

Balancing Acts: Coping Mechanisms of PE Teachers Handling Academic and Athletic Responsibilities

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how physical education (PE) teachers manage and cope with the dual demands of academic instruction and athletic coaching, while identifying strategies that help them sustain performance, manage stress, and maintain work-life balance. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted to 15 PE teachers who actively handle both teaching and coaching responsibilities. Findings revealed that participants face persistent role conflict, emotional and physical exhaustion, and a lack of institutional support and resources. These challenges not only affect professional effectiveness but also contribute to stress, fatigue, and a sense of isolation. Despite these demands, PE teachers employ several adaptive strategies to navigate their complex roles. Structured routines, prioritization, strategic delegation, peer support, and intentional self-care were found to enhance their focus, energy, and resilience. Participants emphasized that these practices, combined with clear boundaries and mindful recovery, are crucial for preventing burnout and maintaining both teaching and coaching effectiveness. The study highlights the importance of both personal coping mechanisms and institutional support in sustaining dual-role performance. It offers a fresh perspective on the lived experiences of teacher-coaches by illustrating how intentional strategies and collaborative networks can mitigate the pressures of overlapping responsibilities. The findings suggest that schools should implement targeted policies, flexible scheduling, and resource provision to support teacher-coaches, thereby fostering professional efficacy, well-being, and a sustainable work-life balance.

Keywords: *Physical education teachers, teacher-coaches, dual roles, higher education, work-life balance*

1. Introduction

Physical Education (PE) teachers often navigate a dual professional identity—serving as both academic instructors and athletic coaches. While these dual roles provide opportunities for holistic student development, they also pose significant challenges, particularly in balancing instructional responsibilities with the demands of training, competition schedules, and extracurricular commitments ^[1-2]. The intersection of these responsibilities frequently leads to role conflict, time pressure, and heightened stress levels ^[3], which may affect both job performance and personal well-being.

Role conflict among teacher-coaches has been well-documented in international literature. In the United States, a review by Richards and Templin ^[1] identified recurring tensions between classroom obligations and athletic duties, often resulting in extended working hours and diminished recovery time. Similar findings were echoed in qualitative studies demonstrating that dual-role educators face unique stressors, including emotional exhaustion, reduced work-life balance, and challenges in sustaining teaching quality ^[4,1]. These stressors are often compounded by a misalignment between job expectations and available institutional support ^[5].

Coping strategies employed by PE teachers vary widely, ranging from problem-focused approaches such as time management and task prioritization to emotion-focused strategies like seeking social support or reframing challenges ^[6-7]. International research highlights the protective role of organizational support, job autonomy, and career-stage adaptability in mitigating stress ^[8-9]. However, studies also warn that persistent role conflict may lead to burnout, regardless of coping mechanisms, if systemic issues remain unaddressed ^[2,10].

In the Philippine context, there is a growing body of literature examining teacher stress and coping strategies. Recent studies have explored time management and work-life balance among teacher-coaches ^[11], stress management techniques in the “new normal” ^[12], and occupational stress in public schools ^[13]. These works consistently identify workload, overlapping roles, and insufficient recovery time as primary stressors. Coping approaches often involve deliberate time management, maintaining healthy lifestyles, and drawing on family and peer support ^[11-12]. While these studies offer valuable insights, they tend to focus on general teaching populations or treat PE responsibilities as peripheral, leaving a gap in understanding the qualitative lived experiences of PE teachers who simultaneously handle both academic and athletic duties.

Thus, despite a wealth of international research on teacher-coach role conflict and coping, there remains a paucity of Philippine-based qualitative studies that capture the nuanced strategies, challenges, and adaptive practices of PE teachers in dual roles. Addressing this gap is essential, as contextual factors such as cultural expectations, institutional policies, and resource availability may significantly shape coping mechanisms. This study, therefore, aims to explore how PE teachers in the Philippines manage and cope with the dual demands of academic instruction and athletic responsibilities, with the goal of identifying contextually relevant strategies to maintain performance, manage stress, and sustain work-life balance.

2. Literature

The dual roles of physical education (PE) teachers as educators and coaches present unique challenges that affect their professional effectiveness and well-being. Across various contexts, teacher-coaches frequently experience role conflict, heavy workloads, and psychological stress due to competing demands from academic and athletic responsibilities. This review synthesizes existing international and Philippine studies to explore the complexities of these dual roles, the factors influencing stress and coping mechanisms, and the institutional support systems that shape teacher-coach experiences.

The present study was anchored on three interrelated theoretical frameworks that provide a foundation for understanding how PE teachers manage dual roles in higher education. Role Theory ^[14] posits that individuals occupy multiple roles in society, each with its own set of expectations, which can create strain when these demands conflict, as in the case of balancing academic and athletic responsibilities. This is complemented by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model ^[15], which explains how job demands, such as workload and role conflict, interact with job resources, such as organizational support and personal coping strategies, to influence performance and well-being. Finally, Lazarus and Folkman’s ^[16] Transactional Model of Stress and Coping emphasizes the process by which individuals appraise stressful situations and employ coping mechanisms to manage them, highlighting the adaptive strategies that PE teachers may use to sustain both roles. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive lens to analyze the coping mechanisms employed by PE teachers who navigate the complex interplay between instructional duties and athletic responsibilities.

2.1 Role Conflict and Dual Responsibilities of Teacher-Coaches

Role conflict is consistently identified as a central issue for teacher-coaches, arising when the expectations of teaching and coaching roles overlap or compete. Internationally, Konukman et al. ^[17] documented how conflicting expectations and time pressures in K–12 settings contribute to stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction. Richards ^[2] expanded this view with a multidimensional framework that links role conflict to time management difficulties, workload pressures, and ambiguous expectations, illustrating that these factors interact to create a complex stress experience.

In Canada, Tracy and Sabol ^[18] reported that overlapping schedules and extended work hours in secondary schools caused significant work-life balance challenges. Similarly, in Hong Kong, Leung and Zhang ^[19] connected heavy workloads directly to burnout and turnover intentions, underscoring the severity of the issue when institutional demands are high.

Philippine research mirrors these patterns. Jandongan ^[20] found that Ilonggo PE teacher-coaches experience significant role conflict stemming from the simultaneous demands of teaching and coaching, resulting in time management struggles and emotional exhaustion. Torres ^[21] likewise reported that high role conflict in Metro Manila secondary schools led to reduced job satisfaction and heightened burnout risk. In the context of policy implementation, the 2022 ERIC policy analysis revealed that unclear and inconsistently enforced workload policies often result in teachers informally taking on extra responsibilities, aggravating role conflict.

The convergence of international and local findings suggests that role conflict is a structural issue embedded in educational systems rather than merely an individual failing. Addressing it requires systemic interventions, including clearer role definitions, realistic workload limits, and institutional recognition of coaching as a legitimate and compensated professional responsibility.

2.2 Psychological and Social Factors Influencing Stress and Coping

Beyond workload, psychological dimensions strongly influence how teacher-coaches experience their roles. Hemphill et al. ^[22] emphasized the buffering role of “mattering,” showing that teachers who feel valued by their institutions experience less emotional exhaustion. Kim and Park ^[23] added another layer by exploring professional identity negotiation in Korea, demonstrating that boundary-setting and role communication are critical in balancing educator and coach expectations.

