

LIVING THROUGH MOVEMENT: THE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE OF VARSITY STUDENT-ATHLETES

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Abstract

This study examines the cultural life of athletic movement among varsity student-athletes in Philippine public higher education, with particular focus on how movement is experienced, interpreted, shaped, and performed within institutional sport environments. Guided by an integrated theoretical lens drawing from embodiment theory, Bourdieu's theory of practice (habitus), and cultural sport studies, the research conceptualizes athletic movement as a lived, socially produced, and culturally meaningful practice rather than a purely technical or biomechanical act. Using an interpretive qualitative design, data were generated through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and contextual observations with officially recognized varsity student-athletes (n = 10). Thematic analysis revealed that student-athletes experience movement in daily training and competition as (1) an embodied routine developed through repetition and bodily adaptation, (2) a disciplined bodily practice regulated by coaching demands and institutional expectations, and (3) a heightened competitive experience intensified by affect,

pressure, and public performance. Student-athletes attached meanings to movement as (1) discipline and self-control, (2) identity and self-definition, (3) responsibility and institutional representation, and (4) personal growth and resilience. Moreover, athletic movement was understood as a form of institutional representation characterized by carrying the institution's name, collective responsibility, public visibility and scrutiny, institutional pride, and moral role modeling that extends beyond competition into everyday campus life. Overall, the findings demonstrate that athletic movement in state college sport operates simultaneously as embodied experience, habituated practice, and cultural performance shaped by institutional structures and public meaning.

Keywords: athletic movement; embodiment; habitus; cultural sport studies; student-athletes; public higher education; institutional representation

Introduction

Human movement constitutes the central analytical object of sports science and has traditionally been examined through biomechanical, physiological, and motor control frameworks aimed at optimizing efficiency, performance, and injury prevention (Gabbett, 2016; Bourdon et al., 2017). Within this dominant paradigm, athletic movement is frequently conceptualized as a technical output governed by universal mechanical principles and neuromuscular coordination (Enoka & Duchateau, 2016). Such approaches have yielded significant advances in performance analysis, skill acquisition, and coaching practice. However, critics have increasingly argued that these models often abstract movement from the lived realities of athletes, treating the body as a functional system while overlooking the social, cultural, and institutional environments in which movement is learned and performed (Ronkainen et al., 2016). As a result, the meanings athletes attach to movement and the cultural forces shaping bodily practice remain insufficiently addressed within mainstream sports science research.

Parallel to these developments, scholarship in sociology of sport and cultural studies has emphasized that sport is not merely a physical activity but a culturally embedded social institution through which norms, values, and identities are produced and regulated (Giulianotti et al., 2016; Parker & Manley, 2017). From this perspective, athletic movement is inseparable from culture, as bodies are trained to move in ways that reflect socially sanctioned ideals of discipline, toughness, control, and excellence (Denison et al., 2015). Ethnographic work on boxing, for instance, illustrates how bodily techniques are acquired through prolonged immersion in specific cultural environments, rendering movement a form of embodied social knowledge rather than a purely technical skill (Rojas, 2022). These insights challenge reductionist accounts of movement and call for a more holistic understanding that situates athletic performance within broader cultural processes (Sá et al., 2021).

The concept of embodiment has been particularly influential in advancing this shift, foregrounding the body as both biological and social, simultaneously shaped by material constraints and cultural meanings (Ryba et al., 2017). Embodiment theory posits that movement is experienced, remembered, and interpreted through lived bodily engagement with the world. In sport contexts, this means that how athletes move is closely tied to how they understand themselves, their roles, and their place within teams and institutions (Cooper & Allen, 2017). Complementing this view, Bourdieu's concept of habitus explains how movement patterns are socially learned and reproduced through structured training practices, resulting in bodies that "know" how to move in culturally appropriate ways without conscious deliberation (Jones et al., 2022). Together, these frameworks highlight movement as a culturally patterned form of action shaped through sustained participation in specific sporting fields.

In higher education sport settings, particularly within public and state institutions, athletic movement is further embedded within organizational logics of accountability, performance, and representation (Buchholz & Lopatta, 2017). Student-athletes are positioned not only as performers but also as institutional representatives whose bodily conduct reflects the values and reputation of the college or university (Weisburst et al., 2016). Training schedules, performance evaluations, and compliance requirements operate as regulatory mechanisms that discipline bodies and normalize specific movement patterns (Rubin & Moses, 2017). Consequently, movement becomes a visible marker of institutional legitimacy, signaling competence, discipline, and collective identity to internal and external audiences (Kerr et al., 2016).

