Sports Leadership in Times of Covid-19 Pandemic: A Grounded Theory

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Sports activities and programs faced significant disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic due to community health restrictions, limiting the ability of sports practitioners to execute programs. In this context, sports leadership emerged as a pivotal factor in sustaining the implementation of the Special Program in Sports (SPS) in the Department of Education (DepEd), particularly in Caraga Region. This study aimed to develop a comprehensive theory on sports leadership amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of six (6) sports coordinators involved in the Special Program in Sports in Caraga Region. The researcher employed a qualitative research design utilizing Charmaz's grounded theory approach, conducting in-depth interviews through purposive sampling to gather data for theory generation. The study's findings revealed five key themes and propositions forming the foundation of Diva's Theory on Sports Leadership. This theory will serve as a basis for sports leaders to continue their programs even in times of health crises. **Keywords:** Sports Leadership, Special Program in Sports, Sports Coordinators, Grounded Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Sports leadership is a career-driven position that requires engaging with diverse individuals and effectively communicating sports programs' priorities, future initiatives, and long-term wellness opportunities (Arthur & Bastardoz, 2020). Successful sports activities, leagues, and competitions vary depending on the systematic application of sports leadership in schools and community-based sports groups.

In a school setting, sports leaders guide coaches and student-athletes in structured activities that enhance their skills and promote well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a global shutdown of events, including major sports competitions such as the Tokyo Olympics. Training facilities and sports activities were also halted due to health restrictions (Milic & Bhaumik, 2021). Sports leaders worldwide faced sudden disruptions, raising concerns about the future of sports participation and leadership (Harangi-Rákos et al., 2022). In the Philippines, Perez et al. (2021) highlighted difficulties faced by sports personnel in executing school-based sports programs due to community restrictions and health protocols. The pandemic significantly affected sports leadership, particularly in schools offering specialized sports programs (Tanglao, 2021).

This study focuses on sports leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and its utilization by sports coordinators in the Special Program in Sports (SPS) curriculum in the Department of Education. It examines how sports leaders effectively deliver and apply their leadership skills despite the health crisis. The study's primary objective is to explore the roles of sports leaders disrupted by the pandemic (Bremer, 2020). Maximizing sports leaders' opportunities during the pandemic necessitates attention to their roles and responsibilities to ensure they reach their full potential in initiating activities and promoting sports participation among coaches and student-athletes. This study also aims to address issues faced by sports coordinators and strengthen their advocacy for sustaining sports programs. Lastly, it examines how sports coordinators deliver learning competencies despite pandemic restrictions.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach. The research aimed to generate a sports leadership theory addressing challenges encountered by sports leaders in schools offering the Special Program in Sports (SPS) during times of crisis. The study was conducted in secondary schools in the Caraga Region, Mindanao, Philippines, offering SPS. Participants were selected based on specific criteria, including years of experience as coordinators and participation in various leadership activities and competitions. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded using mobile and audio recording devices, and transcribed into Microsoft Word. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed. Data analysis adhered to Charmaz's (2006) steps for grounded theory research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experiences of sports coordinators during the pandemic revealed several prominent themes and subthemes. These include the embodiment of athleticism, program facilitator, endowed challenges, community linkages, and visionary stewardship. These themes contain several subthemes that discusses how sports leaders lead during the health crisis.

Themes Developed:

Theme 1: Embodiment of Athleticism

Sports leaders who have in-depth sports experiences serve as the backbone of the sports leader in crafting activities, applying appropriate competency, and making decisions. Their firsthand experiences as athletes grant them unparalleled insights into the physical and mental demands of sports, which in turn guide their strategic decision-making (Mejarito et al., 2022). This great familiarity empowers them to tailor activities that resonate with athletes on a profound level, fostering engagement, motivation, and skill development (Malacko et al., 2019). By applying their intrinsic competency, these leaders create an environment where athletes thrive, and their adept decision-making ensures that every initiative aligns with the overarching goals of the sports program, thus fortifying their role as visionary architects of athletic success. The embodiment of athleticism is based on their experience as athletes, coaches, and facilitators of sports activities (Nathaniel, 2022).

According to Khan et al. (2020), the experiences of sports leaders have a significant contribution to the successful promotion of sports. The immeasurable contribution of the sports experiences of the sports leader or athletic director can impact leadership skills. In the same way, Mejarito et al. (2022) explained that the valuable contribution of sports experiences to becoming a sports leader, which is influenced by their exposure to various sports events and activities. In addition, their involvement and participation in various sports helped them develop their leadership skills and allowed them to function critically in future decisions and responsibilities. Frawley et al. (2017) firmly believed that a competitive sports organization needs an experienced sports leader as a way of developing a better workforce and to better maintain the program sustainability. In this manner, participation in diverse sports activities not only enhances an individual's physical fitness but also fosters essential sports leadership qualities. Through teamwork and cooperation in various sports, individuals learn how to communicate effectively, make quick decisions under pressure, and adapt to different situations. These experiences teach them the importance of discipline, perseverance, and resilience, which are crucial attributes for effective sports leadership.

As an Athlete. A sports leader who is also an experienced athlete is an individual who excels not only in their athletic performance but also in their ability to inspire and guide their teammates (Perez et al., 2022). The leader's athletic ability demonstrates strong leadership qualities, including effective communication, teamwork, and a commitment to the team's success. They lead by example, both on and off the field, displaying qualities of dedication, sportsmanship, and a positive attitude (Samuel et al., 2020).

Their presence instills confidence and respect among the team, as they lead by example and inspire others to push their boundaries and achieve greatness (Burkett et al., 2014). To add, experienced athlete who is also a sports leader tends to become an effective and efficient due to his undertakings both skills and personality growth and being able to understand the student-athlete's platform (Jhonson, 2022). Sports leaders who have firsthand experience embody a rich background in various sports disciplines. This sports leader's extensive athletic journey spans over several years, which is a great advantage. Competing at high levels and acquiring a profound understanding of the physical

and mental demands of different sports can be great factors in leading a sports program. Ultimately, a sports leader who serves as an athlete serves as a role model, contributing to the overall success of the sports program (Perez et al., 2022).

As a Coach. As a sports leader with a coaching mindset, this sports leader understands the importance of mentorship to athletes and guidance to fellow coaches, actively supporting athletes through their journey, providing constructive feedback, and fostering an environment of continuous improvement. As stated by Mejarito et al., (2022), this mindset helps the leader sustain the sports program during the pandemic, fostering the ability to transcend ideas into action and output.

Gorgulu (2019) stated that when a sports leader is also a coach, it has a significant effect on leading sports programs, especially in predicting the future outcomes of student-athletes and the sports organization as well. The mindset of a coach has the direct authority to create an avenue for exchanging ideas in the athlete-coach relationship and the coach-coach relationship. In the same way, Garcia et al. (2021) shared that sports leaders who are also coaches are competent in delivering quality leadership, making the sports program produce quality players and recognition. Arthur & Bastardoz (2020) also discussed the role of coach-leader in a sports program, where it plays a pivotal role in preparing and developing the athletes for training, competition, and the whole sports program as well. They further revealed that a sport leader at the same time a coach has the great ability to inspire young student-athletes.

A sports leader who also serves as a coach plays a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of student-athletes. Their dual role allows for a seamless transfer of knowledge, skills, and values from their own experiences as athletes to their athletes. Such leaders inspire and mentor young talents, instilling essential qualities like discipline, resilience, and sportsmanship. Their coaching helps individuals maximize their potential, leading to improved team performance and a legacy of excellence in sustaining the sports program.

As an Officiating Official. With the ability of an official to decide, he or she has the ability to provide logical perspectives based on his or her observation and empirical evidence, which can lead the official to become an effective leader in a sports program. Having to deal with varied situations on the field or in competition, sports officials need to include considerable amounts of information in their decision-making (Tanglao, 2021).