In Sweden, Andersson and Pettersson ^[24] found that adaptive coping and positive workplace relationships sustain psychological well-being and career longevity, particularly for older PE teachers. Martínez and López ^[25] extended the discussion to gendered stress patterns in Spain, revealing that female teacher-coaches often face compounded stress from domestic and professional responsibilities.

In the Philippines, Gonzales and Mercado ^[26] identified role ambiguity as a stressor in Mindanao, with identity negotiation emerging as a key coping process. Carillo ^[27] addressed gender-specific challenges, noting the disproportionate work-life balance strain on female PE teacher-coaches due to societal expectations. Santos ^[28] reported high burnout rates in NCR PE teachers, with coping strategies such as mindfulness and exercise helping to mitigate symptoms.

The psychological health of teacher-coaches is shaped not only by workload but also by how they perceive their value, navigate identity tensions, and manage intersecting personal and professional roles. Interventions must therefore go beyond logistical workload adjustments to include mentoring, recognition programs, and gender-sensitive support.

2.3 Workload, Coping Mechanisms, and Time Management

Effective coping strategies are essential for sustaining performance under dual-role pressures. Nguyen et al. ^[29] identified problem-focused coping and social support as primary mechanisms in Vietnam, while Bhusan ^[30] found similar patterns in Philippine schools, with teachers relying on time management and colleague assistance.

Velasco ^[31] reinforced the importance of time management in Luzon universities, noting that task prioritization and delegation reduced stress and improved productivity. Bhusan ^[30] further demonstrated that effective time management in Negros Island improved work-life balance and coaching success, although overlapping schedules remained a challenge.

Mendoza ^[32] highlighted the adaptive strategies used by PE teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including peer mentoring and flexible scheduling to handle increased workload and role ambiguity. Santos ^[28] also documented coping through exercise, mindfulness, and peer collaboration.

While personal coping skills like time management and resilience-building are vital, the literature indicates that their effectiveness is limited without institutional changes that reduce chronic overload and provide adequate resources.

The psychological dimension of role conflict also plays a crucial role in teacher-coaches' well-being. Hemphill et al. ^[22] introduced the concept of "perceived mattering," showing that feeling valued by the institution and community can buffer emotional exhaustion. Luna et al. ^[33] supported this by finding that strong institutional support, clear role expectations, and resource provision reduce role conflict and enhance job satisfaction among PE teacher-coaches. Carillo ^[27] added a gender perspective, revealing that female teacher-coaches face additional stress due to societal expectations and work-life balance pressures, calling for gender-sensitive policies. These studies underscore the importance of social and organizational recognition as vital coping resources.

Career stage matters as well. Andersson and Pettersson ^[24] showed that veteran PE teachers in Sweden rely more on adaptive coping, while earlier-career teachers may lack these established strategies, making institutional mentorship critical.

Policymakers and administrators must recognize that interventions should be context-sensitive, factoring in crises, cultural norms, and career development needs to be truly effective.

2.4 Institutional and Policy Support

Several studies point to the decisive role of institutional structures in shaping teacher-coach experiences. Sullivan and Kent ^[34] in Australia found that clear role expectations, resources, and administrative support reduced role stress. Similarly, Luna et al. ^[33] confirmed in the Philippine higher education context that strong administrative support correlated with lower role conflict and higher job satisfaction.

Tagare ^[35] demonstrated how the reformed PATH-Fit program created additional demands for PE teachers, with senior faculty support emerging as a crucial factor in balancing responsibilities. Del Rosario and Bautista ^[36] linked administrative backing and stress management programs to improved mental health outcomes among state university PE instructors.

Infrastructure and resource challenges also play a role. Santini and Neto ^[37] reported that inadequate facilities and spaces for PE activities hinder teacher-coach performance in Philippine tertiary institutions. Institutional policies and support systems are not peripheral but central to teacher-coach

effectiveness. Well-designed workload policies, resource provision, and active administrative engagement can transform the work environment from a source of stress to a platform for professional growth.

The literature reveals that PE teacher-coaches face multifaceted challenges stemming from role conflict, heavy workloads, and ambiguous expectations. Psychological factors such as perceived mattering, gender roles, and social support critically influence their stress and coping outcomes. Time management and professional development emerge as essential tools for balancing dual responsibilities. Moreover, institutional support and clear workload policies are vital in mitigating role stress and enhancing job satisfaction. While studies from various countries provide useful insights, the Philippine context presents unique cultural and institutional factors that must be addressed through targeted interventions and policy reforms to better support PE teacher-coaches.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which was deemed appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of Physical Education (PE) teachers who simultaneously handled academic instruction and athletic responsibilities. Qualitative research was selected because it enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, emotions, and coping strategies within their unique work contexts. As Creswell and Poth ^[38] emphasized, qualitative research allows for the exploration of complex phenomena through detailed, rich descriptions that capture the essence of participants' lived realities. This approach aligned with the study's objective of uncovering the nuanced ways PE teachers managed the dual demands of their profession.

Through this design, the study sought to capture not only the strategies and practices employed by PE teachers but also the meanings they attached to their coping mechanisms. This was particularly important given that the intersection of academic and athletic duties is inherently multifaceted and context-dependent. Merriam and Tisdell ^[39] asserted that qualitative research is especially useful when the goal is to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences and construct meaning in specific social or professional settings. In this study, the qualitative design allowed the researcher to examine the participants' day-to-day challenges, stressors, and balancing acts through their own narratives, providing a comprehensive view of the phenomenon.

The design facilitated the collection of in-depth data through semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to share detailed accounts of their work-life balance, stress management approaches, and role negotiation strategies. By adopting this qualitative approach, the study provided a platform for participants' voices to be heard authentically, ensuring that their coping mechanisms were understood within the broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which they operated.

3.2. Population and sampling

The population of this study consisted of Physical Education (PE) instructors who also serve as athletic coaches in higher education institutions, including colleges and universities. These professionals handle the dual responsibilities of academic teaching and athletic coaching, making them key participants for understanding coping mechanisms in managing such demanding roles.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select 15 PE instructors/coaches who are currently employed in higher education institutions. This sample size was considered adequate to achieve data

saturation—the point at which no new themes emerge—while still enabling an in-depth exploration of participants’ experiences and coping strategies within the higher education setting ^[40].

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: they must be actively employed as PE instructors with formal coaching responsibilities in a college or university; have a minimum of two years of combined experience in both academic teaching and athletic coaching at the higher education level; and voluntarily consent to participate, sharing personal experiences during interviews. In addition, to ensure diversity of perspectives, participants were drawn from various public and private higher education institutions, representing a range of institutional policies, resources, and support systems.

Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because it enables the selection of participants who are most knowledgeable and directly involved with the phenomenon under study. This method aligns with the goals of qualitative research, which emphasizes depth of understanding rather than generalization ^[40].

3.3. Instrument

The primary instrument employed for data collection in this study was a semi-structured interview guide crafted by the researcher. This tool was specifically designed to elicit in-depth narratives from participants regarding their experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms in managing Physical Education (PE) instruction alongside athletic coaching duties in higher education settings. The semi-structured format provided a balance between structured questioning and conversational flexibility, enabling participants to openly discuss issues they deemed important while ensuring alignment with the study’s objectives ^[42].

