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## Coaches Lived Experiences, Challenges and Strategies in Motivating Para-Athletes Performance in Selected High School in South Cotabato.

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This qualitative study explores the lived experiences, challenges, and strategies of high school coaches in South Cotabato as they work to motivate para-athletes. Despite the growing recognition of para-sports, the role of coaches remains under-researched, particularly in localized and resource-constrained educational settings. Anchored on Self-Determination Theory and employing a phenomenological design, this research investigates how coaches navigate the emotional, social, and physical dimensions of coaching student-athletes with disabilities. In-depth interviews with selected coaches from five public high schools were conducted to gather rich, narrative data. The findings reveal that coaches employ adaptive and emotionally intelligent strategies such as autonomy support, individualized training, empathy-driven engagement, and resilience-building to address diverse impairments and systemic barriers. Coaches face persistent challenges, including lack of specialized training, limited institutional support, emotional burnout, and infrastructural inadequacies. Despite these difficulties, their intrinsic motivation, driven by a deep sense of purpose and commitment to inclusive athletic development, sustains their efforts. The study underscores the necessity for policy reform, coach education programs, and support systems that are responsive to the needs of para-athletes and their coaches. These insights contribute to the development of more inclusive, effective, and empathetic coaching frameworks within the Philippine high school sports system.

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