One way of achieving the continuity of the sports program is to use their own knowledge as a source of information (Pizzera & Raab, 2012). As a sports leader, this individual goes above and beyond by also serving as an officiating official, ensuring fair play, integrity, and adherence to the rules of the game. By being intimately involved in the officiating aspect of sports, this leader gains a comprehensive understanding of the game dynamics, regulations, and importance of maintaining a level playing field, which sets the criteria for becoming an effective sports leader (Hill, 2023). This ability of being an officiating official has a full understanding, especially in deciding what certain sports activities or learning engagements should be implemented and utilized in the sports program (Garcia et al., 2021).

Through engagement in multiple sports activities, aspiring leaders develop crucial abilities as athletes, officials, and coaches. These qualities are essential for fostering collaboration, motivating team members, and making informed decisions within sports organizations (Sashin, 2022). In this sense, encouraging individuals to explore and participate in a range of sports activities can significantly contribute to their growth as successful sports leaders in both school and community-based settings. It can contribute to the lifelong implementation of the sports program. When these abilities were utilized effectively, a sports program even in the health crisis can contribute to its sustainability (Zhang & Lee, 2020).

Theme 2: Program Facilitator

Sports leaders who act as program facilitators are those who organize sports activities even in the most challenging times. These sports leaders are the planners and doers of the activities. They ensure that the sports programs are properly implemented and systematically aligned with the curriculum ensuring everybody's success. Sports leadership during the pandemic involves creative and innovative approaches adopted by sports leaders to navigate the unprecedented challenges posed by the global health crisis. Ferkins (2018) delivered that each individual's strengths and roles complement and support one another, creating a unified vision and a pathway to achievement. Together, they navigate challenges, celebrate victories, and learn from defeats. Similarly, Jones et al. (2018) explained that to achieve success in a sport development program, facilitating long-term shared development for athletes, coaches, and the whole sports organization as well. Through facilitating combined with shared accountability and

responsibility, each member of the group knows the flow of the organization in achieving common goals and objectives. Crane (2022) added that shared sports leadership can have a positive impact on athletes and adapt strategies to foster connection and communication with stakeholders.

This unique quality of sports leader ensures the safety of athletes, maintain sporting engagement, and sustain sporting events despite the restrictive conditions faced. This quality has proven immensely important, as it not only safeguards the health of athletes and stakeholders but also preserves the spirit of competition and unity that sports bring to societies. Ingenuity in sports leadership during the pandemic has showcased the adaptability of leaders and their ability to think outside the box, ensuring the continuity of sports while setting a precedent for problem-solving in the face of adversity (Ferkins, 2018).

As an Initiator. A sports leader who is an initiator of sports activities and proposals is someone who takes the proactive role of conceiving, planning, and organizing sports-related events and initiatives (Wang et al., 2021). They are doers who identify opportunities for sports development and growth within their community or organization. These leaders possess the ability to create and present comprehensive proposals for new sports programs, events, or facilities, aiming to enhance participation, promote physical fitness, and foster a sense of unity among individuals through sports (Sparks & Repede, 2016).

According to Lieberman et al. (2007), it is necessary that a leader in a sports core group exercise a number of plans and activities during difficult times for the program to continue its implementation. Likewise, Extejt and Smith (2009) illustrated that the success of the sports program lies in the sports leaders' ability to think of plans and activities for the promotion of the sports program in a school setting or even in the commercial sports industry. This leadership skill contributes to the better experiences of its constituents. Additionally, Mochechela (2021) explained that sports programs' success is determined by the collective efforts of the people working on them, where a sports leader takes the lead in ensuring the adaptability of the plans, programs, and different activities. The implementation prowess of a sports leader in times of COVID-19 in a special program in sports is crucial in driving organizational change and executing complex game plans, as they possess the expertise to coordinate resources, assign roles, and foster a culture of accountability and discipline within the team (Garcia et al., 2021). Gorgul (2019) explained that sports leadership must consider the action taken to be called a leader. Your action is the empirical evidence that you have undergone a series of actions to comply with the necessary requirements of the implementation program. Similarly, Jarett et al. (2020) stated the role of an action-oriented sports leader in the success of the sports program. They act as the catalyst, implementing the competencies, showing commitment to the task, and being involved in all activities.

Sports leaders' initiatives on plans, intervention programs, and advocacy campaigns help sustain sports programs amidst the pandemic (William et al., 2023). It helps the whole sports curriculum to be proactive in delivering quality activities to coaches, student-athletes, and even stakeholders. These individuals are the contributors and, at the same time, the recipients of the success of the program. These activities initiated by the sports leaders will make a significant contribution to the welfare of the sports program amidst the health crisis and even in the years to come.

As a Follower. A sports leader who adheres to education directives, government protocols, and health advisories is an individual who prioritizes the safety and well-being of participants and the community (Young, 2022). They demonstrate a strong commitment to compliance with regulations and guidelines set forth by educational institutions, government agencies, and health authorities. These leaders ensure that sports activities are conducted responsibly with strict adherence to measures that mitigate risks, such as COVID-19 protocols, ensuring that sports can continue safely within the given parameters.

As mentioned by Cánovas-Alvarez et al. (2020), in attaining the supreme attainment of a sports program, a leader should be vested with qualities of a responsible follower so that he has the full capacity to accomplish the task comprehensively by following the checklist needed. Match et al. (2021) shared in their journal that transformational leadership in sports occurs when a leader takes the lead, especially in following the ground rules, which makes a significant outcome in better team performance. Mochechela (2021) also discussed the significant contribution of sports leaders in liquefying the implementation of the program through following the desired requirements as mandated by authorities and empowering everyone in the program.

The importance of a sports leader who follows education directives, government protocols, and health advisories cannot be overstated. They serve as responsible leaders for the well-being of athletes, coaches, and the community,

ensuring that sports activities are conducted safely and in compliance with established standards (William at al., 2023). By adhering to these directives, sports leaders help mitigate health risks, contribute to public safety, and set a positive example for athletes and sports enthusiasts. Their commitment to following guidelines promotes the longevity and sustainability of sports programs while safeguarding the physical and mental health of all participants.

As a Supervisor. A sports leader who serves as a supervisor for monitoring training and checking sports activities is tasked with overseeing and ensuring the quality and effectiveness of athletic preparation and events (Zhao & Jowett, 2022). They play a critical role in assessing athletes' progress, technique, and performance during training sessions and competitions. This supervision ensures that athletes receive the necessary guidance, feedback, and adjustments needed to optimize their skills and achieve their full potential, ultimately contributing to the overall success of the sports program (Canovas-Alvarez et al., 2020). Certainly, a sports leader who is a supervisor creates a sense of knowing how the members of the program work effectively and effectively. The sports leader monitors and checks the status of the training matrix and skills of the student-athletes.

In the study revealed by Misasi (2018) the importance monitoring and checking of the activities initiated by the coaches and specialization teachers. The monitor dwells on the execution of the training matrix. In other words, the best thing one can do is get to know their athletes and work hard to understand their goals, motivations, and needs. Activities should be monitored and carefully controlled for the assurance of achieving the goal of the program despite the health crisis experience. Additionally, Montull et al. Al (2022) shared that monitoring-based activities of the athletes create awareness, and self-autonomy leads to better athletes' performance. This remarkable ingenuity ability contributes to the effective implementation of the program and ensures alignment of the outcomes goals and objectives.

