

Take It or Leave It: The Lived Experiences of Student-Athletes on Feedback During Training and Games

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Abstract

Feedback is vital in the field of sports as it helps athletes improve by giving them helpful advice on how they are doing, finding where they can improve, and keeping track of their progress. A phenomenological study was employed to investigate the lived experiences of high school volleyball student-athletes in Davao City, Philippines. The study included five participants who were purposely selected for in-depth interviews. Further, the study was anchored on the Attribution Theory, which states that understanding how people translate events around them and how their translations affect their thinking and behavior. In sports, this theory helps understand how athletes interpret and respond to feedback and assess their own performance during training and games. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to derive meaning from the lived experiences of the student-athletes. In terms of the lived experiences of the student-athletes, two emergent themes came into view: receiving feedback to cultivate a learning mindset and navigating coach feedback dynamics. The findings of the study support two major recommendations: volleyball coaches should enhance their understanding of feedback techniques to effectively utilize them as an asset rather than a liability for the student-athletes, and student-athletes should develop the skill of navigating diverse feedback from their coach to foster greater opportunity for learning and improvement.

Keywords: Lived experiences, feedback; navigating coach feedback dynamics

1. Introduction

In my experience as a physical education teacher, I learned that feedback is an essential component in sports training and development. Feedback in sports is viewed as a process intended to provide athletes with information that will enhance their skill acquisition and sports performance. In this process, athletes are actively involved in their own development (Dawson et al., 2019). Despite the fact that feedback greatly influences athletes' performance, skill development, and overall progression within their respective disciplines, I was informed that there is still an absence of coach awareness about how athletes process and respond to feedback, which can have detrimental effects on player performance (Mason et al., 2021).

In Turkey, Kangalgil and Ozgul (2018) noted that the viewpoints and experiences of students receiving feedback are often neglected in physical education and sports lessons. Even though feedback is essential for teaching and learning in these areas, there is a disparity between the feedback provided by teachers and how students view and respond to that feedback. Understanding students' perspectives is essential for tailoring feedback strategies to their needs and preferences, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of feedback in promoting learning and skill development (Rezk, 2021).

In the Philippine context, Velasco and Alforja (2021), found that despite being a performing division in terms of sports, there is a need to improve the coaching competencies, specifically on the delivery of feedback of the coaches to optimize athletes' performance in the area of ball games and individual games. This encompasses the technical proficiency of the coaches and their ability and understanding of when and how to deliver feedback to athletes. Pestano (2021) revealed that the performance of the athletes can be influenced by the coaching competencies used by the coaches.

From the school I am currently affiliated with, I observed that there has yet to be an existing program designed for the coaches wherein training could be included for their professional development. Moreover, student-athletes have expressed concerns about how their coaches provide feedback during training and games.

Despite the acknowledged importance of feedback and assessment in sports training and development, there exists a gap in considering athletes' perspectives on feedback, leading to a disconnect between coach-provided feedback and athletes' responses, which hinders optimizing athletes' performance. In this light, I see an urgency to conduct this study as its findings will provide practical implications for bridging the gap between coaches' feedback and athletes' responses. Otherwise, the problem of ineffective feedback practices in sports training will continue, hindering the athletes' overall development and success.

This study sought to explore the real-life experiences of high school volleyball student-athletes. It focuses on the feedback they receive during both training sessions and competitive games.

2. Method

This qualitative research utilized a phenomenological approach. According to Bhandari (2023), qualitative study involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. A phenomenological approach is a form of qualitative research that focuses on studying an individual's lived experiences within the world (Neubauer et al., 2019).

In this research endeavor, I gathered data about the participants' lived experiences regarding feedback during training and games. In addition, the participants of this study were five high school student-athletes in volleyball in a non-sectarian private school in Davao City.

In gathering data, I used interview guide questions. The data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. According to Clark and Braun (2017), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data.

3. Results and Discussions

From the data gathered, there were two significant themes in the lived experiences of high school volleyball student-athletes in terms of feedback during training and games I extracted from the in-depth interview. Both these themes emerged from critical reflection. These are receiving feedback to cultivate a learning mindset and navigating coach feedback dynamics.

