

Support systems and the experiences of learner athletes in San Jose National High School

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Abstract

This study examined the level of support systems and the experiences of learner athletes at San Jose National High School. Grounded in Role Strain Theory and Holistic Wellness Theory, it aimed to determine the level and effectiveness of support systems and the experiences of learner-athletes in terms of academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health. An exploratory sequential design was employed, in which qualitative data were gathered through interviews to inform the development of a validated survey questionnaire administered to 80 learner athletes. Findings reveal that learner-athletes experience significant challenges in academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health. These three interrelated areas reflect the strain of balancing the academic and athletic demands of learner-athletes. Moreover, learner-athletes perceive a high level of support systems in academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support. However, the level of experiences in academic, mental, and physical domains also includes difficulties in time management, stress and anxiety, fatigue, and injuries. The results indicate that these support systems are not always sufficient to address the demands that learner-athletes face. Statistical analysis further showed that, while academic experiences were not significantly related to support systems, mental well-being and physical health were significantly associated with specific types of support systems. The study concludes that learner-athletes experience significant role strain, highlighting the need for more structured, integrated, and proactive support systems. Based on the findings, a comprehensive action plan, the ATHLETE Thrive, was proposed to strengthen support systems and enhance overall learner-athlete development.

Keywords: learner-athletes, support systems, academic performance, mental well-being, physical health

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1. Introduction

Being a learner-athlete entails both privilege and responsibility, as it requires balancing academic requirements with training and competition. In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 10676 and DepEd Order No. 052, s. In 2021, define learner-athletes as learners who represent their schools in athletic competitions while continuing their education. Their success and well-being largely depend on the support systems provided by teachers, coaches, and school administrators, who help them manage the demands of academic and athletic roles. However, this dual responsibility exposes learner-athletes to physical, mental, and academic challenges, especially when support systems are insufficient. Studies show that without adequate institutional support, learner-athletes may struggle to maintain academic performance and overall well-being. Navarro et al. (2017) found that academic advising, mentoring, and faculty support significantly help learner-athletes manage dual roles. Similarly, Comeaux & Harrison (2011) emphasized that academic assistance programs, such as tutoring and study halls, help them cope with demanding schedules. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (2022) further reported that collaboration among teachers, coaches, and counselors enhances academic engagement and motivation. In terms of mental health, a supportive school environment plays a crucial role in the development of learner-athletes. As stated by Lim & Ho (2022), a positive school climate contributes to better academic outcomes, while social support from peers, coaches, and teachers improves mental health and resilience, as stated by Graupensperger et al. (2020). However, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2022) emphasized that not all schools have sufficient resources; thus, limited access to facilities, academic programs, and health services continues to challenge learner-athletes. Given these conditions, there is a need for a comprehensive school-based support program to address the physical, mental, emotional, and academic needs of learner-athletes (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2024). Thus, this study aimed to assess the level of support systems and the experiences of learner-athletes at San Jose National High School. The findings will serve as a basis for developing an action plan that promotes balance, well-being, and holistic development.

Statement of the Problem - This study examined the support provided by San Jose National High School to learner-athletes, focusing on their academic, mental, emotional, and physical aspects. It also investigated their experiences in balancing academic and athletic responsibilities and explored the relationship between school support and these experiences. The findings were intended to inform the development of a program to better assist learner-athletes in managing their dual roles. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What are the experiences of the learner-athletes in San Jose National High School? (2) What is the level of support systems for learner athletes in terms of academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support? (3) What is the level of experience of the learner athletes in terms of academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health? (4) Is there a significant relationship between the level of support systems and the level of experiences of the learner athletes? (5) What action plan may be proposed to the school to enhance their learner athletes' support?

Significance of the Study - This study is significant to several stakeholders. For learner-athletes, the researcher believes that they will gain a deeper understanding of their shared experiences and the support systems that can enhance both their academic and athletic performance. For school heads, the findings may serve as a basis for planning and implementing effective school-based support system programs. Teachers may benefit from becoming more responsive and flexible in addressing the needs of these learners, particularly regarding academic support, time considerations, and instructional strategies. Teacher-coaches and trainers may gain insights that will help them adjust their instructional and coaching approaches to better support learner-athletes. Parents and guardians may become more aware of how to support their children's academic and athletic journeys in partnership with the

school. Moreover, the study may assist DepEd officials in coordinating programs, policies, and support services for teachers, coaches, trainers, and staff involved in the development of learner-athletes. The Local Government Unit of San Jose may also use the findings as a basis for more effective resource allocation and for identifying areas where support for learner athletes can be strengthened. Finally, this study may serve as a guide or reference for future researchers who intend to explore similar topics and conduct more in-depth investigations in this field.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - This study focused on the support systems provided for learner athletes in terms of academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support, as well as their experiences in relation to academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health. It aimed to examine how these support systems influence the overall experiences of learner-athletes within the school setting. The study involved 80 learner-athletes, aged 14 to 17 years, who represented the school at the Area Sports Meet for the School Year 2025–2026. These participants were selected as they directly experienced the demands of balancing academic responsibilities and athletic commitments. The findings of the study are limited to the selected respondents and the specific context of San Jose National High School. Thus, the results may not be generalized to learner-athletes from other schools or to those involved in different levels of competition. The scope of the study is further confined to the School Year 2025–2026, focusing on the support systems and experiences within this period.

2. Methodology

Research Design - The study employed an exploratory sequential design. It is an approach in which the researcher collects and analyses qualitative and quantitative data in a specific order, with each phase building on the results of the previous one (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The purpose is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the level of the available support systems and experiences of the learner athletes. In the first phase, qualitative data were collected through interviews with selected learner athletes to identify their experiences. The findings from this phase served as the basis for developing and refining a researcher-made questionnaire. In the second phase, quantitative data were collected via a survey administered to the officially recognized learner-athletes at San Jose National High School. The variables related to the experiences of learner athletes, particularly academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health, were derived from interviews conducted during the qualitative phase of the research. Readings and related literature informed the support systems for learner athletes, ensuring that the constructs were grounded in established research. These variables were then incorporated into the survey instrument and measured during this phase to determine the relationship between school support and learner athletes' experiences.

