



## Student-Athlete Satisfaction in a Philippine Higher Education: Insights for Institutional Support and Sports Development

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### Abstract

Collegiate athletics play a vital role in supporting student-athletes' academic, athletic, and personal growth, yet disparities in institutional support often affect satisfaction, retention, and program sustainability. While athlete satisfaction has been extensively studied internationally, empirical research in the Philippine context remains limited. This study examined student-athletes' perceived satisfaction across six domains: self-perception, coaches and trainers, team and teammates, administration, facilities and budget, and support and recognition, at a higher education institution in the Philippines, as these encompass psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and institutional support factors that consistently shape student-athlete experiences. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were gathered from 50 varsity athletes across five sports through a validated Likert-scale survey, followed by focus group discussions with 15 athletes selected through maximum variation sampling. Descriptive statistics summarized satisfaction levels, while thematic analysis provided qualitative insights into areas for improvement. Results showed Highly Satisfactory ratings in self-perception ( $M = 3.45$ ), team and teammates ( $M = 3.48$ ), administration ( $M = 3.38$ ), and support and recognition ( $M = 3.39$ ). Coaches and trainers ( $M = 3.23$ ) and facilities and budget ( $M = 2.82$ ) were rated Satisfactory, with qualitative insights citing inconsistent coaching quality, outdated facilities, and inequitable budgets for non-priority sports. Recommendations include standardized coach training, facility upgrades, equitable resource allocation, expanded housing, and enhanced recognition systems. This study provides context-specific evidence to inform policy and program development in Philippine collegiate sports.

**Keywords:** *student-athletes, athlete satisfaction, institutional support, collegiate sports, sports development, higher education*

### INTRODUCTION

Collegiate athletics has long been an integral part of the Philippine higher education landscape, serving as both a platform for sports excellence and a vital component of student development. In many institutions, athletics programs are designed not only to hone physical skills but also to instill values such as discipline, resilience, leadership, and teamwork, qualities essential for success beyond sports (Hatteberg, 2020; Tabuena, 2021). Research presents that well-managed athletic programs positively influence student-athletes' motivation, academic performance, and institutional engagement, ultimately contributing to higher retention and graduation rates (Mixon & Treviño, 2005; NCAA, 2020). Despite these benefits, student-athletes often face systemic challenges that hinder their holistic development. In the Philippine context, these include uneven access to quality facilities, inconsistent budget allocations, and variability in coaching quality, particularly in less prioritized sports programs (Micua et al., 2025). Such disparities can undermine both athletic performance and academic persistence. At the same time, student-athletes navigate demanding schedules, balancing training and competition with academic requirements, a dual role

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that requires robust institutional support structures (Grimit, 2014).

This study is based in a higher education institution in Batangas City, where the Sports Development Office (SDO) serves as the primary body responsible for providing institutional support to student-athletes. Many of these athletes have their satisfaction with athletic services as a critical factor for both academic retention and sports program sustainability. However, little empirical evidence exists regarding how these student-athletes perceive the quality and responsiveness of the support they receive. Addressing this gap, this study seeks to explore the perceived satisfaction levels of student-athletes in FAITH, a higher education institution, particularly with six key domains: self-perception, coaches and trainers, team and teammates, administration, facilities and budget, and support and recognition. These domains were selected because, based on recent scholarship, they encompass psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and institutional support factors that consistently shape student-athlete experiences (Ni & Feng, 2023; Simons et al., 2023; Hanuliaková et al., 2024). The objective of this study is to examine student-athletes' perceived satisfaction across these six domains at a Philippine higher education institution, to provide evidence-based insights that can guide the institution in enhancing support systems to ensure both athletic and academic success.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The satisfaction of student-athletes has been widely examined in higher education because it directly affects athletic performance, academic persistence, and institutional engagement. Research emphasizes that satisfaction is multidimensional, shaped by individual, team, and institutional factors (Hatteberg, 2020; Palao et al., 2023b). Understanding these factors is critical for creating policies and interventions that support both academic and athletic development.

Self-perception influences motivation, coping strategies, and well-being. A balanced dual identity embracing both academic and athletic roles supports resilience, while identity foreclosure, where sports dominate self-concept, may hinder academic success (Tabuena, 2021). Coaching quality is equally critical. Autonomy-supportive approaches marked by open communication, constructive feedback, and shared decision-making enhance motivation, competence, and commitment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Conversely, authoritarian styles, repetitive drills, and inconsistent engagement reduce cohesion and may increase burnout (Micua et al., 2025). Strong team cohesion fosters belongingness, shared responsibility, and mutual motivation, and peer support correlates with higher academic and athletic satisfaction (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Administrative responsiveness through flexible scheduling, academic advising, and athlete representation supports retention (Otto et al., 2019). In the Philippines, gaps persist in athlete participation in decision-making (Tabuena, 2021). Modern, well-maintained facilities enhance performance and institutional pride, while inadequate or outdated ones lower morale (Hardin & Pate, 2013). Resource allocation often favors revenue sports, disadvantaging smaller programs. Recognition through awards, public acknowledgment, and media coverage strengthens engagement and motivation (Navarro et al., 2021).