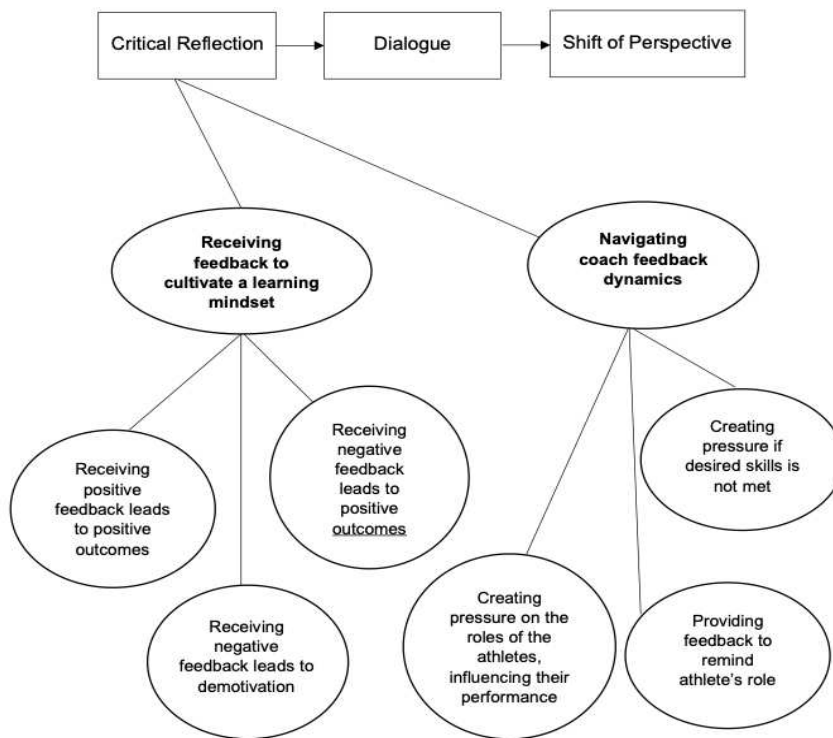


Fig. 1. Emerging Themes Lived Experiences of High School Volleyball Student-Athletes in terms of Feedback During Training and Games

As a researcher, I focused on the lived experiences of high school volleyball student-athletes. The experience was enlightening and emotionally moving. Student-athletes shared stories of challenges, resilience, and the continuous act of aiming to improve in the field as volleyball players. I observed their various ways of treating the coach's feedback to upgrade gameplay and performance. These insights deepen my understanding of feedback reception and how it impacts student athletes' personal goals in enhancing their volleyball skills. This recognizes the dedication and unyielding passion involved in striving to improve volleyball skills through feedback. This research goes beyond just academic study. It gives us a glimpse into the deep feelings and experiences connected to this topic.

During interviews, student-athletes revealed varied consequences in receiving feedback to cultivate a learning mindset. Three sub-themes emerged: receiving positive feedback leading to positive outcomes; receiving negative feedback leading to positive outcomes; and receiving negative feedback leading to demotivation.

Another significant theme confines on navigating coach feedback dynamics of the student volleyball athletes, which primarily encompasses its influences. This theme emphasizes how both positive and negative feedback contribute to individuals' self-awareness, skill enhancement, and overall well-being. It underscores the importance of constructive criticism in fostering continuous self-improvement. Subsequently, three sub-themes surfaced: creating pressure on the roles of the athletes, influencing their performance; creating pressure if the desired skill is not met; and providing feedback to remind athlete's role.

3.1. Receiving Feedback to Cultivate a Learning Mindset

As an interviewer, I learned that student-athletes experience different outcomes based on the type of feedback they receive, affecting their mindset toward learning. Positive feedback tends to yield positive results, while surprisingly, even negative feedback can sometimes lead to positive outcomes. However, negative feedback can sometimes make athletes feel less motivated, showing that coaches need to balance and maintain in providing constructive criticism. Receiving feedback involves being open to various constructive criticism. Further, in the field of sports, receiving feedback may result in various outcomes. This finding is in line with the study of Noor (2019), which stated that the effect of a feedback session can vary among players because each person is influenced by different past experiences, affecting their response to the coach's remarks.

