

CONFLICT PREVENTION: STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY COACHES IN COTABATO CITY

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Abstract

This study examined the conflict experiences of city coaches and the leadership styles that influence their approaches to conflict prevention. Using qualitative methods, the research explored how coaches navigate clashes of opinions, strong personalities, emotional tensions, communication barriers, and structural constraints within sports teams. Findings revealed that coaching leadership styles, particularly transformational, and participative approaches, play a central role in shaping conflict management practices. Coaches who demonstrated empathy, open communication, shared decision-making, and individualized support were more successful in building trust, strengthening relationships, and mitigating conflict escalation.

The study also identified key challenges that hinder effective conflict prevention, including personality-driven tensions, emotional overload, bias, and misunderstandings arising from unclear or inconsistent communication. These issues align with Conflict Management Theory, which emphasizes the importance of structured strategies in addressing interpersonal disagreements, and Transformational Leadership Theory, which highlights the role of inspirational and relational leadership in fostering cohesion and reducing conflict.

Overall, the findings suggest that enhancing communication frameworks, strengthening leadership competencies, and promoting participative decision-making can improve conflict prevention among city coaches. The study concludes by recommending targeted training programs, institutional support, and the development of standardized team policies to create a more cohesive, collaborative, and psychologically safe coaching environment.

Keywords: conflict prevention, leadership styles, transformational leadership theory, conflict management theory

INTRODUCTION

In the field of sports, conflict is an inherent and dynamic element that can either hinder or enhance team performance and development. Coaches, as primary leaders and decision-makers in athletic teams, are regularly faced with conflicts arising from various sources, including interpersonal disputes, differences in cultural values, coaching styles, performance expectations, and institutional pressures (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). The prevention of such conflicts is pivotal, not only for maintaining harmony within the team but also for promoting athlete well-being, motivation, and a positive sports environment (Holt & Knight, 2014).

In Cotabato City, the landscape of sports coaching is uniquely shaped by the city's rich tapestry of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity (Bangsamoro Sports Commission, 2025). Situated in a region historically affected by socio-political unrest and intergroup tensions, Cotabato City presents a distinctive context wherein coaches are not only athletic mentors but also community leaders navigating deeply rooted social differences. Sports in this city are often viewed as a bridge for fostering unity, understanding, and resilience among youth from various backgrounds (Sugden, 2006). Within this complex setting, conflict resolution takes on an added layer of social and cultural significance.

While coaches are traditionally trained to focus on the physical and tactical aspects of athlete development, their roles have expanded to include conflict management, psychosocial support, and interpersonal facilitation (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). However, there is a significant gap in both academic literature and practice when it comes to understanding the specific conflict prevention strategies employed by coaches operating in culturally sensitive environments such as Cotabato City. Much of the existing research on conflict prevention in sports is situated in Western or homogenous contexts, often overlooking the realities of coaches working in areas marked by diversity, inequality, and historical marginalization (Jeanes, O'Connor, & Alfrey, 2015).

Moreover, studies on conflict resolution in sports often highlight general frameworks such as Thomas-Kilmann's conflict management styles—avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating—

but few investigate how these strategies are adapted, modified, or innovatively applied in contexts with complex cultural and socio-political dynamics (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). There is a compelling need to examine how coaches in Cotabato City—given their exposure to multicultural teams, competing identities, and post-conflict realities—develop and implement contextually relevant conflict prevention strategies that are effective, inclusive, and peace-oriented (Schinke et al., 2017).

This research also contributes to the growing discourse on the intersection of sports and peace education, aligning with the national and regional efforts to utilize sports for youth development and intercultural understanding. The findings of this study can inform policy frameworks of local government units, the Department of Education, and other stakeholders involved in grassroots sports programs, particularly in conflict-sensitive and culturally diverse areas like Cotabato City. Furthermore, the insights gained can support the design of targeted training programs and capacity-building initiatives for coaches, emphasizing not only technical competencies but also emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution skills.

In sum, this study is driven by the need to explore, document, and analyze the conflict prevention strategies employed by coaches in Cotabato City, to contribute to the academic fields of sports management, peace studies, and multicultural education, and to provide practical recommendations for empowering coaches as both athletic leaders and peacebuilders in their communities.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a descriptive-phenomenological approach, to explore and understand the conflict prevention strategies employed by city coaches in Cotabato City. The qualitative design is appropriate given the study's aim to uncover the lived experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes of coaches when dealing with conflict in diverse and often complex team environments.

The descriptive-phenomenological approach, grounded in the work of Edmund Husserl, seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals. In this study, the phenomenon is the act of resolving conflict within a sports coaching context. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the research will capture the unique ways coaches interpret conflict situations, the strategies they employ, and the

rationale behind their chosen approaches. This method enables a deeper understanding of the coaches' internal reflections, leadership behaviors, and culturally informed practices that may not be easily quantified.

This design allows for the contextualization of conflict prevention within the socio-cultural realities of Cotabato City, a location characterized by ethnic and religious diversity, as well as a history of



conflict and peacebuilding efforts. The study will focus on the how and why of the conflict prevention process from the perspective of the coaches, making qualitative inquiry the most suitable approach.

The research was conducted in Cotabato City, a dynamic urban center in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The city serves as a hub for various sports activities, both school-based and community-based, making it an ideal setting for exploring coaching practices and interpersonal conflicts within athletic teams.

Given Cotabato City's historical experience with intergroup conflict and its ongoing peacebuilding efforts through education and youth engagement, it presents a unique context for exploring conflict resolution in the field of sports. The multicultural composition of its communities, combined with the emotionally charged nature of competitive sports, makes it a relevant and meaningful setting for investigating how city coaches manage interpersonal and organizational conflict.

This locale was selected due to its social diversity, the strategic importance of sports in local youth development, and the critical role coaches play in promoting unity, discipline, and nonviolent communication within teams and the school community.

The participants of this study were consist of coaches who are affiliated with either public or private elementary and high schools in Cotabato City, with experience in managing athletic teams and handling interpersonal or organizational conflicts.

To ensure the depth and relevance of the data gathered, participants were selected based on specific criteria. They were actively coaching or have coached within the past two years in the schools they are presently connected. Furthermore, they have a coaching experience, preferably in team sports such as basketball, volleyball, football, athletics, or martial arts—sports that typically involve frequent interaction, coordination, and potential conflict among team members. Importantly, eligible participants have experienced or managed at least one notable conflict situation within their team or coaching environment. Equally essential was their willingness to participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview and share candid reflections on their conflict resolution strategies and leadership practices.