A sports leader who serves as a supervisor cannot be understated. As mentioned by Cotterill & Fransen (2021), their role is instrumental in maintaining the quality and safety of sports activities. By monitoring training and overseeing events, they help identify areas for improvement, ensure compliance with rules and regulations, and create an environment that fosters athlete development, safety, and fair play. Ultimately, their diligent supervision contributes to the success and integrity of the sports program by instilling confidence in athletes and participants.

As an Innovator. A sports leader who is an innovator is a visionary and a catalyst for change within sports programs. They are individuals who constantly seek new and creative ways to improve the culture of sports, reshape traditional activities, and introduce novel elements to enhance the overall sports experience (Lawrence, 2021). These leaders challenge the status quo by infusing fresh ideas, strategies, and technologies into training methods and competitions, often pushing the boundaries of what is possible in sports. Their innovative mindset not only inspires athletes to reach new heights but also attracts a broader audience to engage with and appreciate the evolving world of sports.

As mentioned by Skinner et al. (2018), one aspect of sports leadership that can actively facilitate innovative cultures in sports is that it empathizes the role of the sports leader to improve the sports program through culture change by integrating connections and providing sports program sustainability. Same idea presented by Grégoire et al. (2020), when a leader is innovative and creative, it significantly contributes to the athlete's ability to perform well. This includes creatively modifying activities to support the needs of athletes (Lawrence, 2021).

The importance of a sports leader who is an innovator can be called transformational leadership. Their ability to introduce creative ideas and approaches can revitalize stagnant sports programs, making them more engaging and competitive. Innovation fosters continuous improvement, leading to advancements in training techniques, equipment, and strategies that ultimately benefit athletes and the entire sports program (Zhao & Jowett, 2022). Moreover, these innovators inspire a culture of curiosity and adaptation, preparing athletes to excel in a rapidly evolving sporting landscape and helping sports remain relevant and appealing to a diverse and ever-changing community (Grégoire et al., (2020),

Theme 3: Endowed Challenges

A sports leader who has endowed challenges is an individual who confronts a range of obstacles that can significantly impact their journey in sports (Cabardo et al., 2022). Health challenges may involve physical limitations or injuries that require perseverance and adaptation to continue athletic pursuits. The absence of parental support can place added emotional and financial burdens on these leaders, making their accomplishments even more remarkable

(Garcia et al., 2021). Moreover, limited access to adequate learning materials can hinder their skill development, but their determination drives them to make the most of available resources. Administrative hurdles, such as bureaucratic processes or funding constraints, can create additional barriers that they must navigate to participate in sports. In the same way, Gorgulu (2019) stated that training issues, such as a lack of access to quality coaching or facilities, necessitate creativity and dedication to continue honing their skills. In the face of these challenges, sports leaders who persevere and excel serve as inspiring examples of resilience and dedication within the sports program.

Amidst the health crisis, numerous hurdles and issues have been experienced in sports clubs and organizations. These problems hinder the activities to continue its mission to provide quality sports experiences among the coaches, athletes, sports leaders, and the whole sporting community (Keshkar et al., 2021). Even with the idea of Samuel et al. (2020), there are drawbacks to the unprecedented spread of COVID-19 in sports. It changes the system of transferring ideas to athletes; even their health and other activities have been hindered or stopped.

Health Concerns. The health concerns of sports leaders during a pandemic revolve around the safety and well-being of athletes, coaches, and the broader sports program as well (Keshkar et al., 2021). These concerns encompass measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in sporting environments. Leaders must implement rigorous health protocols, including regular testing, quarantine procedures, and social distancing, to mitigate the risk of transmission. Furthermore, they must monitor the mental health and emotional well-being of athletes, who may face additional stress and anxiety due to the uncertainty and disruption caused by the pandemic (Luik & Lepp, 2021). Sports leaders also cope with the logistical challenges of organizing events, considering factors such as limited or absent spectator attendance, travel restrictions, and potential disruptions to training schedules.

Hector et al. (2021) discussed the lived experiences of the people leading the sports program during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that health concerns were the major problem for the people handling the sports program. It hinders the leaders and staff from working the timeline of jobs, including reports, classes, and the modified training setup for athletes. Similarly, Carmody et al. (2022), with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, stated that one major problem encountered by sports enthusiasts is the health concerns experienced by athletes during the limited face-to-face training. This problem disrupts the continuous training of the athletes and the whole sports program due to health restrictions and protocols. According to Jayathunga and Chandana (2022), the peak of sports performance during the pandemic has degraded due to health complications among coaches and the people involved in the sports program.

Technical Concerns. Technical concerns for sports leaders during a pandemic encompass a range of challenges related to the use of technology in leading and organizing sports activities (Malloy et al., 2022). These concerns may include issues such as limited or unreliable internet connectivity, which hinders the ability to conduct virtual meetings, coaching sessions, or administrative tasks effectively. Additionally, the absence of necessary gadgets or devices for athletes, coaches, or organizers can disrupt the smooth flow of communication and information sharing, impacting training and coordination efforts. Moreover, the lack of signal or connectivity in remote or outdoor locations where sports activities take place can pose a significant obstacle to tracking and monitoring athlete performance, ensuring safety, and relaying important information (Milic & Bhaumik, 2021). Addressing these technical concerns requires creative solutions, such as offline data storage, alternative communication methods, or investing in infrastructure improvements to enhance connectivity in sports facilities (Mitra et l., 2022). Navigating these challenges is essential to maintaining the continuity of sports programs and ensuring effective communication and coordination within the sports community during a pandemic.

In the journal shared by Zainuddin et al. (2021), one of the issues experienced by people leading the sports program during the pandemic is the connectivity and gadgets among coaches and student-athletes. The prevalent issue of information technology hinders productivity among the coaches, where connectivity is of much importance to continue the meetings and communications. They further revealed that students who are using technology for lessons have experienced problems due to unavailable internet funding and even gadgets in some cases. In the same way, Mahyoob (2020) stated that e-learning during a pandemic is of great importance so that education can continue. In some instances, there are connectivity issues for learners that disrupt their attention and span of learning. Moustakas & Robrade (2022) also discussed how digital technologies have been a great solution to physical education and sports because of their continued implementation amidst the pandemic. However, the use of technology is not applicable when attending PE and sports classes. It does not quantify the learning outcomes. However, during pandemic using technology is an advantage to ensure sports participation by submitting recorder videos and the like.

Learning Competency Concerns. Learning competency concerns in sports programs during the pandemic refer to the challenges faced by sports leaders in delivering a comprehensive curriculum to athletes (Mohammad, 2020). These issues encompass disruptions in the structured learning and skill development processes, hindering athletes' progress and overall development (Perez et al., 2021). Sports leaders must adapt to remote and hybrid learning models, which can affect the effectiveness of coaching and athlete education. Moreover, limitations in access to resources, facilities, and expert coaching can impede athletes' ability to acquire and refine essential competencies, making it a complex and dynamic challenge for sports leaders to navigate during these unprecedented times (Mohammad, 2020).

For this concern, Cabardo et al. (2022) shared that teachers utilizing a modular approach to learning experienced a variety of concerns. These concerns include no assurance of learning due to unanswered modules, teachers not being ready for the learning setup, and even the availability of the modules from higher authorities. This subtheme theme is consistent with the findings of Toquero (2020), who found that one of the challenges of modular distance learning is beating the deadline set by the school. He argued that there are students who submitted their learning modules late because they could not finish the bulk of the modules given to them on time. Hence, Reimers and Schleicher (2020) stressed the need to revisit and re-prioritize the curriculum goals and to strike out the competencies that are not responsive to the current needs of the learners and those that would have a disruptive impact on the distance learning modality being utilized. This was necessary to ensure that learners would be able to answer their learning modules on time and submit them on time. Aside from that, other competencies that were found to be inappropriate at this time would just cause learners difficulty.