Through interviews, I've gained personal insights from the student-athletes on the relevance of feedback reception from their coach. It's not merely about listening to what the coach tells you but it is more of how to use it as a steppingstone in skill development. Utilizing feedback serves as a tool for self-improvement and embracing challenges as opportunities for growth.

Talking to the student-athletes, as a researcher, I gleaned the importance of treating feedback as one of the sources for self-development. It has to go beyond criticism—one should accept it in order to develop a mindset focused on growth, improvement, and learning.

Receiving Positive Feedback Leads to Positive Outcomes

From my perspective as an interviewer, I was able to confirm that positive feedback from the coach indeed plays a significant role, in showing favorable outcomes from the student-athletes. Positive feedback makes people feel good about themselves because it shows that their efforts or skills are valued. This finding validates the study of De Meester et al. (2024), which noted that positive feedback enhances motivation and enjoyment during physical activities, leading to increased interest and perseverance. When someone gets praised or acknowledged for what they've done well, it boosts their confidence and makes them want to keep doing their best. The encouragement from the coach expressed in feedback pushes the student-athletes to aim high and work hard to achieve their goals.

Furthermore, it is evident from the responses of the student-athletes during the interviews that the positive feedback from their coach resulted in favorable outcomes. To wit, some of the participants had expressed:

"...Katong nagdula mi sa Balusong Sei. Nag time out to si coach. Ana siya, "Ayumi, gwapo na imong set. Naunsa ka kaganiha." Katong kuan pud, "gwapo kaayo kag kamot, naunsa ka?" Mag smile na lang ako Sei. Then, maningkamot ko Sei na ma maintain nako siya." – P2, IDI L106-108

[During our game in Balusong, our coach called for a time-out. He said my set was good, which made me smile. His comment motivated me to keep playing well.]

In the interviews, it has become apparent that providing positive feedback to the student-athletes during games garners a positive attitude, which motivated the participant to maintain good form.

"... So katong first ball nako na hatag Sei is gwapo, so maka spike ang player. Maka receive kog feedback Sei like "o, nindot imong first ball, padayon lang". So mao to Sei, mas ma

motivate mi Sei, ma improve mi Sei.” – P5, IDI L214-216

[Because I made a good first ball, the player was able to spike the ball successfully. My coach praised me for it, which made us all feel more motivated to do better.]

In the course of our interviews, it is evident that the student receives the coach's positive feedback as a source of motivation to improve more on the required skills in volleyball. Positive feedback also fosters a positive emotional state. It draws out feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment, contributing to individuals' overall sense of well-being. This emotional upliftment not only enhances individuals' moods but also promotes resilience in the face of challenges, as they will encounter obstacles with a more optimistic perspective. This, in turn, strengthens interpersonal relationships, promotes collaboration, and builds a culture of positivity and mutual respect.

Receiving Negative Feedback Leads to Positive Outcomes

From my perspective as a researcher, negative feedback is just as crucial as positive feedback. Positive feedback often results in favorable responses and outcomes. However, in order to improve the skills that are necessary for volleyball student-athletes, negative feedback is vital. Negative feedback highlights areas for improvement or areas where performance may be lacking. Whether it's in the form of constructive criticism, corrective action, or performance evaluation, it provides student-athletes with valuable insights into their strengths and weaknesses.

Moreover, I observed that negative feedback prompts the volleyball student-athletes to reflect on their actions, behaviors, or performance critically. Instead of viewing criticism as a setback or failure, the participants use it as a starting point for self-reflection and self-improvement. This observation is in line with the findings of Kim and Lee (2019), which mentioned that negative feedback helps students assess their performance more realistically and that constructive feedback can enhance their ability to reflect on themselves more accurately. As they acknowledge their shortcomings and areas for improvement, individuals can develop a growth mindset, accepting challenges as opportunities for learning and development.

"So mao tong akoang gina build up Sei para at least man lang Sei, para for the coming next year Sei, kanang ang mahatag na niya sa ako na feedback is positive feedback na, kanang makit-an niya nag grow gud ko Sei. Ako man gud Sei, when it comes to dula kay makulbaan dayon Sei. Dili jud matarong akong play kay nakasab an. So ang mga feedback ato Sei, gina take nako siya as motivation." – P5, IDI L204-208.