Respondents of the Study - The study was conducted at San Jose National High School, located in Bagong Sikat, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The school had a total population of approximately 4,000 students and accommodated about 80 learner-athletes aged 14 to 17 who actively represented the school in various sports at area meets. The researcher employed complete enumeration and asked them to assess the school's support systems and their experiences as learner-athletes.

Research Instrument - The first instrument used in this study was the interview guide. An interview was conducted with 15 randomly selected learner athletes from San Jose National High School. In the quantitative phase, a researcher-made questionnaire, based on findings from a review of related literature and existing tools on learner-athletes' well-being and support systems, was utilized. The first part of the questionnaire assessed the level of support systems for learner athletes, particularly academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support. Responses were rated using a 4-point Likert scale: 4 – Strongly Agree, 3 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree. The second part of the questionnaire assessed the extent of learner-athletes' experiences in academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health, using the same 4-point Likert scale.

To ensure the validity of the researcher-made instrument, a team of three graduate school professors from Divine Word College of San Jose brought their expertise and insights to ensure the clarity and appropriateness of the statements. The feedback and recommendations from the professors were incorporated into the questionnaire

draft to enhance its potential to generate valuable data for the research. A total of 30 respondents participated in the pilot testing phase of the instrument, and all responses were considered valid, with no data excluded. The 48-item research survey on learner athletes is divided into two main parts: (1) the level of support systems available to them and (2) the experiences encountered by learner athletes. The reliability of the research instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha for standardized items to assess internal consistency. The six scales include academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support for support systems, followed by academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health for learner-athletes' experiences. The table below summarizes the consistency across the different scales of support systems and experiences.

Table 1*Result of Reliability Analysis*

Scale (8 items each)	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficient*	Analysis
I. Level of Support Systems			
A. Academic Assistance	8	.803	High Reliability
B. Mental and Emotional Support	8	.841	High Reliability
C. Physical Support	8	.837	High Reliability
II. Experiences of the Learner Athletes			
A. Academic Performance	8	.905	Very High Reliability
B. Mental Well-being	8	.908	Very High Reliability
C. Physical Health	8	.898	High Reliability

*Based on Standardized Items

The experience scales showed higher internal consistency than the support scales. In fact, the mental well-being experiences scale achieved the highest reliability of .908, closely followed by .905. The three support-related scales produced very similar results, ranging from .803 to .841, indicating a high and stable level of reliability across the different types of support measured. The results from the reliability analysis demonstrated high internal consistency across all six scales, as coefficients exceeded the generally accepted threshold of .70. The overall results provide the necessary statistical justification to proceed to further inferential testing.

Data Gathering Procedure - The researcher complied with the Department of Education's requirements by securing approval from the Schools Division Superintendent. Permission was then obtained from the School Principal of San Jose National High School to conduct the study. Parental consent forms were also distributed and signed prior to data collection to ensure ethical compliance. With the necessary approvals in place, the researcher personally administered the survey questionnaires to respondents during their free time or after training sessions. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and confidentiality was assured. After one week, the questionnaires were collected to ensure completeness of responses. The qualitative phase was conducted through personal interviews using the guide question: "What are your experiences as learner-athletes?" Selected learner-athletes, along with some coaches and teachers, participated in a discussion facilitated by the researcher to provide deeper insights into the support systems. The interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initial, developing, and final thematic maps were created to identify and refine the key themes emerging from the data. Finally, all collected data were organized, summarized, analyzed, and interpreted with the guidance of the research adviser and statistician.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - For qualitative data, the researcher employed thematic analysis to explore the variables. At the same time, the quantitative data addressed the descriptive problems and were processed using the statistical software SPSS version 26. For the inferential problems and the hypothesis, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used, and results were generated using WarpPLS version 7.0. To describe the responses, frequencies and percentages were used. A 4-point Likert Scale was also employed. For the qualitative data, responses to interview questions were analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers carefully reviewed and organized the responses to identify common patterns, recurring ideas, and meaningful insights related to the experiences of learner-athletes. These responses were then grouped into themes that supported and enriched the quantitative findings, providing a deeper understanding of how support systems influence participants'

academic, mental, and physical experiences.

Ethical Considerations - The researcher acknowledged all the sources used as references in this study. The American Psychological Association (APA) citation was used to acknowledge the ideas of researchers and authors. This study aimed only to contribute to educational innovation and did not cause harm to anyone involved. The researcher asked permission from the school's division superintendent and the school principal of San Jose National High School to gather data for the study. The research instrument was also explained in detail to the learner-athletes. During the administration of the instrument, the survey questionnaire was distributed personally during their vacant time or after training hours. The confidentiality of the respondents' data was assured. It was guaranteed that all data and results gathered would be used exclusively for the study.

