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Lived Experiences of Visually Impaired Para-Atheletes: Inputs to the Design of An Inclusive School-Based Sports Program

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, with the aim of informing the development of a school-based support program that fosters high motivation and inclusive participation in sports. Grounded in Experiential Learning Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the principles of Universal Design for Learning, the study explored the personal, social, and academic dimensions that shape the athletic journeys of goalball-playing student-athletes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis.

Ten interconnected themes emerged: (1) sports as a pathway to empowerment and identity, (2) support systems and external motivation, (3) inclusive social environment, (4) overcoming challenges and building resilience, (5) self-growth and psychological development, (6) training, discipline, and performance, (7) faith, hope, and aspirations, (8) adaptive learning and accessibility, (9) passion, enjoyment, and fulfillment, and (10) navigating multiple roles and responsibilities. Findings revealed that sports served as a transformative force that empowered athletes, enhanced self-esteem, and cultivated confidence. Family, peers, and coaches were critical motivators, providing emotional support and validation.

The study identified key gaps in existing para-sports programs, including the lack of emotional literacy components tailored for student-athletes with disabilities and the underutilization of culturally rooted emotional regulation strategies such as prayer and music. It also highlighted a need for further research into the intersection of emotional regulation, disability, and rural youth well-being.

In response, the VISION-GOAL program was proposed—an inclusive, sustainable, and motivation-driven framework featuring experience-based design, academic-athletic integration, year-round functional assessments, peer mentoring, teacher development, and institutional collaboration. Ultimately, the study concluded that para-athletes' motivation is shaped by intrinsic passion, external affirmation, and inclusive environments, underscoring the need for educational and policy systems that empower disability as a form of uniqueness and potential.

Keywords: Visually Impaired Para-athletes, Lived Experiences, Qualitative Phenomenology, Goalball, Motivation, Inclusive Participation, School-based Support Program, Experiential Learning Theory, Self-

Determination Theory, Universal Design for Learning, Thematic Analysis, VISION-GOAL Program, Holistic development, Inclusive education, Rural Youth Well-being

Chapter I

Introduction

In recent years, global initiatives to promote inclusive education and sports have raised awareness of the specific needs and strengths of learners with disabilities (LWDs), notably para-athletes with vision impairments. Sports serve not merely as physical engagement but as transformative platforms for empowerment (History of Nature, 2025), rehabilitation, and social inclusion (Dilnoza, (2023). Research suggests that participation in adaptive sports promotes psychological well-being, emotional resilience, and collaborative skills—elements essential to holistic human development (Chen, Zhang, Li, & Wu, 2024)

The increased exposure to the Paralympic Games has significantly impacted popular discourse on ability rather than disability, with para-athletes portrayed as agents of empowerment and perseverance (Sample, 2024). Contemporary research on para-sports encompasses psychological, biomechanical, and sociocultural domains, often guided by inclusive frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018) and international policy guidelines provided by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC, 2021). Research consistently demonstrates the critical role of sports in identity formation, self-confidence enhancement, and social integration for individuals with disabilities (Shapiro, Moffett, Lieberman, & Dummer, 2020). However, para-athletes in developing nations like the Philippines encounter systemic and structural obstacles. While national policies such as the Palarong Pambansa Act of 2013 aim to support student-athletes with disabilities, their inconsistent implementation leads to disparities in training access, inclusive infrastructure, and program integration (Robredo, 2024). These difficulties are more noticeable in rural regions, where visually impaired athletes face a lack of specialist coaching, accessible venues, and adequate assistive equipment. Academic stress, a lack of financial resources, and widespread social prejudices regarding disability are all additional impediments (Malik, 2023).

Against these complex circumstances, the municipality of Calabanga in Camarines Sur emerges as a noteworthy example of local progress in inclusive education and para-athletics. Home to a population of 88,906 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021), Calabanga has made significant efforts to overcome persistent limitations, including a shortage of SPED-trained educators and underdeveloped school infrastructure (Department of Education Camarines Sur, 2023), to build a more welcoming and friendly atmosphere for the visually impaired student-athletes. Central to this local transformation is goalball, a sport specifically designed for the visually impaired.

This initiative reflects the community's growing awareness and commitment to promoting accessibility and equal opportunity in sports. With the support of partnerships between schools, the Department of Education (DepEd), and local government units, goalball initiatives in Calabanga serve not only as a means of physical development but also as powerful avenues for empowerment and holistic growth among students with disabilities. Several schools in the Bicol Region have demonstrated strong support for visually impaired goalball athletes through inclusive sports initiatives and regional competitions. Calabanga National Science High School (CNSHS) stands out because it actively supports four visually impaired goalball athletes—three boys and one girl—who have all competed in the Palarong Bicol Para Games (DepEd-Bicol Region, 2023).

Medroso Mendoza National High School (MMNHS) promoted inclusivity through its Inclusive Sports Week and had supported one female athlete in regional goalball competitions. West Coast National High School (WCNHS) enhanced accessibility by extending goalball training to coastal barangays, enabling one female athlete to compete in inter-district events. Jose De Villa National High School (JDVNHS) recently began engaging in para-sports by supporting one female goalball player. Calabanga National High School and San Roque NHS have also achieved regional recognition, earning bronze medals in the 2018–2019 Palarong Bicol Para Games and a silver medal in 2023–2024. These schools' para-athletes were nominated for the Outstanding Para-Athlete Award (Calabanga MSWDO, 2023).

While traditional perspectives in the Bicol region have historically considered disability a source of pity (Bunyi & Gines, 2020), school-led programs are changing public opinion by teaching equity, dignity, and inclusion principles. The consistent expansion of goalball programs in Calabanga underscores the potential of localized interventions to catalyze broader systemic and cultural change. Nevertheless, key obstacles remain para-athletes in the municipality continue to face inadequate training infrastructure, limited access to certified coaches, unreliable transportation, and inconsistent enforcement of inclusive policies (National Council on Disability Affairs, 2021). Furthermore, para-athletes receive less public recognition and support compared to their non-disabled peers, which negatively affects their motivation and sense of social value. Data from the Calabanga MSWDO (2023) indicate that out of approximately 650 registered persons with disabilities (PWDs), 18% are visually impaired, many of whom are currently enrolled in inclusive education settings. However, access to tailored educational and athletic support remains limited, reinforcing the need for context-specific and needs-based programs.

While most existing literature highlighted the psychological benefits of adaptive sports—such as stress alleviation and enhanced emotional health (Chen et al., 2024)—these studies often adopt an outcome-based framework. This approach tends to overlook the complex personal narratives and lived realities of para-athletes, particularly in rural Philippine contexts (Rodríguez Macías, González-Ruiz & Pérez, 2022). Additionally, there remains a noticeable gap in school-based models derived directly from student-athletes' authentic experiences. The present research examined the experiences of visually challenged para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, to fill these gaps. It looked explicitly at how these student-athletes managed the demands of athletics and academics while dealing with societal and structural constraints.

The study aimed to identify their intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers, adaptive coping mechanisms and pressing support needs. This study uses a phenomenological method to create a school-based support program firmly rooted in visually impaired para-athletes' authentic narratives and lived experiences. The program was designed to be culturally relevant by reflecting the unique socio-cultural realities of rural Filipino learners, ensuring that the intervention was appropriate for their situations and daily problems. Additionally, sustainability is crucial, as the program's survival depends on active cooperation with regional stakeholders like government institutions, community organizations, and schools. To ensure that the program satisfies its intended participants' actual needs and objectives, the intervention is also scientifically supported, drawing on qualitative research and firsthand accounts. The findings and resulting framework will be a valuable resource for various stakeholders. Educators and administrators will receive practical and specialized information for creating inclusive sports and education programs that meet the needs of student with visual impairments.

Data-driven insights will help policymakers better existing legislation, regulations, and programmatic efforts to promote inclusion in education and sports. Families and communities whose active participation

is critical to the success and sustainability of any inclusive program will be empowered to advocate for and promote para-athletes' rights and development within their networks. These findings will guide inclusive practices and inspire a shift in mindset, recognizing para-athletes as capable, deserving, and vital members of educational and athletic communities.

Ultimately, the framework will help build a culture of equity where accessibility and dignity are at the heart of every institutional and community effort. Most significantly, the para-athletes—whose perspectives, experiences, and goals form the foundation of this research—will develop a support model that is responsive, powerful, and representative of their lived experiences. This work substantially contributes to the current conversation on inclusive education and para-athletics by addressing the context of disability, education, and sport. It also provides a paradigm that connects empirical knowledge with actionable, context-sensitive program design. It addresses a significant research gap by grounding its analysis and recommendations in the lived experiences of visually impaired student-athletes in a rural Philippine municipality, specifically eight goalball players from four secondary schools in Calabanga, Camarines Sur.The study proposes a culturally responsive, school-based framework to guide inclusive policy, enhance support systems, and foster empowerment, equity, and holistic development through localized para-sports programming.

By matching para-sports programs with each school's distinct cultural and community contexts, the framework seeks to close gaps in representation and access while ensuring that these para-athletes' needs, goals, and voices are accurately represented in the planning and implementation of inclusive educational and athletic opportunities. This method acknowledges the significance of valuing lived experiences and local knowledge as essential in developing pertinent, long-lasting solutions. It also emphasizes how parasports may be a life-changing medium for encouraging self-advocacy, social inclusion, and personal development in people with visual impairments. This strategy makes schools active partners in inclusion, ensuring every challenged student-athlete is seen, heard, and empowered through sports

Research Objectives

This study aimed to describe the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur to develop and enhance an inclusive school-based program for the public secondary schools of Calabanga, Camarines Sur.

Specifically, it answered the following objectives:

1. To explore the lived experiences, motivations and challenges of visually impaired para-athletes including empowerment through sports, resilience in the face of adversity, supportive relationships, inclusive environments, the balance of academic and athletic responsibilities, and aspirations for the future; and
2. Design school-based program that will foster high motivation among them.

Scope and Delimitation

This qualitative study investigated the actual experiences of visually impaired para-athletes enrolled in selected secondary schools in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, with the primary aim of developing a school-based support program that fosters inclusivity, positive well-being, and community empowerment for students with disabilities. Specifically, the study focused on seven (7) visually impaired student-athletes from Calabanga National High School, West Coast National High School, and Medrozo Mendoza National High School. All participants competed in goalball; a sport designed exclusively for individuals with visual impairments. Their stories offered rich, firsthand insights into the challenges and triumphs of

navigating both academic and athletic spaces as visually impaired individuals. These lived experiences served as a foundation for building a meaningful, context-based program that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of student-athletes with disabilities.

The study's scope included various participant experiences, including social, emotional, athletic, and academic ones. The study's extensive analysis sought to identify the barriers and facilitators that influenced student-athlete involvement and achievement in academics and athletics. To ensure comfort and authenticity in their comments, participants were allowed to express themselves in Tagalog, English, or their original dialect during semi-structured interviews. The analysis was framed using Social Constructivism (Liebowitz & Ferreira, 2022), Universal Design for Learning (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2024), and Humanistic Education (Geller, 2020), which together enabled a holistic and inclusive interpretation of the participants lived experiences

These theoretical frameworks shed light on how the student-athletes' motivation, identity, and agency were influenced by their educational environment, accessibility to learning, and fundamental psychological needs. Using the knowledge gathered from this study, a school-based support program was proposed to meet the requirements of visually impaired para-athletes. Nevertheless, there were several restrictions and limitations on the study. First, only student-athletes who played goalball were the subject of the study. The experiences documented in this study might not be typical of visually impaired athletes participating in other sports because each para-sport has unique physical, psychological, and contextual requirements. Second, the study was conducted within three Calabanga and Camarines Sur public secondary schools. As such, the findings may not be generalizable to visually impaired para-athletes in other geographic regions, particularly urban areas that may offer more advanced infrastructure, specialized accessibility services, and comprehensive, inclusive educational programs.

Third, although the study's results were used to build a school-based support program, the research was not equipped to handle the program's actual implementation and evaluation. Therefore, piloting and evaluating the program's efficacy in educational and athletic contexts is urged for future research. Lastly, the study relied primarily on self-reported information gathered via focus groups and in-person interviews. Although this qualitative approach facilitated rich, narrative-based insights, it also introduced elements of subjectivity and potential recall bias. To address these problems, the researcher employed methodological triangulation to cross-validate data sources and increase study dependability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, it was impossible for participant responses to include some personal bias.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable contributions to understanding the nuanced experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in rural secondary schools. The findings have the potential to inform future policy directions, guide school-based inclusion practices, and inspire further research on disability, sports, and education while emphasizing the importance of culturally grounded, community-driven actions that target the specific needs and goals of para-athletes in similar rural contexts. These insights underscore the significance of amplifying marginalized voices within educational and athletic program development.

Theoretical Framework

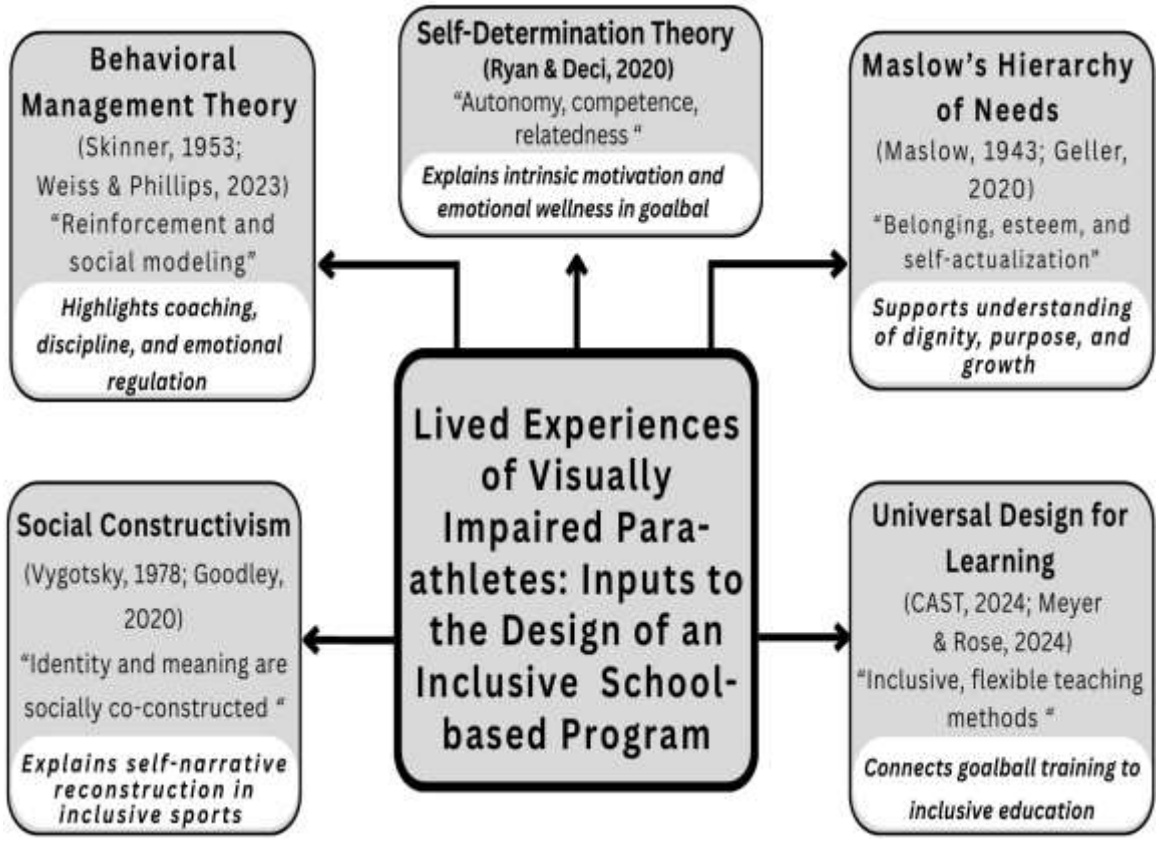
The development of an inclusive school-based program for visually impaired para-athletes was anchored on multiple theoretical perspectives, as illustrated in Figure 1. Collectively, these theories guided the design, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention by providing a holistic understanding of the elements that shaped para-athletes' lived experiences—behavior, motivation, social interaction, educational design, and individual needs.

At the core of this framework was Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation and emotional well-being. SDT posited that individuals were more likely to engage meaningfully in activities when they experienced autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For visually impaired para-athletes, this meant that when their learning and sporting environments supported these psychological needs, they were more motivated to sustain participation in both academic pursuits and adaptive sports. The program's integration of SDT ensured that para-athletes felt empowered, supported, and capable of achieving their goals.

Complementing SDT was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943; Geller, 2020), which underscored the necessity of fulfilling basic psychological needs such as belongingness, dignity, esteem, and self-actualization. By addressing these needs, the

Figure 1

Theoretical Paradigm



framework provided a foundation for motivation, confidence, and resilience. For visually impaired para-athletes, this translated into enhanced sports performance, personal growth, and overall well-being. Meeting these needs also ensured that participation in both education and sports was rooted in purpose, dignity, and self-worth.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2024; Meyer & Rose, 2024) served as a critical educational principle within the framework. UDL advocated for flexible, inclusive teaching strategies that accommodated diverse learning preferences and abilities. Its application bridged inclusive education with adaptive sports by ensuring that both classrooms and training grounds were accessible, equitable, and

engaging. Through UDL, the program guaranteed that para-athletes could fully participate in both academic and athletic contexts, regardless of individual challenges.

Equally important was Behavioral Management Theory (Skinner, 1953; Weiss & Phillips, 2023), which highlighted reinforcement, social modeling, and structured feedback as essential tools in shaping behavior. For coaches and educators, this theory informed strategies that fostered discipline, emotional regulation, and commitment to training routines. Such behavioral approaches were essential in nurturing both athletic performance and academic engagement among para-athletes, ensuring balanced growth across multiple domains.

In addition, Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Goodley, 2020) acknowledged that identity, meaning, and knowledge were co-constructed through social interactions. For visually impaired para-athletes, this principle emphasized the importance of relationships with peers, teachers, coaches, and family in shaping confidence and self-narratives. The program, therefore, integrated social constructivist principles by fostering collaborative learning, inclusivity, and community involvement, reinforcing the value of belonging and shared identity in inclusive sports contexts.

Finally, beyond theoretical considerations, the framework was grounded in the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes. Anchoring the program design in actual narratives ensured that it remained culturally sensitive, contextually relevant, and reflective of the real challenges and aspirations of its intended beneficiaries. This strengthened the applicability of the program while affirming its responsiveness to the unique needs of visually impaired learners and athletes.

Therefore, the integration of Self-Determination Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Universal Design for Learning, Behavioral Management Theory, and Social Constructivism provided a robust foundation for the study. Together, these perspectives addressed motivation, well-being, inclusive education, discipline, and social identity, ensuring that the intervention was both theoretically sound and practically aligned with the lived realities of visually impaired para-athletes. This holistic paradigm enabled the creation of a sustainable, inclusive school-based program that empowered student-athletes to thrive in both academic and sporting environments

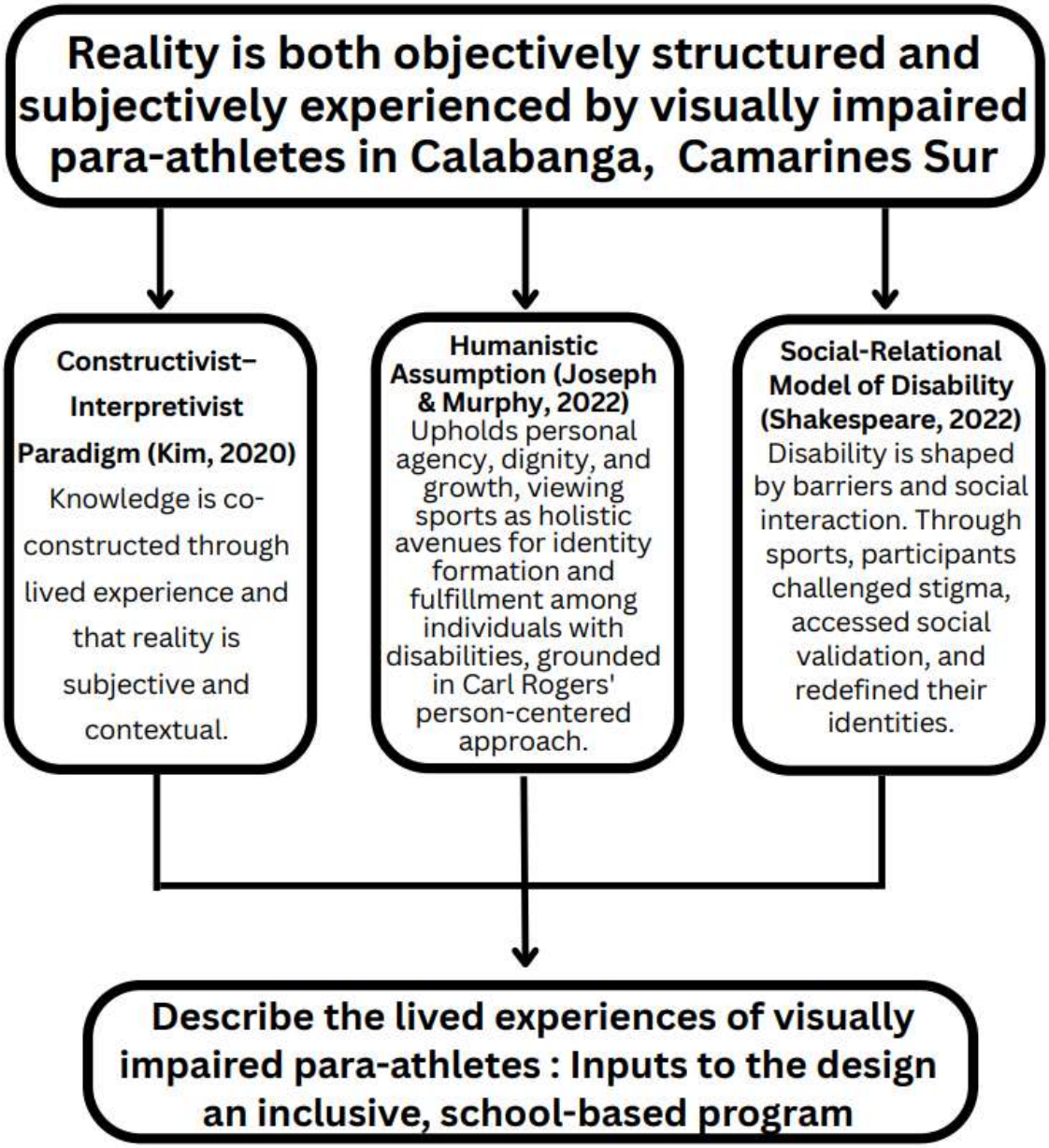
Philosophical Assumption

Figure 2 presents the philosophical assumption of the study which was based on the idea that reality was both structured by external systems and subjectively experienced by visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Three essential philosophical assumptions influenced the study's perspective on knowledge, human potential, and disability. First, the study adhered to the Constructivist-Interpretivist Paradigm (Kim, 2020), which stated that knowledge was generated via peoples lived experiences. Reality was not static or universal; it was molded by unique settings and perspectives. For this study, it meant that the para-athletes' voices were critical to understanding their environment. Second, the Humanistic Assumption (Joseph & Murphy, 2022) prioritized personal agency, dignity, and development.

Sports were viewed as significant opportunities for people with disabilities to establish their identity and achieve fulfillment, rather than as mere physical 2activity. This belief was based on Carl Rogers' person-centered approach, which valued human potential and self-worth. Third, the study used the Social-Relational Model of Disability (Shakespeare, 2022), which viewed disability as the outcome of social boundaries and interactions. It focused on how para-athletes used athletics to overcome stigma, obtain affirmation, and change how they saw themselves and how others perceived them.

These three foundations worked together to support the study's purpose of exploring and describing the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes and then

Figure 2
Philosophical Assumption



using those insights to develop a more inclusive, school-based program. The philosophical assumptions ensured that the research respected the athletes' personal stories, emphasized empowerment, and considered the larger social milieu that influenced their lives.

Conceptual Framework

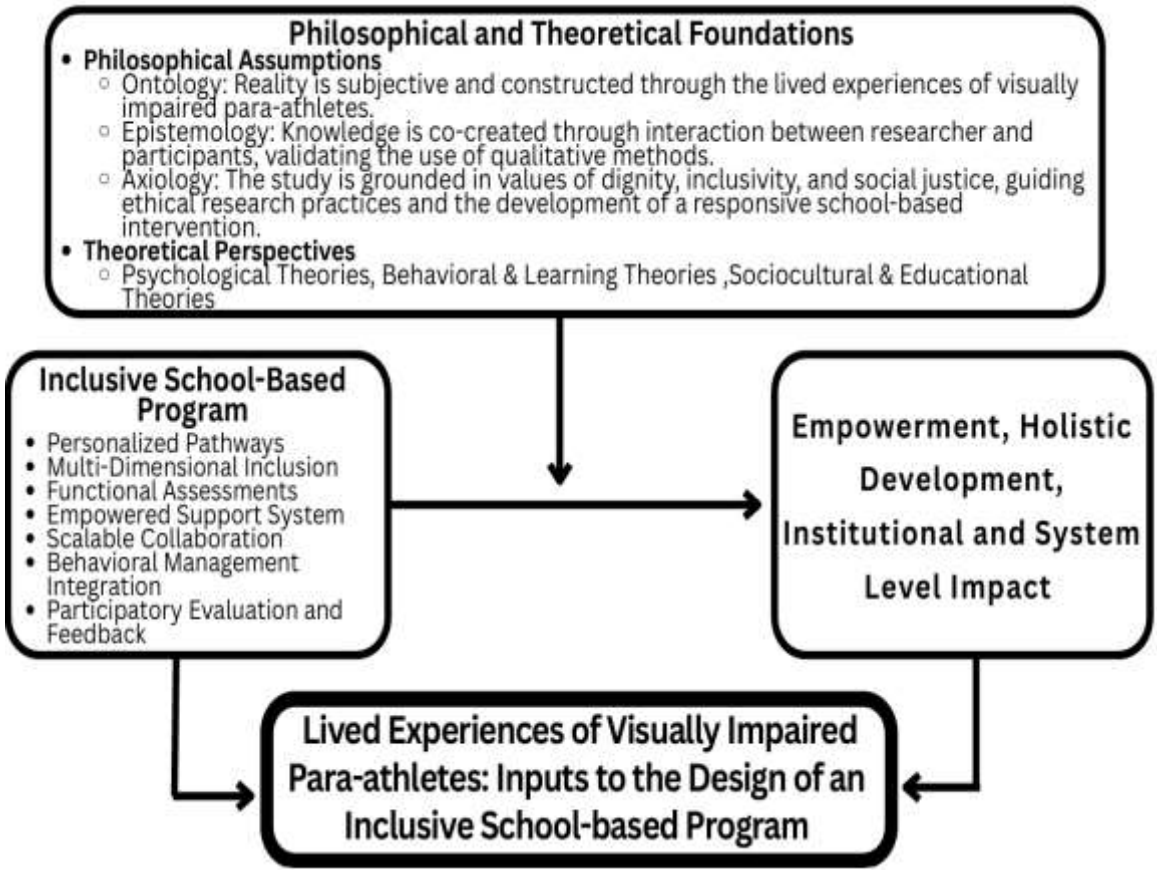
Figure 3 illustrates an integrative conceptual framework that serves as the foundation for this qualitative study, which seeks to understand and address the lived experiences of para-athletes with vision impairments. Its primary focused is on how these student-athletes balance their dual obligations in adaptive sports and education to lead the development of an inclusive, school-based sports program that fosters resilience, empowerment, and long-term well-being.