The study has utilized purposive sampling, specifically criterion sampling, to select information-rich cases that can provide deep insight into the phenomenon of

conflict prevention in sports. There were twelve (12) participants who participated in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The themes reflect the experiences and approaches of coaches in preventing conflicts, leading their teams, and fostering cohesion and performance. Each theme is supported by verbatim statements from the informants to ensure authenticity and to provide a rich understanding of the dynamics within the teams.

Part 1. Common Sources of Conflict Experienced by the Coaches within their Respective Teams

Theme 1: Structural Resource Scarcity

Resource Scarcity and Structural Sources of Conflict emerged as one of the most consistent concerns raised by the city coaches during the key informant interviews. Coaches emphasized that while passion and commitment drive their teams, the reality of limited resources often creates tension that affects both daily operations and overall team performance. These conflicts typically arise not because of personal issues among members, but because of the practical challenges of sustaining a competitive sports program with insufficient support.

Across interviews, coaches described how inadequate training facilities became a recurring point of friction. Teams often share limited spaces, leading to compressed training schedules and disputes over time allocation. Several coaches mentioned that they sometimes have to negotiate for extended use of the gym or court, which occasionally causes misunderstandings with other sports groups or even within their own team when expectations are not met.

One of the participants (R11) mentioned,

"Ang pinakakaraniwang tunggalian na nararanasan namin bilang mga coach sa aming mga team ay ang 'pag-aagawan sa mga limitadong resources.' Kabilang dito ang kakulangan sa oras, pondo, at mga kagamitan, na madalas nagiging sanhi ng alitan sa team, lalo na sa mga pampublikong paaralan."

(The most common conflict we experienced as coaches within our teams is "competition over resources" limited resources such as time, money and

equipments which can lead to conflict as team, especially to the public schools.)

Similarly, another participant (R12) shared,

"Karamihan sa mga coach ay walang natatanggap na espesyal na pondo para sa pagsasanay ng mga atleta mula sa city government o sa MBHTE. Dahil dito, napipilitan silang gumastos mula sa sariling balsa para suportahan ang kanilang mga atleta. Nagdudulot ito ng alitan sa pagitan ng mga coach at ng organisasyon dahil pakiramdam nila ay hindi sila sinuportahan at sila pa ang nabibigyan ng dagdag na pasanin."

(Most of the coaches do not receive a special fund for athlete training from the city government or the MBHTE. As a result, coaches are often forced to use their own money to support their athletes. This situation creates conflict between the coaches and the organization because they feel unsupported and financially burdened.)

Another related concern involved scarcity of equipment and supplies. Coaches reported disagreements regarding who should use the limited equipment first, especially when training intensifies before competitions. In some cases, athletes feel that certain groups receive preferential treatment, which creates a sense of unfairness and undermines team cohesion. Coaches explained that they do their best to distribute equipment fairly, but the lack of uniformity—such as mismatched gear or insufficient protective equipment—often leads to frustration that can eventually boil over into conflict.

Participants R2 and R16 supported this observation when they stated that,

"Isa sa mga pinakakaraniwang suliranin na nararanasan ng mga coach ay ang kakulangan ng pisikal na pasilidad. Lalo itong nakikita sa athletics kung saan iilang paaralan lamang ang may maayos na track oval para sa iba't ibang athletic events. Dahil sa kawalan ng sapat na training venue, nagkakaroon ng pagkadismaya at tunggalian sa pagitan ng mga coach, atleta, at pamunuan ng paaralan."

(One of the most common conflicts experienced by the coaches is the lack of physical facilities. This is especially evident in athletics, where only a few schools have a proper track oval for the different athletic events. The absence of adequate training venues often leads to frustration and conflict among coaches, athletes, and school administrators.)

Several coaches also pointed to conflicts involving budget and financial constraints. Because funding for local sports programs is often limited, coaches find themselves competing for support or improvising with whatever resources are available. This situation leads to tension not only between coaches and athletes but also between coaches and management. Some coaches shared experiences of requesting support for travel, allowances, or meals during tournaments, only to receive delayed or insufficient allocations. As a result, coaches sometimes become the intermediaries absorbing the frustration of athletes and parents, especially when expectations cannot be met.

One participant (R5) said,

"Nagdodoble trabaho kami kapag may laro kasi kami pa ang humihingi ng budget para sa biyahe at pagkain. Madalas delayed ang release, kaya kami rin ang inaasahan ng mga bata. Kapag hindi natupad ang inaasahan, sa amin napupunta ang sama ng loob."

(We have to double our work whenever there's a game because we are the ones requesting the budget for travel and meals. The release of funds is often delayed, so the athletes rely on us. When their expectations are not met, the frustration falls on us.)

Another interviewee (R11) noted,

"Humingi kami ng allowance bago ang tournament pero kulang at huli dumating. Siyempre, naghahanap ang mga magulang at atleta. Kami tuloy ang nasisisi, kahit hindi naman kami ang may hawak ng pondo."

(We requested allowances before the tournament, but the funds were insufficient and arrived late. Of course, the parents and athletes look to us for answers. We end up being blamed, even though we are not the ones managing the funds.)

Finally, resource-related conflicts extend to human resources, particularly the availability of assistant coaches or staff. Inadequate manpower forces head coaches to handle multiple responsibilities—technical training, administrative paperwork, team management—which becomes overwhelming. This overload can affect their performance and cause miscommunication with athletes, further escalating conflict.

One participant (R7) pointed out'

"Minsan, ako mismo ang nag-aasikaso ng training, schedules, at paperwork nang sabay-sabay kasi wala kaming assistant coach. Nakakapagod talaga, at minsan may nakakaligtaan akong ipaalam sa mga atleta."

(Sometimes, I have to manage the training, handle the schedules, and take care of paperwork all at the same time because there's no assistant coach. It gets overwhelming, and sometimes I miss communicating important instructions to the athletes.)

Participant R8 also shared,

"... talagang kulang kami sa tauhan. Ako na mismo ang gumagawa ng lahat—mula sa coaching drills hanggang sa administrative tasks—at naapektuhan ang paraan ng pamamahala ko sa team. Mas madalas na nagkakaroon ng hindi pagkakaintindihan kasi sobra akong napapagalaw."

(We really lack staff. I end up doing everything—from coaching drills to administrative tasks—and it affects how effectively I can manage the team. Misunderstandings happen more often because I'm stretched too thin.)