Recent work in cultural sports science and embodied cognition has begun to bridge sports science and cultural analysis by recognizing that movement is simultaneously mechanical, experiential, and symbolic (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). These studies demonstrate that athletes' movement practices are shaped by affective experiences such as pressure, pride, fatigue, and belonging, particularly in environments characterized by high performance demands (Trainor & Bundon, 2023). Nevertheless, much of this literature remains conceptual or focuses broadly on identity and well-being, with limited empirical attention to movement itself as the primary site of cultural meaning-making in sport (Moran et al., 2024). Specifically, few studies have examined how athletes describe, interpret, and live through movement in everyday training contexts.

This gap is especially evident in public higher education institutions in the Global South, where sport often serves multiple functions beyond competition, including service, representation, and nation-building (Marginson, 2018). In such contexts, athletic movement is shaped not only by performance objectives but also by cultural narratives of discipline, sacrifice, and communal responsibility (Morgan & Parker, 2022). Student-athletes navigate structurally demanding environments marked by limited resources, compressed schedules, and heightened expectations of representation, intensifying the cultural significance of how bodies are trained to move (Champ et al., 2018). Yet, the cultural life of movement within these settings remains underexplored.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the cultural life of athletic movement by focusing on how student-athletes experience, interpret, and enact movement within institutional sport environments. Adopting a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in embodiment theory and cultural sport studies, the study shifts analytical attention from movement as output to movement as lived practice. By foregrounding athletes' narratives and embodied experiences, this research contributes to an interdisciplinary understanding of human movement that integrates sports science with cultural analysis. In doing so, it offers new insights into how athletic performance is simultaneously a physical, cultural, and institutional phenomenon, with important implications for coaching, athlete development, and sport education in public higher education contexts.

Research Questions

This study explores the cultural life of athletic movement among student-athletes in selected Philippine state colleges within public higher education. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do student-athletes experience athletic movement in daily training and competition?
2. What meanings do student-athletes attach to their athletic movement?
3. How do student-athletes view athletic movement as part of representing their state college?

Theoretical Lens

This study is guided by an integrated theoretical lens drawing from embodiment theory, Bourdieu's theory of practice (habitus), and cultural sport studies, which together conceptualize athletic movement as a lived, socially produced, and culturally meaningful practice rather than a purely technical or biomechanical act. Embodiment theory positions the body as the primary site through which individuals experience, interpret, and make sense of the social world, emphasizing movement as felt, remembered, and emotionally charged action shaped by everyday engagement in sport contexts (Ryba et al., 2017; Parviainen & Aromaa, 2015). Complementing this perspective, Bourdieu's notion of habitus explains how movement patterns are socially learned and reproduced through structured training environments, as institutional routines, coaching practices, and evaluative norms cultivate durable bodily dispositions that guide how athletes move without conscious deliberation (Bourdieu, 1990; Barker-Ruchti et al., 2015). Cultural sport studies further situate athletic movement within broader institutional and societal contexts, viewing sport as a cultural field where values such as discipline, identity, representation, and legitimacy are enacted through embodied practice, particularly within public higher education settings (Giulianotti, 2016; Denison et al., 2015). Together, these frameworks provide a coherent lens for examining how student-athletes experience, interpret, and enact athletic movement as a culturally embedded practice shaped by institutional structures, social expectations, and lived bodily experience.