Personnel Concerns. Personnel concerns experienced by sports leaders during a pandemic revolve around leading and supporting the people involved in sports programs (Samuel, 2020). These concerns include the sports leaders' own concerns, less support from parents, less administrative support, and even less support received from some local governments with a primary focus on implementing and enforcing health protocols to mitigate the risk of infection. Additionally, Mocha-Bonilla et al. (2023) delivered that personnel concerns extend to addressing the mental and emotional well-being of individuals who may face stress, anxiety, or burnout due to the disruptions and uncertainties brought about by the pandemic.

In this prevalent situation during the pandemic, Waters (2020) figured out the experiences of sports leaders during COVID-19, where they experienced self-hesitation and questioned their capabilities in the implementation of the sports program with less support from the people around them due to health restrictions. Another issue mentioned by Nasrulloh et al. (2022) was that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people in the sports industry were restricted from continuing their work since they were unable to do it online, and difficulty in delivering quality instruction and support from other people was hindered due to this health restriction. Making difficulties in reaching out to some personnel, disparity in self-abilities, and less financial support led to a decrease in sports implementation in the first quarter of the pandemic. Equally, Mocha-Bonilla et al. (2023) elucidated that it is necessary to strengthen the immune system to effectively share your expertise with the sports program and be connected to your people. Even parents didn't support their children's sports due to the high risk of viruses, and in most cases, they were not supportive of their children, according to Ribeiro et al. (2021). Even school administrators and education leaders are recommended to give support to sports programs during the pandemic. Most of them are focused on other activities, and sports programs are neglected (Tanglao, 2021).

Training Concerns. Training concerns for sports leaders during a pandemic encompass the challenges related to conducting effective training sessions. One of the significant issues is the availability of students -athletes, as restrictions and safety measures can limit their participation in training sessions (Yasin & Can (2021). Additionally, the closure or restricted access to training facilities and a lack of necessary equipment can hinder the ability to conduct comprehensive and high-quality training sessions, impacting athletes' development and performance (Thormann & Wicker, 2021).

In the study conducted by Boiseau (2022), it was revealed that one of the training issues in sports during the pandemic is the availability of students during sports training due to the high percentage of COVID patients. This lower number of participants hinders the fulfillment of sports programs efforts to continue their activities. Likewise, Yasin & Can (2021) explored that during the pandemic, many students and sports enthusiasts failed to attend regular training sessions for the reason that they were afraid to get infected by the virus. Aside from these issues, facilities and equipment during the pandemic are not visible for training. Rosete et al. (2022) shared that having fewer facilities

and equipment during classes has a tremendous adverse effect on the teaching-learning process in physical education classes. The use of facilities and equipment during pandemic is highly restricted because it is one way of transmitting the virus. The sharing of equipment and closed door facilities as perceived by the health experts is discouraged (Edwards et al. 2022).

Theme 4: Community of Linkages

Community linkages for sports leaders during a pandemic refer to the connections and relationships established with various stakeholders and organizations within the sports community (Wang et al., 2021). They establish various connections to group of people in the community. Furthermore, these linkages are essential for sharing information, resources, and best practices to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic effectively. Sports leaders collaborate with local health authorities to stay informed about safety guidelines and ensure compliance in sports activities (Waters, 2022). They also engage with schools, clubs, and governing bodies to coordinate efforts, adapt schedules, and share strategies for safe sports participation, thereby fostering a sense of unity and resilience within the sports community during these unprecedented times. These linkages include the internal and external connections of the sports leader (Angoy, 2024).

In the study of Henry et al. (2021), it was revealed that the urgency of support from local and external stakeholders to sports programs has a significant contribution, especially towards equipping future athletes. Their understanding and continuous support provide better opportunities. In the same way, Luik et al. (2021) shared that both internal and external factors affect change and have a great impact on continuing the sports program amidst the pandemic. The success of the said program depends on the role exerted by these stakeholders, who are therefore labeled as catalysts of change in the program. Thormann & Wicker (2021) added that collaboration among stakeholders from any source greatly helps the sustainability of the sports program in a pandemic. These stakeholders support building the sports program to rise again despite the restrictions implemented in disadvantaged communities.

Internal Stakeholders. Internal stakeholders of a sports program refer to individuals or groups within the school premises directly involved in its operation and success. These stakeholders often include athletes, coaches, support staff, and administrative personnel who collectively contribute to the program's functioning and performance (Luik et al. (2021). The sports leader interacts closely with these stakeholders to oversee training, competition, and administrative aspects of the program, ensuring that everyone is aligned with the program's goals and objectives (Angoy, 2024).

As per the discussion of Luik et al. (2021), teachers and school principals, as part of the internal stakeholders, play a pivotal role in the continuity of the sports program, where they are the motivational factor to encourage and the driving force of the sports leader, coaches, and even learners who act as athletes to continuously implement the sports program. Hence, the principal can support himself through financial allocation, encouragement, and physical support. During the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, Suarez (2022) stated that top executives in schools are the face of the program and the voice of the people behind the program, and they lead with empathy. School administrators, who hold a crucial position in ensuring the effective delivery of education and training services in schools, have played a vital role in facilitating distance education during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the constraints imposed by social isolation measures, school administrators have undertaken various tasks to ensure the smooth functioning of distance education and maximize its efficiency (Zincirli, 2021).

External Stakeholders. External stakeholders of a sports program encompass individuals, organizations, and entities outside the program but who have a vested interest in or influence over its success. These stakeholders include sponsors, donors, parents, local communities, and governing bodies (Suarez (2022). Sports leaders often engage with these external stakeholders to secure funding, support, and resources for the program's operations and development. They also interact with governing bodies to ensure compliance with regulations and participate in competitive events (Khan et al., 2020).

Efforts made by external stakeholders to support the sustainability of sports programs during the pandemic emphasize the significance of establishing linkages with individuals outside the educational institution. Suarez (2022) emphasized the importance of these linkages, stating that updates, communication, and notifications provided by external stakeholders served as tangible manifestations of their support for the school sports program during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Henry (2021) emphasized the integration of stakeholders, particularly in sports engagement, and the provision of technical assistance to sports implementers. This involvement of external

stakeholders had a significant impact on program sustainability and enabled young learners to continue their sports activities despite the health restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Furthermore, Luik et al. (2021) firmly believed that external stakeholders play a crucial role as contributors in terms of funding, educational linkages, and activity designs. Their participation in these activities serves as concrete evidence of their commitment to building connections with educational institutions and supporting sports programs. By providing financial resources, establishing educational collaborations, and contributing to the design and organization of sports activities, external stakeholders demonstrate their dedication to ensuring the continuity and success of the sports program.

Theme 5: Visionary Steward

A visionary sports leader during a pandemic is an individual who possesses a forward-thinking and strategic mindset and is capable of charting a course through unprecedented challenges (Frawley et l., 2017). They have the ability to envision the future of sports in a post-pandemic world, considering evolving trends and potential opportunities. These leaders anticipate and plan for the long-term impacts of the pandemic on sports programs, from safety measures and virtual engagement to financial sustainability and athlete development. Additionally, Gorgulu (2019) said that they are instrumental in giving information to parents, coaches, and students about the progress of the sports program. They are values-driven, accompanied by being a type of leader in providing opportunities to coaches and student-athletes. They take proactive steps to adapt and innovate, seeking creative solutions to maintain the integrity and relevance of sports during these trying times. A visionary steward sports leader is not only a guardian of the sport's values but also a catalyst for transformation, ensuring that sports not only survive but thrive in the face of adversity (Gregoire et al., 2020).