Likewise, another coach (R12) observed,

"Nakaka-stress talaga ang mag-isa na humawak ng maraming responsibilidad. Kapag abala ako sa paperwork o sa pag-organize ng events, hindi ko lagi natututukan ang proper training ng mga atleta, at minsan nagdudulot ito ng tensyon sa team."

(Handling multiple responsibilities alone is stressful. When I'm busy with paperwork or organizing events, I can't always focus on training the athletes properly, and this sometimes causes tension in the team.)

Overall, the interviews reveal that resource-related conflicts are not simply about material shortages but reflect deeper systemic issues in local sports management. These conflicts influence team morale, operational efficiency, and the overall experience of both coaches and athletes. Despite these challenges, coaches consistently demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness, often stepping in to fill the gaps left by inadequate support systems.

The findings of the study reveal that the resource-related conflicts experienced by city coaches align strongly with established perspectives in Conflict Management Theory, particularly the idea that conflict often arises from structural

and organizational constraints rather than interpersonal incompatibility. According to this theory, conflicts that emerge from limited facilities, budget shortages, and inadequate equipment fall under substantive or task-related conflict, wherein individuals disagree because the resources necessary to achieve goals are insufficient or unevenly distributed (Rahim, 2011). The interviews reveal that coaches frequently face such tensions, especially when several teams compete for limited training spaces or when athletes perceive inequities in access to equipment. This supports the theory's assertion that when resources are scarce, collaboration becomes strained and disagreements naturally surface.

From the standpoint of Conflict Management Strategies, the narratives suggest that coaches often rely on compromising and accommodating approaches (Rahim, 2011). They negotiate shared schedules, adjust training routines, or find temporary alternatives to address gaps in equipment or funding. While these approaches help reduce immediate tension, they also highlight a recurring pattern: coaches are forced to manage conflicts reactively because structural solutions—such as institutional support or consistent budgeting—are lacking. In this sense, the resource-related conflicts reflect a context where avoidance and compromise are used frequently, not out of preference, but because coaches have limited authority to change institutional conditions (De Dreu, 2015).

On the other hand, the challenges surrounding resources also illuminate the significance of Transformational Leadership Theory within the coaches' roles originally conceptualized by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and further developed by Bernard M. Bass (1985). Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to inspire, motivate, and uplift their teams despite constraints. Several coaches shared stories of adopting a vision-oriented and inspirational approach, encouraging athletes to remain focused and committed even when faced with limited equipment or substandard facilities. Their ability to frame challenges as opportunities for growth reflects the idealized influence and inspirational motivation dimensions of transformational leadership.

Furthermore, coaches demonstrate intellectual stimulation when they creatively adapt training methods or reorganize schedules to accommodate resource shortages. They often introduce innovative solutions, such as rotating equipment, maximizing open spaces, or integrating strength and conditioning routines that require minimal gear (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). This creative problem-solving aligns with the transformational leader's role in fostering adaptability and encouraging team members to think beyond traditional methods.

Lastly, the coaches' efforts to maintain positive relationships with athletes

despite resource-related frustrations reflect individualized consideration, another core element of transformational leadership (Kelloway et al., 2012). Coaches frequently absorb the emotional burden caused by delayed allowances, inadequate transportation arrangements, or lack of nutritional support during competitions. By addressing athletes' concerns, mediating frustrations, and sustaining morale, they demonstrate leadership that prioritizes personal growth and emotional well-being.

In summary, the narrative of resource-related conflicts reveals a dynamic interplay between structural sources of conflict and leadership responses. While resource scarcity creates frequent tensions consistent with conflict management theory, the coaches' reliance on transformational leadership behaviors helps mitigate negative impacts, maintain team cohesion, and sustain performance under challenging conditions. This integration suggests that effective leadership becomes not only a management style but a vital mechanism for navigating systemic limitations within local sports institutions.

Theme 2: Communication and Misunderstandings

Communication and misunderstandings emerged as a significant source of conflict within the teams of city coaches. The study's findings reveal that ineffective communication, unclear instructions, and differing communication styles often serve as catalysts for tension between coaches and athletes, as well as among team members themselves. These conflicts are not necessarily rooted in personal animosities but rather in systemic and practical challenges in conveying expectations and coordinating activities.

Several participants emphasized that lack of clear communication frequently leads to confusion regarding roles, responsibilities, and team strategies. Coaches observed that conflicts often arise when instructions are not fully understood or when team members interpret messages differently. Misunderstandings regarding task assignments, scheduling, and resource allocation were also highlighted, particularly in environments where multiple coaches, athletes, and administrative demands converge.

Participant (R2) stated,

"Batay sa aking obserbasyon, ito ay dahil sa kakulangan ng komunikasyon... Karaniwang nagkakaroon ng tunggalian dahil sa magkakaibang estilo ng coaching, isyu sa pagpili ng manlalaro, at iskedyul o pamamahagi ng mga resources."

(As what I observe it is the lack of communication... Common conflicts usually

arise from different coaching styles, selection issues, and scheduling or resource allocation.)

Another informant articulated that,

"...mga pagkakaiba sa estilo ng coaching o paraan ng pamumuno na kung minsan ay nagdudulot ng hindi pagkakaunawaan."

(...differences in coaching style or leadership approaches that sometimes lead to misunderstandings.)

The findings also suggest that miscommunication amplifies stress and frustration for both coaches and athletes. Coaches often act as intermediaries, absorbing the frustrations of athletes and parents when expectations are unmet due to unclear instructions or delayed information. As participants indicated, unclear messages or poor information sharing can result in mistakes, misaligned priorities, and reduced team cohesion. These patterns of misunderstanding are further exacerbated when team members have differing personalities, work styles, or levels of experience, making consistent and transparent communication critical to prevent conflicts.

A number of participants (R2, R6, R10, R12, and R17) provided similar explanations, noting that,

"...marami sa mga ito ay nakatuon sa mga isyu sa komunikasyon, magkakaibang prayoridad, o pagkakaiba ng personalidad. Ang mga sanhi nito ay pagkasira ng komunikasyon, hindi pagkakaunawaan, hindi maayos na pakikinig, at maling interpretasyon ng mga mensahe."

(...many of which focus on communication issues, differing priorities or personality differences. Sources of them are communication breakdown, misunderstandings, poor listening, messages misinterpreted.)

Moreover, communication breakdowns are closely tied to misinterpretation and assumption-making. Several coaches reported that team members sometimes act on assumptions instead of clarifying instructions, which often escalates minor issues into more significant conflicts. This highlights that misunderstandings are not only about what is communicated but also how messages are delivered, received, and processed within the team environment.