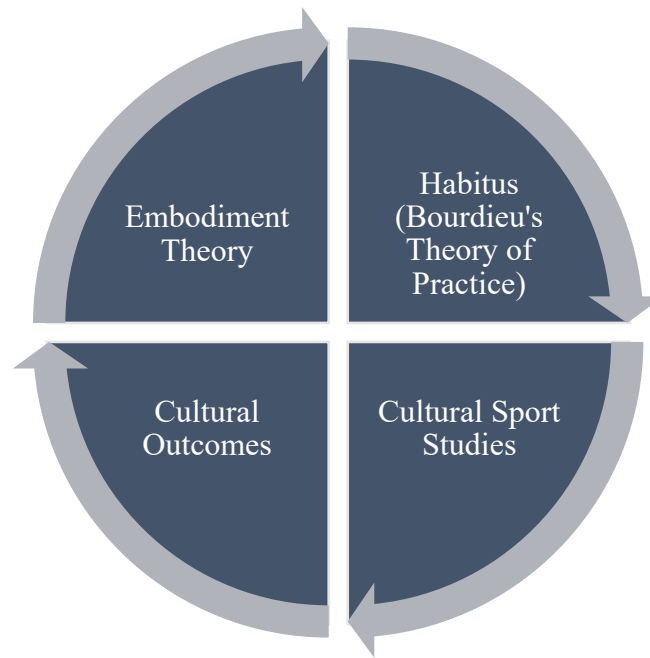


Figure 1. Integrated Theoretical Concept Map of Athletic Movement

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretive paradigm to examine athletic movement as a culturally embedded practice within public higher education sport contexts. An interpretive qualitative approach is appropriate as it enables an in-depth exploration of how student-athletes experience, interpret, and enact movement in their everyday training and competitive environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The study focuses on student-athletes in a Philippine state college and generates data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and contextual observations, which are well suited for capturing lived, embodied experiences in sport settings (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Patton, 2015). Data are analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by embodiment theory, Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and cultural sport studies, allowing for a theoretically informed interpretation of meanings related to movement, discipline, identity, and institutional representation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bourdieu, 1990; Giulianotti, 2016).

Research Setting

The study was conducted across selected Philippine state colleges, specifically Mindanao State University at Naawan (MSU–Naawan), Davao del Sur State College (DSSC), and J.H. Cerilles State College (JHCSC), situated within the context of public higher education where sport functions as both an academic support activity and an institutional practice tied to visibility, discipline, and representation. The research setting encompasses formally organized varsity programs, regular coach-led training sessions, and participation in sanctioned intercollegiate

competitions. Within these environments, athletic movement is shaped by the interaction of institutional rules, coaching practices, team cultures, and academic demands, as student-athletes navigate training compliance, performance expectations, and eligibility requirements alongside coursework and class schedules. Student-athletes are also positioned as representatives of their respective institutions, rendering bodily performance and conduct visible markers of institutional identity and legitimacy in public sporting contexts. Collectively, these state college settings provide an appropriate context for examining athletic movement as a culturally embedded and institutionally regulated lived practice within Philippine public collegiate sport.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were officially recognized varsity student-athletes enrolled in the selected state colleges and actively participating in institutional sport programs at the time of data collection. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants capable of providing rich, first-hand accounts of athletic movement within structured collegiate sport environments. Inclusion criteria required that participants (a) held formal varsity status, (b) were engaged in regular coached training sessions, and (c) had represented their institution in sanctioned intercollegiate competitions. Exclusion criteria included students who participated only in recreational sport, athletes who were no longer actively training or competing during the study period, and individuals without official varsity accreditation. This sampling strategy aligns with qualitative research objectives that prioritize depth, relevance, and experiential insight rather than statistical generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1. Profile of Study Participants

Participant Code	Sport	Sex	Years as Varsity Athlete	Competition Level
P1	Basketball	Male	3	Intercollegiate
P2	Volleyball	Female	2	Intercollegiate
P3	Athletics (Track & Field)	Male	4	Intercollegiate
P4	Basketball	Male	2	Intercollegiate
P5	Volleyball	Female	3	Intercollegiate
P6	Badminton	Female	2	Intercollegiate
P7	Basketball	Male	3	Intercollegiate
P8	Volleyball	Female	4	Intercollegiate
P9	Athletics (Track & Field)	Female	2	Intercollegiate
P10	Football/Futsal	Male	3	Intercollegiate

Note. Participant identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide designed to generate rich, in-depth accounts of student-athletes' experiences, interpretations, and meanings related to athletic movement within institutional sport contexts. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their everyday training and competition routines, bodily sensations and emotional responses during movement, interactions with coaches and teammates, and the ways institutional rules, expectations, and academic demands shape how they move and train. Additional prompts explored participants' perceptions of discipline, identity, and institutional representation, allowing movement to be discussed as both a physical and cultural practice. The use of a semi-structured format ensured consistency across interviews while allowing sufficient flexibility to pursue emergent themes, clarify meanings, and deepen exploration of embodied experiences as they unfolded during the interview process. This approach is well suited for examining lived experience and meaning-making in sport, as it balances systematic inquiry with responsiveness to participants' narratives and situational contexts.