In the journal of Kurt et al. (2013), it is stated that a steward leader is considered a mature leader who sees the future direction of the program, creates a shared vision, and values diversity. This type of leader has a great impact on the continuity of the programs and activities in an organization. Cotterill and Fransen (2021) shared that a program or organization will prosper with the aid of a visionary leader who sees the long-term development of the program and provides opportunities to students as well as coaches. Equally, Scott Rodin (2010) explained in his journal that a steward leader uses a holistic approach to attaining the objectives of the program. It deals with future direction and sustaining the implementation of the program.

Information Provider. A leader who serves as an information provider to athletes, coaches, and parents is a vital conduit of knowledge and guidance within the sports program. They keep all stakeholders well-informed about important developments, updates, and changes related to training schedules, competitions, curricular programs, and safety protocols (Harangi-Rakos et al., 2022). Such a leader fosters transparency and open communication, ensuring that athletes and their families are aware of the latest news and can make informed decisions about their involvement in the sport. Also, Jarett et l., (2020) delivered that an information provider leader can act as a valuable resource, offering advice, resources, and expertise to athletes, coaches, and parents to enhance their understanding of the sport and its associated opportunities. Their role extends beyond just disseminating information; it involves empowering and supporting all members of the sports community, contributing to a well-informed and engaged group dedicated to the success and well-being of athletes.

As explained by Madanchian et al. (2022), a sports leader who serves as an information provider is a great communicator to the people involved in any club or organization. They provide valuable services that aim to provide updates and discuss the foregoing activities of the organization. Chatman (2020) argued that a leader who is an information provider is a good communicator of ideas to be shared in the organization. This pivotal role leads to program sustainability and easy access to updates. This role also pushes every member of the group to be at their best in attaining their shared destiny

Values-Driven. A values-driven sports leader during a pandemic is an individual whose actions and decisions are guided by a strong ethical framework and a commitment to core principles. They prioritize the well-being and safety of athletes and the broader sports community above all else, demonstrating integrity and a steadfast adherence to moral values. Such leaders emphasize fairness, passion, honesty, dedication, sincerity, equity, and inclusivity, ensuring that decisions related to training, competition, and resource allocation are made with a sense of justice and compassion (Chatman, 2020). This leader ensures all work is done in passion, love and dedication to achieve the goals and objectives of the program. Additionally, these leaders inspire trust and confidence among athletes, coaches, and stakeholders by consistently upholding the values that underpin the sport (Merce et al., 2021). Their unwavering

commitment to these principles not only strengthens the sense of unity within the sports community but also serves as a beacon of resilience and ethical leadership during challenging times like a pandemic.

In the journal shared by Crossan et al. (2023), it was shared that leaders should embody the values and provide directions to coaches and athletes. Values are vested in leaders to influence the workforce and deliver quality outputs. Constant communication and passionate, committed, and goal-oriented leaders greatly affect performance within the organization. Sports leader's dedication to creating a positive and ethical sporting environment, promoting fairness, respect, and sportsmanship among athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders. To add, Pim (2016) success to sports activities and sports program directly based on the leaders' character. This includes teaching sports through value-oriented instruction, considering and defining core values, and building team and cultural significance. In other words, this is a shared responsibility, especially for values being imparted to the whole organization. Furst (2014) also shared that a value-driven leader in sports understands the importance of teams collectively determining the values that are crucial for achieving high performance. They guide the team in identifying and defining specific behaviors that embody these values, ensuring that everyone involved has a clear understanding of what these behaviors entail. By doing so, the leader ensures that the team can effectively assess whether individuals are exemplifying these behaviors or not. The value-driven leader plays a central role in facilitating this process by encouraging and empowering the team to live out their shared values through their actions and decisions (Crossan et al.2023).

Achiever. A sports leader who is an achiever of recognition is an individual who consistently excels in their role, garnering acknowledgment for their contributions to the sports community (Rodin, 2010). These recognitions may include awards, honors, or titles that highlight their exceptional leadership qualities, expertise, and dedication. Such leaders are driven by a relentless pursuit of excellence, setting high standards and consistently surpassing them to achieve notable recognition.

These remarkable statements from the participants only proved that sports leader are known for their extraordinary achievement while leading the program. According to Malloy et al., 2022), better outcomes received in sports leadership when there is commitment to work and displacing one's eagerness. Leaders were meant to received recognitions after all the efforts and sacrifices. These recognitions may be in the form rewards in athletic competitions and recognitions to their remarkable contribution to the world of sports. Bourke and Titus (2022) revealed that leadership is achieved when people in the organization is uplifted and received valuable recognition. On this note, sports leader who is an achiever often serve as inspirational figures, motivating athletes and fellow sports professionals to aspire to their level of success and commitment. Achieving recognition is not only a testament to their competence but also a reflection of their positive impact on the sports program, team, or organization they lead, further solidifying their status as respected figures within the sports community (Malloy et al., 2022)

Opportunity Provider. A sports leader who serves as an opportunity provider to athletes and coaches is an individual who actively seeks out and creates avenues for growth, development, and advancement within the sports community (William et al., 2023). They identify and harness opportunities for athletes to excel in their respective disciplines, whether it's through access to specialized training, competitions, or scholarships. Additionally, these leaders support coaches by offering opportunities for professional development, certifications, and mentorship, which ultimately enhances their ability to guide and mentor athletes effectively (Sparks & Repede, 2016).

As illustrated by Stenling and Tafvelin (2014), the main concern of sports leaders is to provide better opportunities to athletes and their sense of well-being, preparing them for future undertakings. When these things arise, a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction is felt by sports leaders. Through the process of contagion, positive elements have been transferred to the athletes, leading to perceived better outcomes. Bass and Riggio (2006) described a sense of fulfillment by building relationships and exemplifying model behavior for athletes and coaches, which can significantly satisfy the sports leader. It creates a positive environment for students and coaches to continue striving, which can enhance the well-being of the people and the sports program as well (Malloy et al. 2022).

HYPOTHESES AND PROPOSITIONS

Hypothesis 1: *A positive outcome exists between a sports leader's experience in sports activities and their effectiveness in leading and motivating individuals or teams within the realm of sports.*

Proposition 1: *A good sports leader has experience in sports activities.*

The experiences of the sports leader as an athlete, coach, and official are an advantage in leading sports programs, especially during pandemics. The effectiveness of a sports leader is shaped in accordance with his athletic abilities and the sports events in which he participates (Khan et al., 2020). Experiences as an athlete, coach, and official provide a significant advantage in leading sports programs, particularly during a pandemic. Having been an athlete allows the sports leader to understand the physical, mental, and emotional challenges that athletes face. Similarly, Mejarito et al., (2022) mentioned that the firsthand knowledge helps them empathize with the athletes' concerns and tailor training programs to accommodate the unique circumstances imposed by the pandemic. They can also provide valuable insights into maintaining motivation and addressing any performance-related issues that may arise. In other words, a sports leader can easily connect with and relate to the feelings experienced by the athlete because he was able to experience them.

Further, the experience gained as a coach enables the sports leader to effectively communicate and strategize with athletes and fellow coaches, especially in the health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have a deep understanding of the technical and tactical aspects of the sport, allowing them to devise alternative training methods and adapt to changing circumstances (Frawley et al., 2017). This knowledge becomes crucial during a pandemic when traditional training methods may not be feasible. Coaches with experience as athletes are more likely to come up with creative solutions to keep athletes engaged and ensure they continue to progress despite the limitations (Johnson, 2022). On the other hand, the perspective gained as an official offers a unique advantage in managing sports programs during a pandemic, officiating involves enforcing rules and regulations, ensuring fair play, and maintaining the integrity of the sport (Arthur & Bastardoz, 2020). This experience helps the sports leader understand the importance of following health guidelines and implementing safety protocols effectively. They can contribute to the development of comprehensive and practical guidelines for athletes, coaches, and support staff, thereby reducing the risk of infection and providing a safe environment for everyone involved.