Several respondents (R5, R9, R14, and R15) similarly emphasized that,

"...hindi pagkakaunawaan tungkol sa magkakaibang layunin at estratehiya,

dedikasyon, at disiplina.”

(...misunderstanding about different goals and strategies, commitment, discipline.)

The study's findings align with theoretical perspectives, such as Conflict Management Theory, which emphasizes that many conflicts arise from structural or informational gaps rather than personal disagreements. Miscommunication represents a classic example of such a structural source of conflict. Additionally, from a Transformational Leadership perspective, the findings underscore the importance of clear, transparent, and empathetic communication by coaches to prevent conflicts and maintain team cohesion. Coaches who actively clarify instructions, listen to athletes' concerns, and ensure mutual understanding demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors that help mitigate conflicts arising from misunderstandings.

In summary, the theme of communication and misunderstandings illustrates that effective information flow is crucial in maintaining team harmony. Conflicts stemming from unclear instructions, differing communication styles, or assumptions can disrupt team dynamics, undermine performance, and strain relationships. Coaches' proactive efforts to address communication gaps, clarify expectations, and foster open dialogue serve as essential mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution within resource-constrained and high-pressure team environments.

The findings on communication and misunderstandings among city coaches and their teams can be meaningfully analyzed through Conflict Management Theory. This theory emphasizes that conflicts often arise from structural, informational, or resource-related gaps, rather than purely personal differences (Rahim, 2011). In the study, miscommunication emerged as a recurring source of tension, whether it involved unclear instructions, differing expectations, or misinterpretation of messages among team members. According to the theory, such task-related or informational conflicts are natural in organizations where multiple actors with varied personalities, roles, and responsibilities interact (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). The participants' experiences demonstrate that unresolved miscommunication can escalate minor misunderstandings into larger conflicts, affecting team cohesion, performance, and morale. Coaches, therefore, often engage in conflict management strategies such as clarification, negotiation, and mediation to address these communication gaps (Rahim, 2011).

At the same time, the findings reflect elements of Transformational

Leadership Theory, particularly in how coaches respond to miscommunication and misunderstandings. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to inspire, motivate, and guide their teams, even in the presence of challenges. (Bass, 1985). Several participants described actively addressing misunderstandings by clarifying instructions, explaining expectations, and listening attentively to athletes' concerns. These actions reflect the transformational dimensions of individualized consideration—attending to the needs and perspectives of each athlete—and intellectual stimulation, by encouraging athletes to ask questions and think critically about their roles. Additionally, by fostering open channels of communication and modeling clarity, coaches demonstrate inspirational motivation, helping team members align with collective goals and maintain cohesion despite initial misunderstandings (Wang et al., 2011).

Integrating both theories, the analysis suggests that communication-related conflicts are not merely interpersonal issues but systemic challenges that require strategic leadership interventions. While Conflict Management Theory helps explain why these conflicts arise—due to ambiguity, unclear roles, or information gaps—Transformational Leadership Theory highlights how effective leadership behaviors can prevent escalation, build trust, and foster mutual understanding. In essence, coaches who employ transformational strategies—active listening, clarifying expectations, and providing guidance—serve as key mediators, reducing the impact of miscommunication and sustaining team performance.

In conclusion, the study's findings indicate that communication and misunderstandings are both a source of conflict and an opportunity for leadership. Proper conflict management, informed by clear communication strategies, coupled with transformational leadership behaviors, enables coaches to navigate misunderstandings, mitigate tension, and enhance team cohesion in resource-constrained and high-pressure environments.

Theme 3: Personality and Interpersonal Conflicts

The study revealed that personality differences and interpersonal dynamics are prominent sources of conflict among city coaches and their teams. Conflicts arising from personal traits, work styles, and attitudes were frequently mentioned by the participants (R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R13, R14). Coaches observed that tension often occurs when team members have clashing personalities, differing goals, or mismatched expectations. These interpersonal frictions are not only present between players but also between players and coaches, highlighting the complexity

of team dynamics in sports settings. There common narratives were as follows:

“Batay sa aming karanasan bilang coach, ang mga sigalot na madalas na lumilitaw sa aking team ay nagmumula sa mga interpersonal na tensyon—tulad ng pagkakaiba ng personalidad, banggaan ng ego, at mga pagkakataong kulang ang pagtutulungan at respeto sa isa’t isa ng mga miyembro.”

(Based on our experience as a coach, the conflicts that often arise within my team usually stem from interpersonal tensions—such as personality differences, clashes of ego, and moments when mutual respect is lacking among members.)

Participants emphasized that ego, pride, and differences in commitment or motivation further exacerbate interpersonal conflicts (R4, R13). For instance, R4 highlighted that frustration over performance, perceived inequities in effort, and disagreements on roles can create tension within the team. Similarly, R13 noted that personality clashes and competition for recognition often cause disputes among athletes. These findings indicate that conflicts are not solely task-related; they are deeply intertwined with human behavior and relational dynamics.

Outlined below are the respondents' accounts,

“Bilang coach, madalas kong nararanasan ang iba’t ibang uri ng sigalot sa team dahil sa halo-halong personalidad, magkakaibang inaasahan, at mga pressure na kaakibat ng trabaho. Kadalasang problema ang hindi pagkakaunawaan sa pagitan ng mga manlalaro o kapwa coach—lalo na pagdating sa tungkulin at responsibilidad, o kapag may frustration tungkol sa performance o antas ng commitment.”

(As a coach, I often encounter different types of conflicts within the team because of the mix of personalities, varying expectations, and the pressures that come with the job. Disagreements between players or fellow coaches are common—especially when it comes to roles and responsibilities, or when frustrations arise over performance or levels of commitment.)

The findings also suggest that interpersonal conflicts can influence team cohesion and performance. Coaches must navigate situations where differences in personality or approach lead to misunderstandings or friction.

Participants R7 and R8 mentioned, respectively,

“Napapansin ko na ang mga sigalot sa relasyon, pagkakaiba ng mga pagpapahalaga, at kakulangan sa respeto sa isa’t isa ay maaaring makasira sa

pagtutulungan at makaapekto sa kabuuang paggana ng team.”

(I have observed that relationship conflicts, differences in values, and a lack of mutual respect can undermine collaboration and negatively affect the overall functioning of the team.)

“Lalo pang tumitindi ang mga sigalot sa mga sitwasyong mataas ang pressure, tulad ng kompetisyon o masikip na iskedyul, kung saan mas nagiging malinaw ang pagkakaiba sa ugali, antas ng commitment, at paraan ng pagharap sa stress.”