Data Gathering Procedures

Following ethical clearance and the securing of informed consent, data collection was conducted in a systematic and ethically sensitive manner. Participants were initially contacted through institutional sport coordinators or coaches and were provided with clear information regarding the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Semi-structured interviews were scheduled at times and locations convenient for participants, typically in quiet campus spaces to allow for open and uninterrupted reflection. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with permission, and subsequently transcribed verbatim, with transcripts checked against the recordings for accuracy. In addition, contextual observations of training sessions and sport participation were undertaken where feasible to complement interview data and provide situational insight into training routines, movement practices, and coach–athlete interactions, with observations documented through detailed field notes. Data collection followed an iterative process in which emerging insights informed subsequent interviews and observations, and continued until thematic sufficiency was reached, indicated by the recurrence of key patterns and meanings across participants' accounts.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Analysis began with repeated reading of interview transcripts and field notes to achieve familiarization, followed by the systematic generation of initial codes that captured meaningful aspects of participants' experiences of athletic movement. Codes were then organized and examined to identify patterns across the dataset, leading to the development and

refinement of themes. Throughout the analytic process, interpretation was guided by the study's integrated theoretical lens, with embodiment theory sensitizing the analysis to lived bodily experience and affect, Bourdieu's concept of habitus informing interpretations of routine, discipline, and socially learned movement practices, and cultural sport studies framing issues of identity and institutional representation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bourdieu, 1990; Ryba et al., 2017; Giulianotti, 2016). This iterative process resulted in a coherent set of themes that reflect how athletic movement is experienced as a culturally embedded and institutionally shaped practice.

Results

The Lived Experience of Athletic Movement in Daily Training and Competition

This section examined how student-athletes experience athletic movement in their everyday participation in training and competitive contexts. Findings indicate that student-athletes experience movement not merely as physical execution but as a lived, embodied, and disciplined practice shaped by routine training, emotional engagement, and competitive pressure. Athletic movement was consistently described as something that is learned through repetition, felt through bodily strain and rhythm, and intensified during competition. Three major themes emerged: (1) Movement as Embodied Routine, (2) Movement as Disciplined Bodily Practice, and (3) Movement as Heightened Experience in Competition.

Table 2. Emerging Themes on Student-Athletes' Experiences of Athletic Movement

Major Theme	Description
Embodied Routine	Movement is learned and internalized through repetitive daily training
Disciplined Bodily Practice	Movement reflects control, endurance, and adherence to coaching demands
Heightened Competitive Experience	Movement intensifies during competition through pressure and emotion

Movement as Embodied Routine

Student-athletes described athletic movement as something that becomes part of the body through repeated training, where actions are gradually internalized and performed with less conscious effort. Daily drills, warm-ups, and conditioning exercises were viewed as essential in shaping how the body moves, reacts, and adapts over time. Participants emphasized that movement is learned through repetition, with the body "getting used to" the demands of training.

"Sa sige ug training, mura'g naanad na ang lawas. Di na kaayo ka maghunahuna kung unsaon nimo paglihok."

(Because of constant training, the body gets used to it. You no longer think too much about how to move.) (P3)

“Balik-balik ra gyud ang lihok sa training, mao na nga mas sayon na siya buhaton sa actual nga dula.”

(The movements in training are repetitive, that's why they become easier to do during the actual game.) (P7)

These accounts indicate that athletic movement is experienced as an **embodied routine**, gradually shaped through continuous practice and bodily adaptation.

Movement as Disciplined Bodily Practice

Participants also described movement as a form of disciplined bodily practice, regulated by coaching instructions, training schedules, and performance expectations. Movements were expected to be controlled, precise, and consistent with team strategies, reflecting discipline and commitment. Athletes noted that training required them to push through fatigue and discomfort, reinforcing control over the body.

“Maski kapoy na kaayo, kinahanglan gihapon sundon ang lihok nga giingon sa coach.”
(Even when you're very tired, you still have to follow the movements instructed by the coach.) (P1)

“Ang training dili lang kusog, pero disiplina gyud sa lawas.”
(Training is not just about strength, it's really about disciplining the body.) (P5)

These experiences show that athletic movement is not spontaneous or free-flowing but is shaped by discipline, regulation, and institutional expectations embedded in daily training.

Movement as Heightened Experience in Competition

During competitions, student-athletes experienced movement as more intense and emotionally charged compared to training. Participants reported heightened awareness, pressure, and responsibility when performing in front of audiences and representing their institution. While movements became more automatic due to training, they were also influenced by emotions such as nervousness, excitement, and pride.

