' schedules, providing flexibility in deadlines, assessments, and participation when competitions or training conflicts arise. At the same time, wellness and resilience-building activities should be infused into lessons to strengthen discipline and self-regulation among student-athletes.

For coaches, the study recommends adjusting training loads during exam periods or heavy academic seasons. Coaches should also incorporate life skills sessions into their training routines, focusing on stress management, discipline, and balance. Maintaining close communication with teachers and parents is likewise essential to ensure that athletic commitments do not compromise academic performance. For guidance counselors, it is recommended to establish counseling programs specifically designed to address the pressures faced by student-athletes, including facilitating peer support groups where athletes can share coping strategies, as well as providing regular check-ins to monitor their mental health and academic status.

For school administrators, the findings point to the need for policies that coordinate academic and athletic schedules, such as exam rescheduling and flexible timetables. Administrators should also support mentorship programs that connect student-athletes with teachers or alumni athletes and allocate resources for wellness initiatives and academic support services tailored to their unique needs. For parents and guardians, it is recommended to provide encouragement and structured support at home by helping organize study schedules and ensuring that student-athletes get adequate rest. Open communication with teachers and coaches is also crucial in monitoring progress, while promoting a balanced perspective that values both academic achievement and athletic growth.

For policymakers in education and sports, it is suggested to review scholarship and eligibility policies to ensure fairness for student-athletes managing dual responsibilities. Funding for mental health programs, academic tutoring, and wellness initiatives should be prioritized, while guidelines that institutionalize coordination between schools and sports bodies must be established to safeguard the welfare of student-athletes. For the researcher, the findings of this study should be applied in both teaching and coaching practices, particularly in promoting time management, resilience training, and wellness support. The researcher is also encouraged to continue developing intervention models tailored to student-athletes' needs and to share results with colleagues to inspire collective action in strengthening athlete support systems.

Finally, for future researchers, this study can serve as a foundation for expanding inquiries into different contexts, such as involving younger athletes, exploring specific sports, or comparing rural and urban schools. Further studies may also examine the long-term impacts of navigational strategies on both academic success and athletic careers, as well as investigate the effectiveness of specific interventions such as digital time management tools and structured resilience programs.

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