3. Results and Discussions

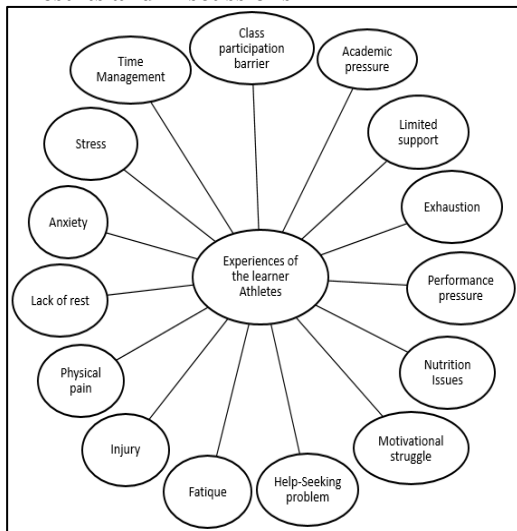


Figure 1. Initial Thematic Map of Experiences: of Learner Athletes

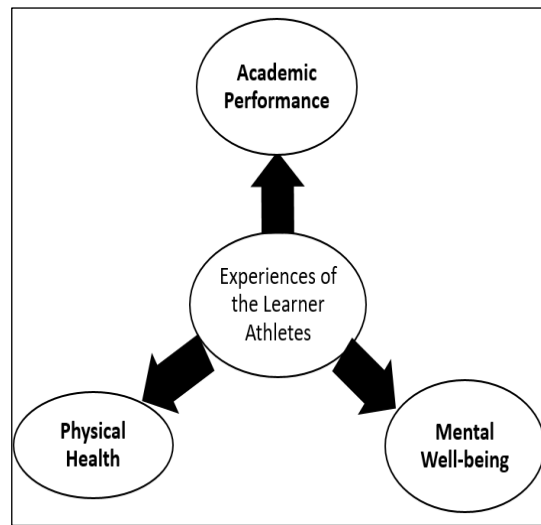


Figure 2. Final Thematic Map of Experiences of Learner Athletes

Figure 1 shows that, based on the interview, the respondents' challenges and difficulties were initially described using themes that emerged. Following the collection, transcription, coding, and extraction of responses, the themes were displayed in the thematic map. The fifteen (15) responses were time management, class participation, academic pressure, limited support, nutrition and health issues, lack of rest and recovery, injury and physical pain, fatigue and exhaustion, stress and anxiety, emotional burnout, motivational struggles, and help-seeking barriers. The final three themes in Figure 2 formed the foundation of the questionnaire, which covered academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health experiences. Learner-athletes who experience difficulties with time management, attending classes, and completing academic tasks tend to show lower academic performance due to the competing demands of training and school responsibilities. This is supported by Navarro et al. (2020) and Cuzzamu and Salcedo (2022), who explained that time constraints and rigid academic structures can lead to difficulties in completing schoolwork and maintaining performance. This supports the present study's theme of academic strain and adjustment. In addition, studies by Tenenbaum (2016) and Putukian (2016) emphasized that learner athletes are more vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion due to performance pressure and high expectations. Luo et al. (2025) further highlighted that social support plays a significant role in reducing psychological distress, reinforcing the mental and emotional pressures experienced by learner athletes.

Furthermore, Mountjoy (2018) and Fiedler et al. (2023) highlighted that fatigue, injuries, and inadequate recovery negatively affects both physical performance and overall functioning. Hamlin et al. (2021) also emphasized that a lack of rest increases the risk of injury and reduces concentration. These findings support the theme of physical health constraints in this research.

Table 2

Mean Level of Support Systems for Learner Athletes in Terms of Academic Assistance, Mental and Emotional Support and Physical Support

Academic Assistance	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school provides academic support, such as tutoring or study halls, for athletes.	2.70	High
2. Teachers provide consideration for missed classes or assignments due to training or competitions.	3.03	High
3. Guidance counsellors help learner-athletes manage their academic schedules.	2.94	High
4. Coaches encourage academic success alongside sports performance.	3.46	Very High
5. The adviser monitors the academic progress of learner athletes regularly.	3.33	Very High
6. The school provides flexible learning options, like make-up sessions for athletes during sports events.	2.88	High
7. There is open communication among teachers, coaches, and counselors to support learner athletes' academic needs.	3.16	High
8. The school provides guidance or orientation to help learner athletes balance their academic and athletic responsibilities.	3.11	High
Composite Mean	3.08	High
Mental and Emotional Support		
1. The school provides counseling or mental health services for athletes.	2.94	High
2. Teachers show concern for athletes' emotional well-being.	3.11	High
3. There are programs that promote stress management and emotional resilience.	2.69	High
4. Learner athletes feel comfortable seeking help when emotionally distressed.	2.79	High
5. The school fosters supportive relationships among teammates, coaches, and teachers.	3.13	High
6. The school provides awareness sessions that reduce stigma about mental health and encourage help-seeking.	3.09	High
7. Mentorship programs are available to help athletes manage stress.	2.90	High
8. The school recognizes and appreciates the efforts and achievements of student-athletes, which motivates them to continue both academically and athletically.	3.10	High
Composite Mean	2.97	High
Physical Support		
1. The school provides programs or activities that help improve the physical strength of learner athletes	3.36	High
2. Training sessions are conducted in safe and well-maintained areas.	3.44	High
3. There is access to medical or first-aid services during practices.	3.28	High
4. The school promotes proper rest and recovery for athletes.	3.08	High
5. Health monitoring and fitness programs are available for learner athletes.	3.13	High
6. The school ensures that sports equipment used by learner athletes is safe and properly maintained.	3.06	High
7. Qualified staff or trainers are available to guide athletes in injury prevention.	3.12	High
8. The school provides sufficient time and schedule for training without greatly affecting academic responsibilities.	3.15	High
Composite Mean	3.20	High
Overall Mean	3.08	High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 Very High; 2.50-3.24 High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate; 1.00-1.74 Low

Table 2 presents the mean levels of support systems for learner athletes across academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support. The findings indicate that learner athletes perceive a high level of support, with a mean of 3.08. Physical support ranked highest (3.20), followed by academic assistance (3.08), while mental and emotional support received the lowest mean (2.97). Regarding physical support, the results show that learner athletes receive a high level of it. Among the three areas, this appears to be the most developed. Training sessions conducted in safe and well-maintained areas received the highest rating, suggesting that safety is a priority. Programs aimed at improving physical strength and access to medical services were also rated highly. These findings are consistent with Rosete et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of safe facilities and proper equipment in enhancing performance and preventing injuries. Promotion of rest and recovery and equipment safety also received high ratings, though slightly lower than other indicators. This may suggest that while these areas are addressed, there is still room for improvement. Padua et al. (2018) emphasized that recovery and proper equipment are essential in reducing injury risks. These results reflect a strong physical support system, particularly in terms of safety and training conditions.

