

Exploring Coaching Strategies, Techniques and Team Dynamics towards a Winning Volleyball Team

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Abstract

This study explores effective coaching strategies, techniques, and team dynamics essential for achieving success in volleyball. Conducted with all 32 student-athletes from a private university in Batangas, Philippines, this research utilizes qualitative exploratory methods and thematic analysis to uncover insights into coaching effectiveness and team cohesion. The total number of participants reflects the entire population of student-athletes at the university, ensuring comprehensive representation. Key findings highlight the significance of personalized training programs tailored to individual needs, detailed performance feedback, innovative skill development drills, and strategic game simulations. Effective team dynamics, including strong communication, mutual trust, and resilience, are crucial for maintaining high performance and navigating competitive challenges. The study also identifies challenges in coaching, such as conflict resolution and role balancing. Recommendations include implementing tailored training plans, providing regular feedback, using innovative techniques, and fostering a supportive team environment. Future research may investigate the long-term effects of personalized training on player development across various competition levels.

Keywords: Coaching strategies, Coaching techniques, Team dynamics, Volleyball

Introduction

Volleyball, a sport renowned for its dynamic play and strategic complexity, demands more than just physical ability. Effective coaching and cohesive team dynamics are crucial elements that influence a team's success. As teams compete at various levels, from local tournaments to national championships, the impact of coaching strategies and team cohesion becomes increasingly apparent. Fatimah et al. (2024) emphasize that effective coaching profoundly affects player development and overall team success, while robust team dynamics create a collaborative environment that enhances performance.

In competitive sports, coaching extends beyond merely refining technical skills; it encompasses nurturing players' growth through personalized attention and strategic guidance (Chen, 2024). Tailored training programs that address individual strengths and weaknesses have proven to significantly boost players' abilities and contribute to team success. Moreover, innovative coaching techniques such as targeted skill drills and strategic game simulations prepare athletes for real-match scenarios, enhancing their adaptability and strategic thinking.

Equally significant are the dynamics within the team. Torres (2024) underscores that successful volleyball teams often demonstrate strong communication, trust, and mutual support among members, which are essential for maintaining high morale and effective performance. Team cohesion, marked by unity and a shared purpose, plays a crucial role in achieving success on the court. The ability to manage pressure and adapt to changing situations further highlights the importance of resilience in competitive sports.

Despite their importance, both coaching and team dynamics present challenges. Coaches must adeptly handle issues related to conflict resolution, role balancing, and continuous adjustments to team strategies. When left unaddressed, these issues can hinder player development and disrupt team harmony. Hence, thoughtful and proactive management of these dynamics is vital to maintain focus and unity.

The necessity of conducting this research stems from the increasing competitiveness of collegiate volleyball and the rising expectations placed upon coaches and athletes. In the context of a private university in Batangas, understanding the specific coaching strategies and team dynamics that contribute to performance can provide actionable insights for sports program development. While numerous studies have examined coaching or cohesion individually, limited research has explored the interrelationship between these two factors from the perspective of student-athletes in the local setting.

This study is therefore timely and relevant. By analyzing the lived experiences of all 32 student-athletes the entire population of the university's volleyball teams this research provides a holistic and context-specific understanding of what drives success in collegiate volleyball. The findings will not only inform better coaching practices and foster stronger team dynamics but also contribute to the academic literature on sports psychology, leadership, and team management in the Philippine context. This research offers practical implications for coaches, athletic program administrators, and educators, aiming to enhance athlete development, promote resilience, and improve team performance through evidence-based strategies. Its significance lies in its potential to guide the continuous improvement of coaching practices and the cultivation of unified, high-performing teams.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore coaching strategies, techniques, and team dynamics in volleyball success as revealed by student-athletes. The goal is to formulate actionable recommendations based on the analysis of these factors to enhance overall team performance and success.

Specifically, this aims to:

1. Identify effective volleyball coaching strategies and techniques
2. Explore the role of team dynamics in volleyball success
3. Analyze the challenges in coaching and team dynamics
4. Formulate actionable suggestions to build a winning volleyball team

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design using thematic analysis to investigate the coaching strategies, techniques, and team dynamics that contribute to a successful volleyball team. The exploratory nature of this research aims to gain in-depth insights into the experiences of student-athletes, focusing on how coaching strategies and team dynamics influence their performance and overall team success.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted within the volleyball program of a private university in Batangas, Philippines. The participants included 32 student-athletes, comprising 16 men and 16 women, who have been actively involved in the university's volleyball team. These athletes have competed in various local, regional, and national tournaments for two academic years, and their extensive experience in competitive play, along with their history of success, makes them ideal participants for this study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), with permission obtained from the university and the sports department. Separate FGDs were held for the men's and women's volleyball teams to capture gender-specific experiences and perspectives. The discussions were conducted in a private, comfortable setting within the university to encourage open and candid dialogue.