The study's philosophical scope consisted of three key presumptions. It is consistent with critical realism on an ontological level, recognizing that social standards, sports regulations, and educational systems are

examples of institutional structures that exist independently of the individual but are subjectively experienced (Bhaskar, 2020). This supported the study's focus on how athletes interpret and respond to these. systems in personalized ways. Epistemologically, the study adopted a constructivist stance, recognizing that knowledge is co-constructed through interactive, context-sensitive dialogues between the researcher and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2020). This validate using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the methodological approach to

Figure 3

Conceptual Paradigm



access deep, meaning-laden narratives (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022).

Axiologically, it is rooted in dignity, inclusivity, and social justice principles, ensuring that ethical responsibility, respect for participant voices, and responsiveness to real-world needs guide the entire research process—from inquiry to intervention (Mertens, 2021). It is based on the axiological principles of social justice, dignity, and inclusion, which ensure that ethical responsibility, respect for participant voices, and responsiveness to real-world issues lead the whole research process, from inquiry to intervention. To explain how and why specific experiences shape outcomes and to inform the structure of the school-based intervention, the framework draws on several key theories.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasized the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core drivers of motivation. This theory explained how athlete-centered environments, peer support, and task-involving coaching climates influence intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in both sports and academic contexts. Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer, 2021) situates

athlete development within a network of nested systems, from direct (microsystem) influences like coaches and family to broader (mesosystem and macrosystem) factors such as institutional support and national para-sport culture. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2024) offers a flexible pedagogical model that ensures accessibility through multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, enhancing the inclusiveness of both sports training and academic support.

The program intervention designed through this framework is composed of seven inductively derived core pillars, each functioning as an independent variable that contributes to the overall effectiveness of the intervention. The first pillar, Personalized Pathways, emphasizes the creation of tailored developmental plans that address individual strengths, challenges, and specific contexts, as highlighted by Tomlinson (2021). The second pillar, Multi-Dimensional Inclusion, extends the scope of inclusion to cover physical, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions, as Booth and Ainscow (2020) discussed. The third pillar, Functional Assessments, focuses on the continuous evaluation of both athletic and academic capacity and readiness, drawing on the insights of Magnusson and Rønholt (2022). The fourth pillar, the Empowered Support System, underscores the importance of fostering strong relational networks that involve peers, coaches, educators, and family members, in line with the perspectives of Deci and Ryan (2023).

The fifth pillar, Scalable Collaboration, promotes the development of partnerships at local, regional, and policy levels to ensure the program's long-term sustainability, as advocated by UNESCO (2021) and the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC, 2022). The sixth pillar, Behavioral Management Integration, incorporates structured strategies designed to enhance emotional self-regulation and discipline, following the framework of Zimmerman and Moylan (2020). Lastly, the seventh pillar, Participatory Evaluation, and Feedback, establishes mechanisms that allow athletes to voice their opinions, engage in reflection, and contribute to shared program improvement, as emphasized by Mertens (2021) and Cousins, Goh, Clark, and Lee (2023).

The study further identified three levels of dependent variables that are influenced by the implementation of this program. At the athlete level, the expected outcomes include enhanced empowerment, motivation and recognition, improved emotional well-being, and strengthened self-regulation capabilities, consistent with the findings of Ryan and Deci (2020) and Martin Ginis, Ma, Latimer-Cheung, and Rimmer (2021). At the institutional level, the program aims to foster an inclusive school culture, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhance the capacity of teachers and coaches, as supported by CAST (2024) and Meyer and Rose (2024). Finally, at the system level, the program seeks to contribute to developing sustainable, inclusive program models, ensure alignment with relevant policies, and reinforce partnerships and advocacy efforts, as articulated by DepEd (2023) and Robredo (2024).

The philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, axiology) and the theoretical perspectives acted as mediating variables, explaining the link between the program elements and the anticipated outcomes. These mediators offer explanatory power, clarifying how individualized support, inclusive systems, and motivational strategies translate into tangible, sustainable results for visually impaired para-athletes (Fletcher, 2021).

Assumptions

The approach used in this study to investigate the lived experiences of para-athletes in selected secondary schools in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, is based on the following assumptions:

1. When carefully considered and investigated, visually impaired para-athletes' varied, real, and pertinent life experiences can contribute to developing inclusive, school-based programs that meet their specific needs.
2. Para-athletes can explain their problems, motivations, and aspirations in both academic and athletic settings, and their narratives will deliver the deep, contextual knowledge required to create meaningful solutions.
3. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and theme analysis, capture the depth, complexity, and subjectivity—of these experiences.
4. Multi-stakeholder interaction is critical for a comprehensive view of the para-athlete journey. The research is expected to include contributions from key sports stakeholders such as school administrators, coaches, referees, parents, and prospective external partners. To comprehend motives and challenges and to jointly develop pertinent, adaptable para-athlete programs, their advice, critiques, and encouragement are invaluable.

Definition of Terms

To make sure the presentation is coherent and clear and the interpretation of findings, the following terms are defined conceptually, based on established theoretical literature, or operationally, as they are applied explicitly within the context of this study. These definitions serve to develop a common understanding of key constructs relevant to the academic and athletic experiences of visually impaired para-athletes examined in this research.

Dual Role. A dual role is the simultaneous fulfillment of two distinct responsibilities or functions, often requiring balancing competing demands (Collins Dictionary, 2023). In this context, the dual role describes the participants' challenge of being both students and athletes, managing time, energy, and emotional regulation across educational and sports commitments.

Emotional and Psychological State. An individual's emotions, thoughts, and general mental health are referred to as an emotional and psychological state. (APA, 2023). In this study, it refers to the inner experiences, feelings, stress levels, coping mechanisms, and mental resilience of visually impaired para-athletes as they navigate the challenges and triumphs of sports participation, social interaction, and personal development within the school and community environment in Calabanga, Camarines Sur.

Environmental Factors. Environmental factors encompass every facet of the outside, or extrinsic, environment that shapes a person's existence. This includes the built environment, social support networks, attitudes of others, and institutional systems that can either hinder or facilitate functioning, participation, and quality of life, especially among individuals with disabilities (World Health Organization, 2022). In this study, environmental factors refer specifically to the physical surroundings (e.g., accessibility of sports facilities), social structures (e.g., support from peers, teachers, and coaches), and institutional conditions (e.g., school policies, inclusion practices, and community awareness) that directly influence the participation, motivation, and overall well-being of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur.

Goalball. It is a team sport devised exclusively for visually impaired athletes in which players aim to throw a ball with bells into the opposing goal (International Paralympic Committee, 2021). The sport is highly strategic, with athletes relying on sound cues and tactile feedback to navigate the court and defend their goal, making it a unique and dynamic challenge. Goalball, the primary adapted sport examined in this study, is a physical activity and a developmental tool for visually impaired student-athletes. It improves communication, coordination, and confidence.

Inclusion/Inclusive Education. The practice of placing impaired children in ordinary classrooms with their non-disabled peers (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Refers to educational and athletic practices that accommodate visually impaired students by providing accessible curricula, assistive aids, and social-emotional support inside conventional school systems (DepEd, 2022).

Inclusive Sports. Inclusive sports refer to athletic programs designed to include individuals of all abilities, promoting full participation and equal opportunity (UNESCO, 2021). Inclusive sports foster social integration, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging among all participants. This study's inclusive sports represent sports activities—particularly goalball—that accommodate visually impaired students through adapted rules, accessible environments, and support.

Lived Experiences. Personal knowledge is obtained via direct, firsthand participation in ordinary occurrences rather than through representations or narratives created by others (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.). This study focuses on first-person stories and reflections offered by visually impaired para-athletes regarding their daily experiences in both academic and athletic settings. These were collected through in-depth interviews and evaluated using theme analysis (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2019).

Motivation. The psychological mechanism that starts, guides, and sustains goal-directed activities (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.). In this study, motivation refers to the internal and external elements (e.g., personal objectives, peer support, competitiveness, and coach encouragement) that influence visually impaired athletes' involvement and perseverance in sports and academics (Clancy, E., Thompson, D., & Smith, J. (2022).

Para-athlete. A disabled person who participates in sports, especially at the Paralympic level (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), exemplifies exceptional skill and determination, overcoming physical challenges to compete at an elite level while symbolizing resilience and redefining societal perceptions of disability. In this study, para-athletes are secondary school students with vision impairments who actively participate in goalball sports at a school, municipal, or national level.

Parasports. Are competitive or leisure sports that have been modified or specifically constructed to accommodate people with physical, sensory, or intellectual limitations. These sports frequently incorporate assistive technologies, classification systems, and modified rules to maintain fairness and accessibility (International Paralympic Committee, 2023). In this study, parasport refers to organized, inclusive athletic activities—such as *goalball*—engaged in by visually impaired student-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur.

Psychosocial Support. Psychosocial support addresses psychological and social needs by offering interventions that improve emotional resilience, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal relationships, ((APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.). This study includes counseling, peer mentorship, and wellness talks that promote resilience, relationships, and mental health among visually impaired athletes.

School-Based Support Program. Interventions or services are given within educational settings to support student learning, health, and well-being (Education Corner, n.d.). These supports are intended to address a variety of student needs, resulting in a more inclusive and supportive school environment for all students. Refer to the proposed comprehensive model for this study, which combines goalball training, psychological health support, inclusive pedagogy, and community engagement for visually impaired para-athletes.

Visual Impairment. A limitation of one or more eye functions resulting in reduced vision not correctable by glasses or contacts (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, n.d.). The student-athletes in this study had partial or total vision loss, qualifying them for goalball and similar adaptive sports under IPC standards (International Paralympic Committee [IPC], 2021).

Visually Impaired Para-athlete Visually impaired athletes are individuals with partial or total vision loss who participate in adaptive sports using accommodations such as tactile markers, audio cues, or guides (WHO, 2022). In this study, students who are coming from three secondary public schools and residing in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, who have been formally diagnosed with visual impairment (low vision or total blindness) and actively engage in competitive goalball, designed for individuals with disabilities.

Notes

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Chapter II

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This chapter summarized significant literature and studies that contextualize the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes. The review focused on key themes such as inclusiveness, motivation, well-being, and support systems to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for building a school-based support program. Understanding para-athletes' life experiences, motivations, and problems is essential for promoting inclusivity and equity in adaptive sports. This research review examined the personal, societal, and systemic aspects influencing para-athletes, emphasizing hurdles, motivation, adaptive methods, school-based assistance, and inclusive education. It also emphasized the importance of sports such as goalball in promoting inclusiveness and empowering visually impaired athletes. This reviewed, which combined qualitative and quantitative research, provided a complete overview of how adaptive sports influence para-athletes' identities, resilience, and opportunities.

Psychological Motivation of Para-Athletes

Several key studies were highly relevant to the current study, which explored the psychological motivation and lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. The ten themes—ranging from empowerment, resilience, and identity to emotional well-being, inclusive support systems, and performance—were supported by a robust body of literature on Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation, coping strategies, and parasports psychology.

Ryan and Deci (2000), the foundational proponents of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), posited that intrinsic motivation stemmed from the fulfillment of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This theory was central to understanding how participants in the study derived motivation and well-being from sports (Theme 1: Empowerment and Identity; Theme 5: Self-Growth and Psychological Development). When para-athletes experienced autonomy in their training, competence in their sport, and social connectedness, their intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience were strengthened.

Macias et al. (2022) further demonstrated the applicability of SDT to para-sports by showing how psychological support, social context, and coaching strategies impacted the motivation of athletes with

disabilities. Their findings supported the current study's emphasis on the role of support systems (Theme 2) and training, discipline, and performance (Theme 6). They also underscored how contextual challenges and motivational climates influenced athlete well-being.

Azid et al. (2023) and Rodriguez (2022) confirmed that intrinsic motivation contributed significantly to perseverance, emotional resilience, and psychological well-being, particularly among para-athletes. Their studies aligned with themes on resilience (Theme 4), passion and fulfillment (Theme 9), and aspirations (Theme 7), affirming that
internally driven athletes were better equipped to handle adversity.

Chiu et al. (2023) and Rodrigues et al. (2024) emphasized the role of motivational climates, autonomy-supportive coaching, and emotional regulation in fostering long-term engagement. These findings resonated with themes of inclusive social environments (Theme 3) and adaptive learning and accessibility (Theme 8), particularly in promoting sustained participation and emotional intelligence through a culturally sensitive lens.

Deng (2023) highlighted that para-athletes frequently demonstrated higher intrinsic motivation than their able-bodied counterparts by redefining their impairments as strengths. This finding directly reflected the transformative experiences of visually impaired athletes in the study (Theme 1 and Theme 5), reinforcing the idea of sports as a means of identity reclamation.

Nuetzel (2023) and Lüdi et al. (2024) addressed the mental health vulnerabilities of para-athletes, such as anxiety, depression, and exclusion—issues also raised by the participants. Their findings reinforced the need for emotional literacy and structured psychological support, which the current study identified as gaps in school-based para-sports programs (Theme 10: Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities).

Wang et al. (2025) conducted a meta-analysis that confirmed the efficacy of resilience-building interventions such as mindfulness and psychological skills training. This directly supported the study's proposed VISION-GOAL program modules, particularly those that advocated for culturally grounded and spiritually informed mental wellness activities (Themes 5 and 7).

Celdran et al. (2018) and Ines (2021) examined Filipino para-athletes' and student-athletes' coping strategies. Their findings echoed the current participants' use of both problem- and emotion-focused coping, validating the need for targeted psychological and emotional strategies in inclusive athletic programs (Theme 4: Overcoming Challenges and Building Resilience; Theme 10).

Her Tage & Cotterill (2022) and Li, Wang & Kee (2019) identified cognitive techniques such as visualization, positive self-talk, and mental rehearsal as essential coping strategies for performance enhancement and emotional regulation. These findings informed the current study's recommendations for integrating emotional regulation practices and structured coping support in para-sports training (Theme 5 and Theme 6).

Ferreira et al. (2023)) validated the link between self-determined motivation and the adoption of adaptive coping strategies like goal-setting and positive reframing. Their research was consistent with the present study's emphasis on promoting internal motivation to build resilience and reduce burnout risks in para-athletes (Theme 9: Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment).

Puce et al. (2023) distinguished between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, reporting that competitive para-athletes experienced higher life satisfaction, emotional
regulation, and self-acceptance. Their findings supported the study's argument that sports enhanced both the emotional and psychological well-being of visually impaired student-athletes in rural settings (Themes 1, 5, and 7).

Trigueros et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence and autonomy-supportive coaching in reducing anxiety and building resilience. This literature aligned with participants' experiences of trust and validation from their coaches and peers (Theme 2: Support Systems and External Motivation). Kaiseler and Polman (2019) and Moreno-Llamas et al. (2022) revealed gender specific coping patterns and motivational triggers. Their work provided important insight into the unique experiences of female para-athletes, such as body image concerns, social barriers, and underrepresentation—issues that were also reflected in the narratives of female participants (Theme 7: Faith, Hope, and Aspirations).

Baaziz et al. (2023) validated the SDT motivational continuum, cautioning against amotivation and controlled extrinsic motivation. Their findings reinforced the current study's recommendation to cultivate internal, values-driven motivation through inclusive school-based interventions (Theme 9 and Theme 6).

Philippine Sports Commission (PSC, 2023) and Department of Education (DepEd, 2024) acknowledged systemic gaps in inclusive infrastructure, psychological services, and adaptive training. Their reports substantiated the context-specific findings of the study, particularly the institutional barriers faced by rural para-athletes in Calabanga (Themes 8 and 10).

Coping research from Gaudreau et al. (2020) and Smith et al. (2019) demonstrated how self-determined motivation predicted the use of adaptive coping strategies such as goal-setting and emotional reframing. These coping tools emerged in participant accounts and were proposed as essential components of the VISION-GOAL program.

Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2021) and Rocchi et al. (2019), stressed the value of inclusive and autonomy-supportive coaching environments. These insights complemented the participants' reflections on coaching relationships and discipline (Themes 2 and 6).

Carlin (2021) and Constantnou (2019) highlighted the pressures student-athletes face in balancing academics and sports, paralleling the study's findings on role conflict and the need for academic-athletic integration (Theme 10: Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities).

This reviewed literature directly complemented and reinforced the findings of this study by providing theoretical grounding and empirical evidence that explained the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga. Self-Determination Theory and related motivational frameworks explained how athletes' intrinsic motivation, social support, and coping strategies shaped their empowerment, resilience, and performance. The studies cited validated the ten themes that emerged, including identity, resilience, psychological growth, and role navigation. Moreover, the literature substantiated the design of the VISION-GOAL program, which addressed motivational needs, coping mechanisms, and inclusive support structures within the Philippine educational and athletic context. Ultimately, this alignment strengthened the study's claim that inclusive, psychologically informed, and culturally responsive interventions were critical for sustaining the motivation and well-being of visually impaired para-athletes.

Social and Environmental Influences on Para-Athletes' Participation

Para-athletes' participation in sports is greatly aided by social support from classmates, coaches, family, and the larger society. It includes both practical help, such as financial support, transportation, and advocacy for accessible opportunities, in addition to emotional support. Numerous studies have emphasized the value of community—and family involvement in removing structural obstacles in adaptive sports. According to Ojwang et al. (2025) and Cardenas (2020), family and community support were crucial for long-term involvement because they help athletes deal with the emotional, financial, and practical difficulties of participating in handicap sports. Numerous studies have emphasized the value of community—and family involvement in removing structural obstacles in adaptive sports.

Equally significant are the psychological advantages of social support. Through a systematic review, Mira et al. (2023) showed that social support for athletes with disabilities greatly improves psychological well-being, resilience, and coping strategies, encouraging continued sports participation. Alhumaid, Alotaibi & Alabdulaziz, (2024) further underscored that fostering a supportive and inclusive community encourages women with physical impairments to engage in sports actively. It has been demonstrated that establishing networks, support groups, and mentorship programs not only offers a feeling of community but also vital motivational resources that help athletes overcome obstacles and enhance their self-esteem and sense of self as athletes. Social relationships' significance extends to sports teams' dynamics and the relationships between players and coaches.

Rocchi, M. A., & Pelletier, L. G. (2019) articulated within the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework that supportive interpersonal environments, especially from coaches, directly influence athletes' perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness—the core psychological needs underpinning intrinsic motivation. Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2021) corroborated these findings, reporting that para-athletes who perceive their coaches as empathetic, autonomy-supportive, and encouraging experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, and performance satisfaction. Additionally, peer acceptance and camaraderie within sports teams mitigate feelings of marginalization, promoting long-term sports involvement (Macias et al., 2022).

Para-athletes have numerous obstacles that prevent them from participating in
sports, even in the face of progressive, inclusive policies and increased social awareness. Khurana et al. (2021) drew attention to the exorbitant prices and restricted supply of adaptable equipment, while Rodríguez-Macías (2022) emphasized the ongoing deficiencies in adaptive sports facilities, transportation services, and infrastructure. These physical and financial barriers are often compounded by societal stigma and entrenched ableist attitudes. In their thorough systematic review, Elipe-Lorenzo et al. (2025) found several enduring obstacles to participation.

Some of these problems are not enough accessible sports facilities, people are biased, society has an ableist mindset, it is hard to find reliable information, and coaches and sports club managers do not get enough training. A multisectoral, coordinated approach are needed to overcome these challenges, and it entails providing sports staff with extensive training, putting inclusive policies into place, offering financial incentives, and using efficient communication techniques. To eliminate these barriers, a coordinated, multisectoral strategy that includes mindset change, focused training for sports staff, inclusive policies, financial incentives, and efficient communication techniques.

The participation of para-athletes is also greatly influenced by cultural beliefs and societal attitudes. According to Shapiro et al. (2020), misconceptions about disability lead to exclusion and prejudice, which have a negative influence on para-athletes' psychological health and participation rates. These discriminatory ideas, which disproportionately affect vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities, usually manifest as social stigma, low expectations, and a lack of assistance. According to Alhumaid et al. (2024), social stereotypes and biases against women with disabilities limit their participation in sports and degrade their athletic identity and social visibility.

Environmental facilitators, such as accessible sporting facilities, adapted equipment, and dependable transportation services, have frequently been identified as participation enablers and motivational reinforcement providers (Rodrigues et al., 2024). In contrast, the absence of these supports relates to para-athletes' demotivation, disengagement, and social isolation (Baaziz et al., 2023). The combined impact of environmental and societal barriers highlighted the importance of comprehensive, systemic change in

promoting equitable access and participation in sports. Such change involves coordination among educational institutions, local governments, and community stakeholders. Inclusion and social integration are fundamental to supporting long-term engagement among para-athletes.

Inclusion and social integration were critical to promoting long-term participation among para-athletes. Inclusive sporting settings that value diversity, equity, and equality enable people with disabilities to participate actively in sports and contribute to their communities. Alhumaid et al. (2024) found that involvement in Para sports is a powerful tool for empowerment and social integration, particularly for women with physical disabilities. However, such empowerment requires an ecosystem that not only facilitates access but actively celebrates diversity and inclusion.

Organizations must assist in establishing a friendly environment. Elipe-Lorenzo et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of sports programs having comprehensive strategies that deal with diversity, equity, and accessibility. Key elements include specialized education and training for coaches, sports staff, and administrators, ensuring they possess the competencies to support athletes with disabilities effectively. It is also important to use effective communication techniques to make sure that people with disabilities can get transparent, accessible, and inclusive information about the sports options that are available to them. This helps them make smart decisions about whether to participate. Policy initiatives also function as facilitators of inclusion and sustained participation. In the Philippines, the implementation of inclusive legislative measures such as the Palarong Pambansa Act of 2013 and Republic Act No. 10699 indicates substantial progress toward equal participation in adaptive sports. However, Cardenas (2020) pointed out that inconsistent enforcement is still problematic. Collaborative initiatives involving schools, local governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are essential for developing sustainable, inclusive sporting environments that translate policy into practice (Penetrante & Friales, 2023).

Environmental and organizational facilitators substantially influenced motivational outcomes in para-athletes. Recent qualitative research by Baaziz et al. (2023) highlighted the detrimental impacts of unsupportive conditions by linking them to para-athletes' elevated feelings of amotivation and social isolation. A comprehensive, team-based approach that actively promotes inclusion, social integration, and psychological well-being while overcoming organizational, social, and structural barriers is required for sustained participation in adapted sports. Recent qualitative research by Baaziz et al. (2023) highlighted the adverse effects of unsupportive situations, which connect these circumstances to para-athletes' increased sentiments of social isolation and amotivation.

Long-term engagement in adaptive sports necessitates a multifaceted, team-based strategy that actively fosters inclusion, social integration, and psychological health while addressing organizational, social, and structural hurdles. Social support from family, peers, coaches, and the larger community remains critical, but organizational and policy measures must collaborate to build an inclusive and empowered environment.

This reviewed literature on social and environmental influences is closely aligned with the findings of this study. The lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga reflected both the enabling role of supportive families, peers, and coaches, as well as the barriers created by financial limitations, inaccessible infrastructure, and societal stigma. These parallels validated themes such as *Support Systems and External Motivation, Inclusive Social Environment, Adaptive Learning and Accessibility,* and *Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities.* Moreover, the literature provided empirical backing for developing the VISION GOAL Program, which addressed the athletes' psychological needs and the social and environmental factors essential to sustaining long-term engagement. By integrating community,

school, and policy-level interventions, the program directly responded to the realities highlighted in the data and related literature, emphasizing that holistic support systems were indispensable for empowering visually impaired para-athletes.

School-Based Sport Programs for Athletes with Disabilities

The Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) has articulated a robust strategy for sports development through its 2023–2028 National Sports Development Plan (NSDP). Grounded in Section 17, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the PSC is mandated to collaborate with the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), National Sports Associations (NSAs), and the Department of Education (DepEd) to provide essential manpower, technical support, and facilities for national sporting events, such as Palarong Pambansa. The Constitution also emphasized the need for athletes to participate in ongoing training programs that support their growth, education, and general well-being, thereby reaffirming sports as a safe and transforming medium for social and personal development.

The "Sports for All" policy was formalized by Philippine Sports Commission. (2023), which strengthened access to physical activity and fitness for all people, irrespective of gender, age, or ability. The NSDP's alignment with multi-sectoral goals and the PSC's major flagship projects have been made possible by this inclusive concept. Flagship Projects Under the NSDP 2023–2028. The NSDP integrates grassroots empowerment and elite athlete development under six main directions:

1. Increasing monitoring and institutional strength is part of sports governance.
2. Promoting sports and raising awareness: expanding media engagement and
3. Sports Accessibility: Encourage inclusivity via initiatives like the Philippine National Para Games.
4. High-performance sports development is the process of improving the competitiveness of top athletes through superior coaching and sports science.
5. Improved facilities and innovation hubs for sports infrastructure and support 6. Sports Links: Promoting connections at the national and international levels,

For example, the establishment of a National Sports Development Council. Key programs include:

- Grassroots and Sports for All Development: Initiatives such as Batang Pinoy, Philippine National Games, Women in Sports, Laro't Saya, and Pilipinas Para Games promote community-level inclusion.
- High-Level Sports Development: Focused on international performance through elite training, exposure, and medical support systems.

A cornerstone of inclusive sports policy is the Differently Abled Sports for Life (DAS4LIFE) initiative (launched in 2018), developed with the Philippine Paralympic Committee (PPC). It advances PWD participation and well-being via events such as the Pilipinas Para Games, in collaboration with DepEd and LGUs. Education Sector Engagement and Inclusive Programming. DepEd continues integrating inclusive sports education alongside partners such as the University of the Philippines (UP). The UP SUPER (Support for the Persons with Disabilities Empowerment, and Rights), established in 2020, supports disability inclusion through sign language workshops, awareness training, and educational access services, such as Braille exams and interpretation.

Advocates like UP SUPER President Panjie Legaspi have emphasized the significance of including people with disabilities in policymaking. This illustrates a paradigm change in favor of rights-based and participatory approaches. In support of para-athletes, Republic Act No. 10699 (Expanded National Athletes and Coaches Incentives and Benefits Act) affirms the government's commitment to rewarding excellence, recently echoed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s public recognition of para-athletes as national heroes.