Prior to actual data gathering, the instrument underwent content validation by two subject matter experts in qualitative research and physical education to ensure question clarity, appropriateness, and comprehensiveness. A pilot test was conducted with two PE instructors/coaches meeting the selection criteria but excluded from the final participant pool. The feedback obtained led to refinements in wording and sequencing of questions to enhance the logical flow and engagement during the interview process.

Interviews were conducted either in person or through secure online conferencing platforms, depending on participants’ preferences and logistical considerations. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, was recorded with prior consent, and transcribed verbatim for subsequent qualitative analysis.

Table 1 presents the instrument of the study:

Table 1. Instrument of the study.

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants
To explore how PE teachers manage and cope with the dual demands of academic instruction and athletic responsibilities.	1. What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing your roles as a teacher and a coach? 2. How do you manage your time between academic teaching and athletic coaching responsibilities?	PE Teachers in different higher education institutions
To examine the specific strategies and practices that help PE teachers maintain performance, manage stress, and sustain work-life balance in fulfilling both roles.	1. How do you cope with stress during peak academic and sports seasons? 2. What specific routines or practices help you maintain energy and focus for both teaching and athletic commitments?	

1.4 Data gathering procedure

The primary data collection procedure for this study involved a systematic and ethically guided process designed to ensure the reliability, validity, and integrity of the qualitative data gathered from Physical Education instructors and coaches in higher education institutions. This approach aimed to create an environment conducive to open, honest, and meaningful sharing of experiences.

The data collection procedure consisted of the following key stages:

Securing Approval and Permission – Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's affiliated university. In addition, formal permissions were sought from the administration offices of the participating institutions to allow the conduct of interviews with their PE instructors/coaches.

Identification and Selection of Participants – Purposive sampling was employed to identify individuals who met the inclusion criteria: (a) currently employed as PE instructors with coaching responsibilities, (b) possessing at least two years of combined teaching and coaching experience, and (c) willing to participate in the study. Potential participants were initially contacted through email or phone calls to provide an overview of the study and extend an invitation to take part.

Scheduling and Conducting Interviews – Interview sessions were arranged at the participants' convenience, either in a quiet, private setting for face-to-face discussions or through online platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet, depending on preference and logistical feasibility.

Informed Consent and Rapport Building – At the start of each interview, the researcher reiterated the study's purpose, assured participants of confidentiality, and obtained written or verbal informed consent. Efforts were made to establish rapport and foster a comfortable atmosphere to encourage open dialogue.

Interview Process – The semi-structured interview guide served as the framework for the discussions, providing a balance between focused inquiry and flexibility to explore emerging topics. Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded with participant consent to ensure accurate documentation.

Transcription and Data Preparation – Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim shortly after each session. Transcripts were reviewed alongside the recordings for accuracy and were anonymized by removing identifying information to protect participant confidentiality.

Data Organization and Storage – All transcripts, consent forms, and related materials were stored securely in password-protected digital files. Access to these files was restricted to the researcher, and data will be retained in accordance with ethical guidelines before being permanently disposed of.

3.5. Data analysis

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data ^[43]. This approach allowed the researcher to systematically organize and interpret the rich textual data to uncover the underlying coping mechanisms and experiences of PE instructors/coaches balancing academic and athletic responsibilities.

The analysis process followed the six-step framework outlined by Braun and Clark ^[43]. The first step was familiarization with the data, in which the researcher immersed themselves in the information by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the content. This was followed by generating initial codes, where meaningful segments of data related to coping strategies, role

challenges, and support mechanisms were identified and labeled through open coding. This step involved breaking down the data into manageable units for analysis ^[44].

In the third step, searching for themes, the identified codes were grouped into broader categories and patterns that reflected common experiences and strategies among participants. The fourth step, reviewing themes, involved refining and validating the themes to ensure they accurately represented the dataset and remained distinct from one another. Next, in defining and naming themes, each theme was clearly articulated and labeled to capture its essence and relevance to the research questions ^[38].

The final step was producing the report, which involved writing a detailed narrative that integrated the themes with illustrative quotes from participants and relevant literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Throughout the analysis, the researcher maintained an audit trail and engaged in reflexivity to minimize bias and enhance trustworthiness ^[45]. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to validate interpretations and ensure credibility.

3.6. Ethical considerations

In conducting this study, the researcher ensured strict adherence to ethical principles to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of all participants. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the affiliated university, guaranteeing that the research protocol met established ethical standards.

Participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study. They were assured that their participation would involve minimal risk and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained either in writing or verbally before interviews commenced.

To protect confidentiality and privacy, all data collected—including audio recordings, transcripts, and personal information—were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Participants' identities were anonymized through the use of pseudonyms and removal of identifying details in all documentation and reports.

Furthermore, the researcher maintained transparency and honesty throughout the study, ensuring that findings were reported accurately and without fabrication or misrepresentation. The principle of beneficence was upheld by minimizing potential harm and maximizing the benefits of the research, which aims to contribute to the better understanding of PE teachers' coping mechanisms and improve support systems in educational settings.

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore how PE teachers manage and cope with the dual demands of academic instruction and athletic responsibilities.

Question No. 1. What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing your roles as a teacher and a coach?

1.1 Role Conflict and Time Management Challenges

The participants unanimously described role conflict as their most persistent and overwhelming challenge. They articulated how the dual responsibilities of teaching academic subjects and coaching athletic teams create a relentless tug-of-war for their time, energy, and attention. The nature of their work demands that they be fully present and effective in both roles, yet the schedules often overlap or extend

beyond regular hours, making it nearly impossible to meet expectations without personal sacrifices. This chronic time pressure not only disrupts their professional effectiveness but also spills over into their personal lives, often leading to a sense of guilt, frustration, and burnout.

PE instructors and coaches face the dilemma of divided focus—trying to prepare engaging lessons, provide academic support, and grade assignments while simultaneously managing training sessions, strategizing for competitions, and mentoring athletes. This fragmented attention undermines their ability to excel in either role, fueling feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. They also reported a continuous mental burden of planning ahead, juggling conflicting commitments, and adjusting to unexpected schedule changes such as additional tournaments or school events, which exacerbates their stress.