A semi-structured discussion guide was utilized, featuring questions designed to explore various aspects of coaching and team dynamics. Key questions included: What specific coaching strategies have been most effective in improving individual performance? Can you describe particular techniques used by your coach that impact the team's success? How do coaches tailor their techniques for different skill levels within the team? Are there specific drills or exercises that have been instrumental in your development? How do team dynamics contribute to achieving success in volleyball, and can you provide examples of how teamwork and communication have influenced performance? Participants were also asked about challenges faced in coaching and team dynamics, and how these challenges have been addressed or could be improved. The FGDs were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and additional notes were taken to capture observations and non-verbal cues. These recordings and notes served as the primary data for thematic analysis.

As both the coach and the researcher, there is a potential for bias in the responses collected. Recognizing this, steps were taken to mitigate any influence of my dual role on the study's outcomes. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to the participants to promote

honest feedback. Furthermore, efforts were made to minimize my influence on the responses, including the use of an independent facilitator to conduct the FGDs and ensure a neutral environment for data collection.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were analyzed using thematic analysis (Schreier, 2012) to identify and interpret patterns related to coaching strategies, techniques, and team dynamics. The process began with transcribing the FGDs verbatim, ensuring an accurate representation of participants' responses, and reviewing facilitator notes to capture additional context. Initial coding was performed by examining the transcripts line-by-line to generate codes that represented significant concepts and ideas related to the research questions. These codes were then grouped into broader themes based on their similarities and relationships.

The development of themes was an iterative process, involving constant comparison and refinement to ensure they accurately reflected the data. Preliminary themes were reviewed and refined through multiple iterations, re-examining the data to ensure comprehensiveness and relevance. The final themes were validated against the original transcripts to confirm their accuracy.

To ensure the accuracy and clarity of the data for international readers, the researcher sought the assistance of a grammarian to translate the responses from the original language to English. This step was crucial for presenting the findings to a broader audience. The translated responses were reviewed and approved by the athletes to ensure that the translations accurately reflected their intended meanings.

The analysis culminated in organizing and summarizing the themes in relation to the study's objectives, highlighting key findings that provide insights into effective coaching strategies, techniques, and team dynamics. This approach allowed for a detailed narrative on the factors contributing to volleyball success, aiding the researcher in formulating actionable recommendations to enhance team performance.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), ensuring they understood the research purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by anonymizing participants and securely storing audio recordings and transcripts. The research adhered to ethical guidelines set by the university's research ethics board. Participants were assured that their responses would be used exclusively for research purposes and would not affect their status within the university or the team. Throughout the data collection and analysis phases, ethical practices were upheld to respect participants' rights and ensure the integrity of the research.

Results

The succeeding tables present a comprehensive analysis of the findings from the Focus Group Discussions, highlighting key themes related to effective coaching strategies, the role of team dynamics, and challenges encountered in coaching and team interactions.

I. Identified Effective Volleyball Coaching Strategies and Techniques

Table 1 presents the effective volleyball coaching strategies and techniques identified in the study. It details themes and subthemes related to personalized training, performance feedback, skill drills, and game simulations, showcasing how these strategies enhance team performance.

Table 1 Identified Effective Volleyball Coaching Strategies and Techniques

Themes	Subthemes	Exemplar Texts
Effective Coaching Strategies	Personalized Training Programs	Our coach creates specific training plans tailored to each player’s strengths and weaknesses. [p20]
		I really appreciate how the coach adjusts the drills to fit my specific needs. [p3]
		The individualized attention during practice helps me focus on my areas for improvement. [p14]
	Detailed Performance Feedback	We receive regular, detailed feedback on our performance, which helps us improve quickly. [p23]
Innovative Techniques	Skill Development Drills	The coach’s feedback after each match is always thorough and actionable. [p10]
		Knowing exactly what to work on based on the coach’s detailed observations has been crucial for my development. [p7]
		The skill drills, like the targeted serving practice, have significantly enhanced our technique. [p1]
		Our coach introduced new drills that have really improved our ball control. [p18]
	Strategic Game Simulations	Specific drills tailored to individual skills have been a game-changer for us. [p4]
Simulating game scenarios during practice helps us prepare better for real matches. [p23]		
Practicing with game-like situations makes a huge difference when we face actual opponents. [p13]		
		The coach's use of game simulations in training has made us more adaptable and strategic during matches. [p5]

Legend: p1-p32 -participants 1-32

As reflected in the table, personalized training programs emerged as a significant factor in player development. Athletes particularly valued the customized training plans that addressed their individual strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, this tailored approach allows for targeted improvement, enabling players to focus on specific areas and enhance their overall performance. Therefore, the effectiveness of such individualized attention underscores its importance in optimizing player growth.