International Benchmarks for Inclusive Sports. Global frameworks provided replicable models for the Philippines' ongoing sports inclusion efforts. According to the American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP), the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), and the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (2019), inclusion strategies include:

- Active identification and encouragement of students with disabilities for sports.
- Dissemination of accessible sports program information.
- Formation of adapted sports teams mirroring mainstream formats.
- Centralized team hosting and district-wide access.
- Integration across grade levels and ability types

Nguyen, T., & Patel, S. (2023) further promoted initiatives like Project Ability, Topsport Ability, and The Young Leaders Program to improve access to physical activity for youth with disabilities. The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (2024) and the Kenneth Wallen Family Foundation (2022) advocated educational initiatives like Paralympic School Day, Special Olympics University Curriculum, and The Inclusion Club,

fostering awareness, educator training, and global dialogue.

Sports and Visual Impairment. Sweeting et al. (2020) highlighted lower physical activity rates and higher chronic illness risks among individuals with visual impairments. Studies by James and Anderson (2020) and Wilson and Williams (2019) recommended school-based adaptations to accommodate visually impaired students in extracurricular sports better. Programs like goalball, tandem cycling, and blind soccer allow meaningful engagement in sports (Pereira, 2018). Inclusive arts programs also contributed to development, using tactile and audio-based accommodations (Miller, 2019; Mitsuba & Vanderheiden, 2018).

Johnson, R., Leyva, M., & Torres, A. (2021) and Anselimus & Sweetbert (2023)

found that inclusive extracurricular environments enhance well-being, confidence, and social engagement among visually impaired youth. Global Inclusive Practices: Tanzania and Beyond. In Tanzania, strategies to support students with visual impairments include:

- Assistive technology and Braille tools (Neely, 2020; Eze, 2018).
- Special Education Units (Bonga, 2016).
- Orientation and mobility training.
- Partnerships with disability organizations (Mallya, 2018; UN, 2021).

These reflect a cross-cultural commitment to equity and inclusion. Inclusive school-based sports programs offered numerous benefits. Rodríguez Macías (2022) reported a 25% increase in motivation and a 30% improvement in academic performance among visually impaired students engaged in structured programs. Similar findings from Robredo (2024) and Disability Insider (2020) demonstrated elevated self-esteem and resilience among para-athletes. In the Philippines, programs such as Project AKTIB and adaptations within Palarong Pambansa and Batang Pinoy Para-games have shown preliminary success (DepEd, 2024; PSC, 2023). However, barriers remain, including:

- Inadequate infrastructure and assistive devices.
- Undertrained personnel.
- Persistent gender and socioeconomic disparities.
- Stigma and negative perceptions (Chiu et al., 2023; Robredo,2024).

Hussan (2019) stated that integrating visually impaired students into recreational and academic activities encourages inclusive learning environments and holistic development. International and regional

initiatives highlighted the critical need for rights-based, cooperative, and well-resourced sports programs adapted to learners' various needs. The Philippine government's initiatives, when aligned with international best practices and educational frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018), can transform schools into truly inclusive environments where all students thrive through sports.

The reviewed literature on school-based sports programs directly reinforced the findings of this study by highlighting the importance of structured, inclusive, and well-supported initiatives for athletes with disabilities. The experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga reflected both the opportunities created by inclusive policies and programs and the persistent barriers of inadequate infrastructure, limited assistive tools, and undertrained personnel.

These findings aligned with themes such as *Adaptive Learning and Accessibility, Training, Discipline and Performance, Inclusive Social Environment,* and *Support Systems and External Motivation.* Furthermore, the literature substantiated the rationale for the VISION GOAL Program, which integrated international best practices and local policies to provide holistic support, motivation, and opportunities for visually impaired student-athletes. This alignment demonstrated that inclusive school-based sports initiatives were not only beneficial but also essential in promoting empowerment, well-being, and sustainable participation among para-athletes.

Barriers and Facilitators to Para-Athletes' Engagement in Sports

Engagement in sports among para-athletes, particularly those with visual impairments, is shaped by a complex interplay of structural, social, and personal factors. Even though friendly surroundings and inclusive programs can act as facilitators, participation is hampered by several obstacles, from undertrained staff and inaccessible infrastructure to social stigma and a lack of policy support. Understanding the barriers and enablers is necessary to create equitable and empowering opportunities for para-athletes.

Physical Barriers

One of the biggest obstacles preventing para-athletes from participating in organized sports is still physical hurdles, including inaccessible infrastructure, poor transportation, and restricted access to adaptive gear. These components contributed to social marginalization and health disparities among persons with disabilities, as well as reducing opportunities for physical activity.

The absence of accessible sporting facilities is one of the main physical obstacle's para-athletes must overcome. According to a recent systematic reviewed by Elipe-Lorenzo et al. (2025), a common and persistent barrier keeping people with disabilities from participating in mainstream and competitive sports is the scarcity of facilities that are accessible to them, such as gyms, training facilities, and sports complexes. This conclusion is repeated in a South African context. Mogashoa et al. (2024) revealed that Paralympians from low-income communities frequently faced significant barriers to obtaining acceptable training locations due to inadequate infrastructure to support their physical needs. In the United Kingdom, accessibility audits conducted by Leonard Cheshire Disability revealed that nearly one-third of gyms lacked automatic doors, over 20% of facilities had faulty lifts, and a quarter of swimming pools did not possess hoists, rendering them inaccessible and effectively excluding many individuals with disabilities from participation (The Guardian, 2012).

Beyond physical infrastructure, transportation barriers also restricted para-athletes' access to sports opportunities. A study by MDPI (2022) examined inclusive sports facilities in Indonesia and Malaysia found that athletes with disabilities frequently experienced difficulties reaching training venues due to limited accessible public transportation systems and the prohibitive private transport

costs. Furthermore, ride-hailing companies discriminated against athletes, reducing their mobility and participation opportunities. These transportation difficulties highlighted the necessity of inclusive, cost-effective, and dependable mobility solutions as a necessary component of accessible athletic facilities. Another crucial physical barrier is the limited availability and high cost of adaptive sports equipment. According to research conducted in Kenya, para-athletes frequently had to rely on non-standard or improvised equipment due to a lack of and high expense of specific gear customized to their demands (Journal of Sport for Development, 2025). A lack of suitable adaptive equipment decreases athletic performance and increases the danger of injury, discouraging aspiring para-athletes from competing. A comprehensive, cross-sectoral strategy is required to overcome these obstacles. It can guaranteed that infrastructure is intrinsically inclusive and accessible to all users by applying universal design concepts to the building and remodeling of sporting facilities. Expanding accessible transportation choices, particularly in impoverished areas, and reducing the cost and accessibility of adaptive equipment are two further essential tactics for enabling para-athletes to participate fully in athletic activities. These programs are crucial for establishing fair, welcoming environments that promote the overall growth, health, and social inclusion of individuals with disabilities through sport.

Psychological Barriers

Psychological obstacles, which included things like low self-esteem, lack of drive, and fear of harm, severely limit para-athletes' participation in sports. These obstacles frequently coexisted with institutional limitations and societal views, resulting in a complicated environment that makes continuous participation difficult (Fagher et al., 2024; Mogashoa et al., 2024).

Low Self-esteem and Fear of Getting Hurt. Para-athletes continue to have a high rate of injury fear, which is frequently caused by bad experiences in the past or the expectation of becoming hurt in situations with insufficient support networks. Avoidant behaviors are frequently the result of this dread, which limits opportunities for social connection, skill development, and competitive engagement (Frontiers in Psychology, 2025). These problems are made worse by low self-esteem, since people may adopt cultural views of handicap and lose faith in their athletic abilities. Sarol (2024) observed that wheelchair basketball athletes commonly report diminished motivation linked to structural constraints and negative societal attitudes. The study emphasized the importance of nurturing supportive, inclusive environments that foster self-efficacy and
empower athletes with disabilities to embrace sports participation.

Lack of Motivation and Intrinsic Drives. A key component of consistent sports engagement is motivation. One important factor in sustaining engagement is intrinsic motivation, which is fueled by self-satisfaction and the natural enjoyment of physical activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), enhancing intrinsic motivation involved meeting the psychological demands of relatedness, competence, and autonomy and encouraging athletic perseverance (Standage et al., 2019). However, because of societal marginalization, restricted laws, and environmental constraints, para-athletes frequently struggle to achieve these demands. According to Rodrigues et al. (2024), para-athletes who experienced unfulfilled psychological requirements are more prone to get demotivated and stop participating in organized sports programs. This is consistent with research by Elipe-Lorenzo et al. (2025), which emphasized that low levels of adapted equipment and inaccessible infrastructure had a detrimental effect on participation and motivation rates.

Structural Limitations and Societal Attitudes. The impact of public perceptions of disability on the psychological health of para-athletes cannot be overstated. The motivation to participate in sports can be

directly undermined by persistently negative perceptions and stereotypes, leading to feelings of marginalization, inferiority, and isolation (Peers et al., 2020). Structural barriers, including the scarcity of accessible facilities and insufficient adaptive resources, further exacerbated these psychological challenges (Ogashoa et al., 2024). Addressing these concerns necessitates comprehensive, multifaceted strategies that involve public education campaigns aimed at reshaping societal perceptions, alongside institutional reforms focused on infrastructure improvement and equitable resource distribution (Fagher et al., 2024).

Strategies for Overcoming Psychological Barriers. To successfully lower these psychological barriers, therapies must improve intrinsic motivation and foster supportive social environments. Programs that emphasiz skill mastery, personal growth, and the innate love of athletics may improve the athletic experience for para-athletes (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Additionally, initiatives that provide mentorship opportunities, peer support networks, and psychological counseling can bolster athletes' confidence and resilience (Paralympic.ca, 2023). Creating inclusive, accessible environments that actively value diversity and promote equal opportunities is crucial in empowering para-athletes to navigate psychological obstacles and participate in sports activities (Fagher et al., 2024; Elipe-Lorenzo et al., 2025). These surroundings assist para-athletes develop confidence, resilience, and a greater sense of identity as they participate in meaningful experiences.

Structural Barriers

Structural impediments, especially financial ones, severely hinder the involvement of para-athletes in sports. These difficulties include insufficient access to training facilities, restricted funding options, and the exorbitant prices of specialized equipment. Para-athletes often require customized equipment tailored to their specific needs, which can be prohibitively expensive. For instance, high-quality basketball wheelchairs can cost between $3,900 and $5,400 (Sportaid, n.d.). Racing wheelchairs, especially those made from carbon fiber, can cost $18,000 (Top End Sports, n.d.).

Additionally, running blade prostheses can range from $13,000 to over $50,000 per leg, with further costs for maintenance and adjustments as the athlete's body changes (SELF, 2021). Since these chairs are usually made overseas and come with extra import fees, many para-athletes in impoverished nations who struggle financially cannot afford them. As a result, some athletes turn to using non-standard equipment, which increases the risk of injury and detracts from performance at international levels where cutting-edge equipment is typical.

Limited Funding and Sponsorship Opportunities. Financial support for para-athletes is frequently uneven and insufficient. Research conducted in South Africa discovered that many para-athletes pass up opportunities owing to a lack of funds for equipment, travel, and access to services. Most elite athletes with disabilities do not have sponsors or medical insurance, and the little funding they receive from federations or national sports departments is often inadequate (Mogashoa et al., 2024). Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, female para-athletes faced financial challenges that limit their participation in sports, compounded by cultural and societal barriers (Alhumaid et al., 2024). In the United States, para-athletes often encountered additional expenses due to specialized equipment and unique travel and healthcare needs, contributing to financial instability. Many must seek additional jobs or rely on financial aid from various sources, but such support is inconsistent and unpredictable (SELF, 2021).

Inadequate Access to Training Facilities. One major obstacle is still access to adequate training facilities. There are few options for training and competition because sports facilities in many areas are not built to accommodate people with impairments. For instance, athletes with disabilities in South Africa

are incapable of engaging in sports because of the lack of accessible and available athletic facilities, particularly in low-socioeconomic areas (Mogashoa et al., 2024). Furthermore, these issues are worsened in Kenya by a lack of funding for parasports facilities and a shortage of specialist equipment (Rodrigues et al., 2024).

In Indonesia and Malaysia, athletes with disabilities faced barriers such as insufficient sports facilities, transportation challenges, and a lack of suitable equipment, all of which hinder their ability to train effectively (MDPI, 2022). In the Philippines, para-athletes faced similar structural barriers. The Philippine Paralympic Committee has highlighted the lack of accessible training venues and accommodations as significant challenges for national para-athletes (Barredo, 2021). While facilities like the New Clark City Athletics Stadium and the PhilSports Complex exist, their accessibility for para- athletes remains limited due to inadequate accommodation and support services (PhilSports Complex, 2024; New Clark City Athletics Stadium, 2025).

Furthermore, because to low government support for sports programs, athletes frequently experienced financial difficulties and delays in payment for training, lodging, travel, registration, and food (Medium, 2021). This lack of aid extends to para-athletes, whose specific needs may present extra challenges. These problems affected not only their performance and participation, but also their morale and long-term dedication to their activity. Para-athletes may require specific equipment, assistance gadgets, and personalized coaching, all of which necessitate a bigger financial expenditure. Without proper assistance, individuals are forced to bear these expenses or rely on personal networks and infrequent donations, making it tough to continue their athletic path and attain their full potential.

Recognizing these concerns, several programs have been created to alleviate financial burdens. In Australia, the AIS Para Athlete Barrier pay, part of the government's Para Uplift initiative, aimed to reduced financial barriers for athletes by providing grants to pay for participation in key events (Sport Australia, 2024). Similarly, in the United States, philanthropist Ross Stevens donated $100 million to support U.S. Olympic and Paralympic athletes created a post-retirement fund worth up to $200,000 per participant, addressing

the financial instability many athletes face (Reuters, 2025).

In the Philippines, the BingoPlus Foundation has partnered with the Philippines. Accessible Disability Services (PADS) to develop the PLUS Center aimed to fill a critical gap in PWD healthcare by offering accessible rehabilitation and a path to new opportunities through sports (Daily Tribune, 2024). Additionally, the National Academy of Sports, established in 2020, provided a government-run sports academy that includes para-athletes in its programs, aimed to develop world-class athletes through education and financial constraints remain a pervasive structural barrier for para-athletes worldwide, including in the Philippines Addressing these difficulties requires a broad approach, which includes increased funding, sponsorship opportunities, and the establishment of accessible training facilities. We can encourage more para-athletes to participate in sports by removing these financial barriers. Ensuring financial support allows athletes to concentrate on training and performance rather than survival.

Systemic Barriers

Systemic obstacles, such as societal stigma and insufficient policy assistance still hamper the full participation and acknowledgment of para-athletes worldwide. Gender inequality exacerbates these issues, resulting in what has been called "double marginalization" for female para-athletes. These problems are especially noticeable in the Philippines, reflecting larger structural injustices in sports. These issues are particularly pronounced in the Philippines, reflecting broader systemic inequities in sports (Reuters,

2024).

Inadequate Policy Support. Globally, para-athletes often face insufficient policy frameworks that provide equitable support. highlighted entrenched ableist mindsets and the lack of inclusive policies as significant barriers to para-athlete participation (Elipe-Lorenzo et al. 2025). In the Philippine context, para-athletes continue to receive less recognition and institutional support compared to their able-bodied counterparts. Systemic disparities in sports recognition and benefits are highlighted by Republic Act No. 10699, also known as the National Athletes and Coaches Benefits and Incentives Act, which stipulated that Paralympic medalists are only eligible to receive half of the financial incentives given to Olympic medalists (2015). Efforts are being made to alleviate these discrepancies. In his campaign, Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada emphasized the value of giving para-athletes proper credit for their achievements and called for increased incentives. To ensure that para-athletes receive appropriate compensation for their contributions, he has suggested amendments to RA 10699 (Senate of the Philippines, 2022). This legislative initiative shows a growing recognition of the importance of institutionalizing assistance for para-athletes nationally.

Social Stigma and Discrimination. Societal views and stigma also have a significant impact on disabled people's engagement in sports. According to Elipe-Lorenzo et al. (2025), ableism and a lack of understanding of para-sports contribute to para-athletes' persistent marginalization. In the Philippines, these constraints include little media coverage, low public support, and societal indifference. The LaSallian (2022) stressed that achievements by para-athletes often receive less attention and fanfare compared to those of non-disabled athletes, which further perpetuates their invisibility in mainstream sports narratives. Additionally, many sports camps and training facilities in the Philippines are not designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities, limiting opportunities for para-athletes to train and participate in competitive sports.

Double Marginalization of Female Para-Athletes. Female para-athletes have additional hurdles due to the combination of gender and disability discrimination. Studies found that female Paralympians worldwide frequently face "double marginalization," which includes restricted media coverage, limited financial prospects, and persistent prejudices about their athletic skills. These difficulties are also evident in the Philippines, where women are underrepresented in sports leadership positions and there isn't any gender-responsive programs expressly intended for female athletes with impairments (Reuters ,2024).

Grassroots initiatives such as Girls Got Game have highlighted how crucial it is to offer assistance and motivation for young girls to engage in sports, recognizing that cultural norms and patriarchal mindsets often dissuade girls from participating in athletic activities (Pinas Culture, 2024). Because of this, there is a limited pool of female para-athletes, limiting their future involvement in regional and worldwide competitions. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Philippines has several notable initiatives to address systemic inequities in sports. The Philippine Accessible Disability Services (PADS)

Dragon Boat Team, based in Cebu City, serves as the country's first cross-disability adaptive dragon boat racing team, providing a model for inclusive athletic opportunities and challenging prevailing societal perceptions about disability and competitive sports (Tatler Asia, n.d.) Additionally, the Department of Education has teamed up with Special Olympics Pilipinas to introduce inclusive sports programs in schools. By incorporating youth leadership programs and unified sports programs into the national educational system, this effort seeks to lessen social isolation and stigma among students with intellectual disabilities (Philstar, 2025).

Systemic barriers, including inadequate policy support, societal stigma, and compounded gender biases, continue to impede the progress of para-athletes worldwide, particularly female para-athletes in the Philippines. Addressing these deeply rooted issues requires comprehensive policy reforms, enhanced public awareness campaigns, and establishing targeted, inclusive sports programs. Collaboration among government agencies, advocacy groups, and community-based organizations in the Philippines is critical to creating an egalitarian athletic environment where athletes of all genders and abilities can thrive.

The reviewed literature on barriers and facilitators to para-athletes' engagement in sports strongly resonated with the findings of this study. The lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga echoed the challenges described in the literature, including limited access to training facilities, high costs of adaptive equipment, transportation barriers, and persistent stigma. These findings directly paralleled the study's themes of *Overcoming Challenges and Building Resilience, Adaptive Learning and Accessibility, Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities,* and *Support Systems and External Motivation.* At the same time, the literature also validated the enabling influence of supportive environments, family encouragement, and inclusive policies, which were equally evident in the athletes' narratives. Notably, the literature reinforced the necessity of the VISION GOAL Program, which was designed to address these multifaceted barriers by providing holistic, school-based, and community-integrated support. By aligning the structural and psychological needs of para-athletes with inclusive policies and grassroots initiatives, the program responded to the systemic, financial, and social realities highlighted by the participants and the global research base.

Facilitators of Para-Athletes' Sports Participation

Despite several challenges, several facilitators have been identified as improving
para-athletes' involvement and continuing participation in sports. These facilitators include inclusive coaching approaches, accessible places, adaptable equipment, motivational techniques, and strong institutional and community support. Para-athletes' involvement is mainly dependent on the availability of accessible sports venues and adaptive gear. Participation rates among people with impairments can be considerably increased by incorporating universal design concepts into sports infrastructure (Elipe-Lorenzo et al., 2025). A dedication to inclusivity was demonstrated in the Philippines with infrastructure projects like New Clark City, built for the 2020 ASEAN Para Games, which featured sliding doors, wheelchair-accessible lodging, and elevators with audio and braille systems (Dioquino, 2019). The National Academy of Sports (NAS) was established in 2020 to deliver para-athletes and other student-athletes specialized training and education while guaranteeing access to facilities and adapted equipment catered to their needs (Argarin, 2020).

Para-athletes are motivated and resilient when inclusive coaching methods that prioritize their autonomy, competence, and relatedness are used. To improve intrinsic motivation, Sarol (2024) highlighted the vital significance that coaches' inclusive leadership styles, good attitudes, and actions play. Furthermore, specific coaching techniques that include psychological support—like customized goal-setting and coping mechanisms—help to remove obstacles to involvement (Powell & Myers, 2017). In the Philippine context, the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) organized virtual sports coaching workshops in 2020, covering various adaptive sports including athletics, ball games, and Boccia. The goal of this program was to help individuals with impairments reach their full potential in both competitive and leisure sports (Disability Insider, 2020). Peer support, individualized coaching, and goal setting are motivational techniques that significantly impact long-term sports involvement and enhanced performance results.

Dehghansai et al. (2021) underscored the centrality of intrinsic motivation in maintaining long-term engagement among para-athletes. The 11th ASEAN Para Games medalists in the Philippines received ₱11.9 million in rewards from the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) in 2022, which gave them real financial encouragement and official acknowledgement for their accomplishments (Panganiban, 2022). Complementing government support, private sector initiatives, including those by the MVP Sports Foundation, have played a crucial role in providing additional resources and sustaining athlete development (Philstar, 2021).

Institutional support through academic mentoring, flexible scheduling, and accessible campus facilities is vital for student-athletes managing dual roles (TSLAM Philippines, 2016). NAS offers full scholarships in the Philippines and plans to expand its services to para-athletes, integrating sports and academic development (Argarin, 2020). Furthermore, community-based programs are essential for promoting social cohesiveness and inclusion. The clearest illustration of this is the Philippine Accessible Disability Services (PADS) Dragon Boat Team, which encourages acceptance and public awareness while providing a competitive environment for those with disabilities. Internationally, similar trends have been observed; in Kenya, para-athletes have highlighted the critical role of family and community support in overcoming logistical and financial challenges related to training and competition (Journal of Sport for Development, 2025). In addition to physical obstacles, systemic and societal hurdles significantly affected visually impaired athletic careers. Dehghansai et al. (2021) conducted a study on 500 para-athletes to analyze the psychological benefits of adaptive sports. The results showed a significant 35% improvement in emotional resilience and a 40% increase in self-confidence.

These findings demonstrated the potential of adaptive sports to foster self-determination and emotional stability. Para-athletes can achieve their own goals and feel more capable by participating. The structured programs of adaptive sports, which often include individualized coaching and social support, were essential for building psychological resilience. These results highlighted how adaptive sports can promote emotional stability and self-determination. Participation allowed para-athletes to achieve personal goals, enhancing their sense of competence. The structured programs in adaptive sports, which often include personalized coaching and peer support, play a key role in cultivating psychological resilience. They also allow athletes to build social networks, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation. Such initiatives are essential in creating a positive, empowering environment for visually impaired individuals.

Building on this, Diaz, Dittmore & Martínez (2019) explored the broader psychosocial impacts of adaptive sports, employing social network analysis to examine its effects on visually impaired athletes. The study revealed that participation in adaptive sports fosters social integration, helping athletes connect with peers, coaches, and mentors. This network of support reduces isolation and strengthens bonds within the athletic community. Adaptive sports foster the growth of life skills, including problem-solving, discipline, and teamwork, as well as developing relationships. Additionally, Diaz et al. emphasized how athletics can assist athletes with vision impairments to redefine who they are. Athletes change how society views them by proving their talents and challenging misconceptions about impairments via success in their chosen fields. Athletes' sense of self and position in the sports world are strengthened by this kind of acknowledgment from peers and the public.

Inclusive programs also play a vital role in shaping the experiences of para-athletes. Rodriguez Macias et al. (2022) evaluated school-based adaptive sports initiatives, focusing on their impact on visually impaired students. The study discovered that students who engaged in these activities saw a 25% rise in motivation

and a 30% increase in academic accomplishment. These achievements would not have been feasible without the availability of easily accessible facilities, mentorship opportunities, and structured training sessions. The researchers underlined the significance of tailored treatments that address the requirements of every athlete and guarantee their sense of belonging and worth in the academic and athletic communities. Such specialized assistance promotes a strong feeling of community and helps students succeed academically and athletically. Research has shown that persistent engagement in adapted sports is essential for maintaining motivation. According to Rodriguez Macias, the development of these programs should be guided by evidence-based frameworks that consider crucial elements like psychosocial support, specialized training, and accessibility.

Chen et al. (2024) conducted a two-year longitudinal study to track changes in motivation among visually impaired athletes. Results showed a 50% increase in intrinsic motivation and a 20% reduction in dropout rates among athletes who received consistent coaching and mentorship. Given that athletes with access to organized coaching and peer support were more likely to remain involved and overcome obstacles, the results highlight the significance of long-term support networks. The report advocated for policies prioritizing accessibility and community-building efforts to ensure visually impaired athletes receive the resources and assistance they need to thrive over time. Para-athletes face significant systemic barriers and challenges despite the many benefits of adaptive sports. Rutland et al. (2025) conducted qualitative research with 26 para-athletes from Ghana, India, and Brazil, uncovering a range of abuse types, such as emotional, psychological, and financial exploitation. Financial abuse emerged as a particularly pervasive issue, with athletes reporting instances of mismanaged funds, unfair compensation, and inequitable access to resources.

Systemic neglect worsens these difficulties, including poor training facilities and a shortage of specialist equipment. Rutland et al. emphasized the importance of safe practices and therapies based on para-athletes' experiences. They contributed to an inclusive and courteous culture in adaptive sports by financing educational programs that dispel myths and promote inclusivity. Similarly, Ojwang, Njororai & Wamukoya (2025) documented the lived experiences of para-athletes in Kenya, emphasizing the value of visibility and community support. While media presence was crucial in changing how society views disability, local parasports competitions became vital venues for skill development and acknowledgment. Athletes stated that their support networks—coaches, friends, and family—were essential to their success. Ojwang et al. (2025) recommended more funding for regional competitions, media advocacy, and resource accessibility to empower para-athletes and improve their growth.

These results were supported by a recent meta-analysis by Isidoro-Cabañas et al. (2023), which showed that playing adaptive sports significantly improves participants' mental and physical quality of life. In addition to improved social integration and general well-being, the analysis showed decreased stress and anxiety levels. This study emphasized the many benefits of adaptive sports, demonstrating how they can effectively support athletes with visual impairments' psychological health, inclusivity, and resilience. These findings underscored the need for institutional support and the programmatic integration of adapted sports into community events and educational systems.

By acknowledging adaptive sports as more than just physical activity—as therapeutic and developmental interventions—educators and policymakers can more effectively address the multidimensional needs of para-athletes. Frequent, readily available opportunities for participation can optimize these advantages by fostering the social and emotional growth of visually impaired athletes in addition to their physical development. A recent study supported these conclusions, emphasizing the importance of motivation,

social influences, and structural elements in determining para-athlete involvement in sports. These studies, grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), highlighted the significance of psychological need satisfaction—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—in fostering sustained participation and well-being among athletes. Chiu et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study involving over 2,000 secondary school students in China to examine the impact of psychological need support from physical education (PE) teachers on students' adherence to sports injury prevention behaviors. The findings showed that students showed higher levels of autonomous motivation when PE teachers offered support that met their autonomy, competence, and relatedness requirements. Consequently, there was an increase in adherence to injury prevention methods and a decrease in the frequency of sports injuries. The study emphasized the importance of need-supportive environments in promoting health-protective behaviors among athletes.

Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) explored the relationships among psychological needs satisfaction, self-determined motivation, and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. (MVPA) among Chinese elementary and secondary school students during PE classes. Utilizing accelerometers to measure MVPA and validated questionnaires to assess motivation and psychological needs, the study found that satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness positively predicted students' self-determined motivation. This heightened motivation was associated with increased levels of physical activity during PE. Interestingly, secondary school children showed a greater correlation between self-determined motivation and MVPA, indicating developmental variations in motivational processes. Furthermore, Rodrigues et al. (2024) carried out a longitudinal study on young football players to find out how a task-involving motivational climate affects athletes' enjoyment and self-determined motivation. The study found that environments stressing personal progress, effort, and mastery—typical of a task-related climate—boosted athletes' intrinsic motivation and enjoyment. Over time, these satisfying emotional experiences were connected to continued participation and dedication to the sport. When taken as a whole, this research highlights how crucial psychological need satisfaction and encouraging social settings are for promoting motivation and long-term sports engagement.

These findings emphasized the significance of need-supportive coaching for para-athletes, especially in settings like the Philippines, where institutional hurdles still exist. This type of coaching increases para-athletes' intrinsic motivation by promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Athletes feel more in control when autonomy-supportive behaviors are used, such as giving them meaningful options, recognizing their emotions, and justifying them for tasks. Para-athletes can experience a sense of purpose and belonging by fostering relatedness via caring relationships and fostering competence through skill improvement and kind criticism. This increases involvement, perseverance, and pleasure despite obstacles or scarce resources. Inclusive physical education (PE) programs that meet psychological needs promote long-term sports participation among students with disabilities. Inclusive PE fosters capability, acceptance, and positive attitudes through modifications, supportive teaching, and success opportunities. By doing this, stigma is contested, and fair, conscious sports cultures are produced. A supportive environment that prioritizes work and individual development over rivalry increases commitment and satisfaction. A task-involving environment lowers anxiety, increases self-assurance, and encourages sustained participation. Communities, educators, coaches, and legislators must work together to implement these concepts. All athletes may succeed in sports when supporting settings are created, which promote inclusivity and remove structural hurdles.

Supportive settings can be institutionalized by adopting these concepts into school policy, ensuring that they are long-term components of the educational system rather than temporary remedies. Stakeholder

engagement is critical in advancing adaptive coaching methods, creating inclusive and flexible curricula, and launching awareness-raising campaigns to normalize disability sports. These collaborative efforts modify public perceptions and further the more general aims of fairness and social inclusion by converting communities and schools into empowering environments where para-athletes feel valued, respected, and capable of excelling. Such approaches eventually result in an environment that embraces and promotes ability diversity. Schools can serve as catalysts for social change by incorporating these inclusive practices into daily school life—via teacher training, accessible infrastructure, and ongoing support services—helping to break down stigma and encourage equitable chances. This proactive approach ensures that all children, regardless of ability, may thrive in an environment that promotes respect, support, and collaborative achievement. It promotes belonging and self-worth, allowing kids to participate and contribute to both academic and extracurricular activities. These activities establish the groundwork for a more inclusive society in which all learners, including para-athletes, are given the opportunity to attain their full potent

The reviewed literature on facilitators of para-athletes' sports participation closely aligned with the findings of this study. The lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga highlighted the same enablers described in the literature, such as inclusive coaching strategies, strong support systems, and accessible training facilities. These parallels validated themes including *Training, Discipline and Performance; Support Systems and External Motivation; Inclusive Social Environment; Adaptive Learning and Accessibility;* and *Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment.* The literature also reinforced the importance of psychological need satisfaction, which is evident in the athletes' reflections on motivation, identity, and resilience. Most importantly, the reviewed works provided a strong foundation for the VISION GOAL Program, which was designed to institutionalize supportive environments, integrate adaptive learning strategies, and strengthen coaching methods to enhance motivation and long-term engagement. By addressing psychological and structural facilitators, the program directly responded to the needs identified in the participants' narratives and aligned with global best practices in adaptive sports development.

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CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

This chapter presented the study's methodology, population, instrumentation, and data analysis technique. It outlines the methodological foundations that guided the exploration of the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Anchored in a qualitative, phenomenological approach, this chapter details how participants were selected, how data were generated through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and how the responses were thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's method.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design, especially Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), that investigated the lived experiences of visually challenged para-athletes as they negotiated the combined

demands of scholastic and sporting commitments. The central aim is to interpret the nuanced meaning participants assigned to their experiences and generates contextually grounded insights that informed the development of a school-based support program promoting high levels of motivation, inclusion, and resilience.

IPA is well-suited for this study because it prioritized the depth and complexity of individual meaning-making. Unlike purely descriptive phenomenology, which focused on bracketing the researcher's interpretations, IPA acknowledged and embraced the interpretative role of the researcher, who co-constructs understanding with participants through rich narrative and thematic engagement (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022).

The study's interpretative design was grounded in three core philosophical assumptions that framed the methodology as human-centered, constructivist, and socially responsive. First, the Constructivist–Interpretivist Paradigm suggested that reality is subjectively and socially constructed. Knowledge is not discovered but rather emerged through participants' evolving interpretations, shaped by their lived contexts and social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). IPA aligned this worldview by enabling in-depth, idiographic analysis of how visually impaired para-athletes construct meaning around their dual identities and life challenges. Second, the study draws from the Humanistic Assumption, which emphasized personal agency, intrinsic worth, and the centrality of emotional well-being and self-actualization (Rogers, 1969; Geller, 2020).

IPA reflected these values by positioning participants as individuals with unique goals and aspirations and articulating how sports participation nurtures their identity development, resilience, and psychological growth. Third, the Social-Relational Model of Disability informed the design by challenging deficit-based views of disability. Instead of identifying impairment primarily inside the individual, this paradigm highlighted the social, institutional, and environmental limitations that shaped marginalized experiences (Shakespeare, 2022).

Through this viewpoint, IPA became a tool for interpretation and advocacy, revealing how participants actively negotiated, resisted, or adapted to structural restrictions in their contexts. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis provided a coherent, rigorous approach to exploring the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes, revealed how identity, motivation, and resilience shape their academic and athletic lives, and informed inclusive, sustainable school-based support programs by grounding the findings in participants' narratives and the socio-cultural realities they navigate daily.

Methods and Procedure

The study used three complementary data collection approaches to obtain rich triangulated qualitative data: (1) semi-structured interviews;(2) focus group discussions (FGDs); and (3) in-depth interviews (Emerald Insight, 2020). The principal approach was semi-structured interviews to gather participants' narratives. A validated interview technique was developed and revised in collaboration with qualitative research specialists to ensure reliability and consistency with the study's objectives.

Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their opinions openly and allowed for an examination of their social, academic, and athletic backgrounds (Creswell and Poth, 2023; Patton ,2021). The interviews were done in a casual, conversational style and delivered in the most comfortable language for the participants—Bicol, Tagalog, or English—to foster authentic communication (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Every session lasted roughly ninety minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent, ensuring accurate transcription and preservation of the participants' voices and intended meanings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019; Saldaña, 2021).

To complement the insights from individual interviews, focus group discussions were organized to facilitate interaction among participants and uncover shared experiences and collective narratives (Emerald Insight, 2020). FGDs encouraged participants to reflect on their everyday challenges, motivations, and support systems as visually impaired para-athletes. The researcher served as the moderator, ensuring that discussions remained participant-centered while guiding the conversation around relevant themes. Each session lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, and participants were grouped according to common characteristics, such as school affiliation or level of competitive experience, to promote meaningful interaction.

A subgroup of participants was chosen for follow-up in-depth interviews to further examine themes that emerged during the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This approach gave the data more depth and resilience by enabling a more thorough examination of individual experiences, motives, and coping strategies. These one-on-one interviews improved the study's overall trustworthiness by substantially contributing to the triangulation of findings. The researcher recorded field and observational notes throughout all data collection activities, documenting participants' non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and environmental context (Creswell & Poth, 2023). These extra notes provided a more comprehensive insight into each participant's lived experience and enhanced the verbal data.

Respondents of the Study

This study gathered seven participants from three secondary schools in Calabanga, Camarines Sur—Calabanga National Science High School, West Coast National High School, and Medrozo Mendoza National High School. These schools were purposively selected due to their active engagement in para-athlete development programs and consistent participation in regional para-sports competitions, as recognized by the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC, 2023) and the Department of Education (DepED, 2022). Specifically, the distribution of respondents included four participants from Calabanga National Science High School, two from Medrozo Mendoza National High School, and one from West Coast National High School.

Respondents were identified as information-rich participants with diverse and meaningful experiences in para-athletics. Purposeful sampling was used, emphasizing athletes who might provide detailed insights into the daily experiences of visually impaired para-athletes. Table 1 presented the demographic profile of the respondents. The study included four males and three ladies actively competing in goalball at the division, regional, or national levels. Five respondents participated in the 2024 National Competition in Cebu City, while the remaining two competed at the division level in Pili, Camarines Sur. During the data collection phase, all participants prepared for the next Palarong Bicol, demonstrating their ongoing participation in competitive sports.

A set of inclusion criteria was applied to guarantee congruence with the study's objectives and target population. First, respondents were required to have a medically certified visual impairment by the classification standards set by the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA, 2021) and Pilipinas Para Games (PSC, 2023). The responders' visual classifications, which placed one athlete in the T11 group and six in the T12 category, confirmed they were eligible to play goalball, a sport created especially for

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Attributes	Categories	Frequency (N = 7)	Percentage
Age	13–14	3	42.85%

	15–16	1	14.29%
	16–17	1	14.29%
	18–19	2	28.57%
Sex	Male	4	57.15%
	Female	3	42.85%
Civil Status	Single	7	100.00%
	Married	0	0%
Educational Level	High School	7	100.00%
	College	0	0%
Impairment Type	Vision	7	100.00%
Visual Acuity	T11	1	14.29%
	T12	6	85.71%
Tenure in Sports	Below 1 Year	2	28.57%
	1–2 Years	4	57.15%
	3–4 Years	1	14.28%

athletes with visual impairments.

To further guarantee experience relevance and consistency, only athletes actively playing goalball—either through practice or competition—were included. All participants were required to have competitive experience at the school, regional, or national level to provide valuable insights grounded in firsthand involvement in adaptive sports (Laughlin & Happel, 2016). The group consisted exclusively of high school students (100%), ranging in age from 13 to 19 years old: three were aged 13–14, one aged 15–16, one aged 16–17, and two aged 18–19. All were single, and none were married, which aligned with the adolescent profile of the sample.

Regarding sports tenure, respondents' experience in goalball varied: two athletes had less than one year of involvement, four had been active for one to two years, and one had been competing for three to four years. This range allowed for the collection of insights from novice and more experienced athletes, enriching the study with diverse perspectives on the challenges and adaptive strategies encountered in para-sports (Patton, 2021).

Demographically, the study focused on male and female high school-aged athletes (13 to 19 years old), in alignment with the Philippine Sports Commission's (2023) definition of youth athletes. Including both genders promoted gender inclusivity, consistent with best practices in sports research (De Bosscher et al., 2019). All respondents were enrolled in Calabanga, Camarines Sur secondary schools and were actively involved in para-sport that required specialist training and adaptation measures.Their combined profiles provided a comprehensive and significant platform for investigating the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in the region.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards in qualitative research involving vulnerable populations, specifically visually impaired student-athletes. Ethical principles were guided by contemporary literature on disability research and qualitative inquiry (Iphofen, 2019; McLaughlin & Alfaro, 2020; Wiles, 2021).

Harm to Participants

Every precaution was taken to prevent physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Given the sensitive

nature of the narratives, participants could skip questions or withdraw at any time without penalty. Support systems were available to address potential emotional distress (Jansen van Vuuren, 2021; Wiles, 2021).

Confidentiality and Anonymity

To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used, and all identifiable data—such as names, schools, and athletic records—were anonymized. Data was storedin encrypted digital formats and locked physical files, in compliance with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 and international ethical standards (Iphofen, 2019).

Informed Consent

A two-step consent process was implemented, combining verbal explanation and written form. For accessibility, consent forms were read aloud and clarified in a language and tone suitable for visually impaired participants. Consent was reaffirmed before each data collection session (Knox & Burkard, 2021). This method ensured that participants were aware of their rights and the nature of their participation. It also upheld ethical norms by encouraging voluntary engagement while reducing any misunderstandings or discomfort.

Invasion of Privacy

Interviews were conducted in private, quiet settings to ensure comfort and discretion, while sensitive topics were approached with empathy, and participants had full autonomy to withhold information or skip questions, thereby fostering a respectful and psychologically safe environment for open sharing (McLaughlin, 2020).).

Deception

No deception was used unless necessary to ensure response authenticity. In such rare cases, participants were debriefed immediately following the session, following ethical debriefing protocols (Wiles, 2021). This ensured transparency while also maintaining participants' confidence, autonomy, and informed awareness of the research
goal.

Data Management

All personal data was handled with strict confidentiality. Electronic files were stored on password-protected devices, and hard copies were in secure cabinets. Only the principal researcher had access to raw data, and all identifiers were removed during transcription to protect participant anonymity and uphold data privacy standards throughout the research process (Iphofen, 2019).

Copyright and Visual Data Use

In cases involving photographs or audio recordings, specific permissions were
obtained. Participants retained full ownership of their visual and audio data; no materials were shared without explicit consent (Knox & Burkard, 2021). This gave participants discretion over how their identities and narratives were represented and protected throughout the research process.

Reciprocity and Trust

The researcher emphasized mutual respect and relational ethics, recognizing participants as co-creators of knowledge, and ensured that findings were shared with participants post-analysis, incorporating their feedback to support empowerment and inclusion while validating their voices in the research process (McLaughlin & Alfaro, 2020; Wiles, 2021).

Affiliation and Conflicts of Interest

The researcher disclosed all institutional affiliations and declared no financial or professional conflicts of interest that could jeopardize the study's integrity, ensure ethical transparency and keep the research process impartial and free of undue influence (Iphofen, 2019).

Truthfulness and Transparency

All procedures and communications were established on honesty and transparency, ensuring that data collection and presentation were transparent. Direct quotations were used to genuinely represent participants' views and promote interpretations based on their lived experiences (Wiles, 2021).

Data Analysis Technique

To explore and interpret the rich, lived experiences of visually impaired para-
athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, this study employed Thematic Analysis (TA), guided by Braun and Clarke's methodological framework (2021). Thematic Analysis is a widely recognized, flexible approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting pattern "themes"—within qualitative data. This approach is particularly suited for capturing participants' subjective meanings and contextual experiences within educational and sociocultural environments (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

All audio-recorded in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were transcribed verbatim to ensure fidelity to participants' original expressions—an essential practice in qualitative research that preserves narrative integrity (Halcomb, E. J., & Davidson, P. M. (2020). The transcribed data were uploaded into Atlas. Ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), to allow the methodical organizing, retrieval, and coding of textual material. Atlas.ti enabled a transparent and rigorous study,
practically interpreting emergent patterns (Paulus & Lester, 2021).

Braun and Clarke's six-phase procedure was used to carry out the Analysis:

Phase 1: Familiarization with Data

The researcher engaged themselves in the data through frequent reading and careful notetaking. This level required active, analytical interaction with the transcripts to uncover underlying meanings and contextual signals, comparable to Braun and Clarke's emphasis on critical reading (2021). Stories of peer support and self-acceptance showed adaptive coping and resilience, but emotional disclosures like crying or feeling isolated highlighted social stigma.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The initial coding was done manually within Atlas. ti. Each relevant extract was labeled with descriptive codes. Inclusivity was the guiding principle—ambiguous segments were still coded to preserve potentially meaningful data. Multiple codes were assigned to data segments when appropriate. This phase yielded numerous codes across transcripts, forming the building blocks for later theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Codes were collated into broader candidate themes reflecting repeated patterns across the dataset. Emerging thematic categories included: Sports as a Pathway to Empowerment; Support Systems and External Motivation; Overcoming Challenges and Building Resilience; Self-Growth and Psychological Development; Inclusive Social Environment; Adaptive Learning and Accessibility, and others. These classifications gave early insight into how para-athletes interpreted their experiences and motivations.

Phase 4: Involves reviewing and refining themes

The themes were evaluated for coherence, internal consistency, and alignment with the total dataset. Thematic overlap was reduced, and the distinctions between themes were improved. Researchers reviewed

the original transcripts and code to guarantee conceptual clarity. Peer debriefing and analytical notes increased reflexivity and reduced prejudice, ensuring final themes were founded on participant narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was properly defined and labeled to convey its conceptual essence. The updated themes addressed complicated aspects of the athletes lived experiences, such as empowerment, social support, personal growth, and inclusive education. Representative quotations were chosen to vividly and genuinely convey thematic substance.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final phase involved developing a rich analytic narrative that incorporated themes, participant voices, theoretical paradigm and contextual. The final phase involved developing a rich analytic narrative that incorporated themes, participant voices, theoretical frameworks, and contextual interpretations. Direct quotations increased emotional depth and authenticity, while theoretical insights from Self-Determination Theory, Social Constructivism, and Competence Motivation Theory helped to deepen knowledge. The issues were not presented independently, but rather as part of a larger story of resilience, transformation, and inclusion.

This analytic synthesis established the framework for creating the VISION GOAL program, an inclusive school-based intervention that addresses the expressed needs of visually impaired para-athletes. The narrative provided a comprehensive grasp of participants' concerns combining lived experiences and theoretical foundation This broad viewpoint ensured the program was evidence-based and deeply rooted in athletes' experiences.

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Chapter IV

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This chapter presented a thematic analysis of the data collected through face-to-face interviews and a focus group discussion with seven visually impaired para-athletes from Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Using Braun and Clarke's Six-Phase thematic analysis method, the researchers carefully examined the participants' narratives to identify patterns and emerging themes that reflected their experiences. This study aims to provide meaningful insights into para-athletes' motivations, difficulties, and support networks to build a school-based program that enhances their motivation and overall sports participation. The concepts

presented in this chapter are based on the respondents' authentic voices and align with the study's objectives.

The development of the VISION GOAL Program was grounded in the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis method, the research team systematically transformed qualitative insights into a coherent thematic framework as the foundation for an inclusive, evidence-based school-based support program.

The first phase has rich descriptions highlighted recurring concerns, including bullying, emotional distress, academic-athletic conflict, and inaccessible learning environments. At the same time, stories of empowerment, identity formation, and emotional fulfillment emerged through participation in sports. These narratives revealed the psychosocial importance of inclusive, supportive athletic environments that validate and empower visually impaired para-athletes.

Initial coding extracted significant elements from the data. Recurring codes included: family encouragement; self-motivation and emotional regulation; Coach trust and peer affirmation; faith and spiritual grounding; training dedication and strategic thinking; use of assistive technologies and teacher accommodation. These codes laid the foundation for clustering shared experiences and setting the direction for theme development.

The initial codes were grouped into broader candidate themes reflecting emotional, psychological, and environmental aspects of the athletes' experiences. These included: empowerment through sports; overcoming adversity and building resilience; supportive relationships; inclusive environments; navigating academic and athletic demands; and future aspirations. This clustering underscored the emphasis on both internal transformation and external support systems.

Themes were then rigorously reviewed to ensure clarity, distinctiveness, and relevance to the research objectives. Through this process, ten empirically grounded and conceptually sound themes were finalized:

1. Empowerment and Identity Through Sports
2. Supportive Relationships as Motivators
3. Resilience in the Face of Adversity
4. Psychological and Emotional Growth
5. Commitment to Performance and Discipline
6. Inclusive and Accepting Social Environments
7. Faith, Hope, and Future Orientation
8. Accessibility and Adaptive Learning Strategies
9. Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment
10. Balancing Responsibilities and Role Navigation

Each theme represented a critical dimension of the para-athletes' development and served as a pillar in the design of the support program. Themes were clearly articulated and substantiated through representative sub-themes and direct participant quotations. The following table 2 highlighted the primary themes and sub-themes, frequency, and illustrative quotes that reflect the lived experiences of para-athletes in Calabanga.

Lived Experiences of Para-Athletes in Calabanga

The objective revealed sports as a vital pathway for empowerment, identity formation, and holistic development. Despite the inherent challenges of visual impairment, participants embraced goalball not merely as recreation but as a transformative platform to build self-expression, confidence, and resilience. This aligned with the central theme, Sports as a Pathway to Empowerment and Identity, where athletes

articulated pride, social recognition, and increased self-confidence through their athletic achievements. Statements like, "*Now we are able to earn medals like this, which I never achieved before*," underscored how sporting success fosters a positive self-concept and intrinsic motivation (Smith & Jones, 2021)

Table 2

Lived Experiences of Para-Athletes in Calabanga

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequency	Representative Quotes
Sports as a Pathway to Empowerment and Identity	Empowerment	6	*"Not every para-athlete is truly disabled or has a lower IQ, ma'am. And not every disability is different, bad, or ugly. It inspires us to be different, to be unique in our own way, and to simply be ourselves."*
	Pride	5	*"Because now we're able to earn medals like this, which I never achieved before."*
	Social Recognition	5	*"In school, when you win, people congratulate you by saying 'Congrats.'"*
	Confidence	6	*"I began to recognize my strengths and flaws... It gives me something to believe in myself and makes me confident for who I am."*
Support Systems and External Motivation	Family Support	3	*"My mom and my family are very supportive of me."*
	Coach Encouragement	6	*"Our coach trusts us wholeheartedly, and my family supports whatever decision I make."*
	Peer Motivation	4	*"My friends encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and motivated me to stay true to myself."*
Overcoming Challenges and Building Resilience	Bullying	6	"*Since elementary, ma'am, they've been calling me names like 'duling' or 'si labo.' But I don't let it bother me."*
	Coping Mechanisms	6	*"If you just let them, be, they'll eventually tire of calling you those names."*
	Resilience	8	*"Even if we didn't win, I know within myself that I gave it my all. And I truly trusted myself."*
Self-Growth and Psychological Development	Self-Motivation	5	*"I motivate myself for my own sake and for the game. Then, I repeatedly say*

			affirmations in my head to keep myself more motivated."
	Emotional Regulation	3	*"I pray and think to myself that I can do this. Whether I win or lose, it's okay."*
Training, Discipline, and Performance	Training Regimens	9	*"Jogging, on Sundays and Saturdays, from 4:00 AM to 7:30 AM."* *"Keep moving, never stop training. And always find your real strength,"*
	Strategic Thinking	4	*"During training, the coach points out what's wrong or what's right."*
Inclusive Social Environment	Friendship	3	*"I really value friendship because, out of all relationships, friendship is the most important."*
	Peer Acceptance	4	*"The way they treat us has changed. Those who used to bully us now admire us."*
Faith, Hope, and Aspirations	Faith	2	*"I pray and think to myself that I can do this."*
	Future Aspirations	6	*"To reach the Palarong Pambansa again and aim for the international level, traveling around the world."*
Adaptive Learning and Accessibility	Use of Technology	5	*" They say, 'I can do it, I am a player."*
	Teacher Accommodation	4	*"The teachers know about my eye condition and allow me to use my cellphone, even if it's normally not allowed,"*
Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment	Enjoyment	6	*"I simply enjoy the game to avoid feeling pressured."*
	Sports Passion	3	*"Gusto ko kasi ang sports."*
Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities	Academic Pressure	2	*"It feels like I don't have enough time for my studies, as I'm trying to catch up and submit projects."*
	Balancing Commitments	*3*	*"When I have free time, I really make an effort to balance everything. It's because I feel like I'm losing time, especially with my family and academics."*

Robust Support Systems and External Motivation were integral to sustaining this motivation, including family encouragement, coach trust, peer support, and faith. Self-Determination Theory emphasized relatedness as a critical psychological need that fosters internal motivation and perseverance, which is

reflected in these outside supports (Ryan & Deci, 2020). "My coach trusts us wholeheartedly," for instance, highlighted the value of interpersonal support in maintaining athletes' commitment and engagement (Lopez, Smith & Garcia ,2022).

Participants also navigated social stigma and bullying, which, under the theme *Overcoming Challenges and Building resilience*, illustrated their development of adaptive coping strategies and psychological resilience. Their ability to reframe adversity— *"They have been calling me names… However, I do not let it bother me*,"—reflects Experiential Learning Theory, demonstrated reflective processing that transforms negative experiences into growth opportunities (Garcia & Patel, 2019).

The theme *Self-Growth and Psychological Development* further demonstrated athletes' agency through self-motivation and emotional regulation, which are critical to sustained participation and well-being. Furthermore, Training, Discipline, and Performance emphasized the athletes' dedication to rigorous routines and purposeful skill development, validating the Competence Motivation Theory's concept that mastery boosts confidence and engagement (Nguyen & Chan, 2023).

Social inclusion and belonging emerged under the Inclusive *Social Environment*, where friendship and peer acceptance provided psychological safety and social identity, counteracting stigma and isolation. The presence of faith and future-oriented aspirations—captured in *Faith, Hope, and Aspirations*—served as motivational anchors, sustaining hope and long-term goals despite challenges (Reyes, Santos, & Cruz, 2020).

Importantly, Adaptive Learning and Accessibility emphasized the importance of educational accommodations and assistive technologies, which aligned with Universal Design for Learning principles and allow athletes to balance academic and athletic obligations (CAST, 2022). Importantly, Adaptive Learning and Accessibility emphasized the importance of educational accommodations and assistive technologies, which align with Universal Design for Learning principles and allow athletes to balance academic and athletic obligations (CAST, 2022).

Collectively, these findings illustrated sport as a multifaceted experiential and behavioral system fostering empowerment, psychosocial recovery, and identity reconstruction among visually impaired para-athletes. A comprehensive lens through which to observe the athletes' transformative experiences is provided by integrating ideas, such as the Social Model of Disability, Experiential Learning, Competence Motivation, Self-Determination, and Behavioral Management. According to current studies, participation in parasports fostered resilience, agency, and social inclusion (Bennett et al., 2023). The para-athletes' narratives confirmed that with adequate support and inclusive opportunities, visual impairment does not preclude excellence or belonging. Instead, sports provide a dynamic framework for personal development, emotional strength, and future orientation, emphasizing the importance of educational and athletic programs that meet para-athletes' psychological and functional requirements holistically.

Key Theme 1: Sports as a Pathway to Empowerment and Identity

A recurring theme of respondents' stories is the transformational effect of sports, particularly goalball, as more than just a physical exercise. Sports became empowering channels for Calabanga's visually challenged para-athletes to express themselves, develop identities, and challenge preconceptions. Participation in goalball enabled them to reclaim a sense of agency and redefine their self-worth. It served as an outlet not only for physical fitness but also for personal transformation, offering visibility, achievement, and social connection despite the limitations often associated with visual impairments. Figure 4 illustrated the key theme one analysis,

Data analysis revealed that sports involvement significantly fostered psychological resilience, social integration, and personal growth. Integrating sports into school-based behavioral programs can help adolescents with disabilities form positive identities, mature emotionally, and acquire coping skills. Sports-based group intervention is inclusive and beneficial.