Excerpts:

“There’s a constant pressure that never lets up. I start my mornings thinking about lesson plans and end my evenings thinking about drills and game strategies. On many days, I’m rushing between classrooms and practice fields, feeling like I’m failing both my students and my athletes because I can’t give 100% to either. Sometimes I skip meals just to catch up on grading or to stay after practice longer, but it never feels like enough. It’s heartbreaking because I love both roles, but the clock is always my enemy.” (Participant 3)

“Time management feels like an impossible puzzle. One week, I’m swamped with exams and papers, and suddenly there’s a big tournament coming up that demands extra training hours. I try to rearrange my schedule, but inevitably something gives. I remember a time when I had to leave a team meeting early to attend a parent-teacher conference, and the guilt weighed so heavily on me I could barely focus for days. It’s emotionally exhausting to feel pulled in every direction, and I don’t have anyone to share the load with.” (Participant 7)

“Every day feels like a marathon. I’m constantly calculating how many hours I can spend here or there, and there’s rarely any margin for rest or personal time. I’ve missed important family occasions because of last-minute practices or school requirements. I want to be a good teacher and a good coach, but sometimes I feel like I’m just surviving instead of thriving. It’s frustrating, and at times, it makes me question if the sacrifices are worth it.” (Participant 12)

1.2 Emotional and Physical Exhaustion

The relentless demands of dual roles take a profound emotional and physical toll on PE instructors/coaches. Participants expressed feelings of deep fatigue that extend beyond mere tiredness, describing a pervasive sense of emotional depletion and mental overload. They spoke candidly about the invisible weight of expectations—both external and self-imposed—that often leads to emotional strain, stress-related health issues, and even burnout. Many conveyed that despite their passion for teaching and coaching, the continuous strain erodes their sense of fulfillment and joy in their work.

Physically, the long hours spent standing, demonstrating, and actively participating in sports practices combined with the sedentary, focused mental work of lesson preparation creates a demanding dual workload. This physical exhaustion exacerbates emotional fatigue, making it difficult to maintain enthusiasm or patience with students and athletes. Participants also shared experiences of isolation, as the intensity of their workload leaves little time for socializing or emotional support outside of work, leading to feelings of loneliness and helplessness.

Excerpts:

“Some days, I don’t even have the energy to get out of bed because my body feels completely worn down. Teaching requires mental focus, but coaching requires physical stamina, and I’m expected to bring my best to both. There are moments when I’m on the field, trying to motivate my players, but inside I’m just empty and exhausted. No one really sees that side of us, the hidden fatigue that creeps in slowly but takes over. It’s heartbreaking to love what you do but feel so drained by it.” (Participant 1)

“After a full day of teaching, my mind is already tired, but I still have to switch gears and become a coach. I have to be loud, encouraging, and energetic for the team, even when all I want is to sit quietly. I remember a night after a tough practice when I cried alone in my car because I felt like I couldn’t keep up with everything. I was afraid to admit it, but the stress was too much, and I felt like I was losing myself somewhere between the classroom and the field.” (Participant 9)

“This work takes everything from me—my time, my energy, my health. Sometimes the exhaustion builds quietly until it explodes in anger or tears. I’ve had to explain to my family why I cancel plans or why I’m distant, but they don’t fully understand how heavy this load is. It’s hard to disconnect from work because the roles are always there, in my head, reminding me of what I still have to do. It’s lonely, overwhelming, and often, very painful.” (Participant 14)

1.3 Lack of Institutional Support and Resources

A recurring theme across all participants was the deep frustration with the insufficient support and resources provided by their institutions. Many described feeling undervalued and overburdened, as their complex roles are often not adequately recognized or supported within their organizational settings. This lack of institutional backing manifests in limited access to facilities, absence of assistant coaches or teaching aides, unclear role definitions, and a general shortage of policies addressing the unique needs of teacher-coaches.

The participants expressed that these institutional gaps exacerbate their challenges by forcing them to take on additional responsibilities without relief, leaving them to cope alone with mounting pressures. The lack of formal support systems—such as counseling services, flexible scheduling, or professional development focused on balancing dual roles—further compounds their stress and feelings of isolation. Participants highlighted that when institutions fail to acknowledge or address these needs, it not only affects their well-being but also impacts the quality of teaching and coaching they can provide.

Excerpts:

“It feels like we’re expected to do everything with nothing. The administration talks about the importance of athletics and academics, but when it comes to giving us the support we need, it’s just words. We don’t have enough equipment, space, or even personnel to help. I’m often left figuring things out on my own, and it’s exhausting. It’s like they expect miracles without giving us the tools.” (Participant 5)

“Our facilities are overcrowded and outdated. We have to share the same gym space with multiple teams, which makes scheduling practice almost impossible. I don’t have an assistant coach, so all the preparation and follow-up falls on me. Sometimes I think about quitting coaching altogether because the lack of support makes it feel like a thankless job.” (Participant 11)

“There’s no clear policy or understanding about how to balance teaching and coaching. Coaching is seen as an extra duty, so it’s not given the same respect or priority as teaching. I wish the school administration would recognize that these roles are interconnected and require proper support. Without that, it feels like we’re just expected to juggle everything on our own, and it takes a heavy toll on us mentally and physically.” (Participant 15)

Question No. 2. How do you manage your time between academic teaching and athletic coaching responsibilities?

2.1 Prioritization and Scheduling Strategies

Participants emphasized that effective time management hinges on their ability to prioritize tasks and create structured schedules. They often begin by identifying the most urgent or important responsibilities

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in both teaching and coaching, then allocate time accordingly. Many use planners, calendars, or digital apps to organize their days and weeks, trying to balance lesson preparations, grading, training sessions, and competitions without overlap. This intentional scheduling helps reduce feelings of chaos and overwhelm, offering a semblance of control amidst their busy routines.

However, despite these efforts, participants acknowledged that flexibility is key. Unexpected events like additional coaching duties, student consultations, or sudden changes in game schedules often force them to readjust plans, requiring constant vigilance and adaptability. Prioritization also means sometimes making difficult choices about which tasks to delegate, postpone, or, unfortunately, drop, which can lead to emotional struggles related to perceived inadequacy or letting others down.

Excerpts:

"I learned early on that without a clear schedule, I'd drown in my responsibilities. I use a planner religiously—blocking out time for class prep in the mornings and coaching in the afternoons. But even then, I have to stay flexible because tournaments can be scheduled last minute or students need extra help unexpectedly. It's a balancing act, and sometimes I feel guilty when I have to cancel a coaching session to focus on grading. Still, having a plan helps me breathe and feel like I'm not just reacting to everything." (Participant 2)

"Every Sunday evening, I sit down to plan my week carefully, slotting in academic tasks and practice sessions. Prioritizing is essential—I tackle the most urgent grading first or prepare lessons ahead when I know a tournament is coming. But it's exhausting always being 'on' and ready to shift gears. Sometimes I wish there were more hours in the day or that someone could share the load because even with all my planning, something always demands my immediate attention." (Participant 8)

"I rely a lot on digital calendars and reminders. I color-code my teaching and coaching activities so I can visually see how my time is divided. But no matter how well I organize, there are days when emergencies pop up—a sick athlete, a school event—and I have to reshuffle everything. It's a constant puzzle, and it takes emotional energy to accept that I can't control it all. I've learned to let go of perfection and focus on doing my best with what I have." (Participant 13)

2.2 Leveraging Support Networks and Delegation

Several participants revealed that managing their dual roles effectively requires not just personal discipline but also strategic use of support networks. They seek help from colleagues, assistant coaches, administrative staff, and even family members to share or alleviate some responsibilities. Delegating tasks such as equipment management, data recording, or even lesson material preparation provides much-needed breathing space.

Emotional and peer support is equally crucial. Sharing experiences and challenges with fellow teacher-coaches helps them feel understood and less isolated. Participants also highlighted the importance of communication—keeping school administrators and athletic directors informed about their schedules and challenges to negotiate flexible arrangements or additional assistance. Those without strong support systems, conversely, expressed feeling overwhelmed and trapped by their workload.