The variety and combined experiences as an athlete, coach, and official provide a sports leader with a comprehensive understanding of the sport, its challenges, and the necessary measures to navigate through a pandemic (Hill, 2023). This multi-faceted and timely background allows them to relate to athletes, devise innovative training strategies, and implement effective safety protocols, which led to effective sports leaders during the pandemic (Garcia et al., 2021). Thus, their expertise and experiences can contribute significantly to the success of sports programs by ensuring the physical and mental well-being of athletes and promoting the continuity of training and competition despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic. Lastly, their numerous athletic experiences helped them navigate strategies to be able to meet the needs of athletes, coaches, and the whole sports program (Angoy et al., 2024).

Hypothesis 2: *A better sports program will be implemented if there is leadership ingenuity and the effectiveness of a sports leader in effectively guiding and motivating individuals or teams within the context of sports.*

Proposition 2: *A good sports leader is endowed with leadership ingenuities.*

According to Ferkins (2018), sports leader in times of pandemic is guided in accordance with the way he initiates, implements, follows, and supervised sports activities. These leadership ingenuities helped realize the outcome goals of the sports program despite the pandemic. In times of a pandemic, sports leaders face unique challenges in leading sports programs effectively. The way they initiate, implement, follow, and utilize values becomes crucial in navigating these difficult circumstances and achieving the outcome goals of the sports program (Crane, 2022). As noted by Jones et al., (2018), the comprehensive explanation will dwell on the systematic perspective of leadership ingenuity in times of health crisis. The initiation of activities is the first step for a sports leader in setting the tone for the entire program. By establishing clear and ethical values, such as integrity, safety, and adaptability, the leader creates a foundation for the program to operate within the constraints of the pandemic. These values guide decision-making processes and serve as a compass for the leader's actions and those of the athletes, coaches, and support staff (Match et al., 2021). By initiating values aligned with the needs of the pandemic, the leader can foster a culture of resilience and unity.

Likewise, the value of being an implementer in the sports program involves translating these guiding principles into action (Mochechela, 2021). A sports leader must communicate the importance of the identified values to all stakeholders, ensuring their understanding and commitment. They can lead by example, demonstrating behaviors that reflect the established values, such as adhering to health guidelines, promoting teamwork, especially crafting learning activities for learners, and displaying empathy (Misasi, 2018). Moreover, the leader must create policies and

protocols that operationalize the values within the sports program, ensuring the safety of participants while maintaining the integrity and spirit of the sport (Montull et al., 2022).

Following values requires consistency and accountability. The sports leader must continuously reinforce the established values by following the protocols set by the community and the education sectors as well, ensuring that they are upheld by all individuals involved in the program (Lawrence, 2021). This involves monitoring compliance with safety protocols, addressing any deviations promptly, and providing guidance and support to overcome challenges. By emphasizing the significance of the values and holding themselves and others accountable, the sports leader creates a culture of trust and responsibility, which is essential during a pandemic when uncertainty and disruptions prevail. To add, the sports leader can harness the values to foster innovation and creativity, seeking alternative approaches to training, competition, and athlete development.

The initiation, implementation, following, and the supervision by a sports leader during a pandemic are fundamental aspects of effective sports leadership acting as the facilitator of learning activities of the sports program (Skinner et al., 2018). By establishing and upholding values aligned with the needs of the pandemic, the leader can guide the sports program towards achieving its outcome goals. Through consistent communication, accountability, and innovative thinking, the leader creates a resilient and adaptive culture that enables athletes, coaches, and support staff to navigate the challenges of the pandemic while maintaining the integrity and spirit of the sport. Lastly, these leadership ingenuities are essential in facilitating and ensuring the success and sustainability of sports programs during these unprecedented times.

Hypothesis 3: *The presence of conflicts and challenges experienced by a sports leader positively influences their ability to develop and exhibit effective leadership skills within the realm of sports.*

Proposition 3: *A sports leader encountered conflicts and challenges.*

One way to become an effective sports leader is to be able to overcome challenges (Samuel et al., 2020). The presence of conflicts and challenges experienced by a sports leader can indeed have a positive influence on their ability to develop and exhibit effective leadership skills within the realm of sports. Additionally, Keshkar (2021) concluded that conflicts and challenges provide valuable opportunities for growth, resilience, and skill development. When facing conflicts, sports leaders are forced to navigate complex situations and make difficult decisions. This requires them to develop strong problem-solving and decision-making skills. Conflict resolution skills become crucial in managing disagreements among team members, addressing disciplinary issues, or handling disputes with other teams or stakeholders. Through these experiences, leaders learn to communicate effectively, mediate conflicts, and find win-win solutions. Such skills are invaluable in fostering a positive team environment, maintaining harmony, and ensuring the program's success (Samuel et al., 2020).

Additionally, challenges often push sports leaders out of their comfort zones and test their adaptability. Whether it's dealing with unexpected setbacks, limited resources, or rapidly changing circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders must quickly adjust their strategies and find innovative solutions (Hector et al., 2021). These challenges help them develop resilience, flexibility, and a growth mindset. They learn to embrace change, think creatively, and find new ways to motivate and inspire their team. Effective leaders can turn adversity into an opportunity for growth, both for themselves and their athletes (Carmody et al., 2022).

Issues in the field provide leaders with valuable learning experiences. By overcoming obstacles, leaders gain a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to continually improve their leadership skills (Zainuddin et al., 2021). They develop self-awareness, which is essential to recognizing and managing their own emotions and biases. Through reflection and feedback, leaders can identify areas for development and actively seek opportunities for further growth. This continuous learning process allows leaders to refine their leadership style, enhance their interpersonal skills, and inspire their team to achieve higher levels of performance (Moustakas & Robrade, 2022).

Indeed, problems experienced by sports leaders in leading special program in sports act as catalysts for the development of effective leadership skills. The problems experienced provide opportunities for leaders to enhance their problem-solving, communication, and conflict-resolution skills. Challenges met foster adaptability, resilience, and a growth mindset, enabling leaders to thrive in dynamic and uncertain environments (Tanglao,2021).

Hypothesis 4: *A sports leader's ability to build harmonious relationships with stakeholders can enhance their effectiveness in leading sports-related endeavors.*

Proposition 4: *A good sports leader builds harmonious relationship to stakeholders.*

As mentioned by Henry et al., (2021), the ability of a sports leader for a special program in sports to establish and maintain connections with various sectors of the community is crucial, particularly in times of uncertainty. Building harmonious relationships with stakeholders can greatly contribute to the success and resilience of the sports program, even in the face of challenging circumstances (Luik et al., 2021). Linking with various sectors of the community allows the sports leader to tap into a wide range of resources and expertise. By establishing connections with government agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations, the leader can access additional funding opportunities, training facilities, coaching expertise, and promotional support. These collaborations can provide the program with the necessary resources to navigate through uncertain times, whether it be financial assistance, alternative training venues, or access to technology for virtual coaching and competitions. The collective efforts and shared knowledge from different sectors can help sustain the program and ensure its continued growth (Thormann & Wicker 2021).

Moreover, a harmonious relationship with stakeholders' fosters community support and engagement. When the community feels connected to the sports program, they are more likely to rally behind it during challenging times (Suarez, 2022). This can be through volunteer assistance, sponsorship, attendance at events, or simply spreading positive words of encouragement. The sports leader can actively involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, seeking their input and addressing their concerns. By engaging the community, the leader creates a sense of ownership and belonging, making the program more resilient and adaptive to uncertainties (Zincirli, 2021). Additionally, community support can provide a network of emotional and social support for the athletes and the sports program as a whole, upgrading their motivation and morale (Luik et al., 2021). Lastly, the collaboration between the sports program and various sectors of the community can lead to broader societal benefits. The sports program can serve as a platform for social inclusion, health promotion, and youth development. By working closely with schools, and social service organizations, the sports leader can manage the program's resources (Henry, 2021). This can include initiatives such as providing sports opportunities for marginalized populations, promoting physical and mental well-being, and instilling values of teamwork, discipline, and resilience. Through partnerships, the sports program becomes a catalyst for positive change within the community, further strengthening its sustainability.