(These conflicts tend to intensify during high-pressure situations, such as competitions or tight schedules, when differences in attitudes, levels of commitment, and responses to stress become more apparent.)

Moreover, the study highlighted differences between player-to-player conflicts and player-to-coach conflicts. Conflicts among players typically stem from competition, personality clashes, and interpersonal misunderstandings (R3, R4, R7, R13), while conflicts between a player and a coach often involve authority, expectations, and leadership decisions. Coaches often act as mediators, leveraging their experience and leadership skills to resolve interpersonal issues and maintain team harmony.

This theme aligns with Conflict Management Theory, which suggests that conflicts arising from interpersonal differences can escalate if not addressed through mediation, negotiation, or structured intervention (De Dreu, 2015). At the same time, it connects to Transformational Leadership Theory, as effective coaches demonstrate individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, attending to the unique needs and personalities of team members while fostering a collaborative and cohesive environment. By understanding personality dynamics and intervening proactively, coaches can reduce tension, improve performance, and strengthen relationships within their teams (Bass, 1985).

In summary, Personality and Interpersonal Conflicts reflect the human side of team management, where differences in character, attitudes, and interpersonal skills can generate tension. Successful conflict resolution depends on coaches' leadership abilities, communication strategies, and sensitivity to team dynamics, ensuring that conflicts are managed constructively rather than detrimentally (Kelloway et al., 2012; De Dreu, 2015).

Theme 4: Coaching and Leadership Style Conflicts

The study revealed that conflicts arising from coaching and leadership styles are a significant source of tension within city coaches' teams. Participants highlighted that differences in how coaches approach training, discipline, decision-making, and team management often lead to misunderstandings and disagreements among both coaches and athletes.

Participant R4 emphasized,

(Sometimes misunderstandings arise in the team because each coach has a different leadership approach and coaching style. This sometimes leads to confusion in instructions for the athletes and creates tension within the team.)

Participants R13 and R14 further explained,

"Nakakaramdam kami ng kalituhan kapag magkaiba ang approach ng mga coach sa training at disiplina. Minsan, hindi malinaw kung ano ang inaasahan sa amin bilang manlalaro, kaya nagkakaroon ng hindi pagkakaintindihan."

(We feel confused when coaches have different approaches to training and discipline. Sometimes it is unclear what is expected of us as athletes, which leads to misunderstandings.)

"Ang pagkakaiba sa pamumuno at coaching style ay nagdudulot ng tensyon sa team. Kapag iba ang paraan ng coach sa pagtuturo o pamamahala ng team, nagkakaroon kami ng kalituhan at minsan ay hindi pagkakasundo sa strategies."

(Differences in leadership and coaching styles cause tension in the team. When coaches have different ways of instructing or managing the team, it can create confusion and disagreements over strategies.)

Several coaches reported that discrepancies in leadership approaches sometimes result in inconsistent guidance for athletes.

Participant R4 noted that.

"Ang pagkakaiba sa estilo ng pamumuno at coaching ay kadalasang

nagdudulot ng kalituhan sa koponan tungkol sa mga tungkulin, responsibilidad, at estratehiya. Kapag maraming coach ang nagbibigay ng magkakaibang instruksyon, nagiging sanhi ito ng tensyon at frustration sa mga atleta."

(Differences in leadership and coaching styles often cause confusion in the team about roles, responsibilities, and strategies. When multiple coaches give conflicting instructions, it creates tension and frustration among athletes.)

Moreover, leadership style conflicts are not limited to differences between coaches themselves but also extend to interactions with athletes.

Both participants R13 and R14 highlighted that,

"Ang magkakaibang awtoridad at estilo ng pagganyak ng coach ay nagdudulot ng kalituhan at pakiramdam ng hindi patas sa mga atleta, na nakakaapekto sa performance, teamwork, at morale lalo na sa mataas na presyon."

(Different levels of authority and motivational styles from coaches can create confusion and feelings of unfairness among athletes, affecting performance, teamwork, and morale, especially under high-pressure situations.)

The findings underscore that conflicts related to coaching and leadership styles are often intertwined with personality differences and communication challenges. Coaches must balance their individual coaching philosophies while ensuring consistency, clarity, and fairness within the team. Failure to manage these differences effectively can lead to misunderstandings, decreased trust, and reduced team cohesion.

Recent studies from 2020 to 2025 highlight several common sources and types of conflict experienced by coaches within their respective teams. One of the most frequently cited sources of tension arises from coaching and leadership style conflicts. Abayari, Tilan, Aton, and Reyes (2024) reported that athletes in grassroots and university-level sports in the Philippines strongly preferred democratic coaching styles that emphasize collaboration, open communication, and shared decision-making. Conflicts often emerged when coaches adopted more autocratic or authoritarian approaches that contradicted the team's expectations. This aligns with findings from *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022), which indicated that differences in leadership styles directly affect coach-athlete relationships, team cohesion, and athlete satisfaction. Similarly, Micua, Paulino, Yco, Lapiceros, Villaseñor, and Cruz (2024) suggested that a balanced approach combining both democratic and

authoritative strategies contributed positively to athlete outcomes, but improper alignment could be a source of internal tension.

Resource-related conflicts also emerged as a significant challenge for city coaches. Limited access to facilities, financial constraints, and inadequate equipment were cited as common sources of friction among team members (Cacayan & Villocino, 2024). These limitations often exacerbated misunderstandings and intensified disagreements, requiring coaches to implement clear communication, equitable resource allocation, and collaborative problem-solving strategies to maintain team harmony.

Miscommunication and misunderstandings constitute another pervasive theme. According to the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (2020), ineffective communication, lack of structured dialogue, and assumptions about others' intentions often escalate minor disagreements into serious conflicts. Research in youth sports contexts also emphasized the importance of formal communication structures, including scheduled team meetings and private discussions, to prevent unresolved issues from affecting team dynamics (Gitchie, 2023; Ebrary, 2021). Coaches who actively listen, provide feedback, and employ consistent messaging can reduce misunderstandings and strengthen team cohesion.

Lastly, personality and interpersonal conflicts are consistently reported as challenges in sports settings. Differences in temperament, ego, and personal values among athletes can create tension and impede collaboration. Sustainability (2023) highlighted that coaches practicing transformational leadership—such as individualized consideration and inspirational motivation—can mitigate interpersonal conflicts by fostering personal growth, encouraging mutual respect, and adapting strategies to accommodate diverse personality traits. Similarly, Wang, (2024) found that democratic leadership behaviors and social support in team settings are strongly associated with enhanced cohesion and reduced interpersonal tension.