The Athlete Satisfaction Framework (Palao et al., 2023a) provides a structured tool for assessing six domains: self-perception, coaching, team dynamics, administration, facilities/budget, and recognition. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains how fulfilling autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs drives motivation and satisfaction. Integrating these frameworks enables a comprehensive analysis of institutional and personal influences on athlete experiences. While global studies underscore the impact of coaching quality, equitable resources, team cohesion, and administrative responsiveness on athlete satisfaction, Philippine research remains limited, particularly using mixed-methods approaches. This study addresses that gap, offering context-specific insights into student-athlete experiences in a Batangas higher education

institution.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2018), beginning with a quantitative survey to measure satisfaction levels, followed by qualitative interviews to explain and contextualize the findings. The respondents were varsity athletes from a higher education institution in Batangas City during AY 2024–2025, each with at least one semester of academic and athletic participation. A total of 50 student-athletes completed the survey through purposive-convenience sampling, which was deemed appropriate for exploratory institutional studies with limited populations (Creswell, 2014). For the qualitative phase, 15 athletes were chosen via maximum variation purposive sampling to ensure diversity in gender and sports. While some interviewees had also answered the survey, prior participation was not a requirement. The sample size aligns with Guest et al. (2006) recommendation that data saturation is typically reached within 12–15 interviews. Data collection involved an adapted Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (Palao et al., 2023a) measuring six domains: self-perception, coaches and trainers, team and teammates, administration, facilities and budget, and support and recognition on a 4-point Likert scale. Pilot testing with non-participating athletes yielded a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.92, indicating excellent reliability (Taber, 2018). Also, surveys were administered via Google Forms with embedded informed consent. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted in small focus groups, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Thus, quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative transcripts underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. To ensure trustworthiness, two researchers independently coded the data and reconciled discrepancies. Integration occurred during interpretation, where qualitative insights were used to clarify and expand upon survey trends. The study followed institutional ethical protocols, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and secure data handling.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of the Participants (N = 50)

| Demographic Profile | Category     | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Sex                 | Male         | 30        | 60%        |
|                     | Female       | 20        | 40%        |
| Sport               | Basketball   | 12        | 24%        |
|                     | Volleyball   | 10        | 20%        |
|                     | Badminton    | 8         | 16%        |
|                     | Football     | 8         | 16%        |
|                     | Table Tennis | 12        | 24%        |

Table 1 shows that the participants were composed of 30 males (60%) and 20 females (40%), indicating a slight majority of male athletes. In terms of sport representation, the largest groups came from basketball (24%) and table tennis (24%), followed by volleyball (20%), badminton (16%), and football (16%). This distribution reflects a balanced mix of team and individual sports, providing diverse perspectives for the study.

## 2. Perceived Satisfaction Level of Student-Athletes in terms of Six Domains.

**Table 2.** Summarized Data on the Perceived Satisfaction of Student-Athletes (N = 50)

| Domain                  | Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|-------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| Self-Perception         | 3.45 | Highly Satisfactory   |
| Coaches and Trainers    | 3.23 | Satisfactory          |
| Team and Teammates      | 3.48 | Highly Satisfactory   |
| Administration          | 3.38 | Highly Satisfactory   |
| Facilities and Budget   | 2.82 | Satisfactory          |
| Support and Recognition | 3.39 | Highly Satisfactory   |
| Overall                 | 3.29 | Highly Satisfactory   |

Legend: 1.00–1.75 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), 1.76–2.50 = Unsatisfactory (U), 2.51–3.25 = Satisfactory (S), 3.26–4.00 = Highly Satisfactory (HS); \* $\mu$  = population mean

Table 2 shows an overall Highly Satisfactory rating ( $\mu = 3.29$ ), with the highest scores in team and teammates ( $\mu = 3.48$ ), self-perception ( $\mu = 3.45$ ), and support and recognition ( $\mu = 3.39$ ). These align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), highlighting the importance of relatedness, competence, and institutional recognition in fostering motivation. Administration was also rated Highly Satisfactory ( $\mu = 3.38$ ), while coaches and trainers ( $\mu = 3.23$ ) and facilities and budget ( $\mu = 2.82$ ) scored lower, reflecting concerns about coaching consistency and resource adequacy, issues also noted in prior studies (Palao et al., 2023b; Navarro & Salazar, 2019). While satisfaction is generally high, targeted improvements in facilities, budget allocation, and coaching quality could further enhance athlete performance and program sustainability.