[I practiced to improve my skills, hoping to show my coach how much I've gotten better. I hope to hear some positive feedback from him next time. I often feel nervous during games, which affects how I play. Sometimes, my coach's criticism makes it even harder for me to perform well. However, I try to use his feedback as motivation to do better next time.]

Observing this statement suggests that encountering setbacks or criticism tests their resilience and determination to overcome obstacles. Hence, during training and even in games, student-athletes can build resilience, adaptability, and grit, enabling them to bounce back stronger and more resilient than before.

"Ang gusto man gud ni kuya Sei is maningkamot jud mi Sei. Kanang ang gusto niya is tama-on namo among mga mali Sei. Kanang ma realized namo among mga mali Sei. So naa juy point si kuya sa iyang mga yawyaw Sei kay kabalo man jud mi na amoa jud tong mali. Ang

iyang gusto lang jud Sei is kanang maningkamot, magpakusog, og magpa isog. Mao ra jud na iyang gusto Sei." - P1, IDI L38-41.

[Our coach really wants us to work hard to fix our mistakes. He just wants us to keep trying and get better at our skills.]

From an observer's standpoint, the participant reflects on negative feedback as a guide to correct wrongly-executed skills. Responsible learning instead of facing challenges alone, student-athletes leverage the expertise and perspectives of mentors or peers to handle obstacles and overcome limitations.

Receiving Negative Feedback Leads to Demotivation

From my observational standpoint, it points to potential psychological effects of criticism, such as feelings of discouragement and self-doubt, which can hinder the student athlete's ability to maintain motivation and strive for success.

"Sa akin Sei, as a libero Sei, ikaw yung target ng kalaban like sa spiking, service. Pag mamali ko Sei, dyan kasi ang start ng play, pag mamali ko yung receive ko Sei, parang mapagalitan ako Sei ba, "hindi ko daw inaayos". Ganun po Sei. Ano Sei, malain gud ko Sei actually." - P3, IDI L112-114.

[As a libero, you're the main focus of the opponents, especially during spiking serves. When I missed the ball, my coach scolded me for not doing my job properly. It made me feel really bad.]

From my interviewing perspective, the statement sheds light on the challenges faced by student-athletes in receiving feedback from their coaches. While feedback is often intended to facilitate improvement and growth, negative feedback can sometimes have unintended consequences, leading to feelings of discouragement and frustration. In addition, negative feedback can trigger emotional responses—and when student-athletes receive it, this may challenge their self-perception and undermine their confidence in their abilities. Moreover, this can lead to a loss of motivation and enthusiasm for the task or goal at hand, as they may feel demoralized and uncertain about their capabilities. This confirms the research of Xu et al. (2020), which mentioned that when people receive negative feedback about something specific, like a particular skill or activity, it can make them less motivated to do things they usually enjoy, even if those things are completely unrelated to the feedback they received.

"Para sa koa Sei, dili pa jud ko hawod kaayo Sei, last year ra man sab ko nag start so, kanang mahadlok, makulbaan ko Sei, kay dili ko gusto magkamali gud Sei. Tas pag magkamali ko Sei, mayaw-yawan dayon ko Sei, mahadlok na. Naa sab times Sei na dili nako ganahan magdula or mag training Sei kay mahadlok lagi na mamali." - P5, IDI L183-186.

[I feel anxious. I'm scared of making mistakes because I don't want my coach to yell at me. Sometimes, I don't even want to play or go to practice because I'm so afraid.]

From my perspective as an interviewer, the statement highlights how the fear of making mistakes emerges because of the participant's reception of the negative feedback given by the coach. The participant's anxiety about receiving negative feedback inhibits their willingness to take risks or engage fully in activities, ultimately diminishing the drive and enthusiasm to improve. Furthermore, negative feedback can reinforce a

fixed mindset, where student-athletes perceive their abilities as fixed traits rather than skills that can be developed through effort and practice. Instead of viewing criticism as an opportunity for growth and improvement, student-athletes may interpret it as evidence of their inherent limitations and shortcomings. This fixed mindset can hinder the willingness to try new approaches or persist in the face of challenges, further provoking demotivation.