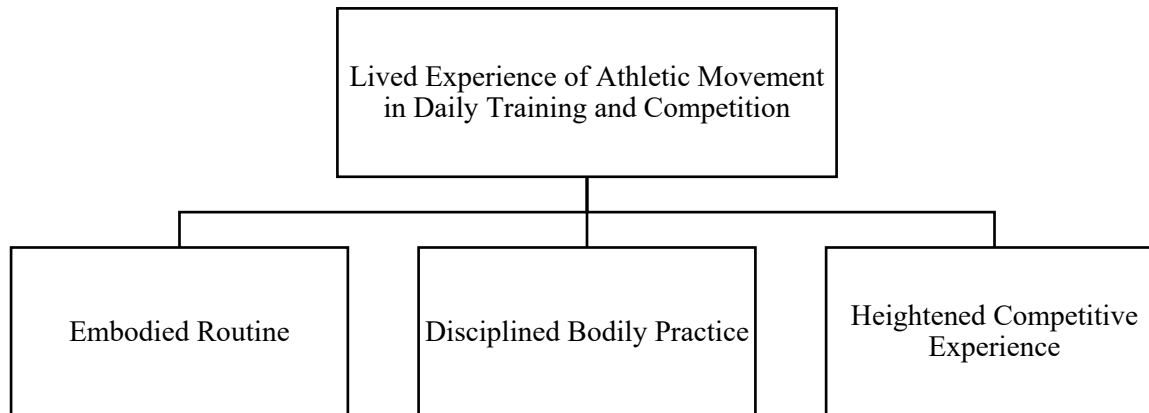
“Lahi ra gyud ang lihok kung naa na sa competition. Murag mas paspas ug mas bug-at ang tanan.”

(Movement feels different during competition. Everything feels faster and heavier.) (P2)

“Sa dula, mura’g automatic na ang lihok pero grabe ang pressure kay nagdala ka sa ngalan sa school.”

(In competition, movements become automatic, but the pressure is intense because you are carrying the school's name.) (P9)

These narratives indicate that competition amplifies the embodied and emotional dimensions of movement, transforming it into a heightened lived experience shaped by representation and performance demands.

Figure 3. Student-Athletes' Lived Experience of Athletic Movement

The Meanings Attached to Athletic Movement by Student-Athletes

This section examined the meanings that student-athletes attach to their athletic movement within institutional sport contexts. Findings indicate that athletic movement is understood not merely as physical action, but as a meaning-laden practice through which student-athletes interpret discipline, identity, responsibility, and personal growth. Movement was consistently described as a way of expressing commitment to sport, representing the institution, and shaping the self through bodily effort and perseverance. Four major themes emerged: (1) Movement as Discipline and Self-Control, (2) Movement as Identity and Self-Definition, (3) Movement as Responsibility and Representation, and (4) Movement as Personal Growth and Resilience.

Table 3. Emerging Themes on the Meanings Attached to Athletic Movement

Major Theme	Description
Discipline and Self-Control	Movement signifies control, endurance, and commitment
Identity and Self-Definition	Movement expresses being an athlete
Responsibility and Representation	Movement reflects duty to the institution
Personal Growth and Resilience	Movement symbolizes self-improvement and perseverance

Movement as Discipline and Self-Control

Student-athletes commonly described athletic movement as a symbol of discipline and control over the body. Performing prescribed movements required patience, consistency, and the ability to endure physical discomfort. Participants emphasized that movement reflects their ability to follow instructions and regulate their bodies according to training demands.

“Ang lihok sa training nagpasabot nga kontrolado nimo imong lawas.”
(*Movement in training shows that you can control your body.*) (P4)

“Kung dili ka disiplinado sa lihok, makita gyud sa performance.”
(*If you are not disciplined in your movement, it really shows in your performance.*) (P6)

These accounts indicate that athletic movement is imbued with meaning as a marker of discipline and self-regulation.

Movement as Identity and Self-Definition

Participants also attached meaning to movement as a way of expressing who they are as athletes. Movement patterns, playing style, and bodily confidence were seen as reflections of personal and athletic identity. Student-athletes reported that how they move distinguishes them from non-athletes and affirms their role within the team.

“Makaila ka kung athlete ang tao tungod sa iyang lihok.”
(*You can recognize an athlete by how they move.*) (P1)

“Ang akong lihok sa court murag mao na gyud akong identity.”
(*My movement on the court feels like my identity.*) (P8)

These statements show that athletic movement serves as a visible and embodied expression of identity.

Movement as Responsibility and Representation

Athletic movement was also understood as carrying responsibility and representational meaning, particularly during competitions. Participants emphasized that their movements are not only personal but are seen as reflecting their school and team, making each action symbolically significant.

