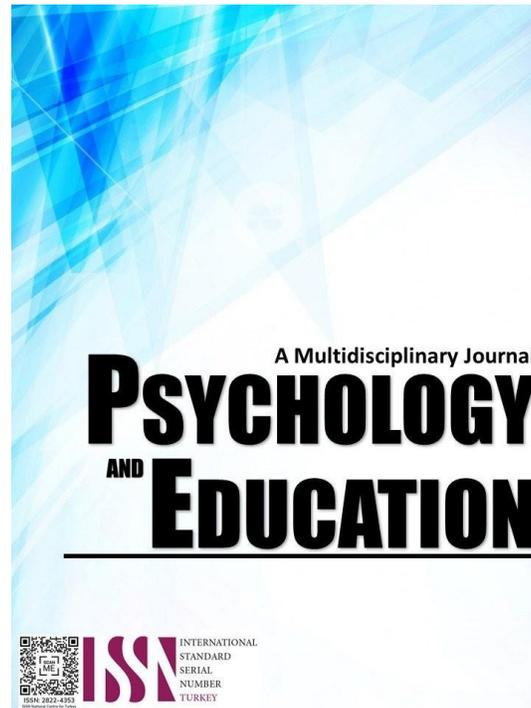


# **ANALYZING BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, AND COPING MECHANISMS IN SCHOOL-BASED SPORTS ACTIVITIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY**



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## Analyzing Best Practices, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms in School-Based Sports Activities: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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### Abstract

Behind every school sports event are dedicated sports officers who work tirelessly to balance passion, preparation, and limited resources. Their stories offer a closer look at the real challenges and triumphs of implementing sports programs in public schools. The implementation of school sports in the Philippines is significantly influenced by national issues. Executive Order No. 64, s., mandates that DepEd follow the "Sports for All" policy IN 1993, which mandates that physical education and sports be available to all students. However, despite these efforts, there are still notable differences in the caliber and availability of sports programs among different educational institutions. This study analyzed the best practices, challenges, and coping mechanisms in school-based sports activities of public secondary schools in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines. Using a phenomenological research design, the study explored teachers' perceptions through semi-structured interviews with six participants, with data analyzed using thematic analysis. The results highlighted three best practices: (1) Effective Event Organization and Planning, (2) Collaborative Community Engagement, and (3) Holistic Sports Integration for Development. However, five major problems arose: (1) time and scheduling constraints, (2) funding and budget limitations, (3) inadequate facilities and infrastructure, (4) balancing academics and sports, and (5) limited support and participation, all of which hampered the seamless implementation of school sports programs. To address these issues, four coping methods were identified: (1) external support and partnership strategies, (2) internal collaboration and preparation, (3) creative and adaptive solutions, and (4) motivation and engagement initiatives. To maintain interest in school-based sports activities, these tactics include garnering community support, involving stakeholders, improvising with available resources, and acknowledging achievements. The findings highlight the need for strong collaborations, strategic planning, and resourcefulness to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of school-based sports programs.

**Keywords:** *school-based sports activities, public secondary schools, phenomenological study*

### Introduction

Sports play a crucial role in students' holistic development by promoting physical fitness, social interaction, and character-building. Integrating sports into the school curriculum fosters essential life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience. As John Dewey (1938) stated, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." This aligns with modern educational theories, such as those of Ken Robinson (2015), who emphasize a holistic approach to education that includes physical activities to nurture creativity, collaboration, and resilience.

Despite its benefits, the effective implementation of school-based sports programs faces several challenges. Funding constraints limit schools' ability to provide proper sports facilities, equipment, and trained personnel, particularly in rural areas (Manzano et al., 2019). Additionally, the prioritization of academic performance over extracurricular activities results in decreased attention to school sports programs. Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, further hinder students' participation in sports due to the financial burden on families (Delos Reyes & Valencia, 2021).