Excerpts:

"I can't do everything alone, so I've built a small support team. My assistant coach handles a lot of the logistics during practices, and I sometimes ask colleagues to cover a class if I have a tournament. Having people to rely on takes so much pressure off, and emotionally, it makes a world of difference knowing I'm not carrying this burden by myself. We also have informal meetups where we vent and share strategies—it's a lifeline." (Participant 4)

"Delegation is a skill I had to develop. I started trusting my student-athletes to manage some equipment and warm-up routines, which freed me up to focus on planning and teaching. I also keep open communication with my

department head to negotiate some flexibility during busy seasons. Without this support, I would be overwhelmed and burnt out much faster.” (Participant 10)

“I’m lucky to have a close-knit group of fellow coaches who understand what I’m going through. We help each other by swapping duties or sharing resources. On tough days, a quick message to a colleague who ‘gets it’ can lift my spirits. It’s not just about workload but emotional survival. I’ve realized that asking for help is not a weakness but a necessity.” (Participant 14)

2.3 Personal Discipline and Self-Care Practices

To sustain their demanding schedules, participants stressed the importance of cultivating personal discipline alongside intentional self-care routines. They described setting boundaries to protect time for rest, physical health, and mental well-being, despite the pressure to always be available. Some implement strict “work cut-off” times, while others incorporate physical exercise, meditation, or hobbies to recharge.

This theme also reflects the participants’ awareness that managing time effectively is not just about efficiency but also about preserving their passion and resilience. Neglecting self-care, they noted, leads to faster burnout and diminished performance in both roles. The emotional nuance here is profound—many struggle to balance self-sacrifice inherent in their roles with the necessity of nurturing themselves.

Excerpts:

“I had to learn the hard way that without self-care, I’d burn out quickly. Now, I set firm boundaries, like no grading after 9 pm, and I make time for exercise that’s just for me, not coaching. It’s not always easy, especially when work piles up, but I remind myself that I can’t give my best if I’m exhausted or overwhelmed. Taking care of myself is part of being a good teacher and coach.” (Participant 5)

“Discipline keeps me grounded. I’ve developed habits like planning meals, sticking to a sleep schedule, and making time for quiet moments, even if it’s just 10 minutes of deep breathing. It’s tough because the demands are relentless, but these practices help me stay mentally sharp and emotionally balanced. I also remind myself that saying ‘no’ sometimes isn’t failure—it’s survival.” (Participant 9)

“I used to push myself until I was completely drained, but now I prioritize self-care. I schedule short breaks between classes and practice, and I try to disconnect from work emails during weekends. It’s about preserving my energy and passion for the job. When I take care of myself, I feel more patient and present with both students and athletes.” (Participant 15)

Research Objectives 2. To examine the specific strategies and practices that help PE teachers maintain performance, manage stress, and sustain work-life balance in fulfilling both roles.

Question No. 1. 1. How do you cope with stress during peak academic and sports seasons?

1.1 Strategic Time Segmentation and Prioritization

One of the most prominent strategies PE teachers employ to manage stress during peak seasons is deliberately segmenting their time and assigning priorities based on urgency and importance. The dual nature of their work — with academic deadlines overlapping with sports training schedules — means that without clear boundaries and conscious allocation of hours, the workload becomes overwhelming. Many participants explained that they deliberately create blocks in their schedule to separate teaching-related tasks (lesson planning, grading, preparation) from coaching responsibilities (training plans, scouting, performance review). This segmentation helps them avoid the mental fatigue of constant switching between roles and allows them to be fully present in one responsibility at a time. Prioritization further comes into play when unexpected situations arise, such as a sudden exam rescheduling or an additional training session before a championship. Teachers learn to make peace with the fact that not everything can be done at once and focus instead on the most impactful tasks for the day.

Excerpts:

"I've learned to live by my planner — if I don't write it down and block out the time, it simply doesn't get done. During peak seasons, I guard my mornings for academic work because that's when I'm mentally sharpest. Afternoons are for the field or the court. I don't let them mix because if I try to do both at the same time, I end up doing neither well." (Participant 6)

"There are days when I'm tempted to just 'wing it,' but experience taught me that without clear priorities, I end up stressed and scrambling. I list down my top three tasks for the day — both for teaching and coaching — and if I accomplish those, I consider it a win." (Participant 15)

"I used to feel guilty saying no to extra activities, but I realized that preserving my focus during peak season isn't selfish — it's necessary. If I stretch myself too thin, both my students in the classroom and my athletes on the court suffer." (Participant 13)

1.2 Mindful Decompression and Self-Care Routines

Beyond technical strategies, participants emphasized the importance of intentional rest and recovery practices as a way to manage the mental and physical toll of the busiest months. For many, stress management goes hand-in-hand with deliberately carving out moments to recharge — whether that's through exercise unrelated to their sport, meditation, spending time with family, or simply enjoying a quiet cup of coffee before the day begins. These routines act as anchors, helping them remain grounded when the workload feels unrelenting. Interestingly, several teachers noted that because their work is inherently physical, they sometimes seek stillness rather than more activity during decompression periods. This mental shift is crucial for preventing burnout and keeping their energy sustainable across the long stretch of overlapping seasons.

Excerpts:

"At first, I thought self-care was just a buzzword, but I learned the hard way that if I don't rest, my body forces me to — usually by getting sick right before a big game or deadline. Now, I protect my Sunday mornings like they're sacred. That's my time to sleep in, eat a slow breakfast, and not think about anything school-related." (Participant 3)

"People think PE teachers don't get stressed because we're always active, but the truth is, the constant movement can be draining. Sometimes, managing stress means just lying down in a quiet room, putting my phone away, and letting my thoughts settle." (Participant 1)

"I always make time for a short walk by myself in the evening. No whistles, no lesson plans, no athletes asking for advice. Just me, the sound of my footsteps, and the reminder that I'm more than my job." (Participant 9)

1.3 Peer Support and Collaborative Load-Sharing

Another recurring theme is the reliance on colleagues for emotional support and workload management. PE teachers often form close-knit networks with other teachers and coaches, recognizing that their peers understand the unique pressure of balancing academic and athletic demands. These relationships become especially critical during peak seasons, as they can share resources, exchange advice, or even cover for one another when emergencies arise. Beyond practical help, having someone to talk to — someone who can empathize with the exhaustion and celebrate small victories — helps reduce feelings of isolation. Several participants noted that simply knowing they are not alone in the struggle significantly reduces stress levels.

Excerpts:

"We've built this unspoken pact in our department — when someone's drowning in responsibilities, we step in where we can. I've had colleagues run my warm-ups while I finish grading, and I've done the same for them. That teamwork keeps us all afloat." (Participant 9)

"There's a huge relief in having someone nod and say, 'I get it,' when you share how overwhelmed you feel. My non-PE friends are supportive, but they don't always grasp the double load we carry. My fellow coaches do — and that understanding itself is healing." (Participant 14)

"One of the best stress management tools isn't in any manual — it's laughing with your colleagues after a grueling day. Those small moments of shared humor make the hard days easier to bear." (Participant 10)

Question No. 2. What specific routines or practices help you maintain energy and focus for both teaching and athletic commitments?