“Dili lang para sa imoha ang lihok, para pud sa school.”
(*Your movement is not just for yourself, it is also for the school.*) (P2)

“Maski simple nga lihok, murag nagrepresent ka sa institution.”
(*Even simple movements feel like you are representing the institution.*) (P9)

These accounts highlight movement as a form of embodied representation tied to institutional identity.

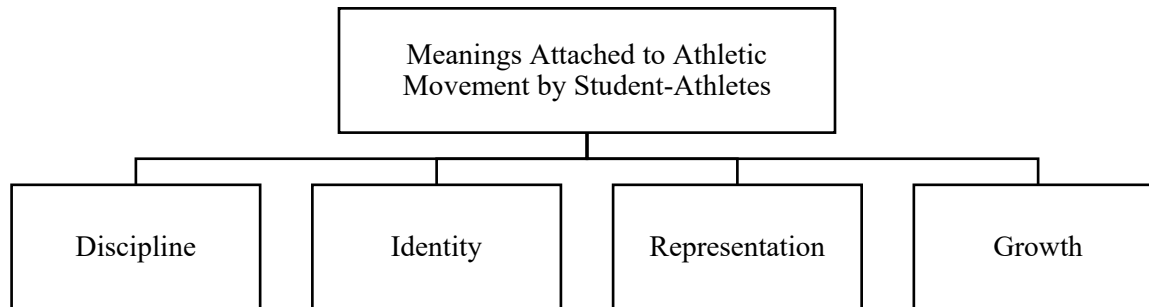
Movement as Personal Growth and Resilience

Finally, student-athletes described athletic movement as meaningful in terms of personal development and resilience. Overcoming physical challenges, learning complex movements, and improving performance were seen as sources of confidence and self-growth. Movement symbolized perseverance and the capacity to improve through effort.

“Ang lihok nagatudlo ug pasensya ug pagpadayon.”
(*Movement teaches patience and perseverance.*) (P5)

“Makita nimo ang imong growth sa imong lihok.”
(*You can see your growth through how you move.*) (P7)

These narratives suggest that athletic movement holds meaning as a pathway to personal growth and resilience beyond sport performance.

Figure 3. Meanings Attached to Athletic Movement

Athletic Movement as Institutional Representation

This section examined how student-athletes view athletic movement as part of representing their state college in public and intercollegiate sport contexts. Findings show that student-athletes understand movement as an embodied form of institutional representation, where bodily actions reflect the image, values, and expectations of the state college. Athletic movement was described as carrying symbolic weight beyond performance, linked to responsibility, visibility, discipline, and moral conduct. Five major themes emerged: (1) Movement as Carrying the Name of the Institution, (2) Movement as Collective Responsibility, (3) Movement as Public Visibility and Scrutiny, (4) Movement as Symbol of Institutional Discipline and Pride, and (5) Movement as Moral Conduct and Role Modeling.

Table 4. Emerging Themes on Athletic Movement as Institutional Representation

Major Theme	Description
Carrying the Name of the Institution	Movement represents the school in public sporting spaces
Collective Responsibility	Individual movement reflects the whole team and institution
Public Visibility and Scrutiny	Movement is constantly observed and evaluated
Institutional Discipline and Pride	Movement symbolizes discipline, honor, and school pride
Moral Conduct and Role Modeling	Movement reflects ethical behavior expected of state college athletes

Movement as Carrying the Name of the Institution

Student-athletes consistently described athletic movement as an act of carrying the name of their state college, particularly during competitions. Every movement was perceived as publicly representing the institution rather than merely expressing individual performance.

“Kung magdula ka, dili lang ikaw ang makita, ang ngalan sa school ang imong dala.”
(When you play, it’s not just you who is seen; you are carrying the school’s name.) (P1)

“Bisan unsa imong lihok, murag nagrepresent ka sa state college.”
(Whatever your movement is, it feels like you are representing the state college.) (P6)

Movement as Collective Responsibility

Participants framed athletic movement as a shared responsibility, where individual actions reflect on teammates and the institution as a whole. Movement was therefore performed with awareness of its collective implications.

“Kung sayop imong lihok, dili lang ikaw ang maulawan, apil ang team ug school.”
(If your movement is wrong, it's not only you who is embarrassed, but also the team and the school.) (P4)

“Kinahanglan mag-amping ka sa lihok kay daghan kaayong nagasalig nimo.”
(You have to be careful with your movement because many people are depending on you.) (P9)

Movement as Public Visibility and Scrutiny

Student-athletes emphasized that athletic movement is subject to constant public observation, particularly during intercollegiate competitions. Awareness of being watched heightened pressure to move properly and maintain composure.