## 3. Challenges Experienced by Student-Athletes

### 3.1. Self-Perception- Student-Athletes with Balanced Dual Identities

Findings indicate that student-athletes adopt a dual-identity approach, striving to excel in both academic and athletic domains without compromising either. As one participant expressed:

*"I don't divide my 100 percent, like 50% as an athlete and 50% as a student. I give my full 100 percent as a student and as an athlete."* (P2, Volleyball, Male)

Despite this commitment, challenges related to workload, time management, and scheduling persist. These results align with previous studies highlighting the cognitive and emotional demands of balancing academic and athletic identities (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2024; Jiang & Wang, 2025).

### 3.2. Coaches and Trainers- Training and Preparation Gaps, Coaching Deficiencies, and Performance Constraints

Participants reported dissatisfaction with the structure and quality of training programs. Some cited repetitive drills without skill progression:

*"We just repeat the same drills, without many new techniques...."* (P5, Table Tennis, Female)

Others described performance decline due to overtraining prior to competitions:

*"By the time the game comes, we are already tired because of excessive practice before."* (P7, Basketball, Male)

These observations suggest that ineffective periodization and unprepared coaching approaches may hinder athletic performance. This indicates potential issues in training periodization and preparedness, aligning with findings that athlete well-being and performance benefit from structured, individualized coaching (Ni & Feng, 2023)

### **3.3. Team and Teammates- Leadership Void, Declining Commitment, Interpersonal Conflicts, and Overdependence on the Core Group**

The absence of consistent leadership, particularly in the lack of senior players or designated captains, emerged as a recurring issue:

*"Sometimes there's no captain, so it feels like everyone is just doing their own thing." (P6, Football Male)*

Additionally, some participants reported declining training commitment and verbal disputes during play, which adversely affected team cohesion. Conversely, teams with a stable and skilled core reported better coordination. This contributed to declining commitment and poor cohesion. Teams with a strong core, however, experienced better coordination. These observations echo established findings on the importance of identity inter-work for sustained athlete cohesion and adaptation ([Chun et al., 2023](#)).

### **3.4. Administration- Inequitable Resource Distribution, Conditional Benefits, and Facility Limitations**

Student-athletes perceived inequities in resource allocation, noting that basketball and volleyball programs received preferential funding:

*"There's more support for basketball and volleyball; we lack equipment." (P9, Table tennis, Male)*

Training schedules occasionally conflicted with academic commitments, reducing access to facilities. These inequities hinder equitable development and reflect broader challenges in institutional resource allocation models ([Pestano & Salazar, 2024](#)).

### **3.5. Facilities and Budget- Insufficient Support, Scheduling Conflicts, and Poor Maintenance**

Nutritional support was reported as limited and inconsistent:

*"Sometimes there's no food, or it's insufficient." (P3, Volleyball, Female)*

Athletes described unsafe and outdated facilities, including rusty gym equipment, worn-out courts, and poorly maintained fields. Unsafe or outdated equipment further compromised training quality. Such deficiencies align with literature linking well-being to structured support across resources and nutrition ([Ni & Feng, 2023](#)).

### **3.6. Support and Recognition- Limited Visibility and Delayed Acknowledgment**

Recognition of athletic achievements was reported as irregular, with social media posts sometimes delayed and focused only on winning teams:

*"Sometimes it takes a long time before it's posted, and only wins are shown." (P13, Badminton, Female)*

Compared to academic recognition, sports achievements were perceived as receiving less institutional visibility. This limited institutional visibility undermined morale. Empirical work confirms that broader, timely acknowledgment of all contributions significantly supports motivation and identity integration ([Pestano & Salazar, 2024](#)).

## **4. Suggestions to Improve Institutional Athletic Support and Services**

### **4.1. Self-Perception- Well-Plotted Schedule as a Tool to Address Student-Athletes' Challenges**

Student-athletes emphasized the need for improved coordination between academic and training schedules to minimize conflicts and stress. One participant shared:

*"It would be better if we had a schedule that doesn't clash, so we don't struggle with academics and training." (P1, Volleyball, Female)*

Effective scheduling was also linked to improved communication between faculty, coaches, and athletes, fostering mutual understanding and consideration. This aligns with findings that integrated academic-athletic planning can mitigate role strain and improve performance in both

domains (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2024; Jiang & Wang, 2025).