Moreover, detailed performance feedback is another crucial element. Athletes appreciated the regular and thorough feedback provided by the coach, which offers actionable insights after each match. In turn, this continuous feedback helps players understand their performance, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments. Thus, the emphasis on detailed observations reveals the critical role of constructive criticism in fostering ongoing development.

Furthermore, innovative skill development drills have also proven to be effective. The introduction of targeted drills, such as specific serving practices, has significantly enhanced players' techniques and ball control. This implies that incorporating specialized drills into training programs can effectively address individual skill areas and contribute to overall team improvement.

Additionally, strategic game simulations have been highlighted as a valuable training technique. Practicing game-like scenarios helps athletes prepare for real match situations, improving their adaptability and strategic thinking. As a result, this method allows players to handle game pressures and adjust strategies effectively, which is crucial for competitive performance.

In summary, the strategies and techniques identified personalized training programs, detailed performance feedback, innovative skill development drills, and strategic game simulations demonstrate a comprehensive approach to enhancing volleyball performance. Collectively, these methods support player development and contribute to team success.

II. Role of Team Dynamics in Volleyball Success

Table 2 illustrates the critical role of team dynamics in achieving volleyball success. The table emphasizes the importance of effective communication, trust and support, team cohesion, adaptability, and the ability to handle pressure in fostering a successful and cohesive team environment.

Table 2 Role of Team Dynamics in Volleyball Success

Themes	Subthemes	Exemplar Texts
Team Collaboration	Effective Communication	Good communication on the court helps us anticipate each other’s moves and coordinate better. [p2]
		We constantly talk to each other during games, which keeps everyone on the same page. [p9]
		Clear and open communication has been crucial for our success in tight matches. [p10]
	Trust and Support	Trusting each other and having each other’s backs makes a huge difference in our performance. [p20]
When we support each other, even after mistakes, it keeps our morale high. [p29]		
Team Resilience	Team Cohesion	The trust we have as a team helps us recover quickly from setbacks during games. [p32]
		Our strong sense of unity helps us stay focused and work together towards our goals. [p19]
	Adaptability and Flexibility	Team cohesion is critical; we support each other both on and off the court. [p23]
		Being able to adapt to different game situations quickly is crucial for our success. [p4]
Handling Pressure	Handling Pressure	We adjust our strategies based on the opponents and game flow, which helps us stay competitive. [p12]
		Staying calm and focused under pressure is key to performing well in high-stakes matches. [p22]
		We have learned to manage stress and support each other through challenging moments. [p11]

Legend: p1-p32 -participants 1-32

Effective communication emerges as a crucial factor. Athletes consistently reported that good communication on the court enhances their ability to anticipate each other's moves and coordinate actions. Furthermore, constant dialogue during games helps maintain alignment and effectiveness, which is particularly vital during close matches. Thus, the importance of clear and open communication in fostering synchronized and successful team performance is evident.

In addition, the role of trust and support within the team cannot be understated. Players noted that mutual trust and support significantly impact their performance. Specifically, the ability to back each other up and maintain morale after mistakes contributes to quick recovery and overall team success. Consequently, fostering a supportive environment is critical for sustaining high performance levels.

Moreover, team cohesion is highlighted as another essential factor. Athletes emphasized that a strong sense of unity helps them stay focused and work collaboratively

towards shared goals. To illustrate, supporting each other both on and off the court strengthens team cohesion, which is crucial for achieving collective success. Team resilience reveals the importance of adaptability and pressure management. Athletes described how the ability to adjust strategies according to game situations is vital for competitiveness. Additionally, staying calm under pressure and managing stress effectively are crucial for high-stakes matches. Therefore, adaptability and resilience are key to navigating the challenges of competitive play.

III. Challenges in Coaching and Team Dynamics

Table 3 outlines the key challenges encountered in coaching and team dynamics, focusing on team interaction issues and integration and adaptation challenges. It details themes such as conflict resolution, role balancing, cohesion building, and adaptability to changes.