“Daghan kaayo mutan-aw, mao na nga murag tanang lihok bantayan.”
(Many people are watching, so every movement feels monitored.) (P2)

“Bisan simple nga lihok, murag dako kaayo ug epekto kay tan-awon man sa tanan.”
(Even simple movements feel impactful because everyone is watching.) (P8)

Movement as Symbol of Institutional Discipline and Pride

Movement was also understood as a symbol of discipline and institutional pride, where proper bodily control and composure were seen as ways of honoring the state college.

“Kung tarong imong lihok, murag nagpakita ka ug respeto sa school.”
(If your movement is proper, it feels like you are showing respect for the school.) (P3)

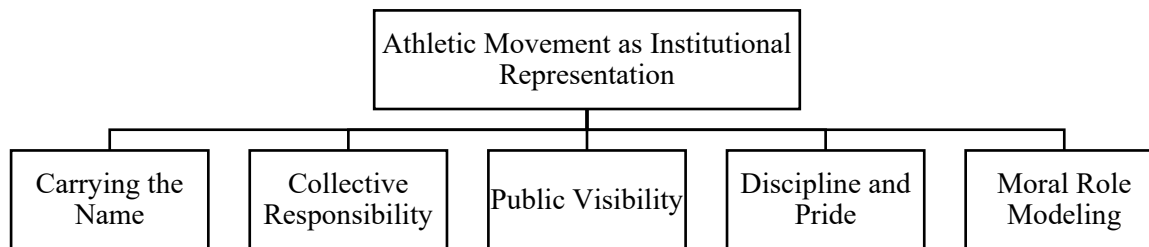
“Ma-proud ka kung limpyo ug tarong imong lihok kay nagrepresent man ka sa institution.”
(You feel proud when your movement is clean and proper because you are representing the institution.) (P7)

Movement as Moral Conduct and Role Modeling

Beyond competition, student-athletes viewed athletic movement as reflecting moral conduct and role modeling, extending expectations of proper behavior to everyday campus life.

“Athlete ka sa state college, mao na nga bantayan gyud imong lihok.”
(As an athlete of a state college, you really have to watch how you move.) (P5)

“Bisan wala mi dula, murag naa gihapon expectation sa imong lihok.”
(Even when there is no game, there are still expectations about how you move.) (P9)

Figure 5. Athletic Movement as Institutional Representation

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that athletic movement among student-athletes in Philippine state colleges is best understood as an embodied, socially learned, and culturally regulated practice, rather than a purely technical or biomechanical act. The theme of movement as embodied routine affirms embodiment scholarship which argues that bodily knowledge in sport is developed through repeated, lived engagement, where movement becomes internalized as practical know-how rather than consciously executed technique (Parviainen & Aromaa, 2015). From a practice-theory perspective, this routinization reflects the formation of habitus, wherein repeated exposure to structured training environments produces durable bodily dispositions that guide action with reduced cognitive effort (Bourdieu, 1990). Student-athletes' accounts of their bodies "getting used to" training illustrate how institutional sport contexts shape movement through embodied learning rather than instruction alone.

The theme of movement as disciplined bodily practice further supports sociological analyses that frame sport training as a disciplinary space governed by coaching authority, schedules, and performance norms. Critical coaching literature emphasizes that such environments normalize control, endurance, and compliance through correction and repetition, shaping how bodies are expected to move and behave (Denison et al., 2015). At the same time, organizational sport culture research suggests that these disciplinary structures persist because they provide shared standards and collective coherence within teams (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). The present findings extend this literature by showing that student-athletes do not experience discipline solely as external control, but also internalize it as commitment and readiness, illustrating how institutional expectations become embodied as self-regulation through habitus (Bourdieu, 1990).

Findings related to movement as a heightened experience in competition align with embodiment-oriented research highlighting the affective intensification of bodily experience in high-stakes performance contexts. Competition heightened athletes' bodily awareness and emotional engagement, even as movements became more automatic due to training, supporting the view that emotion and embodiment are inseparable in sport performance (Ryba et al., 2017). Cultural sport studies further argue that competitive sport is a public performance space where

meaning is amplified through visibility and evaluation (Giulianotti, 2016). In this study, the intensification of movement during competition was closely tied to representational pressure, reinforcing the idea that affective experience is shaped not only by individual psychology but by institutional and cultural expectations.