In the Philippines, policies such as Executive Order No. 64, s. 1993, and DepEd Memorandum No. 005, s. 2023, promote inclusive school sports participation. These initiatives emphasize equal access to physical education and organized competitions, contributing to students' overall development. However, disparities persist in the quality and accessibility of sports programs across different schools, highlighting the need for further institutional support and stakeholder involvement. Existing research has explored best practices and challenges in school-based sports programs, but there is a gap in understanding the specific coping mechanisms employed by educators and administrators (Martínez-Andrés et al., 2020). This study aims to assess school-based sports activities in the Municipality of Lambayong, focusing on best practices, challenges, and coping strategies to enhance the effective implementation of sports programs. Addressing this research gap can provide valuable insights to improve policies and ensure equitable access to quality sports programs.

A significant issue in Lambayong schools is the lack of coordination in developing sports programs, leading to disparities in physical education quality and athletic training. This results in unequal access to the developmental benefits of sports and affects student performance in competitions (Stylianou et al., 2019). By examining these challenges and identifying the best practices, this study seeks to enhance school sports programs in Lambayong and contribute to broader national and international discussions on improving sports education.

Based on this premise, this study explored the implementation of school-based sports activities in the Municipality of Lambayong. It aims to gain insights into best practices, challenges, and coping mechanisms in this process.

## Analyzing Best Practices, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms in School-Based Sports Activities

Nesperos (2025) studied the lived experiences of sports officers about their best practices, challenges and coping mechanisms in implementing school-based sports activities.

In this study, the researcher aims to contribute to Psychology and Education by revealing how school-based sports activities foster motivation, resilience, and strategic program implementation in support of student development and academic balance.

### Research Questions

The study analyzed the school-based sports activities in the Municipality of Lambayong. It answered the following questions:

1. What were the school's best practices in implementing school-based sports activities?
2. What challenges were encountered in implementing school-based sports activities?
3. What coping mechanisms does the school use to implement school-based sports activities?
4. What school-based sports activity program can you implement?

## Literature Review

### *Best Practices in School-Based Sports Activities*

School-based sports activities offer several benefits, such as better academic performance and increased physical and mental health. According to Watson et al. (2017), recent studies have shown that kids participating in sports have higher psychological well-being, less stress, and more self-esteem. Due to enhanced focus and cognitive function, adolescents who engage in physical activity are more likely to perform academically (Vella et al., 2015)

To improve school sports activities' sustainability, educators can concentrate on effective resource management, look for alternate financing sources, and form alliances with neighborhood organizations. This strategy, called sustainable resource management, ensures that initiatives receive the funding and community support they need to succeed (Harris et al., 2016). Schools can sustain a successful athletic program that helps kids in the long run by obtaining sufficient financing and cultivating great relationships with the community. When these best practices are applied correctly, they can result in a dynamic and significant sports program that promotes kids' social, mental, and physical growth (Murray, 2015).

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research design used in this study is phenomenological qualitative research. Phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals by exploring their perceptions, emotions, and meanings associated with a specific phenomenon (Smith et al., 2019).

### Respondents

The study involved six school sports officers from public schools in the Municipality of Lambayong, selected based on purposive sampling for their relevant experience and roles in implementing school-based sports activities.

### Instrument

This study employed five research instruments: the interview guide questions and protocols, a questionnaire validation tool, an informed consent form, and transcription writing. The research primarily used in-depth interviews guided by semi-structured questions, following Colaizzi's phenomenological method, to capture participants' experiences and insights on school-based sports.

### Procedure

The researcher obtained approval from relevant authorities and conducted an orientation for participants, ensuring they signed informed consent forms. Interviews were recorded and lasted 30 to 60 minutes, followed by members checking to validate the data and enhance the study's credibility.

### Data Analysis

The researcher used Colaizzi's (1978) method, applying thematic analysis in six steps: familiarizing with the data, generating initial themes, clustering themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Validation of findings was conducted through member checking to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data interpretation.