2.1 Structured Daily Routines Anchored on Consistency

A recurring insight among PE teachers is the importance of creating a predictable and disciplined daily routine. This structure enables them to manage both the academic and athletic demands of their profession without burning out. Many emphasize that starting and ending the day with fixed activities—such as early morning preparations, lesson reviews, and warm-up drills—helps them stay grounded even during high-pressure weeks. Consistency eliminates the mental load of constant decision-making, allowing them to focus their cognitive and physical energy on tasks that matter most. This practice also supports mental clarity, helping them avoid the feeling of being constantly “on edge” when the demands of teaching and coaching overlap.

Excerpts:

"I make sure my mornings start the same way, regardless of whether it's exam week or tournament season. I wake up before 5 AM, have a light breakfast, review my lesson plans for the day, and then do a short stretching routine. This sequence gives me the sense that no matter how chaotic the rest of the day gets, I've already anchored myself. Without that, I'd feel like I'm reacting to everything instead of leading my own day." (Participant 11)

"Consistency is my safety net. The moment I let my mornings slip into randomness, everything else feels heavier—lectures feel rushed, training feels unprepared, and my energy drains faster. Keeping a fixed schedule means I have less mental clutter, and that helps me focus better both in the classroom and on the court." (Participant 2)

"I try to keep small rituals in place—coffee at the same time, reviewing my athletes' progress after lunch, and checking my teaching materials before going home. These may seem small, but they protect my energy because they're familiar. I'm not wasting energy thinking about 'what's next' all the time." (Participant 8)

2.2 Intentional Recovery and Rest as Part of the Schedule

Several participants highlighted that they don't see rest as an afterthought—it's an active, deliberate part of their professional strategy. They schedule recovery time into their daily and weekly routines, treating it as seriously as lesson planning or training sessions. This approach acknowledges that sustained energy comes from a cycle of exertion and renewal. Whether through power naps, meditation, or quiet downtime, these teachers protect their mental and physical reserves so they can maintain focus without succumbing to chronic fatigue.

Excerpts:

"I used to think rest was something you earn after work. Now I treat it as part of the work itself. I block out at least 30 minutes after training just to decompress—no phone, no emails, no planning—just breathing and sitting still. That's what allows me to go into my next class with full attention and energy." (Participant 7)

Balancing Acts: Coping Mechanisms of PE Teachers Handling Academic and Athletic Responsibilities

"People think being busy means you should be moving all the time, but for me, the trick is the opposite: I schedule my breaks like meetings. If my mind and body are not recovered, I can't teach effectively or coach passionately. So I take rest seriously, even if it means saying no to extra commitments sometimes." (Participant 5)

"My students know that when I say I'm taking a quick pause after class, I mean it. I learned the hard way that skipping rest for weeks leads to burnout. Now, I guard my recovery time like a coach guards a championship lead—it's non-negotiable." (Participant 4)

2.3 Energy Management through Balanced Nutrition and Physical Maintenance

Participants also recognized that energy and focus are not just mental concerns but are deeply tied to physical upkeep. Many teachers shared that maintaining a healthy diet and consistent physical exercise—beyond the demands of coaching—ensures they can meet the physical intensity of sports training and the mental endurance of academic teaching. Instead of letting exhaustion dictate their habits, they proactively fuel and condition their bodies for sustained performance.

Excerpts:

"I treat my body like an athlete's, even though I'm a teacher too. That means eating balanced meals, staying hydrated, and never skipping my own workouts. When my body feels strong, I can handle long days without dragging myself through them." (Participant 9)

"I realized that if I want to teach PE and coach well, I can't just rely on willpower. My energy comes from the basics: good food, regular movement, and proper hydration. When I ignore those, I start forgetting small details in class or feeling impatient during training." (Participant 13)

"Some think I get enough exercise just by coaching, but coaching isn't the same as training my own body. I need my personal workout time to stay sharp—physically and mentally. It's my way of making sure I don't just survive the day, I actually perform at my best in both roles." (Participant 1)

5. Discussion

The first research objective aims to understand how Physical Education (PE) teachers navigate the challenges of fulfilling two demanding roles simultaneously: delivering academic instruction and coaching athletic teams. This objective recognizes that PE teachers often face overlapping responsibilities, which require both mental and physical engagement.

The primary challenge identified was persistent role conflict and time management strain: PE instructors described an ongoing struggle to fulfill teaching duties—like lesson preparation and grading—while simultaneously managing training sessions, competitions, and athlete mentoring, resulting in chronic pressure, emotional fatigue, and a sense of inadequacy. This mirrors findings from Guinn ^[46], whose qualitative study revealed that teacher-coaches often experience conflicting schedules and divided attention that degrade performance in both domains. Additionally, Konukman et al. ^[1] documented that dual-role educators face conflicting role expectations and overlapping duties that heighten stress and reduce job satisfaction. Collectively, these studies affirm that the inter-role tension reported by participants is not isolated but part of a broader pattern in educational systems where academic and athletic responsibilities overlap without adequate structural relief. The implication is clear: institutions must formalize workload coordination—such as synchronized scheduling, role-specific support, or administrative relief—to mitigate these conflicts, preserve teacher efficacy, and safeguard psychological well-being.

The theme of emotional and physical exhaustion described by participants showed that the dual demands of teaching and coaching produced more than routine tiredness: interviewees reported pervasive emotional depletion, chronic fatigue, somatic complaints, and a shrinking capacity for patience or joy in either role. Physically, the expectation to demonstrate skills, run practices, and remain active for athletes compounded the cognitive load of lesson planning, assessment, and student support, creating a sustained “double shift” that left many feeling isolated and unable to recover between workdays. These findings mirror broader empirical evidence: a systematic review and meta-analysis found that high emotional exhaustion was common among physical-education teachers ^[47], and mixed-methods research grounded in the Job Demands–Resources model identified field-specific demands (paperwork, scheduling, pandemic pressures) and insufficient resources as key predictors of burnout in PE teachers ^[48]. Together, these studies confirm that exhaustion among teacher-coaches is a structural problem produced by persistent high demands plus inadequate recovery or institutional supports. This implies that addressing this exhaustion therefore requires organizational action—not only individual coping—such as redesigning workload (protected planning time and recovery windows), providing practical resources (assistant coaches, adequate facilities), and ensuring access to mental-health supports so that teacher-coaches can sustain their dual roles without eroding their health or effectiveness.

The pervasive issue of institutional neglect and lack of resources emerged as a key challenge for PE instructor-coaches, who felt undervalued and overwhelmed due to inadequate support in facilities, staffing, role clarity, and policy frameworks. This sentiment closely aligns with findings by Chang et al. ^[49], who demonstrated that perceived organizational support positively influences performance among university PE teachers, while poor fit between individual roles and institutional conditions undermines effectiveness. This means that institutions must proactively scaffold dual-role professionals by investing in infrastructure (e.g., dedicated facilities), staffing (assistants or allies), clear role policies, and supportive services (professional development, counseling), thereby aligning organizational resources with the demands placed on teacher-coaches and safeguarding both their well-being and performance.