The meanings student-athletes attached to movement, as discipline, identity, responsibility, and personal growth, underscore movement as a central site of meaning-making. The identification of movement as a marker of discipline and self-control supports cultural analyses that view sport as a domain where values such as commitment and endurance are enacted through bodily practice (Denison et al., 2015; Giulianotti, 2016). Similarly, the theme of movement as identity and self-definition aligns with narrative and cultural scholarship showing that athletic identity is socially constructed and embodied, with athletes recognized by how they move as much as by what they say or achieve (Ronkainen et al., 2016). The finding that movement symbolizes personal growth and resilience further affirms qualitative sport research suggesting that athletes interpret bodily struggle as formative, although identity scholarship also cautions that strong athletic identity can intensify pressure and vulnerability when performance is central to self-worth (Ronkainen et al., 2016).

Finally, the results on athletic movement as institutional representation strongly affirm cultural sport studies perspectives that conceptualize sport as a cultural field where institutions enact legitimacy, identity, and moral order through embodied performance (Giulianotti, 2016). Themes such as carrying the institution's name, collective responsibility, public visibility, and institutional pride reflect how movement is evaluated not only for technical quality but for its symbolic alignment with institutional values. Organizational culture research supports this by emphasizing that public performance reinforces shared meanings and collective accountability within teams (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). The added theme of movement as moral conduct and role modeling extends existing literature by showing that representational expectations regulate athletes' bodily conduct beyond competition, shaping everyday behavior on campus. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that athletic movement in public higher education is simultaneously embodied experience, habituated practice, and cultural performance, deeply shaped by institutional structures, coaching norms, and public meaning.

Conclusions

This study concludes that athletic movement among student-athletes in Philippine state colleges is a lived, socially learned, and culturally regulated practice, rather than a purely technical or biomechanical act. Student-athletes experience movement as embodied routine, formed through repetitive training that gradually becomes internalized as bodily know-how. Athletic movement is further shaped as a disciplined bodily practice, regulated by coaching authority, institutional rules, and performance expectations that normalize control, endurance, and compliance. In competitive contexts, movement becomes a heightened embodied experience, intensified by emotional

pressure, public visibility, and the responsibility of institutional representation. Beyond execution, student-athletes attach deep meanings to movement, as expressions of discipline, identity, responsibility, personal growth, and resilience. Finally, athletic movement functions as a form of institutional representation, where bodily conduct symbolizes collective identity, discipline, pride, and moral responsibility, extending expectations of proper movement and behavior beyond competition into everyday campus life. Collectively, the findings affirm that athletic movement in public higher education is simultaneously embodied experience, habituated practice, and cultural performance, shaped by institutional and coaching structures.

Implications of the Study

The findings have important implications for sports science, coaching practice, and higher education sport policy. First, the study contributes to sports science by demonstrating the need to move beyond purely biomechanical analyses of movement and to incorporate embodiment and cultural perspectives that recognize movement as lived and meaning-laden. Second, for coaches and sport administrators, the results highlight how training practices and institutional rules not only shape performance but also produce athlete identity, discipline, and moral conduct, underscoring the ethical responsibility of coaching approaches. Coaching practices that rely solely on control and compliance may inadvertently intensify pressure, whereas reflective and athlete-centered approaches may better support embodied learning and well-being. Third, within public higher education, the findings emphasize that student-athletes carry institutional and representational burdens through their movement, suggesting the need for policies that acknowledge these responsibilities and provide adequate academic, psychological, and organizational support. Recognizing movement as cultural practice can help institutions better balance performance demands with student-athlete development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Embodied Athlete Development Program (EADP):** Integrate short reflection sessions, movement awareness activities, and embodied learning discussions into regular training to support self-regulation and well-being.
- **Athlete-Centered Coaching Training:** Require regular coach education on embodied learning, ethical coaching, burnout prevention, and athlete communication.
- **Student-Athlete Academic and Mental Health Support:** Provide coordinated academic advising, flexible scheduling during competitions, and access to dedicated counseling services.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Include embodiment theory and cultural sport studies modules in Physical Education and Sports Science programs.
- **Athlete Conduct and Representation Program:** Implement orientation and mentorship programs emphasizing ethical conduct, role modeling, and institutional representation.

- **Research Development Initiatives:** Support longitudinal and comparative studies on athletic movement across sports and institutional contexts.

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