### Ethical Considerations

This study ensured informed consent, confidentiality, and participant safety by providing clear explanations of the research purpose and guaranteeing the right to withdraw at any time. Ethical principles, including social value, privacy, justice, and transparency, were

followed to minimize risks, ensure fairness, and protect participants' rights throughout the research process.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's results and deliberates the implications of data gathered through an interview guide questionnaire during the interview conducted with the participants.

### *Analyzing Best Practices, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms in School-Based Sports Activities*

This part is composed of different tables about the experiences of participants in implementing school-based sports activities. It includes three tables, Table 1 to 3, with the essential information about the participants' best practices, challenges and coping mechanisms in implementing school-based sports activities. Based on the result it has 12 emerging themes were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesis from 78 formulated meanings, 73 codes and 38 clustered themes.

Table 1. *Best Practices in Implementing School-Based Sports Programs*

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Clustered Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Significant Statements</i>
1. Effective Event Organization and Planning	- Implementation of intramural programs (intramurals, Kadalawan, Ragsak Festival, summer camp)	"intramural" "sports day" "Kadalawan"	"A successful initiative was the school's intramural sports day, where students participated in various games like basketball, volleyball, track events, and many more. It was effective because of strong community involvement, local businesses, sponsors, prizes, and refreshments, while teachers and students worked together to organize the event. ... So here at Lambayong National High School, we launched our first Kadalawan last year. Kadalawan is a Maguindanao term that means "Kasiyahan." This is a yearly practice and also the stepping stone for potential athletes to be discovered to represent our school and our unit to the higher meets."
	- Structured planning/scheduling	"Ragsak Festival"	
	- Committee/task distribution	"committee" "tasks are distributed"	
	- Partnerships with local businesses and sponsors	"summer camp"	"As a sports coordinator, we have this Ragsak Festival, which is a combination of sports, socio-cultural, and academic events wherein all the levels in our school from grade 7 to 12 participate in various sports activities ... so this program was effective since everybody, especially the teachers, participated through their cooperation ..."
			"The program that was successful, of course, was our intramurals, where selected athletes represented us in the municipal meet and provincial meet. Last year, we initiated a summer camp for Volleyball in partnership with the SK Federation. That's all so far, ma'am, because I've only been a sports coordinator for more than 2 years."
2. Collaborative Community Engagement	- Collaboration among teachers, students, and the community	"collaboration" "teachers"	"Collaboration is one of the keys to school sports activities, of course, And teachers serve as referees and then coaches to students as contributions of teachers in every intramural. Then, the talents and skills of the students will join and compete in sports at the per-year level. And then, our PTA, the parents, and teachers have meetings before the intramural so that they can discuss what needs to be done." -P2
	- Pre-event meetings and joint planning	"students" "community"	
	- Resource support (funds, equipment, volunteering)	"PTA" "donate sports equipment" "support"	"Ah! In our sports activities in the school, the teachers, as well as the students, are very cooperative, and at the same time, we collaborate as we plan the activities, especially during our Ragsak festival ... And when it comes to the community, the community supported us by funds which we use for our uhm, prices and purchasing equipment. So this only shows that the community, as well as the school, is really supportive in terms of the sports activities of the students in our school." -P3
			"For the collaboration. For the teachers, of course, the