From a behavioral management standpoint, this theme emphasized sports' potential as a therapeutic and developmental tool. Integrating sports into school-based behavioral programs can promote positive identity formation, emotional growth, and coping skills among students with disabilities. Sports-based group interventions provide inclusive and supportive environments that serve as behavioral support systems,

Figure 4

Key Theme 1: Sports as a Pathway to Empowerment and Identity

encouraging self-regulation, leadership, and self-advocacy. Collaborations with physical education departments and local sports organizations can enhance students' emotional and psychological well-being through structured and inclusive sports activities.

This theme were consistent with research on the psychological benefits of adaptive sports. Ferreira and Borges (2022) discovered that participating in sports boosts self-esteem, mental health, and social integration in people with disabilities. Tanaka et al. (2023) also stressed the importance of sports in shaping identity and community belonging for visually impaired kids. Similarly, Tanaka et al. (2023) emphasized the role of sports in shaping identity and community belonging for visually impaired youth. These findings echoed Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), highlighted autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key factors for intrinsic motivation—needs that sports fulfill. Incorporating Adlerian Individual Psychology, which stressed social connectedness and purposeful living (Carlson et al., 2021), further supported sports as essential in holistic development and counseling.

Recommendations included developing inclusive sports programs accessible to students with visual impairments and other disabilities. Schools should collaborate with local governments and disability-focused organizations to offer resources and training. Counselors must push for including athletics in student development plans, particularly for underprivileged students. Furthermore, training modules for instructors and coaches should focus on sensitivity and inclusive practices to ensure that sports environments remain empowering and non-discriminatory. Finally, more studies are needed to examine the long-term psychosocial consequences of sports on para-athletes, which will help inform evidence-based counseling techniques**.**

Empowerment. Participants consistently described their engagement in goalball as a transformative experience. One participant shared:

*"In our view, we are norma*l." Another encouraged, *"Don't be shy. Just do what you want to do. Don't be afraid… you will be successful."*

A particularly powerful testimony stated:

"I was given strength, ma'am. It felt like I saw myself as a normal person… The things that I can do, they cannot do, and the things they can do, I can also do."

Athletes expressed milestones that signaled self-discovery and empowerment:

"I reached the Palarong Pambansa, ma'am. We won a gold medal, and we experienced the joy of life. "I didn't know at first that I had talent in playing goalball… we can do things that others cannot."

These accounts reflected inner strength, growing competence, and transformation:

"I gained inner strength, ma'am. I started seeing myself as just as any other person… Then I was able to reach the Palarong Pambansa, we won the gold… I can truly say I'm proud of myself."

The narratives emphasized five aspects of empowerment: inner strength and self-belief, equal ability, pride in accomplishment, fulfillment via athletics, and personal growth. The transition from internalized stigma to a confident self-concept implies a shift from passive acceptance to active self-construction of identity and value. These findings resonated with Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 2020), which emphasized mastery experiences in building belief in one's capabilities. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) also applied, as the athlete's experienced autonomy, competence, and relatedness through sports.

Empirical support is provided by McLoughlin, Rodriguez, and Hannafin (2022), who demonstrated that adaptive sports help dismantle internalized stigma. Bell, Thompson, and O'Connor (2023) documented identity reconstruction among marginalized youth through sports. In the Philippine context, Eyes, Lontoc, and De Luna (2021) highlighted para-sports' impact on confidence and pride in visually impaired youth. Goodley (2020) framed such transformation through social constructivism, emphasizing that disability is socially shaped and not fixed.

Although sports offered transformative experiences, institutional structures such as inclusive policies, trained coaches, and psychological support remained lacking, especially in rural areas. Future interventions should incorporate empowerment modules in the curriculum and support peer-led leadership activities to institutionalize this growth.

Pride. Pride emerged as both personal and communal.

One participant stated:

"I can proudly say I am one of them— a para-athlete."

Another added:

"We became proud. Our school became known."

Achievements like winning medals instilled this sense of value. Further participants expressed:

"Because now we can win medals like these—something I never achieved before"

"Now, with others like me, we feel like we have more worth."

Pride served as a catalyst for deeper motivation and a reconstructed identity. It affirmed individual effort and elevated the school's reputation and the athlete's community value.

This reflected Competence Motivation Theory (Horn, 2020), where motivation and self-worth stem from perceived ability. Social Cognitive Theory (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021) added that self-efficacy fosters goal-directed behavior, reinforced through recognition. The fulfillment of esteem needs aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy (Kenrick et al., 2019), while Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2020) contextualized the transformation through repeated achievement experiences.

Empirical studies (Giblin, Collins, & MacNamara, 2021) showed that recognition strengthens youth identity. Beacom, French, and Thomas (2022) found that pride nurtures emotional development in inclusive sports, while Zhang and Weiss (2020) linked pride with motivation and self-regulation. Despite substantial emotional gains, schools often lack recognition systems for para-athletes. Policies should include structured recognition through assemblies, certificates, and athlete showcases to sustain positive identity

formation and peer validation.

Social Recognition. Social validation was a powerful motivator. One participant said:

"Every time you leave the house and go home; people greet you with congratulations."

Others reported changes in social dynamics:

"They changed how they treat us. Those who used to bully us now admire us."

And:

"They became proud of us. Our names are now posted outside the school."

Social recognition transformed peer and community relationships. Athletes shifted from being stigmatized to being admired and validated, reshaping their self-worth and group identity. This reflected the relatedness aspect of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020) and Social Identity Theory (Haslam

et al., 2019), where group belonging enhances self-concept. From a constructivist lens, identity is built through social interaction and acknowledgment.

Tanaka, Yamamoto, and Kobayashi (2023) found that peer affirmation boosts inclusion among disabled students. Zarei, Goodwin, and Kudlac (2021) emphasized how recognition enhances motivation, while McLoughlin, Shields, and Taylor (2023) identified social validation as a core motivational driver in adaptive sports. While organic recognition exists, institutional mechanisms are needed. Schools should implement peer-led storytelling sessions, create recognition boards, and involve para-athletes in school leadership to deepen social belonging and normalize inclusion.

Confidence. Confidence surfaced as a core psychosocial benefit. One athlete expressed:

"I began to recognize my strengths and flaws… It gives me something to believe in myself and makes me confident for who I am."

Another shared:

"Yes ma'am, when I joined goalball, my confidence grew because even though I have a disability, I realized I can do what people without disabilities can do."

One participant cited:

"I gained self-confidence, and my self-esteem was boosted."

This development reflected a shift from perceived limitation to self-assured capability. Confidence empowered athletes to extend their aspirations beyond sports into academics, leadership, and life goals.

This growth aligned with Self-Efficacy Theory (Schunk, (2020), in which mastery experiences enhance confidence, and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which links competence with intrinsic motivation. Tomasone, Martin Ginis, and Latimer-Cheung (2020) confirmed the role of adapted sports in boosting emotional well-being and self-esteem in youth with disabilities.

Schools should develop post-sport pathways to translate sports-based confidence into broader life domains, like academic counseling, mentoring, and career exploration programs tailored for para-athletes. These sub-themes—Empowerment, Pride, Social Recognition, and Confidence—illustrate the profound psychosocial impact of inclusive sports like goalball. They support that sports function as developmental ecosystems, encouraging internal growth and societal transformation among visually challenged student-athletes.

However, the achievement of these benefits is dependent on institutional support. Schools should:

- Integrate inclusive sports and recognition systems into the curriculum.
- Train educators in inclusive coaching and psychosocial development.
- Embed athlete recognition in school events and community festivals.
- Offer mentorship, mental health support, and life skills coaching for para-athletes.

Future research should assess the long-term outcomes of such initiatives and explore models for embedding empowerment into broader educational and sports policies for students with disabilities.

Key Theme 2: Support Systems and External Motivation

The theme "Support Systems and External Motivation" emerged as a crucial factor in the lived experiences of para-athletes with visual impairments. Figure 5 showed the key theme 2 analysis. Participants in this study consistently stated that their participation in sports was heavily affected by encouragement and concrete support from family members, coaches, and peers. These support systems provided emotional safety, practical assistance, and motivational reinforcement that helped them remain active and resilient

in the face of both internal doubts and external challenges. While personal motivation is still necessary, a strong, affirming social network supplements their athletic and psychological development. Notably, the role of family in providing regular support, coach mentorship, and peer empathy all contributed to a motivating environment in which para-athletes could continue and flourish.

The analysis of responses revealed that support systems serve multiple psychological functions: they reduce stress, increase self-efficacy, and validate identity. Para-athletes who feel seen and encouraged by significant people report higher confidence and motivation. Coaches are not only technical guides but also moral anchors who provide trust and positive reinforcement. Family members frequently help with logistics, transportation, and emotional support, whereas peers provide companionship
and mutual understanding. These layered contacts create a motivational network supporting players' prolonged sports participation. Significantly, the existence of external assistance appears to attenuate the negative consequences of social stigma and isolation that people with disabilities often face, replacing them with emotions of inclusion and empowerment.

From a behavioral management standpoint, these findings highlighted the significance of establishing support systems for students with disabilities to enhance behavioral and academic outcomes. Behavioral leaders can help parents, teachers, coaches, and peers collaborate to develop a supportive and empowering environment. Structured peer mentorship programs may be one of these partnerships in which students with similar experiences offer emotional and motivational support. To improve academic and athletic

Figure 5

Key Theme 2: Support Systems and External Motivation

performance and reinforce positive behaviors, behavioral interventions should seek to harness these outside sources of incentive. Integrating peer support programs into a formal framework promotes social skills, empathy, and inclusion, promoting behavioral standards. Furthermore, these approaches improve coping strategies and establish a positive school environment in which group accomplishment is rewarded. A supportive school culture that values collaborative success.

This theme is congruent with Liang and Chen's (2023) findings, which showed that social support greatly improves motivation and psychological resilience among impaired student-athletes. Similarly, Meeks and Chao (2022) emphasized the importance of family involvement in improving adaptive functioning in adolescents with visual impairments. The theoretical grounding for this theme is supported by Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne (2020), who emphasized the ecological importance of social networks in sport participation and mental well-being among individuals with disabilities. This aligned with Ecological Dynamics Theory (Renshaw, Davids, Newcombe & Roberts, 2019), a modern extension of ecological perspectives that considers the interaction of individual, task, and environmental constraints on behavior. Furthermore, the Social Relational Theory of Disability (Thomas, 2019) provided a modern paradigm for describing how social support reduces debilitating barriers via positive interpersonal interactions and community structures.

These theories jointly acknowledged the enormous importance of social settings on motivation, involvement, and psychological maturation. These included implementing inclusive peer mentoring programs and formal collaborations between counselors, sports coordinators, and families. Policies should support allocating resources for assistive technology and transportation to remove logistical impediments to participation. Policies should support the allocation of resources for assistive technology and transportation to remove logistical impediments to participation. Future research should investigate how the quality and regularity of these support networks affect long-term motivation and identity building in para-athletes with vision impairments.

Family Support. Families play an important part in developing para-athletes' confidence and resilience. A supportive home setting gives emotional security, logistical assistance, and ongoing encouragement, all of which serve to mitigate the psychological issues that people with disabilities frequently confront. Their conviction in the athlete's talents promotes self-esteem and motivation. One participant shared:

"*My mom and my family are very supportive of me."*

Another added:

"*They are the ones who gave me strength. I pray to them for guidance—they support and believe in my abilities."*

"My parents, because they are the ones who understand my life and they are always the ones who support me no matter what challenges life brings."

These reflections illustrate how emotional and moral support from family sustains athletes during physical and emotional exhaustion.

Recent studies reinforced this sub-theme. Meeks and Chao (2022) emphasized the critical role of family engagement in fostering adaptive functioning and emotional regulation among adolescents with visual impairments. Family encouragement is linked to higher athletic persistence and psychosocial well-being (Liang & Chen, 2023). The microsystem level of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Rosa, E. M., & Tudge, J. (2023) validated the direct influence of immediate family on the individual's development, while Bandura's (2022) revised Social Cognitive Theory emphasized the modeling of supportive behaviors and the formation of self-efficacy through family interactions.

Programs for student-athletes with disabilities should include family orientation and engagement sessions. Schools can institutionalize family inclusion in athletic events and recognition ceremonies to solidify emotional bonds and reinforce extrinsic motivation.

Coach Encouragement. Coaches emerged as pivotal figures in the lives of visually impaired para-athletes—not merely as technical trainers but as trusted mentors who provide direction, emotional affirmation, and motivational reinforcement. Their guidance plays a crucial role in developing athletic discipline and self-confidence, particularly in navigating the dual challenges of performance anxiety and societal prejudice. Participants expressed deep appreciation for their coaches, stating:

"Our coach trusts us wholeheartedly,"

And:

"He tells us what we need to do, how to do it, and what challenges we need to handle."

These reflections illustrated how a coach's trust fosters a sense of psychological security, clarity of purpose, and confidence in task execution. One athlete shared.

"Our coach trusts us wholeheartedly, and my family supports whatever decision I make,"

Emphasized the synergistic emotional impact of supportive mentors and family

systems. Moreover, the leadership opportunities delegated by coaches were particularly empowering. As one participant noted:

"*Because if you're the power thrower, you become the group's leader. You're the one who handles the team when the coach is not around during training.* "

This highlighted how coach-instilled trust and responsibility can cultivate a strong sense of identity, accountability, and belonging.

Another athlete added.

"I feel I'm the strongest... I don't boast,"

Demonstrated confidence gained through coach affirmation and peer validation—displaying strength balanced with humility. These participant stories demonstrated the coaches' significant role in developing para-athletes' emotional resilience, athletic commitment, and personal growth.

Recent research supported these findings. Hartmann and Flores (2021) highlighted that coach-athlete relationships grounded in empathy, trust, and constructive communication significantly enhance para-athletes' self-regulation, motivation, and performance. From a theoretical standpoint, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020) affirmed that relatedness—meaningfully connected to significant others like coaches—is vital in sustaining internal motivation. Furthermore, Vansteenkiste, Aelterman, De Muynck, Haerens,, & Reeve, (2020) emphasized that when coaches show genuine belief in their athletes' capacities, extrinsic goals (e.g., winning or recognition) can be internalized into intrinsic motivations such as mastery and personal growth.

Schools and sports groups should provide coaches with disability-sensitive mentorship training because of the coach's enormous effect. The main priorities should be developing inclusive leadership, validating feedback, and emotional intelligence. Structured mentorship frameworks that prioritize trust-building, personalized communication, and athlete empowerment can further sustain para-athletes' motivation and holistic growth.

Peer Motivation. Peers provided emotional support, camaraderie, and understanding—crucial motivators for visually impaired para-athletes. Their presence mitigated the internalization of stigma and alleviated feelings of loneliness by fostering empathy, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. One participant disclosed:

"My friends encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and motivated me to stay true to myself,"

Participants expressed how peer relationships fostered courage, self-acceptance, and personal growth. Another emphasized:

"They are my close friends. They are my friends at school. They are the ones who give me strength,"

The emotional reliance and reinforcement found within peer circles were highlighted. Additionally, another participant affirmed:

"My peers uplift us even though we have disabilities, they became our strength,"

Illustrating how affirming peer interactions enhances morale and reinforce positive self-perceptions.

These stories highlighted peers' critical role in fostering long-term motivations and emotional resilience. The value and abilities of visually impaired athletes are validated by friendship, which gives them the confidence to take on new tasks, create a sense of self, and promote psychological stability in their academic and sporting endeavors.

These observations are supported by recent research. Kim and Choi (2021) discovered that peer encouragement improves engagement, social adjustment, and resilience among students with impairments. This is consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Daniels, 2020), which states that peer interactions are essential for cognitive and emotional development. Furthermore, Bandura's (2022) updated Social Cognitive Theory confirmed that modeling and mutual reinforcement among empathetic peers foster self-efficacy and behavioral consistency. From a systemic perspective, Rosa and Tudge's (2023) update of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory illustrated how mesosystem-level interactions—such as those with peers—directly influence developmental trajectories.

Philosophically, this sub-theme reflected constructivist and humanistic perspectives, which regard identity and motivation as co-constructed through social interaction. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020) further reinforced the importance of relatedness as a psychological need that peer relationships satisfy by providing validation and emotional closeness in inclusive environments.

Schools should establish structured peer mentoring programs for children with
and without impairments to foster this dynamic in educational and athletic programs. These techniques can promote empathy, encourage teamwork, and break down social barriers in both academic and recreational settings.

Finally, strong peer networks promote emotional fortitude, resilience, and confidence. These links serve as a framework for sports participation and overall human development, demonstrating that motivation is influenced not only by internal factors but also by social connectedness and inclusive surroundings.

Key Theme 3: Overcoming Challenges and Building Resilience

The lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes who faced structural obstacles, including bullying, social isolation, and restricted accessibility in communities and schools, were reflected in this theme. The participants showed exceptional resilience in these problems by empowering themselves, managing their emotions, and finding strength in sports, especially goalball. Figure 6 showed the theme three analysis.

To regain their identity and boost their confidence, the participants discussed how they dealt with prejudice by emotionally separating themselves from criticism and concentrating on their athletic accomplishments. The lack of official psychosocial support, inclusive programs, and disability awareness in school settings continues to be a significant gap, despite their remarkable personal resilience. These results highlighted how urgently communities and schools must implement all-encompassing support networks incorporating

peer mentoring, disability sensitivity training, resilience-building programs, and collaborations with neighborhood sports and disability organizations.

Such efforts will promote individual growth and advance authentic inclusion and empowerment for para-athletes beyond physical access.

Bullying. Bullying emerged as a pervasive issue among visually impaired para-athletes, characterized by derogatory name-calling, exclusion, and public ridicule. Participants recalled enduring hurtful labels such as "duling" (cross-eyed) and "si labo" (the blurry one) since childhood, leaved lasting emotional scars. One Participants mentioned:

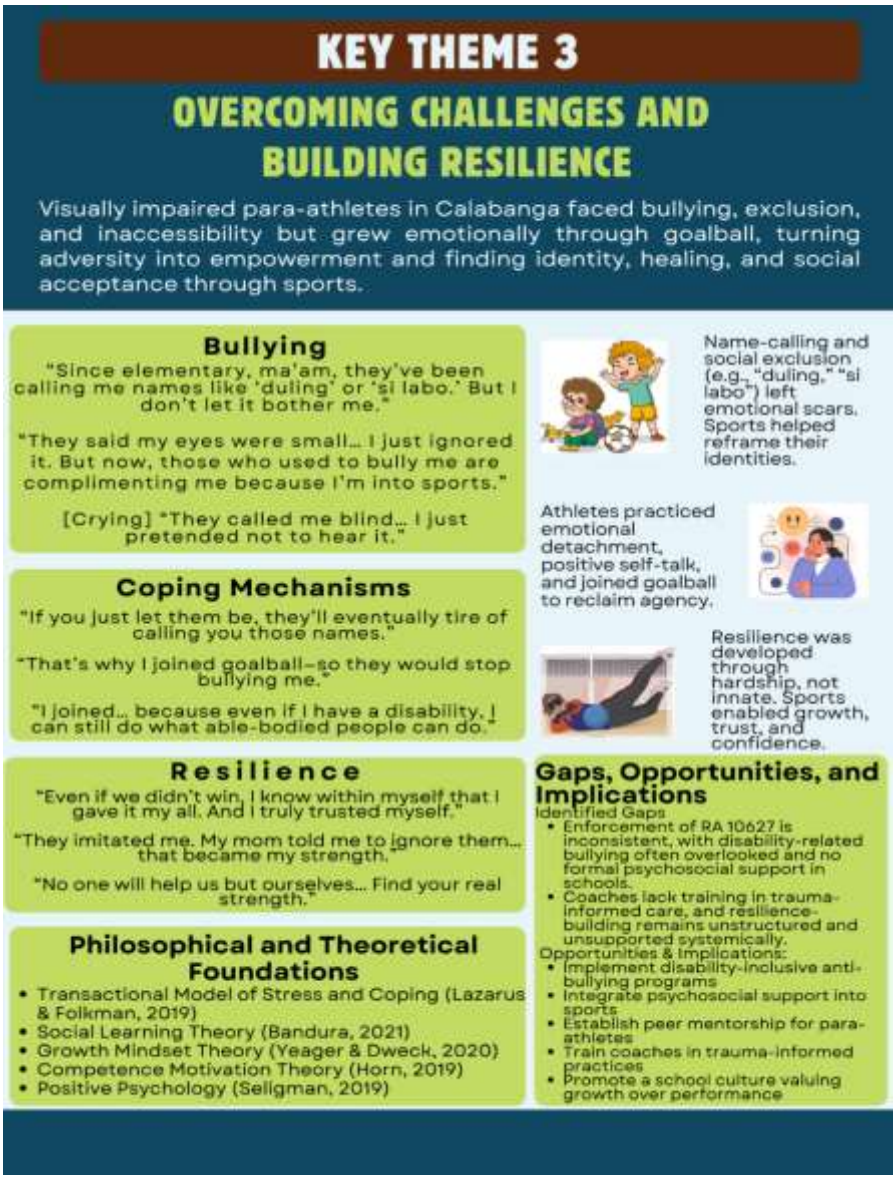
"Since elementary, ma'am, they've been calling me names like 'duling' or 'si labo.' But I don't let it bother me."

Another cited:

"They said my eyes were small… I just ignored it. But now, those who used to

Figure 6

Key Theme 3: Overcoming Challenges and Building Resilience



bully me are complimenting me because I'm into sports."
Further expressed:
"They called me blind… I just pretended not to hear it."
Despite the emotional burden, para-athletes employed emotional detachment to refocus their energies on sports, particularly goalball, as a transforming way to restore their identity and social standing. Sports activity altered their self-perception and increased peer recognition.
Recent literature confirmed that bullying significantly undermines self-esteem and hinders inclusion in adaptive sports (Htzler & Barak, 2020). However, engaging in sports can buffer these adverse effects by fostering social integration and peer acceptance (Wilson, Shapiro & Doo, 2021). A school climate that actively supports diversity and confronts ableist microaggressions were crucial to reduce long-term psychological harm (Tan, Lim, & Gomez, 2023).
These para-athletes' experiences underscored the importance of Republic Act 10627 (the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013), which mandates that all primary and secondary schools in the Philippines conduct programs to prevent and combat bullying. RA 10627 requires schools to establish a safe and supportive environment, implement anti-bullying programs, provide mechanisms for reporting and investigating bullying incidents, and offer counseling services for victims and perpetrators alike (Republic of the Philippines, 2013).
The experiences of the participants, however, show that RA 10627's enforcement and disability-sensitive implementation are still uneven, especially when it comes to dealing with bullying of students with disabilities. Schools frequently react reactively rather than proactively because they lack specialized programs that acknowledge the vulnerabilities of para-athletes.
While sports offer para-athletes a powerful means to transform their experiences, the absence of systematic, disability-sensitive anti-bullying programs highlighted an urgent institutional gap. Schools must shift from expecting individual resilience alone to building systemic protective measures and advocacy frameworks aligned with RA 10627.Recommended actions includes implementing proactive anti-bullying campaigns specifically inclusive of students with disabilities; providing disability sensitivity training for teachers, staff, and students; establishing accessible and confidential grievance mechanisms for bullying complaints, integrating peer empathy-building sports programs to foster inclusive peer relations and designating advocates or focal points for disability rights in schools guarantees early detection and assistance.
By taking these steps, the school would be better able to fulfill its legal obligation under RA 10627 as a protective environment and uphold the dignity and welfare of visually impaired para-athletes.
Coping Mechanisms. Participants developed creative and deeply personal coping mechanisms in response to bullying and exclusion. Common strategies included emotional detachment, affirming self-talk, and sports participation as a form of empowerment and agency. Participants quoted:
"If you just let them, be, they'll eventually tire of calling you those names."
"That's why I joined goalball—so they would stop bullying me."
"I joined… because even if I have a disability, I can still do what able bodied people can do."
These coping techniques served as defense mechanisms and proactive strategies to preserve emotional well-being and reframe their identities. Joining goalball restructured their social image—from being targets of ridicule to becoming sources of admiration and strength. This re-identification promoted self-efficacy and autonomy. Research supported that problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies help reduce emotional exhaustion and sustain performance in athletes with disabilities (Masten & Motti-Stefanini, 2020). Emotional distancing reframed external threats, while engagement in sports fosters

psychological mastery and resilience (Park & Lim, 2022). This is particularly critical in marginalized settings where institutional support is limited (Kim, Lee, & Choi, 2021).

This sub-theme aligned with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Folkman, 2019), which conceptualized coping as a dynamic process involving cognitive appraisal and behavioral responses. Emotional detachment and problem-solving are two adaptive methods that promote long-term psychological health. Furthermore, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2021) suggested that exposure to positive role models and peer encouragement within sports teams promotes learning and behavioral adaptability.

While participants created their solutions, many lacked structured help to validate or improve these mechanisms. There is a missed opportunity in not including emotional and psychological coping strategies in school athletic systems. Teachers, coaches, and peer mentors are rarely educated to assist emotional growth, indicating a systemic issue.

Schools should implement mindfulness and resilience programs centered on emotional management. Structured group sessions that focus on positive self-talk, mental reframing, and shared narratives may help to normalize experiences and foster a culture of collective support. Athletic coaches should receive training in psychological first aid and emotional intelligence to support para-athletes in competitive and non-competitive environments.

Resilience. Resilience emerged as a defining attribute in the visually impaired athletes' journey. Participants acknowledged their growth not by avoiding hardship but by engaging with challenges, embracing effort, and discovering inner strength. Participants articulated.

"Even if we didn't win, I know within myself that I gave it my all. And I truly trusted myself."

"They imitated me. My mom told me to ignore them… that became my strength."

"No one will help us but ourselves… *Find your real* strength."

In this context, resilience meant more than endurance; it represented transformation. From internalized shame and marginalization, the athletes grew into confident persons who valued visibility, competence, and community. The sports arena provided a getaway and an opportunity for confrontation, affirmation, and growth. Contemporary literature confirmed that resilience is not an inherent trait but a process that can be cultivated through affirming and inclusive environments (Sabato, Walch & Caine ,2020). Athletes with disabilities who demonstrated high resilience are more likely to achieve psychological well-being, adaptive functioning, and consistent performance (Allan, Côté, Turnnidge & Vierimaa, 2022). Growth-oriented mindsets, especially among youth, reinforced this resilience (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). This sub-theme aligned with progress Mindset Theory (Yeager et al., 2020), emphasized that effort and perseverance in adversity lead to progress and long-term success. Furthermore, the Competence Motivation Theory (Horn, 2019) emphasized how self-perceived competence influences motivation, engagement, and resilience. Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2019) also affirmed that internal strengths, such as hope and self-efficacy, are central to flourishing despite adversity.