Overall, the literature suggests that conflicts within sports teams are multifaceted, stemming from leadership mismatches, resource limitations, communication barriers, and personality differences. Effective conflict management in these settings requires a combination of transformational leadership, structured communication mechanisms, and equitable resource management to foster collaboration, fairness, and team cohesion.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with Conflict Management Theory, which posits that differences in leadership or management

approaches are common sources of organizational conflict. The theory emphasizes the importance of mediation, negotiation, and proactive communication to address and resolve such conflicts (Rahim, 2011). Simultaneously, Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the critical role of coaches in managing leadership style conflicts through individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and role modeling. By adapting their approach to the needs of athletes and fostering open communication, coaches can reduce tension, align team members with shared goals, and enhance overall performance (Bass, 2015).

In conclusion, Coaching and Leadership Style Conflicts demonstrate that differences in leadership approach can generate both interpersonal tension and performance-related challenges.

Part 2. Conflict Prevention Strategies Commonly Applied by Coaches in Cotabato City

This section presents the results of the study in a thematic manner, highlighting the key insights gathered from the responses of the informants. Thematic presentation allows for a structured exploration of patterns, similarities, and differences in the perspectives shared by the participants. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how coaches in Cotabato City approach leadership and conflict prevention within their teams.

The findings are organized into distinct themes that emerged from the interviews, reflecting recurring strategies, behaviors, and leadership approaches. Each theme captures the collective experiences of the coaches while also illustrating individual nuances in their practices. By presenting the findings thematically, this study aims to provide clarity on how leadership styles influence conflict prevention, how coaches maintain team cohesion, and how their approaches foster a supportive and productive sporting environment. The following sections will discuss each theme in detail, supported by verbatim statements from the informants to ensure authenticity and depth.

Theme 1: Open Communication

Across the responses, open communication emerges as the most consistently applied and valued conflict prevention strategy among coaches in Cotabato City. Coaches emphasize the importance of creating a space where athletes can freely express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without fear of judgment. This approach often begins with active listening—allowing each party involved in the

conflict to narrate their side of the story, clarify misunderstandings, and articulate the underlying issues contributing to the tension.

Many coaches shared that communication serves as the foundation of their conflict management process. It enables them to gather accurate information, understand the emotional state of their athletes, and identify the true root of the dispute. Through respectful dialogue, they are able to guide players toward mutual understanding and help them see each other's perspectives. In situations where disagreements affect teamwork or performance, coaches use conversations to reset expectations, reinforce shared goals, and maintain the team's unity.

Open communication is also closely linked with other conflict prevention strategies, such as collaboration and mediation. Coaches often combine these approaches by facilitating structured discussions or leading conversations that encourage reflection and problem-solving. The emphasis on communication helps prevent issues from escalating by addressing problems early and calmly.

Respondent (R2) conversed that, *"Bilang bagong itinalagang tournament manager at coach sa school, karaniwan kong ginagamit ang bukas na komunikasyon at mediation upang malutas ang mga isyu sa loob ng aking koponan. Pinapahayag ko sa magkabilang panig ang kanilang mga alalahanin, at pagkatapos ay ginagabayan ko sila patungo sa isang patas at marespeto na solusyon."*

(As newly assigned tournament manager and coach of the school, I usually use open communication and mediation to resolve within my team. I let both sides express their concern, then guide them towards a fair and respectful solution.)

Similarly, informant (R4) said,

"Sa Cotabato City, karaniwang hinahawakan ng mga coach ang mga alitan sa pamamagitan ng bukas na komunikasyon at pag-unawa. Madalas silang nagsisimula sa pakikipag-usap sa mga manlalarong sangkot upang marinig ang magkabilang panig at tulungan silang maresolba ang isyu."

(Coaches in Cotabato City usually handle conflicts through open communication and understanding. They often start by talking with the players involved to hear both sides and help them settle the issue.)

Another respondent (R11) stated that,

"Palagi naming hinihikayat ang bukas at tapat na pakikipag-usap sa pagitan ng mga manlalaro at coach. At syempre, kolaborasyon, nagtutulungan kami upang matugunan at malutas ang mga nakatagong isyu."

(We always encourage open and honest communication between players and coaches. And of course, collaboration — we work together to address and resolve underlying issues.)

From the perspective of Conflict Management Theory, this practice reflects a collaborative approach to conflict prevention, where coaches actively engage with all parties to uncover the root causes of disagreements (DeChurch & Marks, 2010). By fostering dialogue and encouraging athletes to articulate their concerns, coaches reduce misunderstandings and prevent conflicts from escalating. Open communication also aligns with the theory's emphasis on information gathering, fairness, and proactive intervention, ensuring that conflicts are addressed in a systematic and equitable manner (Bennett, 2014).

At the same time, open communication demonstrates key principles of Transformational Leadership Theory. Coaches exhibit idealized influence by modeling respectful and transparent interactions, showing athletes how conflicts can be managed constructively (Bass, 2015). Through individualized consideration, coaches listen to each athlete's unique perspective and respond thoughtfully to their needs. Encouraging athletes to contribute to discussions and participate in problem-solving reflects intellectual stimulation, promoting critical thinking, reflection, and shared responsibility. Finally, by reinforcing team goals and values throughout these conversations, coaches provide inspirational motivation, fostering trust, cohesion, and commitment to collective objectives (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

Overall, the narratives suggest that open communication is more than a conflict prevention tool—it is a core coaching value. By integrating Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, it becomes clear that open communication not only resolves disputes but also strengthens leadership, enhances team cohesion, builds trust, and fosters an environment where conflicts contribute to constructive growth rather than division.

Theme 2: Mediation and Neutral Facilitation

The responses reveal that many coaches employ mediation and neutral

facilitation as a structured approach to preventing interpersonal and performance-related conflicts within their teams. When disagreements arise—whether between players, between coaches, or involving the entire group—coaches often step into the role of a neutral third party. They guide the conversation, ensure fairness, and help the involved individuals reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Coaches describe this process as one that requires impartiality and balance. They emphasize the importance of hearing both sides equally, allowing each person to explain their perspective without interruption, and preventing emotional escalation. By maintaining this neutral stance, coaches are able to de-escalate conflicts that might otherwise intensify due to personal biases or misunderstandings.

Several responses indicate that mediation is particularly useful when players struggle with personality differences, miscommunication, or disagreements about roles and responsibilities. In these cases, the coach acts not as a disciplinarian but as a facilitator, helping the athletes articulate their concerns, acknowledge the impact of their behavior, and explore potential compromises. This guided dialogue helps clarify issues that may not be immediately visible during practices or games.