			preparation is mostly done by the school and then the SSLG. So that's the part of the collaboration between the teachers and students. And for the community, ma'am, sometimes we have stakeholders who provide either financial support or sports equipment to help improve the school's sports activities." -P4
3. Holistic Sports Integration for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of sports into the curriculum</li> <li>- Development of teamwork, discipline, and leadership</li> <li>- Recognition of multiple intelligences</li> <li>- Mandated integration by DEPED</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"unity and growth"</li> <li>"teamwork"</li> <li>"discipline"</li> <li>"leadership"</li> <li>"DEPED"</li> <li>"multiple intelligences"</li> <li>"curriculum"</li> </ul>	<p>"Hmm. I do believe that sports activities are really integrated into the school program. Sports activities are really integrated into the school program since they were mandated by the DEPED. I just forgot the DEPED memorandum or order where sports are really integrated into the school program, and at the same time, it is really important for students as well to engage themselves in physical activities like sports since it can also help in their development as students. That's all!" - P3</p> <p>"This sports program is really necessary because it's in our curriculum, and our children have individual differences. That's why I want to develop the children in areas where they excel, in case they succeed there. And I really love sports, I love sports. So the kids also need to be happy and have sports because it gets boring without sports." -P5</p> <p>"So far, in the integration of sports programs in our public schools, not much opportunity is given to us because we only have intramurals and DepEd Meets. So far, our volleyball and basketball teams have been participating in leagues where they can showcase their talent. In volleyball, we also became members of PNVF and Rebisco, so from time to time, they have leagues that we participate in in Isulan. So, as a sports coordinator, I'm happy that our students at Pimbalayan National High School are being given opportunities." - P6</p>

Table 2. Challenges Encountered in Implementing School-Based Sports Programs

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Clustered Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
1. Time and Scheduling Challenges	- Weather delays disrupting schedule	"unexpected weather delays disrupted our sports schedule"
	- Limited preparation time	"scheduling the time"
	- Extended event duration	"only 3 weeks left"
2. Funding and Budget Constraints	- Difficulty raising funds	"rain caused an interruption in the schedule" "build up a fund"
	- Budget limitations in MOOE	"prices are you going to give the students"
	- Need for external funding	"money", "MOOE"
	- Money issues	"budget"
3. Inadequate Facilities and Infrastructure	- Limited access to proper equipment and venues	"so many equipment needed" "limited funding and facilities"
	- Damaged facilities	"proper sports equipment"
	- Lack of space	"suitable venues"
	- Need for external coordination with barangay officials	"basketball court"
		"damaged"



4. Academic-Sports Balance Challenges	- Balancing academic priorities with sports training	"not enough space" "barangay gymnasium" "BPAT" "managing time and resources"
	- Scheduling conflicts affecting academics	"balance"
	- Ensuring students attend classes while training	"flexible learning schedule" "set a schedule for academics and practices"
		"excusing the kids" "full-day attendance"
5. Support and Participation Challenges	- Limited teacher support and manpower	"scheduling practices" "limited resources, time constraints, and lack of participation"
	- Teachers not sports-minded	"lacking in time and manpower"
	- Conservative parental attitudes	"only a few know about the events"
	- Lack of participation and inconsistent community support	"teachers who are not sports-minded" "conservative parents" "not allow the children to practice"

Table 3. *Coping Mechanisms for Implementing School-Based Sports Programs*

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Clustered Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Significant Statements</i>
1. External Support and Partnership Strategies	Securing community support through fundraising and partnerships Engaging PTA, stakeholders, alumni, and barangay support Seeking donors and local business sponsorships	"community support"	"The school has adapted to challenges in its sports programs by securing community support through fundraising and partnerships. Teachers and parents volunteer their time to coach and organize events ... These efforts help maintain the program despite the limited resources and logistical challenges." -P1  "Regarding the challenges, let's reiterate the funds; that's definitely one of them. So, in the community, they support the school yearly. In PTA meetings, it is mentioned that we are looking for possible donors of equipment or financial support. ... " -P4  "Our intramurals, so that we don't run out of time, are mostly held within the school, and we do a lot of sports. We will go to the barangay to ask for the game schedule at the barangay gymnasium ... " -P2 (Q2)  "Still coaching and teaching other teachers how to referee an event to address the challenges or gaps in the program." -P2 (Q1)  "Organize and prepare in a timely manner for sports activities. Again, we have been preparing for more than 1 month so that we can provide solutions to any problems that may arise as early as possible." -P6 (Q2)
		"fundraising"	
		"partnerships"	
		"PTA"	
		"barangay"	
		"donors"	
2. Internal Collaboration and Advance Preparation	- Coaching and teaching other teachers to referee events  - Preparing activities ahead of time  - Calling for meetings for problem-solving	"stakeholders"	
		"alumni"	
		"coaching and teaching other teachers"	
		"prepare activities ahead of time"	
		"call for meetings", "organize and prepare"	