While resilience is evident, the support for developing it is often left to chance. There is minimal formal programming aimed at nurturing resilience systematically among para-athletes, particularly in rural or underfunded schools. More inclusive policies and curriculum integration are needed to shift resilience from an unexpected outcome to an intentional goal. Schools and local governments should establish structured resilience-building programs that combine physical activity with reflective activities like journaling, goal planning, visualization, and storytelling. Mentorship programs that match new athletes

with experienced peers can provide structured models of resilience. Furthermore, celebrating effort-based achievements rather than merely outcomes may promote development and perseverance.

The journey of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga is not merely about overcoming physical limitations but courageously navigating social exclusion with remarkable inner strength. From being bullied to becoming leaders, from emotional detachment to active coping, and from vulnerability to resilience, their lived narratives speak to the transformative potential of inclusive sports.

Despite its strengths, the analysis showed important institutional and psychosocial shortcomings, including a lack of school-based emotional programs, inadequate advocacy mechanisms, and an underdeveloped emphasis on psychological training for coaches and peers. These gaps represent opportunities to design more holistic, theory-driven interventions that acknowledge disability not as a deficit but as a dimension of identity worthy of support and empowerment. To truly empower para-athletes, educational and community systems must move beyond access and embrace advocacy, inclusion, and strength-based development. Through intentional, trauma-informed, and resilience-oriented programming, we can ensure that para-athletes survive adversity and thrive within and beyond it. Resilience emerged as a defining attribute in the visually impaired athletes' journey. Participants recognized their progress not by avoiding adversity, but by facing obstacles, accepting effort, and discovering inner strength.

Key Theme 4: Self-Growth and Psychological Development

This theme depicted sports' transformational impact on the self-growth and psychological development of Calabanga's visually challenged para-athletes. Figure 7 showed the theme analysis. Structured athletic engagement helped these people develop a greater sense of identity, emotional resilience, and self-confidence. Their engagement in sports fostered intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and adaptive coping strategies, supported by mentorship and a team environment. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2021), the findings highlight how sports fulfill core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness contributing to positive identity formation and emotional well-being. These insights underscore. The need for inclusive, school-based sports and mentorship programs integrated into guidance and counseling services to support the holistic development of para-athletes. Two sub-themes were identified in these key themes: Self-motivation and emotional regulation.

Self-Motivation. Para-athletes in Calabanga demonstrated strong self-motivation, a significant internal driver for continued participation in sports such as goalball. This internal motivation was not based on external validation but on identity creation, personal progress, and overcoming disability-related constraints. Their commitment emerged

Figure 7

Key Theme 4: Self-Growth and Psychological Development

from a drive to demonstrate their ability, set personal objectives, and defy cultural norms. Self-motivation was expressed through daily affirmations, internal goal setting, and a drive for self-actualization.

These athletes turned perceived weaknesses into purposeful strengths. They developed an internal center of control by putting discipline, self-belief, and independence first. This concept fostered perseverance and resilience in the face of inadequate resources and social prejudice. The athletes' intrinsic motivation supported

personal agency by providing emotional fuel for their athletic and psychosocial journeys. Several narratives of participants are:

"*I motivate myself for my own sake and for the game. Then, I repeatedly say affirmations in my head to keep myself more motivated."*

"That became my igniter—to show them I can do this. I can surpass them and do what they can't yet do."

"Just go for your goal. Don't let others affect you."

"I have something I want to achieve. I have something I want to prove."

"When I got into sports, I felt something new was encouraging me to try—like stepping out of my comfort zone."

"It gives me something to believe in and makes me confident for who I am."

These quotes highlight the self-reinforcing nature of motivation, where affirmations and goal orientation strengthen perseverance and identity.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2023) provided a robust framework for understanding these motivational processes. The athletes' emphasis on autonomy, competence, and relatedness aligned directly with SDT principles.

Their behavior also demonstrated goal congruence and emotional regulation, essential for maintaining long-term motivation and psychological wellness. Existential Humanism (Morris, 2020; Aquino & David, 2022) further illuminated how athletes create personal meaning by embracing challenges. This philosophy supported the view that individuals are agents in constructing their identity through meaningful experiences like

sports.

Recent findings supported these insights. Giacobbi, P. R., Stancil, M., Hardin, B., & Bryant, L. (2021) and Johnston, J. A., Bernabe, R., & Lim, D. A. (2023) found that goal-setting interventions, self-talk routines, and autonomy-supportive coaching improve intrinsic motivation and resilience among youth with disabilities. Similarly, Schunk et al. (2021) argued that motivation becomes more durable and empowering when goals are aligned with personal beliefs.

To cultivate self-motivation among para-athletes, school-based programs should incorporate:

- Structured goal-setting workshops for performance tracking and reflection.
- Affirmation and self-talk training to reinforce positive internal dialogue.
- Autonomy-supportive coaching that validates personal effort and encourages self-direction.
- Mentoring systems led by peers or alums para-athletes to model resilience and perseverance.

These modules should be embedded in the curriculum and adapted for students with visual impairments, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility. The gaps and opportunities identified in current programs highlight several crucial areas for improvement, particularly for visually impaired athletes in rural areas. There are no established motivational development activities in rural inclusive schools. Coaches and teachers frequently lack expertise in motivational psychology for students with disabilities (SWDs). Furthermore, there is a scarcity of culturally appropriate models of intrinsic motivation in Filipino settings. Finally, longitudinal study can investigate how early motivation influences para-athletes' life trajectories.

Emotional Regulation. Emotional regulation emerged as a critical adaptive mechanism that enabled para-athletes to manage stress, setbacks, and the emotional toll of competitive and daily challenges. Through prayer, self-talk, rest, music, and social support, athletes demonstrated the ability to stabilize emotions and maintain composure, reinforcing their mental health and sports engagement.

Para-athletes improved their emotional regulation by employing cognitive-spiritual tools like mindfulness, positive reframing, and spiritual grounding. These actions assisted them in managing stress without jeopardizing their work or well-being. Their approach is consistent with emotional intelligence, in which knowledge and modulation of feelings lead to long-term resilience. This type of coping promotes a transition from reactive to reflective action, fostering equilibrium in the face of hardship. Participant narratives are as follows:

"I pray and think to myself, 'I can do this. Whether I win or lose, it is okay."

"I believed in myself. When I get tired, I make sure to rest."

"Sometimes I sing with others to lift our spirits."

"I sing with three or four teammates to cheer ourselves up."

These reflections highlight how the athletes consciously used strategies like spirituality, peer connection, and music to uplift their emotional states and enhance group
morale.

This theme aligns with the Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Emotion Regulation, emphasizing cognitive reframing, self-awareness, and behavioral planning (Gross & Thompson, 2020). The athletes reappraised stress and maintained control through prayer and positive thinking.

Compas et al. (2021) stressed the importance of these strategies during adolescence, which is characterized by identity construction and vulnerability. For para-athletes dealing with identity-related stressors, emotion management is a survival technique and a growth opportunity.

Johnston et al. (2023) also emphasized the importance of emotion coaching and reflective techniques like journaling and mindfulness in increasing psychological resilience among students with impairments. These methods assist students in processing emotions constructively while remaining interested in academics and athletics.

To strengthen emotional regulation skills, inclusive sports programs should integrate:

- Mindfulness and prayer sessions that offer quiet time for reflection and spiritual grounding.
- Reflective journaling and structured emotional debriefs after games or practice. Scenario-based coaching were athletes role-play responses to stress and loss.
- Team music or bonding activities to promote shared emotional support and release.
- Emotional expression workshops that teach vocabulary and strategies for dealing with emotions constructively.

Furthermore, coaches and teachers should be trained in emotional intelligence coaching, focusing on empathy, active listening, and supportive feedback, especially in special education. The analysis revealed several gaps and opportunities within para-sports programs at the school level. These include the absence of formal emotional literacy initiatives designed explicitly for student-athletes with disabilities and the limited incorporation of spiritual and emotional strategies into athletic training. Moreover, culturally relevant behaviors like music and prayer were underappreciated in promoting emotional regulation. There is also a clear need for research on the relationship between emotional regulation, disability, and the well-being of rural kids.

Self-motivation and emotional regulation are interlinked constructs that are foundational skills for para-athletes' development. Based on contemporary theories like Self-Determination Theory, Cognitive Behavioral Theory, and Existential Humanism, these findings highlighted the necessity of developing inclusive, culturally grounded, and psychologically informed support systems. Empowering para-athletes with these skills not only enhances sports performance but also contributes to their long-term emotional.

strength, social participation, and identity development.

Key Theme 5: Training, Discipline, and Performance

This theme encapsulated how para-athletes in Calabanga view training not merely as a physical regimen but as a structured path to personal and psychological transformation. Two key sub-themes emerged from the data: training regimens and strategic thinking. Participants emphasized consistency and commitment in their training routines, such as early morning jogs and structured drills. These routines instill not only physical endurance but also foster discipline, time management, and intrinsic motivation.

These athletes viewed training as a way of life, an essential component of their identity and daily routine, rather than just a chore. Simultaneously, a critical cognitive skill acquired through coach-led feedback was strategic thinking. Athletes explained how vocal corrections and tactile cues improved their technique and sharpened their critical and adaptable thinking skills. This organized feedback loop fostered the executive functioning, emotional control, and mental attention that are essential for both athletic success and life outside of sports. These sub-themes illustrated how structured training environments cultivate disciplined, goal-oriented individuals capable of sustained performance, resilience, and personal growth. Figure 8 presented the theme 5 analysis.

Figure 8

Key Theme 5: Training, Discipline, and Performance

Training Regimens. Some participant shared:*"Jogging on Sundays and Saturdays, from 4:00 AM to 7:30 AM,"* while another noted:

"Whenever I have free time, I use it to strengthen my body, so I don't get sick easily and don't get tired quickly."

These statements demonstrated the discipline and internal motivation that their instructors' organized routines fostered. The consistent and rigorous training schedule outlined by participants reflects not just physical conditioning but also a culture of accountability and discipline. These routines are carefully imposed and monitored by coaches who serve as instructors and mentors. Other athletes echoed this saying:

"I follow what the coach says because that's the right way; we don't know better because he's the coach,"

And:

"We train harder and push ourselves because of the coach's guidance."

Structured regimens promoted not only athletic preparedness but also behavioral self-regulation. Athletes internalized discipline through habit and repetition, which enhanced their resilience, perseverance, and time management. Through these practices, the coach becomes a role model and source of motivation, reinforcing a belief in the athletes' potential. Training thus becomes a dual process—physical enhancement and character development. Knight, Harwood, & Sellars (2018) emphasized that effective coaching includes emotional encouragement and consistent routines that nurture athletes' psychological resilience. Milistet,,Nascimento, Gonçalves& Côté (2020) further stressed that coach-athlete relationships based on trust and structured engagement foster greater self-efficacy and athletic identity, especially in athletes with disabilities.

These findings aligned with Bandura's updated concept of self-efficacy development through social modeling (Bandura, 2021) and Gagné's Conditions of Learning Theory, highlighted the importance of routine and external guidance in behavior formation (Gagné & Golas, 2020).

Training programs should include inclusive coaching frameworks that address para-athletes' psychological, emotional, and technical demands. Updated coach education modules must cover adaptive motivator tactics, organized feedback, and goal planning. Performance tracking tools and behavior reinforcement systems (e.g., progressive rewards and reflection journals) can also be utilized to ensure sustainable athlete development.

Strategic Thinking. One participant stated:

"During training, the coach points out what is right or wrong."

Another added:

"We practice real discipline before competitions—our phones are taken away so we can focus."

Further insights included:

"Train hard, cooperate, and eat well so you can focus and remember things better," And:

"We must learn how our teammates move and communicate—we need to understand their body language."

These quotations highlighted how training fosters cognitive engagement in addition to physical preparation, including evaluating coach comments, comprehending game strategy, and improving focus. Eliminating distractions, honing focus, and encouraging group decision-making are ways to develop strategic thinking. An athlete put it succinctly:

"Confidence, teamwork, and always listening to the coach strengthen us when we know we can win."
Strategic thinking among para-athletes is rooted in executive functioning, aided by routines, feedback, and mental conditioning. Athletes learned to make real-time decisions, evaluated options, and reflected on their actions. This development is intrapersonal (focus, memory, confidence) and interpersonal (teamwork, communication, situational awareness). These behaviors suggested metacognitive growth and tactical maturity. Van der Graaff, Gledhill, Harwood, & Stebbings, (2019) highlighted that continuous, specific feedback enhances self-regulation and game intelligence. Gearity and Murray (2021) emphasized reflective learning through coach-athlete dialogue as a driver for behavioral adaptability.
These findings supported Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, where learning is mediated through interaction and scaffolding (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2021). Additionally, Beckmann and Kazén (2020) affirmed that attentional control and cognitive regulation are amplified when structure and feedback are combined in adaptive environments. Removing phones before competitions reflect Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which argued that reducing extraneous stimuli improves decision-making efficiency (Sweller, Ayres & Kalyuga,2019).
Sports programs should embed cognitive and metacognitive skill-building modules alongside physical training. Coaches should receive specialized training in delivering feedback that triggers reflective learning and problem-solving. Tactical simulations, mindfulness training, audio-visual aids, and post-training debriefs can reinforce attention, planning, and inhibition. These techniques enhance sports performance and cultivate transferable life skills for academic and social contexts. Identified gaps and potential within present para-sport programs highlight several crucial areas for improvement, particularly among visually impaired athletes. First, there is a deficit in cognitive support services, since most programs focus on physical training while providing limited systemic integration of cognitive training methodologies tailored to the demands of visually impaired athletes. Second, there is an opportunity for inclusive coach development because many existing coach training programs do not fully address adaptive tactics for promoting para-athletes' psychological and behavioral progress.
Designing competency-based modules based on current learning theories and universal design principles is critical. Third, multimodal feedback tools are scarce; including audio-based or haptic feedback devices in training can dramatically increase the game intelligence and situational response of athletes with visual impairments. Finally, there is a need for community-based reinforcement, in which post-training routines and
collaboration between schools and homes can promote strategic habits and self-discipline, ultimately strengthen resilience, and facilitate the transfer of taught behaviors.

Key Theme 6: Inclusive Social Environment

Figure 9 illustrated the theme 8 analysis. Inclusive Social Environment captures the transformative role of inclusive sports— specifically, goalball—in shaping the emotional and social well-being of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Through sustained participation in a supportive athletes moved from experiences of social marginalization to gaining friendship, peer recognition, and emotional security, essential for their self-worth and social identity.

Friendship. One participant shared:

"I really value friendship because, out of all relationships, friendship is the most important. "One participant further added:

"I made a lot of friends, even though most of them are not para-athletes."

Social Environment captures the transformative role of inclusive sports— specifically, goalball—in shaping visually impaired para-athletes' emotional and social

Figure 9

Key Theme 6: Inclusive Social Environment.

well-being in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Through sustained participation in a supportive environment, athletes moved from experiences of social marginalization to gaining friendship, peer recognition, and emotional security, essential for their self-worth and social identity.

These sentiments illustrated the emotional importance of friendships formed through sports and beyond. Friendship emerged as a central psychosocial anchor for the

participants, fostering belonging, trust, and emotional resilience. These bonds extended beyond the confines of the team, reflecting expanding social integration. Friendships served as emotional support, motivation, and affirmation of their self-worth.

This aligned with Maslow's updated Hierarchy of Needs (Gambrel & Cianci, 2021), which repositioned belongingness and love needs as foundational to psychological growth and self-esteem. Carl Rogers' modernized Person-Centered Theory (Joseph, 2022) emphasized the importance of genuine relationships and unconditional positive regard in promoting self-concept and emotional health. Within this framework, friendships provided the psychological safety needed for personal growth.

Cheng, Zhang, and Wang (2023) found that inclusive sports environments significantly improved life satisfaction and emotional resilience in youth with disabilities, echoing the para-athletes' experiences. Similarly, DeCarlo, Munoz, and Tran (2022) confirmed that friendships and peer networks helped reduce social isolation and enhanced motivation among visually impaired students. These findings validated the therapeutic and developmental value of friendships within inclusive sport contexts. Strong connections were developed, but mostly fostered in the context of athletics, according to gaps and possibilities identified. Through peer mentoring, integrated extracurricular activities, and platforms for cross-disability engagement, inclusive friendship-building possibilities had to be expanded into academic and community settings. Addressing this could have maximized social development and reduced long-term dependency on sports

teams for emotional support.

Peer Acceptance. Participants articulated:

"The way they treat us has changed. Those who used to bully us now admire us."

This statement revealed a significant transformation in the athlete's social status, from exclusion to admiration, signifying a shift in how others perceived their capabilities and value.

This transformation emphasized the function of sports as a social equalizer, altering perceptions of disabilities and encouraging mutual tolerance. The athletes' sports participation redefined their social identity, enabled them to earn recognition not for sympathy, but through merit and contribution to the team.

This transition reflected Vygotsky's Social Growth Theory (Daniels, 2021), which stated that social interaction was necessary for emotional and cognitive growth. Through collaborative play and shared achievements, para-athletes experienced social validation. Additionally, Glasser's Reality Therapy (Wubbolding & Brickell, 2020) posited that belonging and recognition within groups fostered responsible behavior and motivation, both evident in the athletes' growing sense of worth.

Zarei and Valizadeh (2022) discovered that inclusive sports boost perceived social acceptance and peer esteem among teenagers with impairments. UNESCO (2023) reaffirmed peer engagement in inclusive educational activities improves equity and group identity. These findings proved the importance of inclusive sports in altering peer dynamics and eliminating discrimination.

While the athletes were respected by their peers, this acceptance was often tied to sports performance. Those who performed well tended to receive more admiration, suggesting a conditional acceptance. There

was an urgent need for programs that fostered acceptance beyond athletic success, such as classroom-based inclusion strategies, peer awareness campaigns, and social-emotional learning modules that normalized diversity and ability differences in all areas of school life.

The inclusive social environment fostered through goalball provided a critical platform for friendship and peer acceptance, enabling visually impaired para-athletes to develop emotionally, socially, and psychologically. These findings demonstrated that, when appropriately designed, inclusive sports could reduce social stigma, boost confidence, and develop long-term relationships beyond the playing field.

To maximize these benefits, it is suggested that:

- Inclusive sporting programs are widely implemented in schools and local governments, integrating structured peer interaction, teamwork, and emotional support.
- Professional training for coaches and teachers in empathy, inclusive practices, and disability awareness should be mandatory.
- Collaboration with mental health professionals should be embedded in program design to sustain emotional safety.
- Peer mentorship programs and cross-setting social inclusion strategies should be integrated to promote non-performance-based social acceptance.

Future research should conduct longitudinal studies to examine the enduring psychosocial effects of inclusive sports and explore how these models can be scaled in rural and under-resourced settings.

Key Theme 7: Faith, Hope, and Aspirations

Figure 10 introduced the theme analysis. The theme "Faith, Hope, and Aspirations" captured the powerful role of internal belief systems and future-oriented thinking in molding the motivation, resilience, and identity of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Faith—whether grounded in spirituality, personal strength, or support networks—serves as an emotional anchor, enabling athletes to navigate adversity with psychological stability. Hope and aspirations function as forward-

Figure 10

Key Theme 7: Faith, Hope, and Aspirations

driving forces, directing them toward personal goals such as national representation, academic achievement, and future sports leadership.

This theme highlighted the synergistic interaction of cognition, emotion, and behavior, echoing Snyder's Hope Theory (2021), which emphasized agency and pathways in goal achievement, and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020), which linked

intrinsic motivation to autonomy, competence, and connectedness. Faith also aligned with existential and therapeutic frameworks like Frankl's Logotherapy (2020) and Narrative Therapy (White & Epston, 2021), illustrating that para-athletes' belief systems did more than buffer stress—they actively shaped behavior and life planning.

Participants shared faith-based practices such as prayer and self-affirmation, illustrating emotional regulation and self-belief. Aspirations ranged from competing internationally to coaching the next generation, demonstrating ambition and a sense of purpose. This was consistent with the findings of Biroli & Cattaneo (2023) and Lim & Yoon (2022), who supported the importance of aspirational thinking and spiritual well-being in resilience and emotional health. Despite these strengths, a critical gap persisted in that current school-based and community sports programs often lacked structured interventions that supported these internal motivators. Opportunities existed to integrate faith- and hope-centered approaches—such as reflective journaling, spiritual mentoring, and goal-setting workshops—into para-sports training. Culturally grounded, evidence-based strategies were particularly needed in rural, low-resource contexts.

Faith, hope, and aspirations were not just coping mechanisms but were essential psychological assets that empowered para-athletes to transcend challenges and shape meaningful, goal-directed lives.

Faith. Faith emerged as a key psychological and emotional resource for visually challenged para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, strengthening their determination and perseverance. Their spiritual, interpersonal, or self-directed belief acted as a stabilizing influence, increasing their ability to cope with hardship and remain optimistic. Participants consistently emphasized how faith helped regulate emotions and sustain

motivation. One athlete shared:

"I pray and think to myself that I can do this,"

Reflecting the dual role of spirituality and self-belief in personal empowerment.

Another stated:

"Be disciplined, practice time management, embrace self-validation, have faith, and trust in myself that I can do it,"

Suggesting a composite belief system rooted in self-efficacy and structured habits.

This aligned with Koenig's (2020) assertion that faith contributed to emotional regulation by reinforcing adaptive cognitive appraisals. It also reflected the updated Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020), in which intrinsic motivation, bolstered by perceived autonomy and internalized values, underpinned long-term engagement. Faith nurtured emotional resilience by fulfilling psychological needs for meaning and connectedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Additionally, faith exemplified existential and humanistic psychology components, especially Frankl's (2020) notion of "meaning in adversity." Faith helped athletes transform suffering into purposeful striving, thus facilitating a growth mindset (Dweck, 2017) and perseverance (Duhigg, 2016). From a phenomenological perspective, faith was

not merely a coping mechanism but a lived experience that reflected the intentional

meaning-making process essential to human flourishing. As one participant stated:

"I pray and trust that I can do this,"

It showed how internal dialogues and spiritual reflection serve as emotional scaffolding. Such beliefs alleviated stress and motivated participation in goalball and personal life pursuits.

Recent research corroborated these findings. Lim and Yoon (2022) reported that spiritual well-being predicts emotional health in visually impaired youth, while Ryff (2019) emphasized the role of spirituality in psychological resilience. These insights highlighted how faith functions as a multidimensional resource, blending emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components.

Despite these strengths, a significant gap existed in formally integrating spirituality into school-based sports training and wellness programs. There is minimal empirical data on structured spiritual mentoring and its effect on long-term psychological development among para-athletes in low-resource rural areas like Calabanga. This suggested an opportunity for educators, coaches, and community leaders to design values-based interventions—such as mindfulness practices, interfaith mentoring, and reflective journaling—to deepen the emotional and motivational capacities of para-athletes.

Future Aspirations. Hope and aspirations surfaced as powerful motivators shaping athletes' life trajectories. These future-oriented visions provided clarity of purpose, self-discipline, and commitment, allowing para-athletes to transform limitations into opportunities for growth, success, and service to others. Participants expressed concrete and ambitious dreams, such as:

"*To reach the Palarong Pambansa again and aim for the international level,*
traveling around the world,"

And:

"I hope to become their trainer or coach so I can share what I know about goalball."

These statements demonstrated a strong connection between current actions and envisioned futures. The presence of specific, measurable goals corresponded with Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2019), which linked clearly defined objectives to increased performance and persistence.

Moreover, Bandura's (2020) Social Cognitive Theory highlighted how self-efficacy and aspirational thinking fostered goal-directed behaviors, even in adversity. These aspirations also satisfied intrinsic needs identified in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020): competence, autonomy, and relatedness, critical to sustained engagement in adaptive sports. These future goals were philosophically consistent with constructivist epistemology, which held that individuals actively shaped their identities and social roles through envisioned life outcomes. Aspirational thinking was a future-oriented self-narrative that affected behavior, identity, and well-being. One athlete expressed:

"I really want to push my limits to become an international para-athlete,"

While another hoped:

"In the next generation, I hope to become their trainer or coach."

These quotations showed that aspirations are directed toward personal advancement, community impact, legacy-building, and intergenerational mentorship.

Biroli and Cattaneo (2023) found that aspirational thinking enhanced resilience among disabled youth athletes, while Kleiber and Brock (2022) noted that hope-linked narratives positively influenced sports persistence. Furthermore, Kunz, Smelser & Gilman (2021) argued that aspirational clarity increased psychological well-being by anchoring present behaviors to a meaningful future.

Despite these aspirational capabilities, institutional barriers such as a lack of access to international competitions, restricted funding, and inadequate mentorship prevented these goals from becoming a

reality. There was a need for institutional support systems, such as mentorship programs, scholarships, exposure opportunities, and international exchange initiatives. Furthermore, longitudinal research was required to investigate how aspirational thinking promoted long-term educational, vocational, and psychosocial development among Filipino para-athletes, particularly those in rural and underserved contexts.

The gaps and potential in present para-sports programs showed the underutilization of powerful internal motivators such as faith, hope, and dreams. Despite their enormous impact, there was a distinct lack of formal integration of these features into school-based parasports programs' curriculum and coaching models. While existing literature supported their significance in improving resilience, empirically grounded interventions in the Philippine setting were limited. Opportunities to close this gap included creating reflective modules for goal setting and narrative therapy, training coaches and mentors in faith-sensitive emotional regulation strategies, collaborating with spiritual counselors and community leaders, and conducting longitudinal studies to track the impact of belief systems on life outcomes. By focusing support programs on these internal factors, stakeholders could have promoted top performance, overall well-being, long-term motivation, and social inclusion.

Key Theme 8: Adaptive Learning and Accessibility

Figure 11 showed the theme 8 analysis. The theme Adaptive Learning and Accessibility highlighted the necessity of inclusive educational and athletic environments for visually impaired para-athletes. It emphasizes the transformative impact of assistive technologies and teacher accommodation, which are essential enablers of meaningful academic and athletic engagement.

Adaptive learning strategies, including the use of assistive technologies and flexible pedagogical accommodation, supported access, autonomy, and competence among para-athletes. The effective interplay between responsive teaching and technological empowerment fostered environments where visually impaired learners could thrive. Adaptive supports went beyond standardized approaches, reflecting

Figure 11

Key Theme 8: Adaptive Learning and Accessibility

personalized methods that responded to the specific needs of learners with visual impairment. Adaptive learning strategies, including using assistive technologies and flexible pedagogical accommodation, supported access, autonomy, and competence

among para-athletes. The effective interplay between responsive teaching and technological empowerment fostered environments where visually impaired learners could thrive. Adaptive supports went beyond standardized approaches, reflecting personalized methods that were grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2020).

This theme illustrated how reciprocal interactions between learners and their environments promoted behavioral regulation, mastery, and academic engagement. Simultaneously, the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles (CAST, 2023) underscored the importance of providing various means of engagement, representation, and expression. Philosophically aligned with Person-Centered Theory (Wilkins, 2021), adaptive learning recognized and honored individual autonomy, empathy, and learner dignity as central to the educational process.

Participant experiences revealed that visually impaired para-athletes actively used assistive technologies such as screen readers, mobile devices, and audio-based learning tools to access, review, and internalize academic content. In learning environments where teachers demonstrated understanding and flexibility—such as permitting device use or providing content in accessible formats—students reported greater confidence and engagement. These practices contributed to the development of self-regulation, increased participation, and a stronger sense of academic and athletic identity. Furthermore, the synergy between teacher responsiveness and technological tools facilitated learner motivation and long-term resilience.