3.2. Navigating Coach Feedback Dynamics

From my perspective as a researcher, I view the navigation of coach feedback dynamics as the process of understanding and managing the various ways coaches provide feedback to athletes and how athletes respond to and utilize the feedback. In my observation, coaches play a crucial role in providing guidance, instruction, and evaluation to help athletes improve their skills, technique, and overall performance. Therefore, athletes must navigate the feedback provided by the coach, discerning constructive criticism from praise and understanding how to implement suggestions for improvement.

Creating Pressure on the Roles of Athletes, Influencing Their Performance

From my research perspective, this examines the multifaceted dynamics of how expectations, responsibilities, and external pressures impact athletes' performance in various contexts, such as sports, competitions, or professional settings. Mainly, it explores how the roles assigned to athletes and associated pressures can significantly influence their mindset, behavior, and performance outcomes. Moreover, student-athletes may experience pressure to perform at a high level, meet performance targets, or fulfill specific roles within their teams or organizations. This pressure can manifest as internalized expectations, external scrutiny, or the fear of failure, all of which can influence athletes' confidence, focus, and performance readiness. This validates the findings of Stoker (2017) that mental pressure can lead to increased risk-taking behavior and slower response times in decision-making tasks, indicating a negative effect on performance under pressure.

"Malain ko usahay, Sei. Kay as a captain ball gud Sei, ako pirmi ang ginaano sa mga mali Sei ba. Murag ako ang gina-pressure ni kuya na "wala jud kay laing mabuhay kay ikaw ra jud ang nagadala dira, ikaw ra jud maka first ball sa likod". Ing-ana gud Sei, sa akua tanan Sei ba. Murag ma feel nako usahay Sei na ma-pressure ko Sei. – P1, IDI L9-12

[I feel bad. As a Captain Ball, I feel all the pressure in handling the team.]

From my research standpoint, this statement underscores the crucial ability to navigate a coach's feedback. As pressure may stem from internal sources, such as their own desire to perform well and lead the team, it is also rooted in external factors, such as expectations from coaches, teammates, and fans, who may have their own perceptions of what constitutes effective leadership and performance. Hence, pressure on the roles of athletes is a complex phenomenon that encompasses both internal and external factors influencing athletes' performance.

"Ano Sei, parang, as a setter man Sei, kailangan ko i-follow kung ano ang gusto nila like sa pag spike. Mamali ko Sei, makaapekto siya sa team, hindi kami makakuha ng point. Mapagsabihan ako ng coach niyan Sei. Madala na lang ko sa ka-pressure, Sei." – P2, IDI L79-81

[As a Setter, I have to give my teammates the ball the way they want it, especially for spiking. If I make a mistake, it will affect my team, and we will not get points. In that case, I will be

reprimanded by my coach. I feel pressure.]

In my capacity as a researcher, I have observed that pressure stemming from the coach's negative feedback is a significant aspect to consider when giving feedback from both the coach's and the student athlete's viewpoints. By understanding the expectations, responsibilities, and pressures associated with their roles, student-athletes can develop strategies to manage stress, maintain focus, and optimize performance outcomes. This only implies that proper navigation of coach feedback dynamics is vital in the process of improving student athletes' volleyball skills.

Creating Pressure If Desired Skill Is Not Met

This clustered theme encompasses the challenges and expectations associated with striving to achieve specific skills and performance standards within the sport. Furthermore, there is the pressure of competition and performance standards within the team environment. In volleyball, where teamwork and coordination are essential, individual skill deficiencies can impact the team's overall performance. The result is consistent with the findings of Bootla et al. (2015), which discussed that when team members lack the necessary skills to perform their tasks effectively, it can lead to poor team performance. The student-athlete may feel a sense of responsibility to contribute to the team's success and fear letting their teammates down if they are unable to meet desired skill levels. This pressure can manifest in heightened stress levels, performance anxiety, or a fear of making mistakes during games or competitions.