Second in rank is academic assistance; the results show that learner-athletes generally receive a high level of academic support from the school, as reflected in a composite mean of 3.08. This suggests that support mechanisms are in place and are being experienced by the students, although some areas appear stronger than others. Coach encouragement and adviser monitoring obtained the highest ratings. This may indicate that individuals who directly interact with learner-athletes play a significant role in shaping their academic behavior. When coaches emphasize the importance of academic performance, students may feel more responsible not only in sports but also in their studies. This supports the findings of Comeaux and Harrison (2011), who highlighted coaches' influence on academic motivation. Similarly, regular monitoring by advisers aligns with the observations of Grandy et al. (2016), who noted that structured guidance improves accountability and performance.

Lastly, regarding mental and emotional support received, the lowest mean (2.97) indicates that support is available across areas, though certain aspects may need further attention. Supportive relationships with teammates, coaches, and teachers received the highest rating. This highlights how daily interactions contribute to students' well-being. When learner athletes feel understood and supported, it becomes easier for them to manage both academic and athletic pressures. Similar observations were made by Luo et al. (2025) and Simons and Bird (2023), who emphasized the importance of social relationships in reducing stress. Teachers who showed concern for emotional well-being and recognized students' efforts also received high ratings. These results suggest that encouragement and acknowledgement play a role in sustaining motivation.

Meanwhile, counseling services and mental health awareness efforts indicate that schools are taking steps to address psychological needs. Cosh et al. (2024) noted that access to such services can help students cope with stress, even if not all choose to use them. Lower ratings were observed in stress management programs, comfort in seeking help, and mentorship programs. Although still interpreted as high, these may reflect students' hesitation to engage with available support fully. As pointed out by Cosh et al. (2024), stigma and fear of judgment can discourage help-seeking behavior. The above findings showed that while support systems are present, creating a more open and accepting environment may encourage greater participation and utilization.

This pattern may suggest that schools tend to prioritize visible, performance-related support, such as facilities and training, over psychological support. While all areas are rated positively, the lower score for mental and emotional support suggests it may require further strengthening. The results support the idea that a balanced approach is necessary. As noted by Stambulova et al. (2020), effective support systems should integrate academic, physical, and psychosocial dimensions.

Table 3 presents the learner-athletes' experiences regarding academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health. All indicators obtained composite means ranging from 2.72 to 2.76, with an overall mean of 2.74, interpreted as High. This means that learner-athletes regularly face considerable challenges in balancing school and sports. In terms of academic performance, the results show that learner-athletes often struggle with time management, meeting deadlines, and balancing training with academic requirements. This aligns with Navarro et al. (2020), who explained that learner-athletes often face academic difficulties due to overlapping schedules and limited study time. Cuzzamu and Salcedo (2022) also pointed out that rigid schedules and limited academic flexibility can further intensify these challenges. This suggests that academic pressure remains a major concern for learner-athletes. In terms of mental well-being, these findings indicate that learner athletes experience emotional strain, such as stress and anxiety. Tenenbaum (2016) noted that athletes often experience psychological pressure due to performance expectations and multiple responsibilities. While Putukian (2016) added that emotional exhaustion and burnout are common among learner athletes when coping mechanisms and support systems are limited. This highlights the continuing need for stronger mental health support in schools.

Table 3

Mean Level of Experiences of Learner Athletes in Terms of Academic Performance, Mental Well-being, and Physical Health

Academic Performance	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I struggle to complete schoolwork due to training schedules.	2.90	High
I find it difficult to focus on lessons after training or games.	2.66	High
I often miss classes due to athletic commitments.	2.62	High
I find it difficult to maintain strong academic performance while participating in sports activities.	2.78	High
I have difficulty organizing my study schedule because of my sports training and competitions.	2.83	High
I sometimes fail to meet academic deadlines because of sports commitments.	2.69	High
I feel that limited access to academic assistance affects my school performance.	2.72	High
I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the combined demands of academic requirements and sports training.	2.86	High
Composite Mean	2.76	High
Mental Well-Being Experiences		
1. I feel stressed about balancing academics and sports.	2.59	High
2. I experience anxiety before or during competitions.	2.68	High
3. I sometimes feel emotionally exhausted or burned out.	2.76	High
4. I find it difficult to relax or take breaks because of my academic and athletic responsibilities.	2.73	High
5. I feel pressured to perform well in both academics and sports.	2.70	High
6. I hesitate to ask for emotional or mental support because of fear of judgment.	2.89	High
7. I lose motivation or focus when stress and anxiety become overwhelming.	2.61	High
8. I sometimes worry about not meeting the expectations of both my teachers and coaches.	2.89	High
Composite Mean	2.73	High
Physical Health Experiences		
1. I often feel fatigued due to training and school activities.	2.81	High
2. I experience muscle pain or injuries that affect my performance.	2.83	High
3. I have limited time for rest and recovery.	2.79	High
4. I experience sleep deprivation due to my schedule.	2.61	High
5. I find it difficult to maintain proper nutrition and physical fitness while balancing schoolwork and training.	2.54	High
6. I experience fatigue or overtraining that limits my classroom focus.	2.58	High
7. I sometimes experience illnesses or injuries that cause me to miss both training and classes.	2.79	High
8. Physical fatigue from training sometimes makes it difficult for me to actively participate in school activities.	2.80	High
Composite Mean	2.72	High
Overall Mean	2.74	High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 Very High; 2.50-3.24 High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate; 1.00-1.74 Low

Regarding physical health, the results suggest that learner-athletes frequently experience fatigue, injuries, and recovery issues. Mountjoy (2018) explained that intense training demands combined with insufficient recovery can negatively affect both physical condition and performance. Fiedler et al. (2023) also emphasized that physical strain and inadequate rest increase the risk of injury and exhaustion, which may also affect academic engagement. These notes show that learner-athletes consistently experience challenges in academic, mental, and physical areas. These findings align with related studies, which highlight the pressures of balancing dual roles. This underscores the importance of stronger school-based support systems that address academics, mental health, and physical well-being to help learner-athletes manage their responsibilities more effectively.