Participants emphasized that effective time management hinges on prioritizing tasks and organizing structured schedules. Many reported using planners, digital calendars, or color-coded systems to separate academic duties—like lesson prep and grading—from athletic commitments such as training sessions and competitions. While this approach helped reduce chaos and enhance control, they also stressed the necessity of flexibility when unforeseen events—like last-minute tournaments or student needs—emerged, often requiring reprioritization or difficult task sacrifices. These findings align with research from Arcenas et al. ^[50], who investigated teacher-coaches in the Negros Island Region and found that strong time-planning skills and positive attitudes toward time management were significantly correlated with better work–life balance. Similarly, Potts ^[51], in a meta-synthesis of qualitative studies, identified problem-solving strategies—like creating to-do lists and advance scheduling—as central to how coaches manage the competing demands of teaching and coaching. Together, these studies confirm that deliberate prioritization and structured scheduling are not just beneficial—they are foundational for teacher-coaches to maintain effectiveness and safeguard well-being. One can deduce that educational institutions should support teacher-coaches by providing time-management frameworks such as time-blocking templates, training in prioritization techniques, and scheduling buffers that accommodate unforeseen changes. Such structural support enhances coping capacity, reduces decision fatigue, and fosters sustainable performance across dual roles.

Balancing the dual demands of teaching and coaching often goes beyond individual time management and personal resilience; it requires intentional reliance on support systems. Teacher-coaches find that sustaining performance in both fields is not a solitary endeavor but one that depends on

collaborative strategies. Delegation of logistical tasks such as equipment management, data recording, or lesson planning allows them to redirect their energy toward higher-level responsibilities like instructional delivery and athletic training. Beyond the practical dimension, emotional and peer support also emerges as vital. Informal gatherings with colleagues, conversations with administrators, and encouragement from family and peers contribute significantly to their well-being. Those who lack such networks report heightened stress and a greater sense of isolation, underscoring the indispensable role of community and shared responsibility in teacher-coaching work. Studies affirm the importance of support systems in reducing occupational stress among teachers and coaches. For instance, research by Richards, Levesque-Bristol, Templin, and Graber ^[52] emphasizes that strong collegial support mitigates burnout and fosters professional satisfaction among physical education teachers. Similarly, Cosh and Tully ^[53] highlight that social support within athletic environments enhances coping mechanisms, helping coaches manage the pressures of competition seasons. Furthermore, the findings of Skaalvik and Skaalvik ^[54] reveal that administrative support and collegial collaboration are strongly associated with teacher motivation and reduced emotional exhaustion. These works collectively stress that building networks and practicing delegation are not supplementary strategies but central pillars for sustaining long-term effectiveness in dual-role positions. This theme highlights the need for institutions to actively cultivate cultures of collaboration and shared responsibility. Schools and sports programs should recognize that teacher-coaches cannot thrive in isolation. Providing platforms for collegial exchange, encouraging delegation, and ensuring administrative flexibility can make the dual role more sustainable. On a personal level, teacher-coaches must shift their perspective from seeing “asking for help” as a weakness to recognizing it as an essential survival skill. The implication is clear: resilience in dual-role careers is as much about community and collaboration as it is about individual discipline.

Another central theme that emerged is the recognition of the importance of support systems and collaborative networks in enabling PE teachers to thrive in both academic and athletic responsibilities. Participants highlighted how leaning on colleagues, mentors, family, and institutional resources provided emotional reassurance, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging. Teaching and coaching are often seen as highly demanding roles that can become isolating without strong social connections. Having a dependable network not only lightens the workload but also helps teachers feel understood and valued. Research supports this idea. According to a study by Donoso et al. ^[55], social support and collaborative communities within schools significantly enhance teacher well-being and reduce work-related stress. Similarly, Malinauskas ^[56] found that teachers and coaches who maintain strong support networks report higher job satisfaction and are better able to sustain performance during high-pressure periods. These findings suggest that the presence of social and institutional backing is not a luxury but a necessity in sustaining the dual identities of teacher and coach. The implication is clear: when PE teachers are embedded in robust support systems—whether through professional collaboration, family encouragement, or school-level initiatives—they are better able to manage the emotional and physical strains of their dual roles. This reflects that resilience is not only an individual trait but also a collective outcome. For schools, the lesson is to prioritize policies and programs that cultivate a culture of teamwork, mentorship, and recognition, ensuring that no teacher faces these challenges alone.

The purpose of the second objective is to explore how PE teachers navigate the heavy demands of handling both academic responsibilities and athletic coaching, especially during peak seasons. It aims to identify the practical strategies they employ to not only sustain their professional performance but also to manage stress effectively and preserve a healthy balance between work and personal life.

The responses of participants emphasize the importance of time segmentation and task prioritization as effective coping mechanisms during demanding periods. By creating structured schedules

and consciously allocating time for academic and athletic tasks separately, PE teachers minimize role conflict and avoid the inefficiency caused by constant switching. This practice reflects a proactive approach to stress management, where teachers focus on the tasks that matter most instead of attempting to do everything at once. The theme also underscores the necessity of setting boundaries, learning to say no, and embracing realistic expectations of one's productivity. Time management and prioritization have long been recognized as essential strategies in managing stress and sustaining productivity. According to Claessens et al. ^[57] highlight that time management fosters both efficiency and psychological well-being, as it helps individuals allocate their limited time to the most important activities. More recent findings by Aeon and Aguinis ^[58] suggest that strategic time use directly contributes to reduced stress and increased work-life balance by preventing overload and burnout. These perspectives align with the accounts of PE teachers who deliberately block time for academics and sports while consciously selecting the top priorities of the day. The implication of this finding is that effective coping during peak academic and athletic seasons does not necessarily come from working longer hours but from working smarter through structured time management and clear priorities. For institutions, this means that training programs or workshops that develop teachers' time management skills could significantly reduce stress levels and improve overall performance. For PE teachers themselves, embracing segmentation and prioritization can serve as a safeguard against burnout, ensuring that they remain effective in both teaching and coaching roles while maintaining a healthier work-life balance.

The adoption of mindful decompression and self-care routines emerged as a vital coping mechanism for sustaining both physical endurance and psychological balance. Participants consistently highlighted how intentional pauses—whether in the form of quiet rest, light physical activity unrelated to their profession, or small daily rituals like solitary walks or family time—functioned as protective buffers against burnout. This aligns with research by Richards et al. ^[2], who observed that teachers engaging in deliberate self-care practices reported lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction. Similarly, Madigan and Kim ^[59] noted that educators who actively scheduled recovery time were less prone to emotional exhaustion and demonstrated greater resilience during peak workload periods. Taken together, these insights affirm that decompression is not indulgence but necessity: a strategic act of preservation that enables teacher-coaches to maintain sustainable performance across overlapping academic and athletic responsibilities. Institutions that normalize and support such practices—through wellness programs or protected downtime—may not only safeguard educator well-being but also enhance long-term instructional and coaching efficacy.