Emerging research affirmed the critical role of adaptive environments in supporting learners with disabilities. Nguyen and Smith (2022) found that using assistive technologies significantly improved academic outcomes, self-esteem, and emotional well-being in students with visual impairments. Similarly, Al Mahmud, Sultana & Hasan (2023) emphasized that teacher accommodation and inclusive attitudes were key predictors of success in inclusive educational contexts.

Within athletic domains, Smith and Johnson (2023) identified that real-time analytics and adaptive sports equipment enhanced training outcomes and psychological motivation for para-athletes. From a behavioral perspective, Al-Azawei et al. (2019) underscored that assistive technologies promoted self-regulated learning, goal setting, and resilience when integrated with inclusive pedagogical practices

Applying Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2020) further illuminated how adaptive environments met essential psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—thus promoting intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement across academic and athletic contexts. The following strategies were proposed for adopting adaptive learning and accessibility for visually challenged para-athletes. Policy uniformity was prioritized by adopting comprehensive school-wide regulations requiring assistive devices and inclusive pedagogies, eliminating reliance on individual teacher discretion. Professional development had to be ongoing, with teachers, coaches, and staff receiving training in inclusive instructional methodologies, assistive technology applications, and

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) implementation.

Collaborative models were applied by assembling interdisciplinary teams of teachers, special education experts, coaches, and counselors to co-create specialized education and training plans based on learners' needs. Ensuring technological access was critical, as was ensuring equal access to up-to-date assistive technologies like screen readers, tactile materials, and learning programs, which were supported by partnerships with technology providers. Finally, monitoring and research activities had to include

longitudinal evaluations to determine the long-term effects of adaptive learning on academic achievement, sports performance, psychological development, and post-secondary transitions.

Use of Technology. Assistive technologies were essential for providing visually impaired para-athletes with equitable access to education and sports. Technology fostered independence, strengthened self-efficacy, and personalized learning. Tools like screen readers, mobile apps, and video documentation supported self-paced learning and reinforced understanding. Several participants narrated:

"*They say, 'I can do it, I am a player.'*""*I take pictures, like in math, then there are explanations…*"

"After the lesson, I take pictures of what was taught so I can self-study later."

These practices promoted academic review, goal-setting, and self-management—key indicators of motivation and persistence.

Wang and Goodall (2020) addressed how assistive technology promoted autonomy and academic inclusion. Similarly, Smith and Johnson (2023) found that digital training tools improved athletic performance and engagement. Institutions had to ensure access to modern assistive technologies and embed them into daily learning and training routines. Training for users and facilitators had to be ongoing.

Teacher Accommodation. Teacher accommodation enabled para-athletes to thrive academically and emotionally through flexibility, empathy, and inclusive adjustments. Responsive teaching strategies (e.g., verbal instructions, visual aids, device permissions) supported learning outcomes, socio-emotional well-being, and engagement. Participant noted:

"The teachers know about my eye condition and allow me to use my cellphone, even if it's normally not allowed."

"They accept me. For someone like me, the teachers *understand my eye condition."*

These quotes reflected teachers' willingness to adapt rules and support individualized learning paths. Gage, Lierheime, and Goran (2018) found that accommodation significantly improved academic performance in students with disabilities. Horne and Tangen (2020) emphasized that flexible teaching fostered inclusion and a positive self-concept. Educators were provided with systematic training in inclusive approaches and were encouraged to collaborate with teachers, coaches, and families to ensure comprehensive and consistent assistance.

Identifying gaps and opportunities in assisting visually impaired para-athletes indicated several significant areas of systemic development. A lack of policy consistency across institutions necessitated institutionalizing inclusive practices through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks. The lack of continuous training in adaptive tools and procedures provided an opportunity to incorporate SPED, UDL, and technology modules into teacher education programs. Cross-sectoral teams were established to create and execute customized learning techniques to overcome the deficiency of multidisciplinary teamwork. Finally, the absence of longitudinal data emphasized the importance of conducting multi-year research to investigate the influence of adaptive learning on both career trajectories and psychological outcomes.

The theme Adaptive Learning and Accessibility, with its sub-themes on technology use and teacher accommodation, demonstrated that visually impaired para-athletes flourished when provided with responsive settings and supporting technologies. Grounded in updated theories (CAST, 2023) and recent empirical evidence, this study affirmed that accessibility was not a static goal but a dynamic process—one that had to be continually personalized, evaluated, and expanded. Ensuring equity in learning and

sports contexts empowered para-athletes to develop their full potential with dignity, agency, and resilience.

Key Theme 9: Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment

Figure 12 showed the theme 8 analysis. The theme of Passion, Enjoyment,

Figure 12

Key Theme 9: Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment

Fulfillment emerged as an important aspect of intrinsic motivation among para-athletes with visual impairments. Beyond the desire for trophies or honors, their participation in sports was motivated by an emotional connection and psychological pressure. The findings aligned with harmonious passion: participants exhibited volitional, balanced involvement in sport that contributed positively to their well-being.

Recent research underscored this connection. Dehghani et al. (2021) asserted that emotional enjoyment was a key factor in maintaining long-term engagement among para-athletes. Macdougall, Halloran, Sherry, and Shields (2021) linked athletic fulfillment to increased motivation and identity integration. Pelletier, Rocchi, Vallerand, and Miquelon (2020) emphasized that passion-driven participation reduced burnout and improved adaptive functioning, while Paxton, Rodgers, Hall, and Mahoney (2019) highlighted how emotional satisfaction built inclusive and empowering environments for athletes with disabilities, personal satisfaction, and a profound sense of purpose derived from participation.

For visually impaired para-athletes, the motivation to train and compete arose primarily from a deep emotional bond with their sport. Passion and enjoyment surfaced as core motivational factors, fostering resilience, sustaining perseverance, and enhancing their sense of identity and self-worth. Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment emerged as critical dimensions of intrinsic motivation in para-athletes with visual impairments.

Beyond the pursuit of trophies or plaudits, their participation in sports was motivated by an emotional connection and internal pressure. This level of continuous engagement represented athletic performance and broader developmental outcomes such as psychological well-being, adaptive learning, and social inclusion.

Participants stated that their satisfaction originated from the sheer joy of playing,
learning new skills, and the development of friendship within their teams. Rather than focusing on external rewards, they emphasized the journey of becoming an athlete as the most meaningful aspect. This theme was best understood through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as updated by Ryan and Deci (2020). SDT suggested that intrinsic motivation flourished when three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—were met. The athletes' experiences of enjoyment and fulfillment highlighted how sport met these needs, enabling sustained and self-directed motivation.

Furthermore, the Dualistic Model of Passion by Vallerand (2019) distinguished between harmonious passion, which arose from intrinsic interest, and obsessive passion, which was driven by external contingencies. In this study, participants exemplified harmonious passion as their sports involvement integrated positively with their lives and identity, promoting balance and well-being. From a constructivist-interpretivist philosophical stance, this theme emphasized the subjective, lived meanings para-athletes attached to sport. Reality was perceived as co-constructed via human experiences and interactions; therefore, athletes' narratives were critical to understanding how passion and fun drove their motivation.

Despite these encouraging findings, significant gaps and potential for
improvement had to be addressed. First, there was a shortage of emotional support networks, as psychological skills training was not fully integrated into school or community programs for para-athletes. Second, there was insufficient cultural-gender analysis—existing research did not investigate how gender or cultural origins influenced feelings of enthusiasm and satisfaction. Third, a lack of longitudinal research made it challenging to comprehend how motivation changed as players progressed through their school

and athletic careers. To address these concerns, stakeholders incorporated mental health and emotional satisfaction modules into para-sports curricula while training teacher-coaches in autonomy-supportive practices and athlete-centered coaching based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

Furthermore, it was critical to establish reflective areas where para-athletes could express their personal stories, which increased emotional connection and social belonging. Finally, institutions conducted longitudinal qualitative research to track motivational variations and their implications for academic achievement, transition, and well-being.

Enjoyment. Participants consistently expressed that their involvement in sport stems from genuine enjoyment. One athlete remarked,

"I simply enjoy the game to avoid feeling pressured."

This quote reveals that enjoyment serves as a psychological buffer, helping athletes cope with stress and competition-induced anxiety. Another shared,

"I enjoy it so I don't lose my strength as a power thrower."

"That's what we find in goalball — it's really joyful."

Such statements demonstrated that enjoyment promoted emotional well-being and encouraged continuous effort and training consistency. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020) emphasized intrinsic motivation as a function of autonomy, competence, and relatedness; thus, this sub-theme aligned with SDT. Enjoyment improved psychological well-being by addressing these needs. In the context of para-sports, Martin, Byrd, and Wu (2021) affirmed that intrinsic enjoyment fostered persistence and social connectedness, which were vital for athletes with disabilities. Similarly, Anderson, H., Lewis, A., and Ng, C. (2023) found that fun, supportive environments increased motivation and decreased dropout rates among adaptive athletes.

From a behavioral lens, enjoyment enhanced self-regulation, leading to discipline and goal-directed behavior (Baumeister & Vohs, 2016). According to Vallerand and Losier (2019), enjoyment in sports strengthened engagement and performance by reinforcing personal interest and volition. Despite its centrality, enjoyment was rarely institutionalized in para-sports programs. Psychological skills training and structured emotional support remained limited in most schools and community sports settings. Additionally, enjoyment was often undervalued in performance-driven environments, prioritizing competition over well-being. Programs intentionally embedded enjoyment through athlete-centered coaching and autonomy-supportive practices (Mageau & Vallerand, 2020). Celebrating progress, encouraging peer collaboration, and designing joyful sports environments helped para-athletes sustain engagement and develop resilience.

Sports Passion. For many athletes, sport is not just an activity, it is a source of purpose and identity. One participant succinctly stated:

"I love sports."

Another reflected,

"When I became a player, I felt like I had another purpose in life. I was amazed— I never knew this kind of sport existed before."

This sentiment indicated that sports passion goes beyond enjoyment, it transforms self-perception and meaning making. Another athlete shared:

"Even if our bodies are hurting, we keep fighting."

Such statements illuminated how passion fostered perseverance and resilience, even amid adversity.

This sub-theme resonated with Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) (Vallerand, R. J., & Mageau, G. A., 2022), which distinguished harmonious passion—an intrinsic drive integrated into one's identity—from obsessive passion, which could cause conflict. The participants demonstrated harmonious passion, wherein their commitment enhanced psychological well-being and life balance. Chen, Kim & Tanaka (2022) found that harmonious passion in para-athletes predicts resilience and reduced burnout. Likewise, Lopez and Miller (2021) concluded that passion improves athlete identity, commitment, and psychosocial health.

The theme also reinforced Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), where passion strengthened intrinsic motivation by satisfying autonomy and competence needs. The emotional connection to sport nurtured a deep internal drive, reinforced identity, and promoted adaptive behavior.

While passion fueled long-term commitment, para-sports programs often lacked mechanisms to cultivate it intentionally. There was limited exploration of how social, gender, or cultural factors influenced the development of passion among athletes with disabilities. Moreover, most studies, including the current one, captured passion in a cross-sectional manner, lacking longitudinal insights. Coaches and mentors highlighted intrinsic rewards—growth, connection, purpose—over medals or status to nurture sports passion. Creating inclusive, meaningful, and emotionally enriching environments helped deepen athletes' emotional bonds with sport. Training coaches in motivational interviewing and emotion-focused communication enhanced these outcomes (Taylor & Smith, 2023).

The theme Passion, Enjoyment, and Fulfillment highlighted the profound emotional dimensions that drove visually impaired para-athletes' long-term engagement. Grounded in updated motivational theories and participant testimonies, this theme underscored the role of emotional connection as a cornerstone of athletic identity, resilience, and life satisfaction. Creating psychologically safe, pleasurable, and passionate environments was critical for para-athletes to compete and thrive.

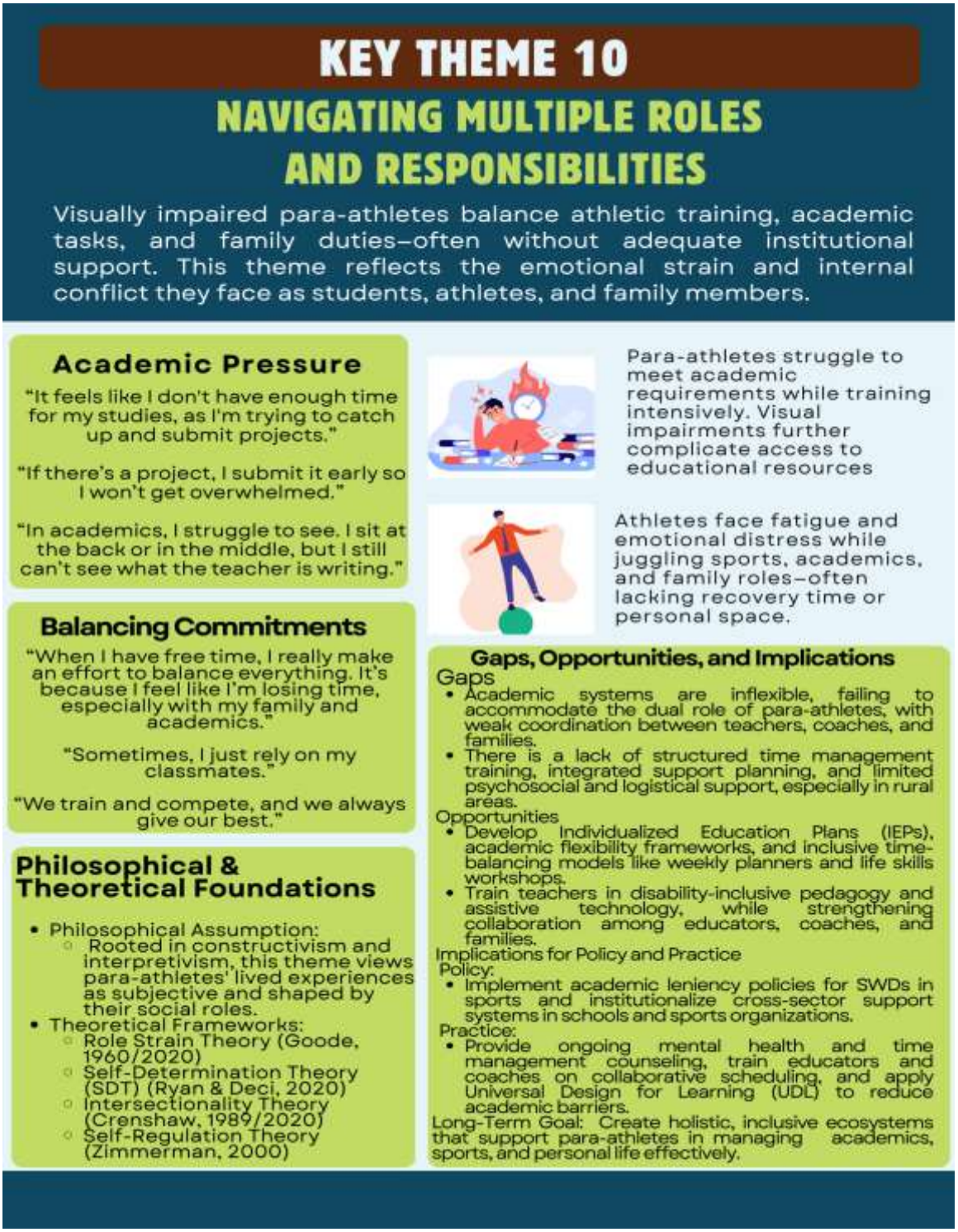
Key Theme 10: Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities

Figure 13 showed the theme 10 analysis. The theme Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities highlighted the complex balancing act that para-athletes faced as they juggled their athletic commitments with academic responsibilities, family obligations, and personal well-being. This multifaceted burden underscored the reality that para-athletes were not solely defined by their sports identity but were also students, children, siblings, and community members—each role demanding significant time, emotional energy, and resilience. For many para-athletes, the demand for excelling in sports while maintaining strong academic performance and fulfilling familial duties created a challenging and sometimes overwhelming experience. The dual (and often triple) expectations of school achievement, competitive athletic performance, and household contribution exposed them to significant cognitive and emotional stress.

This theme captured the internal conflict and pressure athletes faced when trying to allocate limited time and energy across multiple roles and responsibilities. Cultural expectations, a lack of individualized support mechanisms, and the absence of equitable academic and sports scheduling frameworks all contributed to these pressures. Academic burnout, physical exhaustion, and mental health pressure were all risks for para-athletes

Figure 13

Key Theme 10: Navigating Multiple Roles and Responsibilities.



who did not receive proper intervention.

The study participants illustrated the delicate balance they attempted to maintain, often struggling to prioritize their sports goals and academic achievements. Several shared stories of sacrificing rest to meet academic deadlines after intense training sessions or feeling guilty over missing family responsibilities due to tournament travel. These narratives reflected the emotional toll of managing various life roles. While sports offered empowerment and pride, this constant negotiation between competing demands often

led to chronic stress, underscoring the need for intentional time management strategies and institutional support systems to safeguard the holistic well-being of para-athletes.

This theme was strongly supported by the Role Strain Theory (Briscoe & Schulte, 2020), which suggested that individuals occupying multiple social roles might experience strain when the demands of these roles were incompatible or exceeded personal resources. In the context of student-athletes with disabilities, this theory remained relevant and had been extended in contemporary literature on intersectionality and inclusive education (Briscoe & Schulte, 2020).

Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan and Deci (2020) offered a compelling lens, highlighting that optimal functioning occurred when individuals experienced autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When para-athletes were overwhelmed by conflicting responsibilities, their perceived autonomy diminished,

threatening motivation and well-being

Recent literature emphasized this tension. Denerel and Aşçı (2021) noted that student-athletes with disabilities often encountered time management issues and felt "pulled" between role expectations, resulting in performance anxiety and emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Kegelaers et al. (2022) found that athletes who perceived limited institutional flexibility experienced higher burnout levels and lower academic self-efficacy. In the Philippine context, Santos et al. (2023) stressed the urgent need for structured psychosocial and educational support for students with disabilities engaged in extracurricular activities.

Despite these findings, some significant gaps and areas for improvement in para-athlete support systems emerged. First, there was a lack of tailored time management and academic flexibility plans, as schools frequently used a one-size-fits-all model that failed to account for the unique pressures encountered by student-athletes, particularly those with impairments. Second, there was insufficient integration of support networks, with little collaboration between academic advisers, coaches, and families in developing a coordinated support framework for para-athletes. Third, there was insufficient empirical attention on para-athletes in rural and low-resource settings, as most existing material was situated in urban or well-resourced areas, leaving a gap in understanding the compounded issues of athletes from marginalized places such as Calabanga.

To address these difficulties, school-based programs should implement Inclusive

Time-Balancing Models, which include academic leniency policies, mental health therapy, and coordinated mentoring by educators and coaches. Integrating role management and life skills training into para-sports development programs can help athletes better handle their obligations. Furthermore, future studies should use longitudinal mixed method designs to investigate the evolution of role conflict and adaptive mechanisms among para-athletes over time.

Academic Pressure. Visually challenged para-athletes face significant scholastic pressure while preparing and competing. This frequently leads to brain tension, sleep deprivation, and lower academic performance. The conflict between academic accomplishment and athletic commitment manifested as role strain (Goode, 2020), in which overlapping obligations caused incompatibility. The participants' academic duties are heightened by their visual impairment, which frequently necessitates extra work and time to access learning resources, exacerbating their stress. One participant shared:

"It feels like I don't have enough time for my studies, as I'm trying to catch up and submit projects."

Another said:

"If there's a project, I submit it early, so I won't get overwhelmed."
A visually impaired student added:
"*In academics, I struggle to see. I sit at the back or in the middle, but I still can't see what the teacher is writing." These insights reflect both the physical and psychological burdens of academic participation among students with disabilities."*
Recent research supported these conclusions. Johnson, Lee, and Santiago (2022) discovered that para-athletes experience disproportionate academic stress due to inaccessible learning environments and a lack of adjustments. Lee and Kim (2023) noted that a lack of communication between coaches and instructors exacerbates scheduling conflicts. Updated perspectives from Ryan and Deci (2020) under Self-Determination Theory (SDT) affirmed that when autonomy and competence are constrained—such as when para-athletes lack control over their academic workload—motivation declines. Moreover, Crenshaw's (2020) intersectionality theory sheds light on how disability, academic identity, and athletic demands intersect, compounding marginalization.
Despite the clear challenges, few schools in rural areas like Calabanga offered structured academic accommodations for student-athletes with disabilities This lack of support frequently causes students to navigate academic and athletic expectations without the required resources or direction. A critical gap exists in implementing flexible academic systems, such as individualized education plans, tailored assessments, or adaptive technology support. Opportunities include creating institutional academic-athletic coordination teams, investing in assistive educational technology, and providing teacher training on disability-inclusive instruction.
Balancing Commitments. Beyond academics, para-athletes had to balance family obligations and sporting responsibilities, often with insufficient time for relaxation, pleasure, or introspection. This juggling act caused persistent emotional tension and a loss of time and connection. This sub-theme aligned with Self-Regulation Theory (Zimmerman, 2000), emphasized proactive time and emotional management in goal achievement. When para-athletes attempted to balance multiple high-demand roles, the absence of structure often led to internal conflict, fatigue, and lowered self-efficacy. As one athlete put it:
"When I have free time, I really make an effort to balance everything. It's because I feel like I'm losing time, especially with my family and academics."
Another shared:
"Sometimes, I just rely on my classmates." These remarks reflect the strategic yet sometimes desperate efforts to keep up across life domains.
One athlete stated:
"We train and compete, and we always give our best."
Yet, these efforts often come at a cost to family interaction or personal rest.
According to Moen, Myhre, and Sandbakk (2019), training athletes in time management and emotional regulation improved academic and athletic outcomes while reducing stress. Balish and Cote (2016) emphasized that athletes supported in balancing their commitments were less likely to experience burnout. Similarly, Santos, Javier, and Trinidad (2023), in the Philippine context, highlighted that para-athletes in rural areas lacked structured psychosocial and logistical support, exacerbating role strain.
The updated Role Strain Theory (Goode, 2020) remained highly applicable, especially considering para-athletes' cultural and environmental stressors in low-resource settings. Combining this with inclusive education philosophies, such as Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2021), created more adaptable and responsive learning and training environments.

Para-athletes had to self-manage competing demands with little institutional support. School administrators, sports coaches, and families seldom worked together to organize players' timetables and support structures. Adopting Inclusive Time-Balancing Models, such as weekly planner systems backed by mentors or coaches, life skills and role management courses, and school-wide academic flexibility policies during training seasons, presented opportunities. These differences highlighted the need for a complete support paradigm that viewed para-athletes as whole people, not just athletes on the court or students in the classroom. The two sub-themes of Academic Pressure and Balancing Commitments highlighted the different challenges that para-athletes faced as they balanced competing responsibilities in situations that lacked inclusive design.

Schools and sports organizations must implement academic leniency and flexibility frameworks for student-athletes with disabilities; provide mental health and time management counseling as core program components; train educators and coaches to collaborate across sectors for better student support; and integrate assistive technologies and inclusive learning strategies to reduce cognitive load and increase participation. This allows institutions to reduce role strain, improve psychological well-being, and maintain motivation among para-athletes who must continually balance competing life domains.

Designing an Inclusive School-based Program for the Visually Impaired Para-athletes

This study presented the VISION GOAL Program builds upon the foundations laid by the VISION GOAL Program Version 1, which were conceptualized from the lived experiences of visually impaired student-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur.

The program initially began with Version 1, which highlighted key components such as experience-based design, multi-dimensional inclusion, year-round functional assessments, empowered support systems, and scalable collaboration. While Version 1 laid a strong foundation for addressing the needs of its beneficiaries, subsequent expert consultations and rigorous refinement processes revealed opportunities for further enhancement. Building on this groundwork, Version 2 was developed to integrate more targeted strategies that directly support motivation, strengthen emotional well-being, and ensure the long-term holistic development of participants. This progression underscores the program’s commitment to continuous improvement, adaptability, and sustainability in addressing the evolving needs of its target beneficiaries.

Primary Basis

The program was designed based on rich qualitative data gathered from para-athletes who emphasized the value of sports in developing identity, confidence, resilience, and purpose. Many shared their emotional challenges—bullying, low self-worth, and academic exclusion—and stressed the importance of having consistent feedback, peer relationships, and structured recognition systems. These voices provided direct insights that informed the personalized and motivational components of the enhanced program.

Secondary Basis

The VISION GOAL Program is firmly anchored in a comprehensive set of theoretical and policy frameworks that collectively support its inclusive, motivational, and evidence-based design. At its core, the program draws from Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 2021), which emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated and co-constructed process. This perspective informs the program’s collaborative elements, such as peer mentoring and interdisciplinary projects, which are essential in nurturing the academic and athletic growth of visually impaired para-athletes.

Another foundational framework is the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci,

2020), which underscores that motivation is significantly enhanced when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The program operationalizes this by offering personalized learning pathways, structured feedback mechanisms, and emotionally supportive relationships—all of which empower para-athletes to take ownership of their development. Aligned with these psychological and pedagogical underpinnings is Humanistic Education (UNESCO, 2021), which asserts that education should holistically nurture both emotional and psychological development. This is reflected in the program's mental wellness sessions and emphasis on fostering self-worth and resilience among student-athletes.

Expert Feedback

Expert feedback played a pivotal role in shaping and refining of the VISION GOAL Program. While Version 1 was widely appreciated for its authenticity and strong alignment with the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes, professionals in the fields of inclusive education and sports development identified several critical areas for improvement that needed to be addressed for the program to be more effective and sustainable.

One of the main observations was that the Experience-Based Design of Version 1,
though grounded in real athlete experiences, needed greater flexibility. Experts emphasized the importance of adapting the program to the diverse needs, learning paces, and motivational profiles of individual student-athletes.

Furthermore, the component on Multi-Dimensional Inclusion was seen as promising but insufficiently integrated. There was a clear need to better connect academic and athletic support systems, ensuring that para-athletes receive a cohesive, interdisciplinary approach to both their education and sports training.

Another concern was the execution of the Functional Assessments. While assessments were present in the initial design, experts recommended enhancing their consistency and objectivity. They suggested establishing standardized procedures and documentation that could track progress more accurately over time.

The Support System, which included elements such as peer mentoring and teacher involvement, was also identified as needing further development. Specifically, there was a lack of continuity in both the mentoring structures and the training provided to teachers, which limited the long-term impact of these support mechanisms.

Finally, stakeholders from the community and public sector highlighted that the roles of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Local Government Units (LGUs) in the program's implementation needed to be more clearly defined. Without specific responsibilities and formal engagement strategies, sustaining and scaling the program beyond its pilot stage would be challenging.

These expert insights directly informed the modifications made in Version 2, ensuring that the enhanced program is not only more responsive to the needs of visually impaired para-athletes but also more structured, adaptable, and sustainable within
educational and community systems.