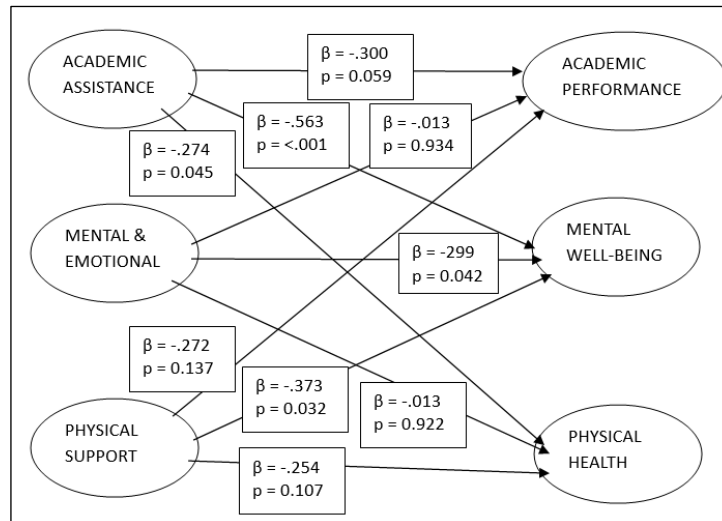


Figure 3. Structural Model of the Relationship Between the Level of Support Systems and the Learner Athletes' Experiences

Based on the structural model in Figure 3, the relationship between support systems and learner-athletes' experiences reveals several significant, albeit counterintuitive, connections. The most influential factor is Academic Assistance, which is a strong predictor of two outcomes: it has a highly significant negative impact on Mental Well-being and a significant negative impact on Physical Health. Interestingly, while it is close to the threshold, Academic Assistance does not reach statistical significance in its relationship with Academic Performance ($p = 0.059$). This finding may be explained by the literature indicating that learner-athletes often experience time constraints and competing academic and athletic demands, leading to stress and difficulty managing responsibilities (Watkins et al., 2022). Although academic assistance programs such as tutoring and advising are designed to support performance (Grandy et al., 2016), these are often provided when students are already struggling, thereby reflecting higher levels of academic strain that negatively affect their mental well-being and physical health.

In support of this, Cuzzamu and Salcedo (2022) argued that academic support does not always have a direct and significant effect on academic performance, as multiple factors, including time constraints, training demands, and personal behaviours, influence learner-athletes' outcomes. Their findings suggest that school-based support alone may be insufficient to improve academic outcomes, as other variables, such as after-school activities and student engagement, demonstrate stronger associations with performance. Furthermore, the presence of conflicting academic and athletic responsibilities may limit the effectiveness of support systems, indicating that academic performance is shaped by a complex interaction of factors rather than by academic assistance alone. Moreover, additional academic requirements may reduce time for rest and recovery, contributing to fatigue and health-related issues (Hamlin et al., 2021), which may also explain why its effect on academic performance is not statistically significant.

Subsequently, Mental and Emotional Support has a significant effect on Mental Well-being. This implies that learner athletes who receive better emotional support tend to handle stress and pressure more effectively. When support is limited, their mental well-being is more likely to be affected. This aligns with Luo et al. (2025), who found that social support helps reduce anxiety, stress, and depression among athletes. Mao (2025) also explained that psychological support improves coping and emotional regulation. Watson (2024) further stressed that mental health support is important because athletes are often exposed to high psychological demands.

Regarding Academic Performance, the relationship is not significant ($p = 0.934$). This suggests that emotional support alone does not directly improve grades or academic results. Mao (2025) explained that academic success

depends more on study habits, time management, and structured academic assistance. Ayala et al. (2024) also pointed out that cognitive and environmental factors play a bigger role in academic achievement than emotional support. The same result appears in Physical Health ($p = 0.922$), where no significant relationship was found. This means emotional support does not directly affect the physical condition of learner athletes. Pilkington et al. (2024) noted that physical health is more connected to training, recovery, and nutrition. Hu and Liu (2025) added that physical outcomes depend more on exercise behavior and self-efficacy.

The third, Physical Support, is a significant predictor of Mental Well-being. However, it unexpectedly shows no significant link to the athletes' Academic Performance ($p = 0.137$) and Physical Health ($p = 0.107$). This may be explained by the physical demands placed on learner athletes, as fatigue, injuries, and overtraining have been shown to affect academic engagement and performance negatively (Jones et al., 2017). While physical support, such as facilities, equipment, and medical services, is essential (Rosete et al., 2023; Mountjoy, 2018), its presence alone may not be sufficient to improve physical health outcomes, especially in contexts where recovery, workload management, and resources remain limited (Jaeger et al., 2023). Critically, every significant path in this model carries a negative beta coefficient. In the context of learner athletes, this suggests an inverse relationship where higher levels of reported support are associated with lower levels of well-being and performance. This often occurs in "reactive" support environments, where assistance is primarily scaled up when a learner athlete is already struggling, or it may indicate that the "support" variables are actually capturing the underlying demand or stress placed on the athlete rather than the effectiveness of the aid itself. This interpretation is consistent with the literature, which emphasizes that learner-athletes face interconnected academic, mental, and physical challenges (Stambulova, 2020) and that support systems are often implemented in response to these difficulties rather than as preventive measures. Therefore, higher levels of support systems may indicate greater underlying strain, which helps explain the consistently negative relationships observed in the model.