3. Creative and Adaptive Solutions	- Improvising with available resources and makeshift equipment	"improvises with available resources"	"The school has adapted to challenges in its sports programs by ... improvises with available resources like using makeshift equipment and training on outdoor spaces." -P1 (Q1)
	- Adapting strategies (e.g., adapting a student from another school)	"makeshift equipment" "adapt a student"	"When it comes to sports, especially if it's in the higher meet na, like provincial meet or regional meet, what we usually do ... is to adapt a student, where the coach will be adapting the student from another school. ..." -P3 (Q1)
	- Combining socio-cultural and sports events	"combine socio-cultural and sports events"	"There are really some kids who are not into sports, so what we do during intramurals is have socio-cultural events. We combine socio-cultural and sports events so that the kids ... are still connected to sports." -P2 (Q3)
		"Ragsak Festival"	
4. Motivation and Engagement Initiatives	- Highlighting achievements and giving recognitions/awards	"highlighting achievements" "flag ceremony"	"So, the school motivates and engages students, teachers, and the community by highlighting achievements, making sports inclusive for all skill levels, and creating a sense of pride through school-wide events. ... recognition and incentives keep everyone motivated." -P1 (Q4)
	- Creating school-wide events that instill pride	"athlete of the year award"	
	- Providing incentives and rewards to students, teachers, and parents	"incentives" "recognition"	"Recognitions. We have a flag ceremony every Monday, where the children who have won and excelled in various sports are recognized. And teachers give out awards or additional points. ..." -P2 (Q4)
		"invite the parents"	"Every graduation, we give an athlete of the year award to those who have participated in the different meets. ..." -P3 (Q4)

### ***Emerging Themes on Analyzing Best Practices in School-Based Sports Activities.***

The study revealed three main themes in identifying best practices in school-based sports activities: (1) Effective Event Organization and Planning, (2) Collaborative Community Engagement, and (3) Holistic Sports Integration for Development. Effective planning includes clear scheduling, task delegation, and partnerships with local sponsors to ensure organized and inclusive events. This supports the findings of Sánchez et al. (2019) and Brown & Smith (2020), who emphasized that structured sports programs improve student participation and event management. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2016) also explains that when students are given autonomy and specific roles, they feel more motivated and engaged in school activities.

Collaborative community engagement emphasizes the teamwork of teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders in implementing sports programs. Regular meetings, volunteer support, and active involvement from the community strengthen the success and sustainability of sports activities, as supported by Green and Thurston (2018) and Wilson & Macdonald (2019). Meanwhile, holistic sports integration encourages the blending of sports with academics to promote discipline, leadership, and inclusivity. This aligns with the "Sports for All" program under Executive Order No. 64 s. 1993 and the studies of Elias et al. (2018) and Côté & Hancock (2016), which highlight sports as a tool for character development. When students feel supported, competent, and connected, they are more likely to stay engaged and succeed both in school and in life.

### ***Emerging Themes on Challenges Encountered in Implementing School-Based Sports Activities***

The study identified five key challenges in implementing school-based sports activities: Time and Scheduling Challenges, Funding and Budget Constraints, Inadequate Facilities and Infrastructure, Academic-Sports Balance Challenges, and Support and Participation Challenges. Sports coordinators experienced delays due to weather disruptions, tight preparation time, and difficulty balancing academics and training. These challenges align with Wright's Ecological Systems Theory (2016), which explains how different environmental factors influence student experiences. Budget limitations also hinder program quality, with insufficient MOOE forcing schools to seek external funding. As Libbey (2004) and Rauscher & Cooky (2016) noted, underfunding often leads to limited or discontinued sports programs. Inadequate facilities, such as lack of equipment and gymnasiums, further affect training and participation, pushing schools to rely on external venues (McLennan & Thompson, 2015; Santos & Rivera, 2020).