A central theme that emerged was the critical role of peer support and collaborative load-sharing in sustaining teacher-coaches. Participants emphasized that their professional relationships with colleagues acted as both a practical buffer against excessive workload and an emotional anchor in the midst of competing academic and athletic responsibilities. In practice, these networks translated into resource-sharing, schedule adjustments, and mutual coverage during overlapping duties. More importantly, they offered a sense of solidarity — the reassurance that others truly understood the unique strain of dual responsibilities. As one participant put it, “the best stress management tool isn't in any manual — it's laughing with your colleagues after a grueling day.” Such everyday acts of camaraderie foster resilience and reduce the isolation often reported in teacher-coach roles. This finding reflects broader literature on collegial support in education. Tinto and Russo ^[60] observed that peer networks provide not only practical assistance but also a form of emotional validation that mitigates occupational stress. Similarly, Richards et al. ^[61] noted that collaboration among physical educators helps distribute workload while also enhancing collective efficacy, especially during high-pressure periods such as competitions or grading deadlines. Peer support has also been linked to higher job satisfaction and lower burnout, as colleagues often serve as informal mentors and sources of encouragement ^[54]. The implication is clear: institutions should actively

foster peer support systems, not leave them to chance. Formalizing collaborative structures — such as co-teaching opportunities, departmental check-ins, or mentorship pairings — can amplify the natural benefits of collegial networks. Beyond reducing individual stress, such initiatives strengthen professional community, improve retention, and cultivate a culture of mutual care where teachers are empowered to thrive despite the dual demands of academics and athletics.

Participants consistently highlighted that maintaining energy and focus across both teaching and coaching responsibilities hinges on establishing disciplined daily routines. By creating predictable patterns—such as fixed morning preparations, lesson reviews, and warm-up drills—PE teachers are able to conserve mental and physical energy, reduce decision fatigue, and approach their dual roles with clarity. Consistency not only provides a sense of control amidst overlapping demands but also minimizes stress, enabling educators to maintain engagement, focus, and resilience throughout the day. As Participant 11 noted, starting the day with a reliable sequence “anchors” them, preventing the chaos of reactive responses to constant responsibilities. Similarly, Participant 2 emphasized that structured routines act as a “safety net,” preserving both teaching quality and coaching effectiveness. This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the role of routine and consistency in occupational performance and stress management. For example, MacIntyre et al. ^[62] demonstrated that structured daily habits in educators improve focus, reduce cognitive overload, and support sustained engagement in multifaceted roles. Likewise, Santos et al. ^[63] found that teachers who adhered to consistent work rituals reported lower fatigue levels and higher overall productivity, particularly when managing concurrent teaching and extracurricular responsibilities. These studies suggest that predictable routines are a practical strategy to buffer the effects of occupational stress and maintain energy. The implication of this theme is that PE teachers benefit significantly from intentional daily structuring. By prioritizing consistency in both personal and professional practices, they can preserve cognitive and physical resources, maintain high performance in classrooms and athletic contexts, and reduce the risk of burnout. Institutions may further support this by allowing flexible scheduling that accommodates established routines, reinforcing teachers’ capacity to manage dual responsibilities effectively.

Participants emphasized that effective stress management and sustained performance are not solely dependent on efficient task execution, but also on deliberately integrating rest and recovery into their schedules. Rest is treated as an active component of professional practice, with teachers allocating specific periods for power naps, meditation, or quiet downtime. This intentional approach ensures that mental and physical reserves are replenished, enabling educators to maintain focus, energy, and enthusiasm for both classroom and athletic responsibilities. Participant 7 noted that scheduling recovery after training allows full engagement in subsequent teaching, while Participant 5 highlighted that treating breaks as “meetings” prevents burnout and preserves instructional and coaching quality. These insights are consistent with research on occupational well-being, where deliberate rest and recovery practices are linked to improved performance and reduced stress. For instance, Sonnentag and Fritz ^[64] found that employees who actively scheduled recovery periods reported higher energy levels, better focus, and lower emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Kersemaekers et al. ^[65] demonstrated that structured mindfulness and rest routines among educators contributed to reduced burnout symptoms and enhanced work engagement. Collectively, these studies reinforce the importance of treating rest as a strategic, non-negotiable part of professional routines. The implication of this theme is that PE teachers—and educators more broadly—benefit from intentionally planned recovery periods as part of their daily and weekly schedules. By institutionalizing rest, teachers can sustain performance, mitigate fatigue, and maintain a healthy balance between academic and athletic duties, ultimately safeguarding both personal well-being and professional effectiveness.

Participants highlighted that sustaining energy and focus requires attention to physical well-being, not just mental strategies. Maintaining a balanced diet, proper hydration, and consistent personal exercise routines enables PE teachers to meet the dual demands of academic instruction and athletic coaching. By proactively managing their physical health, participants reported enhanced endurance, better mental clarity, and increased resilience during long and demanding days. For example, Participant 9 emphasized treating their body like an athlete's, ensuring consistent nutrition and workouts, while Participant 13 noted that neglecting these habits led to decreased focus and impatience during both teaching and training. Participant 1 stressed that coaching alone does not substitute for personal physical conditioning, highlighting the need for dedicated self-care routines. These findings align with research demonstrating the critical role of physical health in professional performance. According to McEwen ^[66], adequate nutrition, hydration, and exercise are essential for cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and overall energy management in high-demand occupations. Similarly, Warburton and Bredin ^[67] found that regular physical activity directly improves mental alertness, stamina, and stress resilience, particularly for individuals balancing multiple physical and cognitive responsibilities. These studies corroborate that physical maintenance is not ancillary but central to sustained performance and well-being. The implication is that PE teachers should treat personal health practices—balanced meals, proper hydration, and regular exercise—as integral components of professional responsibility. By embedding these habits into daily routines, teachers can maintain high levels of energy and focus, thereby enhancing both their teaching effectiveness and coaching performance while reducing the risk of fatigue-related errors and burnout.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how PE teachers manage and cope with the dual demands of academic instruction and athletic responsibilities, while also examining the strategies they employ to sustain performance, manage stress, and maintain work-life balance. The findings reveal that teacher-coaches face persistent role conflict, emotional and physical exhaustion, and limited institutional support. Participants described the challenges of juggling lesson preparation, grading, training sessions, and competitions, which often lead to stress, fatigue, and feelings of inadequacy. What is particularly noteworthy is the depth of their personal experiences, showing how the combination of mental, emotional, and physical demands creates a unique professional burden that is rarely acknowledged in existing literature.

Beyond the challenges, this study highlights the practical strategies and coping mechanisms PE teachers employ to navigate their complex roles. Participants emphasized structured routines, prioritization, mindful rest, delegation, peer support, and personal self-care as key factors in maintaining energy, focus, and resilience. Unlike prior research that focuses primarily on the difficulties of dual roles, this study provides a fresh perspective by showcasing how intentional practices and support networks actively sustain teacher-coaches' well-being and performance. These insights demonstrate that success in dual roles is not just about managing tasks but about cultivating habits, relationships, and personal strategies that make the workload manageable and fulfilling.

Finally, the research underscores the importance of institutional recognition and tangible support in reducing stress and preventing burnout. Schools and educational institutions are encouraged to implement workload coordination, resource provision, flexible scheduling, and professional development tailored to the needs of teacher-coaches. By combining personal strategies with systemic support, both educators and institutions can foster a sustainable environment that promotes professional effectiveness, psychological well-being, and a balanced work-life dynamic. Future studies may expand on these findings by exploring interventions or programs specifically designed to strengthen dual-role performance across various educational contexts.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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