Table 4

Beta Coefficient of the Path and p-value for Ho₁

Path	Beta (β) Coefficient	p-value*	Interpretation
Ho: Level of Support Systems → Experiences of Learner Athletes			
ACADASST → ACADEXP	-0.300	0.059	Not Significant
MNTLSUPP → ACADEXP	-0.013	0.934	Not Significant
PHYSSUPP → ACADEXP	-0.272	0.137	Not Significant
ACADASST → MNTALWBE	-0.563	<.001	Highly Significant
MNTLSUPP → MNTALWBE	-0.299	0.042	Significant
PHYSSUPP → MNTALWBE	-0.373	0.032	Significant
ACADASST → PHYWBEXP	-0.274	0.045	Significant
MNTLSUPP → PHYWBEXP	-0.013	0.922	Not Significant
PHYSSUPP → PHYWBEXP	-0.254	0.107	Not Significant

*Significant at $p < .05$

Table 4 shows how academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support influence academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health. None of the support variables significantly predicts academic performance. Although academic assistance ($\beta = -0.300$, $p = 0.059$) approaches significance, it does not meet the 0.05 threshold. Similarly, mental and emotional support ($\beta = -0.013$, $p = 0.934$) and physical support ($\beta = -0.272$, $p = 0.137$) show no statistically significant effects. This suggests that, within this model, these forms of support do not have a direct measurable impact on students' academic performance. This may be explained by the literature, which emphasizes that learner-athletes experience time constraints and competing academic and athletic demands, making it difficult to translate support into improved academic outcomes (Navarro et al., 2020). Although academic assistance programs such as tutoring and advising are designed to enhance performance (Grandy et al., 2016), their effectiveness may be limited when students are already under significant academic pressure and workload (Watkins et al., 2022), thereby weakening their direct impact on performance. All three forms of support significantly influence mental well-being. Academic assistance shows a strong, highly significant negative effect, indicating that it is the most influential predictor among the three. Mental and emotional support, as well as physical support, also have significant negative effects. These findings suggest that variations in these

support systems are meaningfully associated with students' mental well-being. This can be supported by studies indicating that learner athletes commonly experience stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion due to the dual demands of academics and sports (Tenenbaum, 2016). Support systems are often accessed when these psychological challenges are already present, particularly as mental health services are underutilized due to stigma and fear of judgment (Cosh et al., 2024). Additionally, academic pressure and physical strain further contribute to mental stress (Watson, 2017), explaining why higher levels of reported support are associated with lower levels of mental well-being. Academic assistance has a significant negative effect on physical health. However, mental and emotional support, as well as physical support, do not significantly predict physical health. This indicates that only academic assistance shows a measurable relationship with physical health in this model. This result may be explained by the literature, which highlights that academic demands can reduce time for rest and recovery, leading to fatigue and increased health risks among learner athletes (Hamlin et al., 2021). While physical support, such as facilities, equipment, and medical services, is essential (Rosete et al., 2023; Mountjoy, 2018), its effectiveness depends on adequate recovery, workload management, and resource availability, which may still be limited in some contexts (Jaeger et al., 2023). As such, the presence of support does not necessarily translate into improved physical health outcomes.

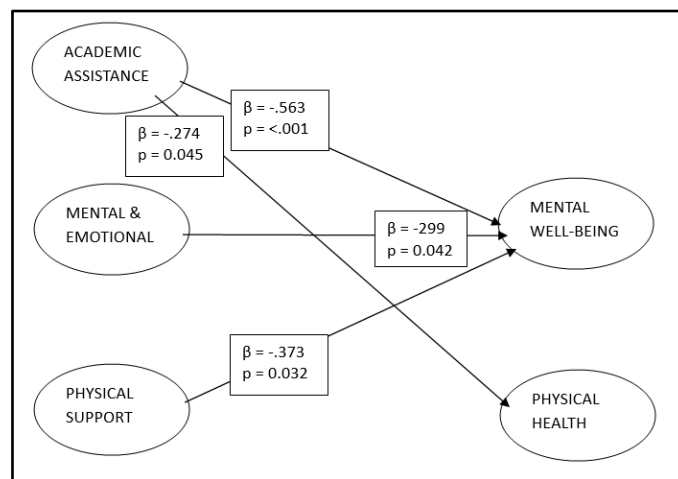


Figure 4. The Emerging Model

Figure 4 presents a streamlined version of the structural framework, in which Academic Assistance emerges as the most prominent variable, exerting a highly significant influence on Mental Well-being and a secondary, significant effect on Physical Health. Meanwhile, Mental & Emotional Support has a singular, significant impact on Mental Well-being, and Physical Support is the sole significant predictor of Academic Performance. The exclusion of non-significant paths simplifies the model and clarifies the specific "pressure points" within the support systems. However, the persistence of negative beta coefficients across all remaining pathways remains a defining characteristic of the model. This consistent inverse relationship suggests that as reported support increases, measures of well-being and performance tend to decrease. In practical terms, this may indicate that these support systems are primarily used by athletes already experiencing difficulties, suggesting a reactive rather than preventive support environment. This interpretation is supported by the literature, which indicates that learner-athletes face overlapping academic, mental, and physical demands that contribute to stress, fatigue, and performance challenges (Navarro et al., 2020). Academic assistance, while intended to support learners, is often accessed when academic strain and workload pressures are already high, which can negatively affect both mental well-being and physical health (Watkins et al., 2022; Hamlin et al., 2021). Similarly, mental and emotional support tends to be utilized when students are already experiencing psychological distress, such as anxiety and emotional exhaustion, and is further limited by stigma and barriers to help-seeking (Cosh et al., 2024; Tenenbaum, 2016). In terms of physical support, increased training demands, fatigue, and injury risk have been shown to interfere with academic engagement and performance (Jones et al., 2017), which may explain its negative association with academic performance. Moreover, the literature emphasizes that the effectiveness of support systems depends not

only on their availability but also on their quality, accessibility, and preventive nature (Mountjoy, 2018; Jaeger et al., 2023), yet these may still be insufficient to address the complex and interconnected challenges faced by learner athletes. By stripping away, the non-essential data, Figure 4 provides a clearer roadmap for understanding which specific interventions are currently linked to the athletes' lived experiences.