#### **4.2. Coaches and Trainers– Coaching Qualifications, Expertise, and Commitment**

Participants expressed a strong preference for highly skilled coaches and well-designed training programs. Dissatisfaction arose from perceptions of unqualified appointments and limited coaching engagement, especially outside competitive seasons:

*“It would be better to have a coach with real experience, not just seasonal.” (P6, Basketball, Male)*

Calls for consistent, year-round coaching echo prior research stressing the link between coach competency, athlete development, and sustained motivation (Ni & Feng, 2023). Ensuring coach preparedness and long-term engagement is seen as crucial for maintaining competitive standards and athlete confidence.

#### **4.3. Team and Teammates– Strengthening Team Support Systems**

Student-athletes valued the role of senior teammates as mentors, providing both academic guidance and emotional support. Suggestions included formalizing peer mentorship programs and fostering collaboration during training:

*“When there’s guidance from seniors, you feel more at ease and more motivated in both studies and sports.” (P7, Volleyball, Female)*

Such peer support structures have been shown to enhance athletes’ social integration, academic success, and performance outcomes (Chun et al., 2023).

#### **4.4. Administration– Promoting Equality, Fairness, and Investment**

Participants advocated for equitable opportunities across all sports, regardless of skill level, and for consistent support in terms of facilities, financial aid, and athlete welfare, particularly for housing needs:

*“Resources should not only go to popular sports; they should be equally given to all.” (P8, Badminton, Male)*

These views resonate with Pestano and Salazar’s (2024) findings that equitable administrative support fosters both morale and performance in multi-sport institutions. Increased investment in sports programs was also linked to improved retention and competitive success.

#### **4.5. Facilities and Budget– Equal Distribution, Infrastructure Investment, and Housing Expansion**

Athletes called for facility upgrades, equal funding across sports, and improved housing options, especially for out-of-town athletes:

*“There should be more dorm space for athletes, and allocation should be equal to that of academic scholars.” (P1, Football, Male)*

Prior research indicates that access to quality facilities and appropriate housing directly influences athlete well-being and academic persistence (Ni & Feng, 2023).

#### **4.6. Support and Recognition– Recognizing All Achievements and Increasing Visibility**

Participants recommended broader recognition of athletes, not limited to medal winners, and more timely dissemination of results and progress updates via school platforms:

*“Even if they didn’t win, as long as there’s improvement and effort, they should be recognized.” (P12, Volleyball, Female)*

They also suggested greater representation of athletes in events, publications, and social media to break stereotypes and promote inclusion. Consistent with Stoyanova and Ivantchev (2025), athletes demonstrate higher self-esteem and confidence, partly due to societal recognition and visibility.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the satisfaction of student-athletes from five sports, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, football, and badminton, across six domains using the Athlete Satisfaction Framework and Self-Determination Theory. The overall satisfaction score ( $M = 3.29$ , Highly Satisfactory) indicates generally positive perceptions, with strengths in team and teammates ( $M = 3.48$ ), self-perception ( $M = 3.45$ ), and support and recognition ( $M = 3.39$ ). These domains reflect confidence, peer cohesion, and institutional acknowledgment, addressing key psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and recognition. The areas for improvement include coaching quality ( $M = 3.23$ ) and facilities and budget ( $M = 2.82$ ), where athletes noted uneven training practices, outdated or unsafe facilities, and inequitable funding for non-priority sports. While administration scored Highly Satisfactory ( $M = 3.38$ ), concerns remain over unequal resource allocation and performance-based benefits. The study contributes context-specific evidence to Philippine collegiate sports research by integrating quantitative measures with qualitative insights, offering a multidimensional view of athlete satisfaction that blends institutional, interpersonal, and personal factors. However, findings are limited by the single-institution scope and reliance on self-reported data, which may be influenced by individual expectations and sport-specific contexts. Recommendations in this study include: (a) Standardized coach development programs to ensure technical expertise, athlete-centered approaches, and consistent engagement; (b) Equitable budget allocation for both popular and non-revenue sports; (c) Upgraded facilities, safe training spaces, adequate nutrition, and expanded housing for out-of-town athletes; (d) Integrated academic–training schedules to minimize conflict; and (e) Inclusive recognition systems that value all forms of achievement.

## LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research should expand to multiple institutions for comparative analysis, use longitudinal designs to track the impact of institutional changes, and explore links between satisfaction, mental health, academic persistence, and career readiness. Examining the role of digital platforms in athlete recognition could also provide new insights. By addressing identified gaps in coaching, facilities, and resource distribution, institutions can strengthen athlete satisfaction, improve retention, and enhance their role in producing well-rounded, resilient graduates.

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