Furthermore, mediation allows coaches to model respectful communication and problem-solving, which in turn strengthens the team's culture. By showing athletes how conflicts can be handled constructively, coaches teach valuable interpersonal skills that extend beyond the sport environment. The goal is not simply to settle disputes but to build cohesion, trust, and mutual understanding.

Several responses from the participants (R2, R8, and R14), and revealed,

"Bilang bagong itinalagang tournament manager at coach ng school, karaniwan kong ginagamit ang bukas na komunikasyon at medasyon upang malutas ang mga isyu sa loob ng aking koponan. Pinapahayag ko sa magkabilang panig ang kanilang mga alalahanin, at pagkatapos ay ginagabayan ko sila patungo sa isang patas at marespeto na solusyon."

(As newly assigned tournament manager and coach of the school, I usually use open communication and mediation to resolve within my team. I let both sides express their concern, then guide them towards a fair and respectful solution.)

"Gumagamit ang mga coach ng conflict coaching, bukas na komunikasyon, medasyon, at malinaw na mga patakaran."

(Coaches use conflict coaching, open communication, mediator and clear policies.)

"Karaniwang ginagamit ng mga coach ang mediation para sa hindi pagkakaunawaan ng mga manlalaro, pagpupulong ng koponan upang tugunan ang mga problema sa komunikasyon, at isa-sa-isang pag-uusap para sa personal na isyu, karaniwan kapag ang mga hidwaan ay nakakaapekto sa pagganap o moral ng koponan."

(Coaches commonly used mediation for player disagreements, team meetings to address communication breakdowns, and one-on-one talks for personal issues, usually when conflicts affect team performance or morale.)

Overall, mediation and neutral facilitation stand out as essential conflict prevention strategies used by coaches to maintain harmony, promote accountability, and ensure that conflicts become opportunities for growth rather than sources of division.

The findings from the interviews indicate that coaches in Cotabato City rely heavily on mediation, neutral facilitation, and open communication as their primary strategies for preventing conflicts within their teams. These strategies reflect a sophisticated integration of both Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, showing how coaches not only resolve disputes but also cultivate a supportive and high-performing team environment.

From the perspective of Conflict Management Theory, coaches consistently employ collaborative and compromising approaches. Mediation and neutral facilitation allow coaches to act as impartial guides, ensuring that all parties involved—whether athletes or fellow coaches—have the opportunity to express their perspectives and concerns (DeChurch & Marks, 2010). By encouraging open dialogue, coaches identify the underlying causes of conflicts, prevent escalation, and create solutions that satisfy all stakeholders. Structured policies and clear conflict-handling procedures further support these strategies by providing consistency and fairness, reinforcing a predictable and safe environment for conflict prevention (Bennett, 2014).

At the same time, these approaches demonstrate key elements of Transformational Leadership Theory. Coaches model fairness, respect, and ethical behavior through their neutral stance in conflicts, promoting idealized influence. Individualized attention is evident in one-on-one discussions, where coaches

address the unique needs, concerns, and emotional states of athletes, fostering trust and morale (Bass, 2015). Through collaborative problem-solving and encouraging athletes to contribute solutions, coaches exercise intellectual stimulation, inspiring team members to think critically and engage constructively with disagreements. By reinforcing shared goals and team values throughout these processes, coaches provide inspirational motivation, ensuring that conflicts become opportunities for learning rather than sources of division (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

The integration of these theoretical perspectives reveals that conflict prevention is not merely about resolving immediate disputes. Instead, it is a strategic tool for leadership and team development. Mediation and open communication address both relationship- and task-related conflicts while simultaneously teaching athletes valuable interpersonal skills. One-on-one and team discussions serve dual purposes: resolving current issues and building the capacity of athletes to handle future conflicts constructively.

Theme 3: Team Meetings and Group Discussions

Another prominent strategy employed by coaches in Cotabato City is the use of team meetings and group discussions to prevent conflicts that involve multiple players or affect overall team communication. Coaches recognize that when disagreements extend beyond individual players—whether involving several athletes or the entire team—direct one-on-one conversations may be insufficient. In these situations, structured team meetings create a platform for collective dialogue, allowing members to voice concerns, clarify misunderstandings, and collaboratively find solutions.

Responses from coaches indicate that team meetings are often proactive as well as reactive. They serve not only to resolve disputes that have already arisen but also to reinforce team expectations, revisit shared goals, and cultivate a sense of unity and accountability among members. By bringing the group together, coaches facilitate open discussion in a controlled setting, ensuring that every voice is heard and preventing dominant personalities from overshadowing others. This approach also encourages athletes to listen actively to their teammates, fostering empathy and mutual understanding.

Team meetings and group discussions are frequently combined with other conflict prevention strategies, such as mediation, compromise, and collaboration. Coaches often act as facilitators during these sessions, guiding the conversation, maintaining focus on the issues at hand, and encouraging participants to propose constructive solutions. By structuring the discussion, coaches ensure that conflicts

are resolved efficiently while building problem-solving skills within the team.

Several coaches highlighted that group discussions are especially effective when conflicts pertain to team performance, training strategies, or resource allocation.

Some coach informants narrated similarly,

"Karaniwang tumatawag ng meeting ng bawat team ang mga coach upang tugunan ang mga problema sa komunikasyon, at mga isa-sa-isang pag-uusap para sa mga personal na isyu..."

(Coaches commonly call team meetings to address communication breakdowns, and one-on-one talks for personal issues...)

They also emphasized that,

"Kapag ang alitan ay may kinalaman sa maraming miyembro ng team o may epekto sa kabuuang daloy ng komunikasyon, agad akong nag-oorganisa ng team meeting. Dito namin pinag-uusapan ang isyu bilang isang grupo, pinakikinggan ang bawat pananaw, at sama-samang hinahanap ang pinakamagandang solusyon."

(When a conflict involves several team members or affects the overall communication of the group, I call for a team meeting. We discuss the issue together, listen to each person's perspective, and work collectively toward a solution.)

From the perspective of Conflict Management Theory, team meetings exemplify a collaborative and mediated approach to conflict prevention. Coaches act as neutral facilitators during these discussions, guiding the conversation, ensuring fairness, and helping the team reach consensus. By addressing disputes collectively, coaches prevent escalation, clarify expectations, and maintain accountability among all team members. Additionally, structured meetings allow for the proactive reinforcement of discipline, unity, and teamwork, demonstrating a preventative approach consistent with conflict management principles (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

These meetings also reflect the principles of Transformational Leadership Theory. Bass (1985) explains that coaches demonstrate idealized influence by modeling respectful communication and fairness, inspiring athletes to emulate these behaviors during disagreements. They show individualized consideration by ensuring each athlete's voice is heard and validated, even in group settings.