Table 5*Standardized Estimates of the Path in the Emerging Model*

Hypothesis	Standardised Estimates (β)	Standard Error	<i>p</i> -value*	Effect Coefficient* *	Effect Size
Ho: Level of School Support → Experiences of Learner-Athletes					
ACADASST→MNTALWBE	-.563	0.63442	<.001	.416	Large
MNTLSUPP→MNTALWBE	-.299	0.67946	0.042	.228	Medium
PHYSSUPP →MNTALWBE	-.373	0.67737	0.032	.240	Medium
ACADASST →PHYWBEXP	-.274	0.61266	0.045	.225	Medium

Table 5 shows how academic assistance, mental and emotional support, and physical support influence academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health. None of the support variables significantly predicts academic performance. Although academic assistance approaches significance, it does not meet the 0.05 threshold. Similarly, mental and emotional support, as well as physical support, show no statistically significant effects.

This suggests that, within this model, these forms of support do not have a direct measurable impact on students' academic performance. This finding may be explained by the literature, which emphasizes that academic performance among learner-athletes is influenced not only by support systems but also by time constraints, competing responsibilities, and rigid academic structures (Navarro et al., 2020). While academic assistance programs such as tutoring and advising are intended to improve performance (Grandy et al., 2016), their effectiveness may be limited when learners are already experiencing high levels of academic pressure and workload (Watkins et al., 2022), thereby reducing their direct impact on performance outcomes.

All three forms of support significantly influence mental well-being. Academic assistance shows a strong, highly significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.563$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that it is the most influential predictor among the three. Mental and emotional support ($\beta = -0.299$, $p = 0.042$) and physical support ($\beta = -0.373$, $p = 0.032$) also have significant negative effects. These findings suggest that variations in these support systems are meaningfully associated with students' mental well-being. This can be supported by studies indicating that learner athletes commonly experience stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion due to the dual demands of academics and sports (Tenenbaum, 2016). Support systems are often accessed when these psychological challenges are already present, particularly as mental health services are underutilized due to stigma and fear of judgment (Cosh et al., 2024). Additionally, academic demands and physical strain further contribute to mental stress (Watson, 2017), explaining why higher levels of reported support are associated with lower levels of mental well-being.

Academic assistance has a significant negative effect on physical health. However, mental and emotional support, as well as physical support, do not significantly predict physical health. This indicates that only academic assistance shows a measurable relationship with physical health in this model. This result may be explained by the literature, which highlights that academic demands can reduce time for rest and recovery, leading to fatigue and increased health risks among learner-athletes (Hamlin et al., 2021). While physical support, such as facilities, equipment, and medical services, is essential (Rosete et al., 2023; Mountjoy, 2018), its effectiveness depends on adequate recovery and on the availability of resources, which may still be limited in some contexts (Jaeger et al., 2023). As such, the presence of support does not necessarily translate into improved physical health outcomes.

Table 6*Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Learner Athletes' Support Systems*

Project Title	ATHLETE (Athlete Total Health, Learning, and Training Enhancement) Thrive: Comprehensive Support Initiative for Learner Athletes' Academic, Mental, and Physical Well-Being				
Objectives/ Targets	Strategies/ Activities	Time frame	Persons Involved	Budgetary Requirements	Expected Outputs
Strengthen Mental Health Support Programs (Improve emotional resilience and reduce stress, anxiety, and help-seeking barriers among learner athletes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct quarterly Mental Health Awareness Campaigns (anti-stigma) • Organize monthly Group Counseling / Kumustahan sessions • Implement Peer Support Program ("Athlete Buddy System") • Integrate stress management workshops (mindfulness, time management) • Establish a confidential referral system to the Guidance Office 	Year-round (Quarterly & Monthly activities)	Guidance Counselor, School Head, Coaches, Advisers, Peer Facilitators	₱10,000.00 annually (materials, snacks, training kits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased help-seeking behavior • Reduced stigma on mental health • Improved emotional well-being and motivation • Established peer support system
Enhance Physical Health and Recovery Support (Reduce fatigue, injuries, and improve recovery practices of learner athletes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regulated training programs with rest days • Conduct quarterly medical check-ups / BMI monitoring • Provide basic first-aid kits and assign trained personnel during practices • Develop nutrition awareness sessions (low-cost, local food-based) • Create an improvised recovery area (rest corner) in the school 	Year round (Monthly monitoring; Quarterly check-ups)	MAPEH Teachers, School Nurse (if available), Coaches, LGU Health Workers, Parents	₱15,000.00 (first-aid kits, basic equipment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced injury incidence • Improved physical fitness and endurance • Increased awareness of nutrition and recovery • Safer training environment
Optimize Academic Assistance Integration (Improve academic performance and reduce missed requirements among learner athletes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish "Athlete Study Hall" after training (2–3x/week) • Implement Peer Tutoring Program (honor students assisting athletes) • Provide flexible deadlines and make-up classes • Monthly academic monitoring (progress tracking sheets) • Conduct orientation on time management and study skills 	Year-round (Weekly & Monthly activities)	Subject Teachers, Advisers, Coaches, Academic Coordinators	₱5,000. 00 for materials (printing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved grades and completion rates • Reduced academic stress • Better time management skills • Strengthened teacher-coach coordination
Holistic Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Establish a sustainable system for tracking learner athletes' academic, mental, and physical well-being)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Student-Athlete Monitoring Tool (Academic, Mental, Physical indicators) • Conduct quarterly evaluation meetings (Teachers-Coaches-Guidance) • Maintain individual athlete profile records • Administer bi-annual feedback surveys • Prepare annual ATHLETE Thrive report for school improvement planning 	Quarterly & Annually	School Head, Research Coordinator, Guidance Counselor, Coaches, Advisers	₱3,000. 00 (printing, documentation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional monitoring system • Data-driven decision-making • Improved coordination among stakeholders • Annual evaluation report