Balancing academics and sports is another major concern. Rigid schedules and intense academic demands make it difficult for students to manage both areas effectively (Garcia & Cruz, 2019). WHO (2020) recommends flexible scheduling and integrated physical

education to help students grow holistically. Additionally, lack of teacher support and conservative parental attitudes hinder student participation. Some teachers lack interest in sports, and some parents prioritize academics over athletics due to safety concerns (Lopez et al., 2021). These issues reflect the microsystem influences in Wright's theory, where family and school environments directly impact student motivation. To address these, schools should provide teacher training, raise parent awareness, and strengthen community partnerships to create a more supportive environment for student-athletes.

### ***Emerging Themes on Coping Mechanisms in Implementing School-Based Sports Activities***

Four key coping mechanisms emerged in addressing challenges in implementing school-based sports activities: External Support and Partnership Strategies, Internal Collaboration and Advance Preparation, Creative and Adaptive Solutions, and Motivation and Engagement Initiatives. Sports coordinators actively engage the PTA, alumni, barangay officials, and local businesses to gain financial and logistical support. These partnerships help address budget gaps and enhance program execution (Santos & Rivera, 2020; Lund & Kirk, 2019). Internally, teamwork and advanced planning—such as training teachers to officiate, assigning tasks, and holding meetings—enable smoother implementation of sports events (Garcia & Cruz, 2019). These coping mechanisms align with Coakley's Transactional Stress Theory (2016), which explains how individuals and institutions respond to stress through adaptation and support systems.

Schools also adopt creative and flexible approaches, such as improvising equipment and repurposing spaces, to overcome facility and resource constraints. Some involve students from nearby schools or merge socio-cultural activities with sports to maximize participation (Santos & Rivera, 2020). Additionally, motivation and engagement strategies—like award ceremonies, incentives, and school-wide events—boost morale and encourage active involvement from students, teachers, and the community (Garcia & Cruz, 2019). These practices foster a supportive school culture and help reduce the pressure of organizing sports activities, ensuring continuity and promoting student-athlete development.

### **Conclusions**

The study focused on three best essential practices for conducting school-based sports activities: successful event management and planning, collaborative community participation, and holistic sports integration for development. Sports coordinators emphasized the need for strategic planning and the active involvement of the school community and stakeholders to ensure event success. Sports programs relied heavily on strong support, cooperation, and teamwork from teachers, students, and the community. Holistic sports integration improves physical fitness and promotes important life skills, emphasizing its importance in overall student development.

The study highlighted five major challenges: time and scheduling issues, budget limits, insufficient facilities, academic-sports balance, and limited support and participation. Coping strategies included partnerships and external support, internal cooperation and planning in advance, innovative and flexible solutions, and engagement and motivating campaigns. Collaborations with PTAs, stakeholders, alumni, and local communities helped schools gain resources. Facility and equipment shortages were addressed through improvisation and coordination. Participation and morale increased through recognition and rewards. These tactics strengthen the sustainability and resilience of school-based sports programs.

The researcher recommended that schools should prioritize strategic planning, stakeholder participation, and collaboration among teachers, students, and the community to implement sports programs effectively. Integrating sports holistically into the curriculum will promote physical fitness and life skills. Flexible scheduling increased financial assistance, and teacher involvement are crucial for balancing academics and sports while overcoming budget and resource constraints. Strengthening partnerships with PTAs, stakeholders, and local communities will secure funding and resources, while flexibility in addressing equipment shortages will ensure sustainability. Acknowledging accomplishments and offering incentives will increase participation and motivation. Further research should explore student motivation, policy support, and the long-term effects of holistic sports integration.

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