Table 3 Challenges in Coaching and Team Dynamics

Themes	Subthemes	Exemplar Texts
Team Interaction Issues	Conflict Resolution	Addressing conflicts swiftly is crucial to maintaining focus and avoiding disruptions during matches. [p4]
		Handling disagreements constructively helps keep the team united and focused. [p32]
	Balancing Roles	Ensuring a balance in team roles is essential for effective contributions from all members. [p24]
		Aligning individual strengths with team needs has significantly enhanced our overall performance. [p17]
Integration and Adaptation Challenges	Cohesion Building	Building a strong sense of team cohesion requires ongoing effort and activities. [p5]
	Adaptability to Changes	Adapting to changes in team dynamics or strategy can be challenging but necessary. [p19]
		Flexibility in roles and strategies helps us adjust to unexpected situations effectively. [p21]

Legend: p1-p32 -participants 1-32

Team Interaction Issues highlight critical aspects of managing team relationships. Effective conflict resolution is essential for maintaining team focus and cohesion, emphasizing the need for swift and constructive handling of disagreements to prevent disruptions and uphold team unity. Balancing roles within the team is also crucial; ensuring that each member's strengths align with team needs enhances overall performance and supports effective contributions from all members, which is vital for team success.

Integration and Adaptation Challenges underscore the ongoing efforts required to build and maintain team cohesion. Developing a strong sense of unity demands continuous activities and shared experiences to reinforce team bonds. Additionally, adaptability to changes in team dynamics or strategies is necessary for navigating unforeseen circumstances. Flexibility in roles and strategies enables the team to adjust effectively, which is crucial for overcoming challenges and sustaining competitive performance.

Discussions

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into effective volleyball coaching strategies, the critical role of team dynamics, and the challenges faced in coaching and team interactions. The results highlight several key themes, including the importance of personalized training, effective communication, team cohesion, and adaptability, as well as the challenges related to conflict resolution and role balancing.

The study's results underscore the significance of personalized training programs. Athletes valued training plans tailored to their specific strengths and weaknesses, which facilitated targeted improvements and enhanced overall performance. This aligns with research on individualized coaching, which suggests that customized training approaches can significantly impact player development by addressing unique needs and fostering growth (Childs, 2024). The effectiveness of detailed performance feedback, as revealed in the study, further supports the notion that regular, actionable insights are crucial for continuous improvement. This feedback mechanism helps players understand their performance and make necessary adjustments, a process that is vital for skill development and competitive success (Khatkar & Chaudhary, 2023).

Innovative techniques such as skill development drills and strategic game simulations emerged as pivotal in enhancing players' techniques and adaptability. Targeted drills improved specific skills like serving and ball control, reflecting the importance of focused practice in skill acquisition (Yevtushenko, et al., 2023). Game simulations, on the other hand, prepared players for real match scenarios, which is crucial for adapting strategies and handling game pressures. This approach is consistent with studies suggesting that practice in game-like conditions enhances performance by improving tactical understanding and adaptability (Endo et al., 2023).

Moreover, effective communication, trust, and support within the team were identified as critical for achieving success. The results demonstrate that good communication helps players anticipate each other's moves and coordinate effectively, which is essential for team cohesion and performance (Low et al., 2021). Trust and mutual support also play a significant role in maintaining high morale and quick recovery from setbacks, reflecting the importance of psychological safety and team morale in sports (Kumbar & Patil, 2024). Additionally, team cohesion emerged as a key factor in maintaining focus and working collaboratively towards goals. The emphasis on unity both on and off the court highlights the integral role of strong interpersonal relationships in fostering a supportive and successful team environment (Qi & Villanueva, 2024).

In addition, the study also highlighted team resilience, particularly in terms of adaptability and handling pressure. The ability to adjust strategies based on game situations and stay calm under pressure is crucial for competitive performance. This finding aligns with research on psychological resilience in sports, which emphasizes the need for flexibility and stress management in achieving success (López-Gajardo et al., 2022).

The challenges identified, including conflict resolution, balancing roles, and adapting to changes, underscore the complexities of managing team dynamics. Effective conflict resolution is essential for maintaining team focus and unity, preventing disruptions that could affect performance (Leis et al., 2023). Balancing roles within the team ensures that all members contribute effectively, which is vital for maximizing team potential and performance (Jaiyeoba et al., 2023). Integration and adaptation challenges further reveal that building team cohesion requires ongoing effort and activities to foster unity. This involves creating opportunities for team bonding and addressing issues related to changes in team dynamics or strategies. As mentioned by Efek & Eryigit (2022), flexibility in roles and strategies helps teams navigate

unexpected situations, which is crucial for maintaining competitive performance and overcoming challenges.