The ATHLETE Thrive Program (Athlete Total Health, Learning, and Training Enhancement) is designed as a practical support system that responds to the real needs of learner athletes. It focuses on three key areas academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health, while ensuring that these are continuously monitored. This approach reflects findings that learner-athletes perform better when support is integrated, rather than provided in isolation, across different aspects of their lives (Stambulova et al., 2020). To begin with, the program strengthens mental health support by promoting a more open and supportive school environment. It includes activities such as

awareness campaigns, counseling sessions, peer support groups, and stress management workshops to help student-athletes feel more comfortable seeking help. Since many athletes hesitate to open up due to fear of judgment, making support more visible and approachable is essential. Research shows that when schools actively promote mental health services, students are more likely to cope effectively with stress and pressure (Gulliver et al., 2017). At the same time, the program gives importance to physical health and recovery. Regular health check-ups, basic medical support, nutritional guidance, and designated rest areas help ensure that learner-athletes are physically prepared for both academic and athletic demands. When students are physically well, they become more focused, energetic, and better able to handle daily responsibilities. Studies show that proper recovery and physical care help reduce fatigue and injuries, which are common concerns among athletes (Mountjoy et al., 2018). Academic support is also strengthened through simple but consistent strategies such as study halls after training, peer tutoring, flexible deadlines, and regular monitoring of academic progress. These interventions help student-athletes manage their time better despite their demanding schedules. With proper structure and guidance, they are more likely to maintain academic performance. Research confirms that structured academic support plays a key role in helping learner athletes balance their dual responsibilities (Capranica et al., 2019).

Lastly, the program includes a monitoring system to track learner athletes' progress across all three areas. Regular meetings, feedback sessions, and documentation allow teachers, coaches, and school heads to respond early when issues arise. This ensures that support is not only provided when needed but is also continuous and adaptive. Studies highlight that consistent monitoring strengthens the effectiveness of school-based interventions (Stambulova et al., 2020). To end with, the ATHLETE Thrive Program is not simply a set of activities but a continuous support system that helps learner athletes develop in a balanced and sustainable way. By making support more accessible, consistent, and connected, the program enables them to manage both academic and athletic demands with greater stability and confidence.

4. Conclusions

Based on the summary of the findings, several conclusions were drawn. Learner-athletes experience significant challenges in academic performance, mental well-being, and physical health, reflecting the strain of balancing academic and athletic demands. In terms of academic performance, learner-athletes often feel overwhelmed by the demands of managing their academic responsibilities alongside their athletic roles. With regard to mental well-being, they experience stress and emotional strain in handling dual roles, and these concerns are frequently underreported due to stigma, indicating a gap between the availability and actual utilization of support services. In terms of physical health, learner athletes face physical strain, including fatigue, injuries, and inadequate recovery, which negatively affect both their academic and athletic performance, highlighting the need for proper recovery and health monitoring.

Furthermore, the level of school support for learner athletes varies in effectiveness. Academic assistance generally helps meet their academic demands; however, it tends to be reactive rather than planned, suggesting the need for better coordination and evaluation. Mental and emotional support services are present but are often provided only when problems arise, emphasizing the need for more preventive and structured approaches. Physical support systems contribute to the health and performance of learner athletes, yet these services require greater consistency and systematic monitoring. Overall, the findings reveal that support is often provided only after difficulties have already emerged, rather than helping learner-athletes prevent them. This underscores the importance of strengthening support systems to be more proactive and responsive to the needs of learner athletes, not only during times of struggle but also throughout their academic and athletic journeys. Consequently, the proposed action plan adopts a holistic approach that addresses the academic, mental, and physical needs of learner athletes. It aims to improve academic performance, enhance well-being, and promote balance between school and sports, while also addressing gaps in existing support systems and the persistent challenges they face, ultimately transforming these systems into more responsive, learner-centered mechanisms.

Recommendations - Based on the study's conclusions, several recommendations are proposed. The school

may implement an integrated support system that combines academic assistance, mental health services, and physical wellness programs. The ATHLETE Thrive Plan may be institutionalized as a regular school program to ensure continuous support for learner-athletes. Coordination among teachers, coaches, and parents may be strengthened to provide consistent guidance. At the same time, orientation and training on time management, goal setting, and work-life balance may also be conducted to help learner-athletes manage their dual roles effectively. Regarding learner-athletes' level of experience, the school may provide structured academic support, such as study halls and peer tutoring, aligned with training schedules. Flexible academic arrangements, including make-up classes, adjusted deadlines, and modular options during competitions, may also be implemented, along with regular academic monitoring through close coordination among advisers and subject teachers. To support mental well-being, the school may strengthen mental health support by offering regular counseling, stress management sessions, and resilience training. Awareness campaigns may be conducted to reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking, while peer mentoring programs may be established and guidance services made more accessible and visible. For physical health, the school may implement proper training and recovery programs with adequate rest schedules to prevent overtraining. Health monitoring, first-aid services, and coordination with local health units may be enhanced, alongside nutrition education and proper maintenance of sports facilities and equipment.

Regarding the level of support systems for learner-athletes, the school may improve tutoring programs and ensure their accessibility, while also increasing resources and funding for academic support initiatives. Counselling services may be expanded and made more responsive, with stronger coordination among teachers, coaches, and parents to support learner-athletes' emotional well-being. In terms of physical support, the school may strengthen health services, ensure immediate access to care, and improve collaboration among school personnel to support physical health and recovery. Furthermore, the school may adopt a more proactive and data-driven support system in which academic interventions address learning difficulties at an early stage, and mental and physical health programs focus on prevention rather than reaction. Strengthened collaboration among teachers, coaches, and guidance staff is essential, as is the use of monitoring systems to identify at-risk learner-athletes and provide timely interventions. Finally, the ATHLETE Thrive Plan may be fully implemented and institutionalized to provide holistic support. Continuous monitoring and evaluation may be conducted to assess its effectiveness, guide improvements, and ensure its integration into the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Annual Implementation Plan (AIP). Partnerships with local government units, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders may also be strengthened to support resources and services, and future research may be encouraged to assess long-term outcomes and identify additional influencing factors.

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