Hypothesis 5: *A sports leader who adopts the role of a visionary steward will have a significant positive impact on the long-term success and sustainability of the sports organization.*

Proposition 5: *A good sports leader is goal-oriented.*

As stated by Kurt et al., (2023) that making a difference in the lives of coaches and athletes in the toughest times can be visible through the competence of the sports leader in providing opportunities to his constituents. Part of the role of a sports leader is to guide and support their athletes and coaches in achieving their goals. This goal is the continuous implementation of the sports program and activities brought about by the health crisis.

A sports leader who fully embraces the role of a visionary steward holds the potential to create a transformative impact on the long-term success and sustainability of their sports organization (Cotterill & Fransen, 2021). This leadership approach transcends the confines of short-term goals and immediate victories, instead focusing on the cultivation of a dynamic and forward-looking vision that guides the organization through an ever-evolving landscape. By embodying the qualities of a visionary steward, a sports leader demonstrates an unwavering commitment to innovation and providing better opportunities to teachers and students, including their recognition and achievements (Scott Rodin, 2010).

By staying attuned to emerging trends and anticipating shifts in the sports program, the leader ensures that the organization remains adaptable and capable of capitalizing on new opportunities (Madanchian et al., 2022). Furthermore, the impact of a visionary steward extends beyond the confines of the sports program. This leader recognizes the importance of inclusivity as a means of building a broader and more resilient foundation for success (Chatman, 2020). By promoting diversity within the organization, embracing different perspectives, and engaging with a wider range of stakeholders, the leader creates a more holistic and comprehensive approach to growth. In turn, this fosters a sense of community and belonging that attracts a diverse array of talent, supporters, and partners,

fortifying the organization's sustainability (Crossan et al., 2023). Lastly, the role of a visionary steward empowers a sports leader to foster a legacy of lasting impact, driving innovation and embracing inclusivity.

THE GENERATED THEORY ON SPORTS LEADERSHIP

The Diva's Theory on Sports Leadership states that *"Sports leadership is characterized by the integration of athletic experiences accompanied by leadership ingenuity, the cultivation of the quality of tenacity, and the establishment of diplomatic relationships towards sports program sustainability."* This theory statement is derived from the set of propositions and hypotheses about the narratives accounts of sports leaders' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theory generated was discussed comprehensively through review of related literatures and studies that would give foundation to the generated theory on sports leadership amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COMPONENTS OF THE THEORY

Diva's Theory on Sports Leadership. As the output of the study, the researcher-generated theory is named after the researcher. The theory is known as Divas's Theory on Sports Leadership which states that *sports leadership is characterized by the integration of athletic experiences accompanied by ingenuity, the cultivation of the quality of tenacity, and the establishment of diplomatic relationships towards sports program sustainability*. The theory emphasizes that sports leadership is a harmonious fusion of firsthand athletic experiences and innovative thinking. Leaders who have walked the path of a sports-experienced leader have an authentic understanding of the challenges, triumphs, and dynamics within the world of sports. This unique perspective enables them to devise innovative strategies that resonate with athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders on a profound level. By blending their athletic capabilities with creative problem-solving, ingenuity, and goal-oriented, these leaders can revolutionize training methods, competition formats, and learning engagement, which can sustain the implementation of sports programs even in times of health crisis.

Sports Leadership Components. In times of the pandemic, sports leaders within educational institutions demonstrated unwavering dedication in their efforts to offer valuable sports opportunities to student-athletes and coaches. Their primary focus was on enhancing overall wellness, adapting training regimens, incorporating educational activity sheets, and sustaining the continuity of sports programs. To effectively achieve these goals, sports leaders skillfully utilized a diverse range of leadership components, strategically navigating the unprecedented health crisis. These components include athletic experiences, leader ingenuity, quality of tenacity, diplomatic relationships, and goal-oriented leader.

Athletic Experience. This pertains to a sports leader who has adequate experience in different areas of sports. These experiences enable them to provide a variety of strategies for leading sports programs even in times of health crisis. Their extensive background equips them with a broad spectrum of strategies to guide sports programs, even in the face of health crises. Drawing upon their numerous expertise, they can seamlessly adapt training routines, implement innovative wellness initiatives, and tailor learning activity sheets to meet the set learning standards.

As revealed by Sahin (2022), the experience of the sports leader can greatly affect the whole flow of the sports organization. The changes in the sports group differ from the way the leader leads. Even in the statement of Vaughan (2015), leader attributes such as a well-versed leader have all-out leadership because of their experience, which highlights that leadership is not only about recognition but also sustainability. This idea is supported by Mejarito et al. (2022) that one of the qualities that a leader should possess is based on experience. This experience is an advantage in choosing the sports leader or director (Hong, 2016). A well-rounded knowledge and ability of a sports leader, specifically the experience, extends beyond the sports field, encompassing crucial aspects such as sports coaching, mentoring, and decision-making. This holistic approach empowers them to create a comprehensive and resilient framework for athlete development, coaching adaptability, and program sustainability. In these trying times, their seasoned leadership provides a beacon of hope and stability, ensuring that student-athletes and coaches continue to thrive amidst adversity.

Leadership Ingenuity. Leadership ingenuity refers to the ability of a sports leader to think creatively and innovatively in their approach to solving problems, making decisions, and guiding a team or organization. To add to this, the sports leader facilitates the program of sports activities and ensures the involvement of the people to attain

the goals and objectives. It involves the capacity to come up with novel and effective solutions, adapt to changing circumstances, and find new ways to achieve goals and objectives.

Malacko et al. (2019) argued that sports leadership needs a leader who possesses a creative and innovative mind. One should be the facilitator of activity in a dynamic, nurturing, and transformative mind. Bosselut et al. (2020) also shared that leaders with ingenuity ability have a great impact on the success of the sports program. The high performance of the athlete and coaches comes from the creative and innovative mind of the athletic leader. In the article of the OECD (2016), sports leaders with an innovative mind are essential to bringing out the goals and objectives of the sports program. These leaders are imaginative, flexible, innovative, and critical thinkers. Sports ingenuity is of paramount importance in leading sports programs, as it enables leaders to adapt to ever-evolving challenges and circumstances within the sports program. Additionally, it empowers them to devise innovative strategies for athlete development, training, and performance enhancement. Hence, sports ingenuity fosters a culture of continuous improvement, keeping sports programs competitive and relevant in the face of changing trends and technologies. Lastly, it ensures that leaders can maximize the potential of their teams and athletes, leading to long-term success and sports program sustainability.

Quality of Tenacity. A sports leader who uses tenacity is considered persistent in handling firsthand problems in the sports program. The sports leader who never surrenders until a problem is solved and is the conqueror of solutions to problems. It simply means that they are determined to continue working towards solutions despite the challenges, setbacks, or obstacles that may arise. Furthermore, they are willing to put in the effort and time required to overcome difficulties and achieve their optimal goals. These leaders possess the mindset of problem solvers, always seeking ways to resolve issues and find solutions rather than giving up when faced with adversity.