Enhanced Features (Version 2)

Building on the foundation of Version 1, the VISION GOAL Program (Version 2) has evolved from standardized interventions into a highly adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable framework that centers on the lived realities and aspirations of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga. This enhancement deliberately integrates broader theoretical foundations—including Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (2020), Humanistic Education (Laudencia et al., 2023), and Wraparound Behavioral Support Models

(Eber et al., 2022)—and aligns with inclusive policy frameworks such as the UNESCO Inclusive Education Agenda (2020) and the DepEd Inclusive Education Policy (2022).

Table 3 systematically maps these enhanced features, clarifying their purposes, implementation strategies, and theoretical or policy-based underpinnings. This tabular framework is both a conceptual guide and a practical tool for stakeholders—school administrators, SPED teachers, coaches, LGUs, and NGOs—ensuring clarity, accountability, and scholarly rigor in program execution.

Key enhanced components include:

Personalized Pathways. Adaptive schedules, tailored support, and athlete selected recognition formats address individualized needs, fostering autonomy and sustained motivation (Fong et al., 2023; Gilmour & Wehby, 2021).

2. Integrated Multi-Dimensional Inclusion. Interdisciplinary projects, teacher - coach collaboration, and shared evaluation tools bridge academic and athletic growth, reinforcing collaborative learning and balanced achievement (Vygotsky, 2020; Morin & Fullerton, 2022).

3. Refined Year-Round Functional Assessments. Monthly assessments, customized training logs, and quarterly reviews provide equitable and individualized

Table 3

Vision Goal Program (Version 2) Features

Enhanced Feature(V2)	Identified Gap Address/Purpose	Key Strategies	Supporting Theories/Studies & Findings
Personalized Pathways	Address the individualized needs and participation comfort of para-athletes	Adaptive schedules, tailored support, athlete-selected recognition formats	Fong et al. (2023); Gilmour & Wehby (2021) – Adaptive education enhances engagement. Study finding: Participants emphasized the need for interventions that reflect their capacities and preferences.
Integrated Multi-Dimensional Inclusion	Promote holistic growth through combining academic, emotional, and physical development	Interdisciplinary projects, teacher-coach collaboration, shared evaluation tools	Vygotsky (2020); Morin & Fullerton (2022) – Learning is socially and collaboratively constructed. Study finding: Athletes desired support in both academic and athletic settings.
Refined Year-Round Functional Assessments	Ensure equitable evaluation and support systems through continuous tracking	Monthly athlete assessments, customized training logs, quarterly stakeholder reviews	Eber et al. (2022) – Continuous data supports individualized growth. Study finding: Learners lacked regular, objective evaluations aligned with their development needs.
Empowered Support System	Provide sustained emotional, academic, and	Peer mentoring, professional development (PD),	Braun & Clarje (2021); Morin & Fullerton (2022) – Holistic development involves emotional scaffolding; Study finding:

	motivational reinforcement	wellness sessions, interdisciplinary support teams	Participants reported emotional fatigue, bullying, and poor mental health support.
Scalable Collaboration	Ensure long-term program expansion and institutionalization	MOUs with LGUs, DepEd, NGOs, CSR; shared review meetings; open-access toolkits	Booth & Ainscow (2020); Taguiam (2022); UNESCO (2020) – Inclusive education is scalable through systemic partnerships; Study finding: Sustainability requires multi-sectoral engagement.
Behavioral Management Integration	Strengthening motivation and positive behavior through structured reinforcement	Goal setting, feedback loops, public recognition, resilience-building activities	Sullivan & Field (2019); Laudencia et al. (2023)– Goal setting and recognition enhance resilience. Study finding: Athletes felt invisible, unrecognized, and discouraged by inconsistent reinforcement.
Participatory Evaluation and Feedback	Maintain continuous program improvement through stakeholder involvement	Quarterly FGDs, athlete reflection journals, parent-teacher-athlete consultations	Patton (2021); Creswell & Poth (2018) – Development is sustained through iterative feedback. Study finding: Participants wanted to be heard and engaged in shaping their learning and training experience.

evaluation systems that promote growth and accountability (Eber et al., 2022).

4. Enhanced Empowered Support System. Peer mentoring and ongoing professional development cultivate resilience, empathy, and inclusive pedagogies, addressing social isolation and emotional fatigue (Braun & Clarje, 2021; Morin & Fullerton,2022).

5. Strengthened Scalable Collaboration. Institutionalized partnerships with LGUs, NGOs, and DepEd, formalized through MOUs and shared accountability, guarantee sustainability, policy alignment, and wider program expansion (Booth & Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; Taguiam, 2022).

6. Behavioral Management Integration. Structured goal setting, recognition systems, and resilience-building activities strengthen positive motivation and reinforce consistent behavioral outcomes (Sullivan & Field, 2019; Laudencia et al., 2023).

7. Participatory Evaluation and Feedback. Quarterly FGDs, reflection journals, and collaborative consultations ensure that athletes' voices are heard, empowering them as active co-creators of their developmental pathways (Patton, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

These refinements shifted the framework from deficit-based models to empowerment-oriented and strengths-based methods. By embedding social constructivism, wraparound care, and inclusive education principles, the improved program ensured that visually impaired para-athletes received personalized, holistic, and consistent support that strengthened academic engagement, athletic performance, emotional well-being, and long-term motivation.

The finalized VISION GOAL Program (Version 2) is a replicable and context-sensitive model of inclusive para-sports development in the Philippines. Its integrated design responds to the critical gaps in

motivation, inclusion, continuous growth, and sustainability identified in the study, while grounding every intervention in empirical research, inclusive policies, and cultural realities. By combining theory, lived experiences, and multi-sectoral collaboration, the program empowers visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga and establishes a scalable blueprint for lifelong growth, high motivation, and sustainable empowerment for para-athletes nationwide.

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VISION GOAL PROGRAM: Empowering Visually Impaired Para-Athletes through Holistic and Inclusive Development

I. Rationale

The Enhanced VISION GOAL Program is a comprehensive, school-based initiative designed to address the multifaceted needs of visually impaired para-athletes in low-resource public schools, starting with Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Recognizing the urgent gaps in inclusive sports opportunities, psychosocial support, teacher preparedness, and recognition for student-athletes with disabilities, the program aligns with national
education and sports development priorities.

It responds directly to challenges identified through qualitative research, including limited access to structured physical activities, lack of adaptive sports programs, inadequate mental health support, and minimal recognition of para-athletes' achievements. Through five integrated modules, the program fosters holistic development—physical, psychological, social, academic, and institutional—while strengthening community partnerships and advocating for inclusive sports policies.

The University of Nueva Caceres champions this initiative in collaboration with the
Department of Education (DepEd), local government units (LGUs), higher education institutions (HEIs), and community stakeholders, envisioning it as a replicable and scalable model for inclusive sports development across Region V and beyond.

II. Objectives

Aligned with the research objective of fostering high motivation among visually impaired para-athletes, the VISION GOAL Program V.2 seeks to:

1. Enhance intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, fitness, and competitive performance of visually impaired para-athletes.
2. Promote psychosocial resilience through structured mental wellness sessions and peer mentoring programs.
3. Deliver structured, disability-sensitive Goalball training to strengthen skill mastery and competition readiness.
4. Institutionalize recognition systems that reinforce competence, autonomy, and relatedness.
5. Establish multi-sector partnerships for sustained program growth and regional expansion.
6. Provide capacity-building programs for teachers and coaches to ensure inclusive program delivery.

III. Beneficiaries

The target beneficiaries of the program include:

- Visually Impaired Para-Athletes: An initial cohort of eight student-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur public schools.
- PE and SPED Teachers: Equipped with inclusive teaching strategies and training through Training of Trainers (ToT) programs.
- Parents and Caregivers: Engaged as active partners in the holistic development of the athletes.
- School Administrators: Supporting institutional implementation and program integration.
- Local Authorities (DepEd, LGUs): Ensuring policy alignment and sustainability through active participation and advocacy.

IV. Program Strategies and Components

The VISION GOAL Program V.2 is delivered through five core modules implemented in five structured phases over a 12-month cycle.

Module	Key Strategies & Activities	Phase & Timeline	Adaptations	Stakeholders	Budget	Resources
VISION FUNCTIONAL ASSESS	Quarterly physical fitness assessments using adaptive tools (bell balls, cones), documented in Individualized Physical Fitness (IPF) logs.	Phase 2: July–Sept; Phase 3: Oct–Dec; Phase 4: Jan–Mar	Combine with Goalball drills to optimize time.	PE/SPED Teachers, Coaches	₱50,000	Bell balls, tactile cones, measuring tapes, stopwatches, clipboards, assessment forms, and storage boxes
VISION MIND	Monthly mental health and peer mentoring sessions, wellness talks, stress checklists, and journals.	Phase 2: July–Sept; Ongoing	Recorded talks if live sessions are not feasible.	Counselors, ToTs	₱80,000	Journals, stress checklist forms, digital projector, sound system, notebooks, printed materials, and refreshments
VISION TRAIN	Weekly one-hour goalball sessions, co-created inclusive drills with tactile cues, disability-sensitive	Phase 2: July–Sept; Phase 4: Jan–Mar	Combine classes if staff-limited; improvise local low-cost tools.	Coaches, PE/SPED Teachers	₱150,000	Goalball set (goals, bells, ball), eye shades, floor tape, training mats, whistles, and first aid kit

Module	Key Strategies & Activities	Phase & Timeline	Adaptations	Stakeholders	Budget	Resources
	training for staff.					
VISION RECOG	Quarterly recognition events, athlete storytelling, digital spotlights, school announcements.	Phase 3: Oct–Dec; Phase 5: April–May	Use social media platforms if physical events are not feasible.	School Admin, LGUs, Media	₱70,000	Certificates, medals, plaques, camera, backdrop, digital editing software, and printing supplies
VISION LINK	Annual fundraisers, stakeholder summits, school readiness orientations, advocacy for policy endorsements.	Phase 1: May–June; Phase 5: April–May	Online meetings and virtual summits to expand reach.	Program Lead, DepEd, LGUs, HEIs	₱120,000	Internet connection, multimedia equipment, virtual meeting subscriptions, tarpaulins, advocacy kits, and documentation tools
VISION CORE (ToT)	Bi-annual two-day Training of Trainers for PE/SPED teachers in collaboration with HEIs.	Phase 1: May–June; Phase 3: Oct–Dec	Collaborate with HEIs for certification and joint facilitation.	DepEd, HEIs, Master Teachers	₱100,000	Training manuals, modules, projector, laptop, venue rental, certificates, and training kits

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

The program employs a structured Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework to track progress in five domains:

- Academic: Attendance rates, academic grades, adherence to Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
- Athletic: Fitness assessment scores, skill development rubrics, competition eligibility.
- Psychological: Wellness self-ratings, counseling session logs, peer mentoring participation.
- Engagement: Training attendance, event participation, social media visibility.

- Sustainability: Number of trained facilitators, toolkit replication, funding generated, policy endorsements.

Midyear (Oct–Dec) and End-of-Year (April–May) evaluations will include data analysis, feedback consultations, and review of Individualized Physical Fitness and Performance Logs (IPFs).

VI. Sustainability

Sustainability is embedded through:

- Training of Trainers (ToT) to build local capacity for independent program delivery.
- Partnerships with DepEd, LGUs, and HEIs for funding, policy integration, and institutional backing.
- Annual fundraisers and stakeholder summits to secure financial and community support.
- Toolkit development for easy replication and integration into other schools' improvement plans.
- Policy advocacy to formalize Goalball as a recognized school sport and secure long-term resources for adaptive equipment and training.

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CHAPTER V

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presented a summary of findings, conclusions, and suggestions, derived from the thematic analysis of the lived experiences of para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Guided by the research objective—to describe these experiences with the goal of developing a school-based program that fosters high motivation—the study explored the personal, social, and academic dimensions of the athletes' lives. The insights collected provide a meaningful foundation for enhancing institutional support systems,

inclusive practices, and motivational strategies tailored to student-athletes with visual impairments' unique needs.

Research Objective 1

To explore the lived experiences, motivations and challenges of visually impaired para-athletes including empowerment through sports, resilience in the face of adversity, supportive relationships, inclusive environments, the balance of academic and athletic responsibilities, and aspirations for the future**.**

Findings

This qualitative phenomenological study uncovered ten significant, data-driven findings that reflect the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes in Calabanga Camarines Sur shown in Figure 14. Rooted in rich participant narratives and thematic
analysis, these findings capture the psychological, social, and educational realities

Figure 14

Lived Experiences of Visually Impaired Para-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur **shaping the lives of these students-athletes.**

1. Rediscovery and Identity Formation.

Visually impaired para-athletes consistently described sports as a powerful catalyst for self-discovery, enabling them to break free from limiting societal labels. For many, participation in athletics allowed them to reclaim agency over how they saw themselves and how others perceived them. As one athlete revealed, sports were "instrumental in discovering a new version of themselves," providing a renewed sense of dignity, pride, and personal identity. This rediscovery offered more than just confidence—it provided a profound emotional awakening, allowing them to redefine what was possible in their lives.

2. Pillars of Support.

Athletes emphasized that they could not have succeeded without the unwavering emotional and moral support of their families and coaches. These individuals served as "central pillars" who not only encouraged them during moments of doubt but believed in them when society did not. Their support extended beyond words—it was shown through daily sacrifices, relentless advocacy, and consistent presence. This circle of support became a lifeline, transforming perseverance from a possibility into a sustainable reality.

3. Sense of Belonging.

In the inclusive atmosphere of sports teams and training groups, athletes found acceptance and validation that was often absent in other areas of their lives. The sports environment counteracted the stigma of disability, allowing them to feel "equal, respected, and valued." This sense of belonging was not just about inclusion—it was about being seen as capable contributors, not defined by limitations. Such environments became safe spaces, fostering emotional healing and helping athletes rebuild their self-worth in a community that celebrated diversity.

4. Overcoming Challenges.

Despite facing deep-seated discrimination, accessibility issues, and physical limitations, these para-athletes rose above obstacles with resilience and resolve. Their stories were filled with moments of struggle, yet even more filled with stories of triumph. They proved their worth not in spite of their disabilities, but through them, transforming adversity into a source of strength. Their ability to challenge stereotypes and exceed expectations exemplified their indomitable spirit, redefining what it means to be an athlete.

5. Values Development.

Through rigorous training and competition, athletes developed a core set of life values including discipline, responsibility, patience, and emotional maturity. The sports arena became their classroom, where every drill taught perseverance and every loss shaped humility. They learned to "stay composed under pressure," to "stay focused amidst distraction," and to carry these values into other areas of life, becoming not only better athletes but stronger human beings.

6. Systematic Training.

Structured and regular training sessions did more than hone physical skills—they instilled work ethic, time management, and a commitment to continuous growth. These regimens taught athletes how to be consistent, manage their time effectively between academics and athletics, and set clear, achievable goals. The discipline gained from such training transcended sports, reinforcing resilience and self-regulation that benefitted them in all life pursuits.

7. Spirituality and Aspirations.

Faith and ambition formed a powerful dual source of motivation for many athletes. Their "faith in God" provided emotional grounding during times of doubt, while the dream to "represent the country" gave

them direction and purpose. This fusion of spirituality and aspiration empowered them to push beyond physical and emotional limitations, driven not just by personal goals but by a higher sense of calling. These beliefs ignited hope, courage, and the drive for excellence.

8. Academic Support and Assistive Tools.

Participants emphasized that access to assistive technologies such as Braille materials, audio readers, and flexible academic arrangements was crucial to balancing academic and athletic commitments. These tools enabled para-athletes to thrive in both spheres, proving that disability should never be a barrier to education. Educators and institutions that embraced inclusivity and flexibility were seen as key enablers of success, demonstrating that with the right support, visually impaired students can excel at elite levels—both in the classroom and on the field.

9. Joy and Fulfillment in Sports.

Athletes consistently highlighted the sheer joy they found in playing. Beyond competition and achievement, sports brought them "fun, satisfaction, and completeness"—feelings often missing from their daily lives due to societal exclusion. These positive emotions served as powerful intrinsic motivators, keeping them engaged long-term. Through sports, they rediscovered what it meant to feel alive, connected, and celebrated, reinforcing their commitment to the game and to personal growth.

10. Independence and Resourcefulness.

Faced with overlapping responsibilities, these para-athletes showcased exceptional independence, strategic thinking, and resilience. They described themselves as "resourceful," "goal-oriented," and "independent," often juggling intense training schedules with academic duties and personal challenges. Through careful planning, determination, and a refusal to be limited, they became masters of their own journey. This mindset not only reflects maturity but also reveals their potential to become future leaders, mentors, and advocates for change.

Conclusions

1. Visually impaired para-athletes are driven by a dynamic interplay of intrinsic motivations—such as passion, purpose, and spiritual belief—and extrinsic motivators like family, peer, and coach support. This synergy not only sustains their commitment to sports but also reinforced their personal growth, resilience, and sense of purpose.
2. Participation in sports enabled para-athletes to redefine their self-worth, assert their identity, and gain meaningful social recognition. These transformative experiences fostered empowerment and a profound sense of belonging, allowing them to thrive both personally and within their communities.
3. Academic and athletic aspirations were better fulfilled in affirming and inclusive spaces that intentionally accommodated the unique needs of student-athletes with visual impairments. Such supportive environments nurtured their holistic growth, enabling them to excel in both educational pursuits and athletic performance.
4. Involvement in sports fostered emotional regulation, discipline, and confidence, empowering para-athletes to navigate the challenges of both competition and daily life. These essential psychological tools equipped them to overcome adversity, build resilience, and pursue long-term personal and athletic growth.
5. The sustained engagement and dedication of para-athletes were significantly influenced by ongoing encouragement from family, peers, teachers, and coaches. This consistent support system strengthened

their motivation, fostered resilience, and reinforced their commitment to achieving both academic and athletic success.

6. Goal-oriented, disciplined training programs nurtured personal growth, enhanced skill mastery, and cultivated a strong sense of purpose in athletic pursuits. These structured approaches empowered para-athletes to maximize their potential, fostering confidence and long-term commitment to their sporting and personal goals.
7. Faith and the aspiration to succeed at national and international levels served as vital internal motivators for athletes' sustained sports participation. These driving forces inspired perseverance, strengthened their sense of purpose, and fueled their commitment to achieving excellence beyond personal and competitive boundaries.
8. The integration of assistive technologies and flexible learning arrangements enabled para-athletes to effectively navigate their dual roles as learners and athletes. These supportive measures promoted academic success, reduced role-related stress, and created opportunities for balanced personal and athletic development.
9. Enjoyment and personal fulfillment from engaging in sports deepened athletes' intrinsic drive and commitment, extending beyond mere competitive motivations. These meaningful experiences fostered long-term dedication, making sports a source of personal growth, satisfaction, and holistic well-being.
10. The VISION GOAL Program, grounded in Self-Determination Theory, Competence Motivation Theory, and the IPO Model, transformed the lived experiences of visually impaired para-athletes into actionable strategies for inclusion. This theory-informed and scalable intervention offered a sustainable framework for advancing inclusive education and holistic sports development.

Recommendations

1. Implement and scale the VISION GOAL Program nationwide with proper contextualization, monitoring, and adaptation across public secondary schools. This initiative should be anchored on DepEd's inclusive education framework and aligned with existing policies on Special Education (SPED) and school-based sports development. Furthermore, institutionalization must include capacity-building for teachers and coaches, collaboration with local government units and community stakeholders, and the establishment of clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure program sustainability and responsiveness to the diverse needs of visually impaired para-athletes.
2. Prioritize the creation of specialized training programs for SPED teachers and coaches that emphasize disability-inclusive pedagogy and adaptive sports strategies tailored for visually impaired para-athletes. These modules should include practical workshops, evidence-based approaches, and continuous professional development to ensure effective implementation and long-term program impact.
3. Allocate sufficient funding for assistive tools, adapted sports equipment, and academic accommodations to empower visually impaired student-athletes in their academic and athletic pursuits. Prioritize equitable distribution of these resources to ensure accessibility, promote inclusion, and enhance their overall performance and well-being.
4. Embed mental wellness services specifically tailored to the psychological needs
1. of para-athletes within existing school guidance and SPED frameworks. Ensure these services are aligned with RA 11036 and include proactive interventions, counseling, and continuous support to promote their overall well-being and resilience.

5. Local government units should provide financial and logistical assistance, co-host inclusive sports and awareness events, and actively engage in promoting disability advocacy. Community-based workshops and sustained partnerships must be prioritized to strengthen local support networks and ensure the program's long-term impact.
6. School leaders should pilot the enhanced VISION GOAL Program, ensuring its effective integration into school systems and practices. They must facilitate regular stakeholder evaluations and establish inclusive sports committees to oversee holistic support and sustained development for para-athletes.
7. Modify school facilities to address the needs of visually impaired athletes by installing goalball court markers, providing mobility aids, and ensuring the availability of visual and tactile cues. These enhancements will promote safety, accessibility, and a more inclusive environment for sports and learning activities.
8. Coaches and instructors should implement personalized mentoring plans that address the unique needs of visually impaired para-athletes. Aligning academic and athletic schedules and fostering collaboration among educators, families, and sports staff will ensure balanced support for their dual development in sports and academics.
9. Parents should participate in workshops on inclusive parenting and athlete care to strengthen their ability to support visually impaired para-athletes. By reinforcing motivation at home and assisting in managing their multiple roles, parents can play a vital part in their children's academic and athletic success.
10. Future researchers should evaluate the impact of the VISION GOAL Program through quantitative or mixed method approaches and conduct longitudinal studies to assess its long-term effectiveness. Expanding the research to other disability groups and exploring cultural and regional differences will provide deeper insights for advancing inclusive sports education.

Research Objective 2

Design an inclusive school-based program fostering high motivation among visually impaired para-athletes.

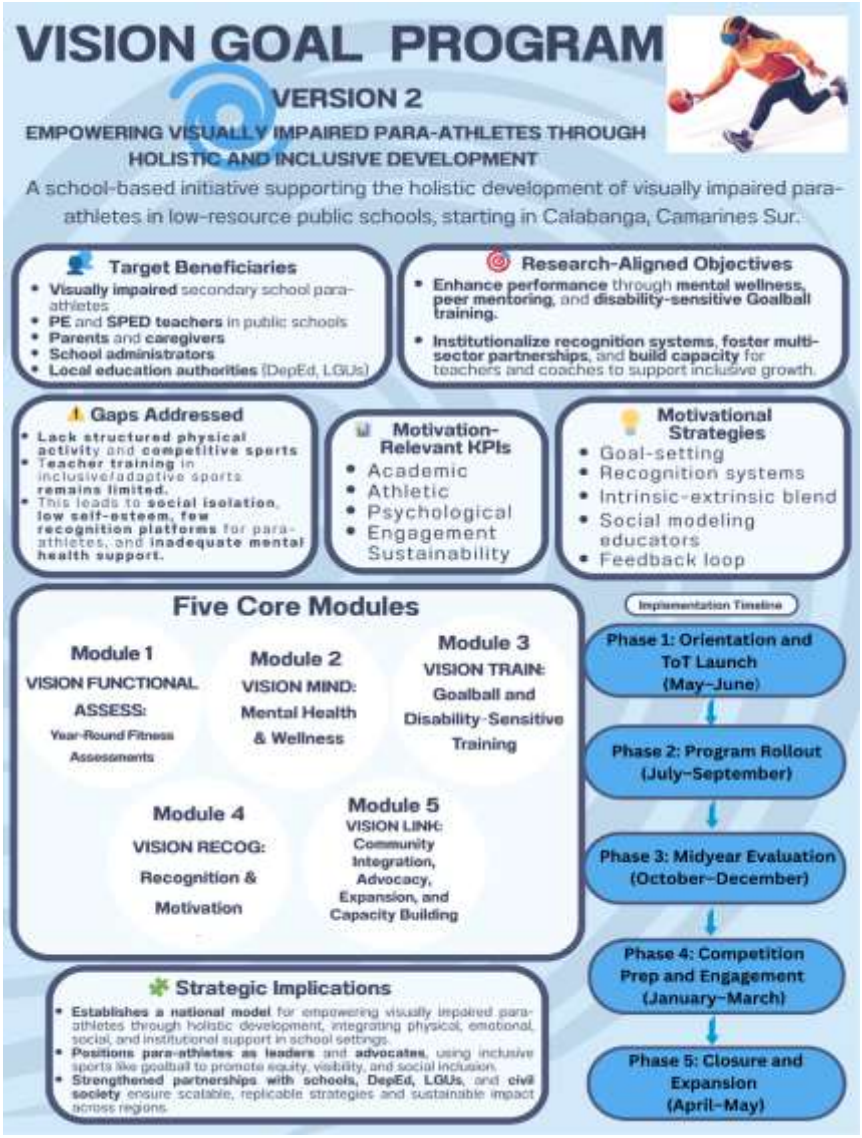
The study successfully developed the VISION GOAL: Empowering Visually Impaired Para-Athletes Through Holistic and Inclusive Development Program, a comprehensive school-based intervention anchored in the lived experiences of visually impaired student-athletes in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Competence Motivation Theory, and the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Model, the program synthesizes thematic findings and directly responds to the multifaceted needs of para-athletes. At its core, the program is structured into five interrelated modules: (1) refined year-round functional assessments for personalized tracking of physical, sensory, and fitness parameters; (2) mental health and wellness support through peer mentorship, resilience seminars, and stress management practices; (3) sports-specific training and coaching focused on goalball skills such as throwing accuracy, blocking drills, tactical simulations, and sensory-based team navigation; (4) a recognition and motivation system that implements inclusive awards, leadership roles, and feedback mechanisms; and (5) community integration, advocacy, expansion, and capacity building that ensures sustainability through community engagement, advocacy, and the VISION CORE Training of Trainers initiative.

Motivational strategies are embedded throughout the program, incorporating goal setting, autonomy-supportive teaching, peer-led encouragement, and a balanced rewards system that nurtures both intrinsic

and extrinsic motivation. Consistent with Self-Determination Theory, the intervention fosters autonomy, competence, and social connectedness, empowering athletes to achieve mastery, resilience, and fulfillment. The measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) across domains such as athletic collaboration, and resource mobilization. Importantly, it confronts context-specific barriers, including limited adaptive equipment, insufficiently skilled coaches, and the low visibility of para-athletes within Calabanga's sports ecosystem, ensuring that interventions remain contextually grounded and needs-based. Ultimately, the VISION GOAL Program is envisioned as a sustainable and scalable model for inclusive sports development in the Philippines. It aligns with the Department of Education's inclusive education goals, Republic Act No. 10524, and the Philippine Sports Commission's para-sports initiatives, ensuring that athletic growth is complemented by holistic personal and social development. Its participatory, theory-driven, and culturally responsive design positions it as an empirically validated and operationally feasible intervention for public school settings—advancing equity, accessibility, and empowerment for visually impaired para-athletes. Figure 15 presented the Vision Goal Program Version 2.

Figure 15

Vision Goal Program Version 2



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