In sum, the study highlights the critical role of personalized training programs and detailed performance feedback in enhancing volleyball player development and performance. Incorporating targeted skill drills and game simulations is crucial for improving technical abilities and adaptability. Effective communication, trust, and team cohesion are essential for fostering a successful team environment. Developing resilience, including adaptability and stress management, is vital for navigating competitive pressures. Addressing challenges such as conflict resolution and role balancing is necessary for optimizing team dynamics. Thus, a comprehensive coaching approach that integrates these elements can significantly boost team performance and cohesion.

Conclusion and suggestions

This study highlights the significance of a comprehensive approach to volleyball coaching that integrates personalized training, detailed performance feedback, and innovative techniques. Personalized training programs, tailored to individual strengths and weaknesses, are essential for enhancing player development and performance. Detailed feedback, provided regularly and thoughtfully, enables players to understand and address their specific areas for improvement, fostering continuous growth. The use of skill development drills and strategic game simulations proves crucial for refining technical skills and preparing players for real-match scenarios, thereby enhancing adaptability and strategic thinking.

Effective team dynamics, marked by strong communication, mutual trust, and cohesion, are vital for achieving success. Building and maintaining team cohesion through activities that strengthen unity and support is essential for high morale and performance. Furthermore, team resilience, including adaptability and pressure management, is critical for navigating competitive challenges and maintaining consistent performance levels. Addressing challenges such as conflict resolution and role balancing is also necessary for optimizing team interactions and ensuring effective contributions from all members.

To enhance volleyball coaching and team success, coaches may implement personalized training plans that cater to each player's specific needs. Regular and detailed performance feedback should be provided to facilitate ongoing improvement. Incorporating innovative training techniques, such as skill drills and game simulations, will help players develop their technical abilities and strategic understanding. Promoting effective communication within the team will improve coordination and effectiveness, while fostering team cohesion and mutual support will sustain high performance. Additionally, developing resilience through adaptability and stress management training is crucial for handling competitive pressures. Finally, addressing conflict resolution and role balancing will help maintain team focus and unity. For future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term effects of personalized training programs on player development across different levels of competition.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

This study contributes new knowledge by offering a comprehensive qualitative exploration of coaching effectiveness and team cohesion from the perspectives of student-athletes in a private university in Batangas, Philippines. It presents a novel approach by examining not only coaching strategies but also the interpersonal dynamics within the team, thus providing a holistic view of factors influencing athletic performance. What sets this study apart is its emphasis on personalized training programs, detailed performance feedback, and innovative techniques that cater to the individual needs of each player. In doing so, it highlights how tailored coaching can significantly enhance both individual development and overall team success. Moreover, the study addresses less frequently discussed challenges in team sports such as conflict resolution, role clarity, and resilience-building, offering practical strategies for managing these issues within a collegiate sports environment.

Beyond academic contribution, the study has meaningful implications for society and local communities. By encouraging more effective coaching practices, it has the potential to uplift the quality of sports programs in educational institutions and local sports organizations. Improved team dynamics can foster environments that promote empathy, collaboration, and mutual respect among athletes, which are essential qualities not only in sports but also in everyday social interactions. These values, when cultivated through team sports, can contribute to the development of responsible and resilient individuals. Furthermore, the lessons drawn from this research are applicable to other sports and team-based initiatives, making the findings valuable for a wide range of settings. This research promotes a culture of performance excellence and collaboration that benefits the broader community by nurturing youth who are adaptable, disciplined, and committed to shared goals.

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be offered to key stakeholders. Coaches and trainers are encouraged to adopt individualized training methods and provide consistent, constructive feedback to support players' growth. They should also prioritize fostering trust, open communication, and mutual respect among team members through regular team-building exercises and clear role definition. When conflicts or misunderstandings arise, strategic interventions should be implemented promptly to maintain a positive team atmosphere. For sports program coordinators and school administrators, investing in professional development for coaches particularly in areas like team psychology, adaptive leadership, and communication is highly recommended. Institutional policies should also support collaborative and inclusive coaching practices that reinforce teamwork and resilience.

Student-athletes, on the other hand, are encouraged to engage actively in self-reflection, peer collaboration, and constructive feedback processes to enhance their individual and team development. Local government units and community sports organizations can use this study as a basis to design youth programs that mirror these best practices, promoting both athletic excellence and personal development. Lastly, future researchers may build upon this study by conducting comparative investigations across different sports or institutions, or by exploring the long-term effects of various coaching styles on athlete performance and retention. These practical suggestions aim to bridge the gap between research and real-world application, ensuring that the insights from this study can drive meaningful improvements in sports and education.

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