In sports leadership, Wang et al. (2021) illustrated that sports leaders are always confronted with simple to complex issues and concerns. This concern includes the complexity of sports failures in many aspects and the community's requirements. The sports leaders are branded as problem solvers and able to remain composed regardless of the pressures experienced. Likewise, Ibrahim (2016) delivered that Sports leadership constantly presents challenges both to the leader's abilities and to a person, things, and change; change brings challenges, and no matter how good a leader is, he can't stop that from happening. How one handles those challenges will define one as a leader and have a great deal to do with how effective one can be. Some challenges come in the form of people or problems that present obstacles to reaching a goal. Keshkar et al. (2021) also discussed the issue of sports leadership during the pandemic, where sports leaders and sports practitioners encountered flaws in the advent of the pandemic. The closure of sports events, from local to international, has been postponed, and others have been cancelled and put on hold. These adverse experiences include unavailable facilities and equipment, trainings put on hold, and many community health protocols implemented in all areas of the locale. As a leader, you are task to provide instant solutions to the problems encountered (Zhao & Jowett, 2022). The quality of tenacity is crucial for a sports leader as it instills resilience and determination, which are vital attributes in the face of challenges and setbacks within the sports program. Tenacious leaders serve as role models, inspiring athletes and coaches to persevere through tough times and maintain their focus on long-term goals. Their unwavering commitment to excellence motivates team members to push their limits and continuously improve, fostering a culture of relentless effort and dedication. Indeed, the tenacity of a sports leader not only ensures sustained performance but also contributes to the development of strong, mentally tough individuals in the sports program (Keshkar et al.,2021).

Diplomatic Relationship. A sports leader who builds harmonious relationships with superiors, subordinates, and other stakeholders is diplomatic. This sports leader possesses the quality of diplomacy, which involves effectively communicating and negotiating with others to achieve common goals and resolve conflicts. They are skilled at building rapport and trust with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and they are able to navigate complex social dynamics with tact and sensitivity. A diplomat is a skilled listener and communicator, able to understand the needs and concerns of others and respond in a constructive and respectful manner. They are adept at managing relationships and are committed to building positive, long-lasting connections with their colleagues and stakeholders.

One way of sustaining the sports program is by building a community through linkages with various stakeholders. Zdroik (2016) pointed out that leader-stakeholder engagement is a good first step towards a school sports development program. This relationship builds a strong partnership for promoting a long-term development plan. Interestingly, this engagement is pivotal in the decision-making process for delivering quality instruction to learners,

coaches, and the people behind the sports program. Likewise, Constandt et al. (2020) argued that strong linkages to communities can help the sports program provide financial and ethical support. A sports leader who has initiated diplomatic relationships holds a crucial role in fostering collaboration and goodwill among different stakeholders. Their efforts can lead to opportunities for virtual competitions, exchanges, and partnerships, which can enhance the program's exposure. These diplomatic relationships can also facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and resources, benefiting athletes and coaches through comprehensive sports learning experiences. Furthermore, diplomatic sports leaders can help resolve conflicts and disputes that may arise in the sports community, promoting harmony and fair play. Their ability to navigate complex diplomatic situations can ensure that the program maintains a positive image and upholds ethical standards, contributing to its long-term success and sustainability. Overall, a sports leader skilled in diplomacy can be a driving force behind the growth and prosperity of the sports program.

Goal-oriented. A goal-oriented sports leader is someone who possesses a clear and unwavering focus on achieving specific objectives within the sports program. They set measurable and achievable goals for themselves, their team, and individual athletes, providing a roadmap for program sustainability. Such leaders religiously plan and strategize to ensure that every action and decision aligns with the program goals, maximizing efficiency and productivity. Their goal-oriented approach not only drives results but also inspires a sense of purpose by providing opportunity, values-driven direction, and direction among team members, creating a cohesive and motivated sports program.

According to Gomes et al. (2019), every leader has goals that need to be achieved. These goals were religiously planned and crafted for the development of the whole sports program. The authors further discussed that a goal-oriented leader helps achieve better sports performance among athletes. whether in sports competition or in daily training. Moreover, a goal-oriented leader motivates the people to work at their best and motivates each member to contribute something to the sports program. Linder & Nilsson (2019) expressed that one of the factors in achieving the program goals and objectives is the positive orientation of the person directing the organization. The goal-oriented leader seeks achievements, which are also influenced by coaches, parents, and the people behind the program.

The main function of a goal-oriented sports leader is to play a pivotal role in driving program sustainability within a sports program by providing a clear sense of direction and purpose. Their focus on well-defined objectives helps create a roadmap for the team, ensuring everyone understands what needs to be accomplished and attained. This clarity enhances team cohesion as athletes and coaches work together toward common goals, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration. Besides, a goal-oriented leader ensures that resources, time, and effort are efficiently allocated, optimizing the program's performance. They act as role models, inspiring commitment, discipline, and a strong work ethic among team members, which are essential attributes for achieving success. Lastly, a goal-oriented sports leader is instrumental in driving continuous improvement of the sports program.

Sports Program Sustainability. Refers to the capacity of a sports program to endure and thrive over the long term, adapting to changing circumstances, economic conditions, and societal needs while achieving its intended goals and maintaining its positive impact. A sustainable sports program is one that can maintain its operations, financial stability, and social relevance without compromising its core values and objectives. This involves effectively providing information, giving opportunities, cultivating community support, and implementing strategies that ensure the program's continued existence and effectiveness.

In the study of Millington et al. (2022), it was stated that the core of the sports program amidst environmental hindrances is to ensure the sustainability of the program and the continuous support of the program to lead to better sports performance among athletes and the whole program as well. In the same way, the study of Bácsné-Bába et al. (2021) revealed that one of the main goals of a sport program is its sustainability and preservation of sports for the continuity of sports training and the development of the program. Its main purpose is to inculcate composure among student-athletes, coaches, and the people behind the sports program. Even in the study of Young (2022), sports program sustainability has been the challenge of every sports organization. Sustainability in sports should be the collaboration of people behind the program, information dissemination, even the values formation of the leader, and the achievement of the people in the program. By giving opportunities to student-athletes and coaches, a program can prosper and be sustained. Lastly, sports program's success and sustainability, according to Megheirkouni (2018), come from the recognition and achievement receive for their self-efficacy. Recognitions are those positive outcomes you receive in the latter part of your journey. Recognitions are the living testament that a certain sports leaving is setting the standards and maintaining quality leadership.

Sports program sustainability is of paramount importance as it ensures the longevity and continued success of the program (Angoy,2024). It enables a consistent and stable platform for student-athletes, coaches, and stakeholders to plan for the future and set long-term goals even in times of adversity and crisis. Sustainability also helps attract and retain sponsors, funding, and support, which are essential for the program's financial health and growth (Mejarito et al., 2022). Additionally, a sustainable sports program can positively impact the community by promoting health, well-being, and youth engagement, making it a valuable asset in the promotion of sports in the community. Indeed, a sustained sports program can provide better opportunities to student-athletes to make their future brighter (Young, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The generated theory on sports leadership in times of the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of adaptability, communication, empathy, innovation, and collaboration in guiding sports leaders during challenging times. These qualities provide a framework for sports leaders to navigate the uncertainties and limitations brought about by the health crisis or whatever societal problem may arise, enabling them to make informed decisions, maintain strong relationships with stakeholders, and foster a supportive and resilient environment within the sports programs. The Sports Leadership Theory serves as a valuable resource for sports leaders, offering insights and guidance on how to lead their programs during times of health crisis. By understanding and applying the components outlined in the theory, sports leaders can enhance their effectiveness, adapt to changing circumstances, and ensure the well-being and success of their athletes, coaches, stakeholders and the sports program as a whole. The generated Sports Leadership Theory contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of sports leadership, providing a specific focus on leading during a global health crisis. It offers practical implications for sports leaders and has the potential to influence future research, policies, and practices in the realm of sports leadership.

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