"Ang experience ko ngayon Sei is, mag training man kami ng set set, kay magsabi man si coach na kailangan ipantay nimo ang bola, kanang igo ra maiigo sa spiker. Tapos, parang, naga lack din kasi ako ng maturity sa game, presence of mind, kasi kapag once na mag yawyaw na si coach, parang magka ratol-ratol so need na jud nako siya i-work especially kay hapit na ang DCAA." – P2, IDI L87-90

[My coach always tells me to set the ball high enough for the spiker. I am aware that I lack maturity and presence of mind. I struggle to stay focused when my coach yells, so I really need to improve since DCAA is fast approaching.]

During the interview, I can tell that student-athletes may internalize a sense of failure or inadequacy, which can undermine their confidence and motivation to persist in their efforts. Like many other sports, volleyball requires a combination of technical skills, physical abilities, and mental acuity to excel. When a student-athlete struggles to meet these desired skills, various forms of pressure can arise, influencing their mindset, behavior, and overall performance. Therefore, there is a crucial part in properly navigating the coach's feedback dynamics along with the pressure that comes with it, as this skill is as important as the rest of the necessary skills in volleyball to become effective players.

Positive Feedback to Remind Athlete's Role

In my role as an interpreter, I interpret this perspective, coach providing feedback to remind athletes of roles in pursuit of role awareness during training, especially during games. Coaches may provide feedback to athletes regarding their performance in relation to their designated roles, such as their defensive duties, offensive strategies, leadership responsibilities, or supporting roles within the team structure. This feedback serves to remind athletes of their unique contributions and the importance of fulfilling their roles to the best of their abilities.

"Para sa akin Sei, yung mga ginasabi sa akin ng coach, every time na magdula mi Sei, kanang naa nami sa court Sei, dapat mag dula jud mi. Kanang kung naa ka sa court, dapat buhaton nimo imong work. Dapat tabangan nimo imong mga ka-team sa dula. Dapat dili ka magnilabad. Dapat mag work mo as a team para makuha ninyo inyohang goal." – P4, IDI L167-170.

[Our coach always reminds the importance of doing our job during games. We have to support our teammates and work together as a team to achieve our goal.]

In my capacity as a researcher, based on the participant's response, providing feedback to remind athletes of their roles involves clarifying and reinforcing the specific expectations and responsibilities associated with their positions or functions within the team. In addition, feedback reminds athletes of their roles as it fosters a sense of accountability and ownership over their performance and contributions to the team. The result is in harmony with the study of Maslovat and Franks (2019), which mentioned that by providing feedback, coaches can guide athletes toward understanding their strengths and weaknesses, helping them to take responsibility for their performance and make necessary adjustments. It helps athletes understand their responsibilities and how they're doing. By receiving feedback highlighting their role-specific strengths and areas for improvement, athletes better understand how their actions impact team dynamics and outcomes. Hence, this feedback-driven approach to role clarification and reinforcement ultimately contributes to improved performance, team cohesion, and overall success on and off the field.

4. Conclusion

Based on the participants' answers, the following conclusions were drawn: In examining the lived experiences of the volleyball student-athletes, two emergent themes came into view: receiving feedback to cultivate a learning mindset and navigating coach feedback dynamics. Receiving feedback to cultivate a learning mindset means the process of accepting constructive criticism or advice from others with the intention of using it to enhance one's learning and growth. It is about being open to suggestions and using them to grow and develop skills or knowledge. There were three sub-themes surfaced under this emergent theme: receiving positive feedback leading to positive outcomes; receiving negative feedback leading to positive outcomes; and receiving negative feedback leading to demotivation. On the other hand, navigating coach feedback dynamics means understanding and dealing with the feedback that coaches give to the athletes during training and games to promote learning and performance outcomes. There were three sub-themes appeared from this emergent theme: creating pressure on the roles of the athletes, influencing their performance; creating pressure if the desired skill is not met; and providing feedback to remind athlete's role.

Based on the implications of the study, there were two key recommendations for enhancing feedback dynamics in volleyball coaching and student-athlete development. First, coaches should deepen their understanding of feedback techniques through training programs and utilize them effectively. Second, student-athletes should develop the skill of processing diverse feedback critically. They should view feedback as an opportunity for improvement and maintain open communication with coaches. Implementing these recommendations can create a feedback-rich environment, fostering holistic growth and performance excellence in sports.

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