Through intellectual stimulation, coaches encourage critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving, challenging athletes to reflect on issues and propose constructive solutions. Furthermore, by reinforcing shared team goals and values during discussions, coaches provide inspirational motivation, fostering a sense of unity, commitment, and collective responsibility (Bass, 1985)

Overall, team meetings and group discussions serve a dual purpose: they prevent immediate conflicts while simultaneously strengthening team cohesion, trust, and interpersonal skills. Through these structured dialogues, coaches transform conflicts into opportunities for growth, ensuring that disagreements contribute to learning, collaboration, and a positive team culture, rather than division or tension.

Theme 4: Setting Clear Rules

Across several responses, coaches highlight the importance of establishing and reinforcing clear rules, expectations, and consequences as a proactive strategy to manage and prevent conflicts within their teams. This theme reflects a structured and discipline-oriented approach, where guidelines serve as a foundation for maintaining order, accountability, and fairness among athletes.

Coaches explain that when expectations are clearly communicated, athletes understand their roles, boundaries, and responsibilities, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings or repeated offenses. Setting rules provides a shared framework that guides behavior during training, competition, and interpersonal interactions. By ensuring that all team members are aware of these expectations, coaches help create a predictable and stable environment where conflicts can be minimized.

Moreover, several coaches emphasize the importance of consistency in enforcing consequences when rules are violated. This consistency builds trust because athletes see that decisions are made fairly and objectively, not based on favoritism or emotion. Establishing consequences also allows players to reflect on their actions and understand how inappropriate behavior affects the team.

The above statements is manifested by the responses of the participants (R1, R3, and R12) during the interviews,

“Upang mapanatili ang kaayusan at pagkakaisa, regular naming nire-review at pinapalakas ang mga tuntunin ng koponan. Lahat ng miyembro ay dapat malinaw na nauunawaan ang inaasahan sa kanila at ang mga parusa kapag may lumalabag sa patakaran.”

(To maintain order and unity, we regularly review and reinforce the team's rules. All members must clearly understand what is expected of them and the consequences of rule violations.)

"Kapag may hindi pagkakaunawaan, lagi kong binabalikan ang mga itinakdang alituntunin ng koponan bilang gabay sa paglutas ng problema. Sa ganitong paraan, patas at pare-pareho ang desisyon at walang naiiwanang hindi nasusunod na pamantayan."

(When conflicts arise, I always refer back to the team rules as a guide for resolution. This ensures decisions are fair, consistent, and aligned with established standards.)

"Itinatakda ko ang malinaw na mga patakaran sa simula pa lamang ng season upang maiwasan ang kalituhan at hindi pagkakaunawaan sa pagitan ng mga manlalaro at coach. Ito rin ay para maging gabay sa tamang asal at pagganap ng bawat isa."

(I set clear rules at the beginning of the season to avoid confusion and misunderstandings between players and coaches. It also serves as a guide for proper behavior and performance.)

Recent studies emphasize the importance of effective conflict prevention strategies for coaches in maintaining team cohesion and performance. Open communication allows team members to express concerns and feel understood, reducing conflict escalation (Bedir, Agduman, & Erhan, 2023; Pan & Sui, 2025). Emotional intelligence and transformational leadership enable coaches to intervene impartially, guide athletes constructively, and foster trust and collaboration (Peng & Wong, 2025; Li & Xing, 2025).

Mediation, team meetings, and group discussions further support conflict prevention by providing structured opportunities to clarify misunderstandings, negotiate responsibilities, and reinforce shared goals (MDPI, 2024; Lualhati, 2025). Finally, establishing clear rules and expectations serves as a preventive measure, guiding behavior and promoting accountability, which strengthens team culture and reduces friction (Sports Conflict Institute, 2025).

From the perspective of Conflict Management Theory, this approach reflects a preventive and structured style, where conflicts are prevented by regulating behavior through norms and procedures. Coaches act as authority figures who set

the standards for acceptable conduct and use these rules as a reference when disputes arise (Angelova, 2025).

In terms of Transformational Leadership Theory, setting clear expectations aligns with the component of idealized influence, where coaches demonstrate integrity and consistency. It also relates to inspirational motivation, as clear rules help unify the team under shared goals and values. When coaches articulate expectations in a positive and motivating manner, athletes are more likely to internalize these standards and commit to the team's collective mission.

Part 3. Leadership Styles of Coaches that Influence Their Approach to Conflict Prevention

This section presents the findings of the study in a thematic format, which allows for a clear and organized understanding of the patterns and insights derived from the responses of the informants. By grouping the data into themes, the study highlights the recurring strategies, behaviors, and perspectives that coaches employ in preventing conflicts and leading their teams.

The thematic approach provides a structured way to explore how leadership styles influence conflict prevention, how coaches maintain team cohesion, and the strategies they use to foster a positive and productive sporting environment. Each theme is supported by direct statements from the informants, ensuring that the findings are authentic and reflective of actual experiences.

Theme 1: Participative Leadership

Participative leadership is strongly reflected in the responses of several coaches who emphasize collaboration, shared decision-making, and group discussions in preventing conflicts within their teams. Under this leadership style, coaches do not impose solutions unilaterally; instead, they actively involve players in the process of understanding the problem and identifying possible preventions.

Coaches practicing participative leadership create an environment where every athlete's voice matters. They hold team meetings, encourage open communication, and solicit suggestions from players before finalizing decisions. This inclusive approach helps reduce misunderstandings and builds a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility among team members.

When conflicts arise—such as disagreements on strategies, roles, or

interpersonal tensions—participative coaches guide the discussion while ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for everyone to express their views. They focus on reaching consensus through respectful dialogue and collective problem-solving rather than relying on top-down directives.

This leadership style enhances trust and cohesion within the team because athletes feel valued and heard. Participative leadership also strengthens team morale, as players become more engaged in decision-making and more committed to the outcomes. In effect, it turns conflict prevention into a shared effort, reinforcing unity and promoting a culture of collaboration.

These observations are corroborated by the narratives provided by the key informants,

Participant R2 said,

"Bilang coach, kasama ko ang aking koponan kapag may tunggalian. Pinapakinggan ko ang bawat panig, pinamamagitan ang diskusyon, at ginagabayan sila sa makatarungang solusyon upang maramdaman nilang naririnig at nirerespeto sila."

(As a coach, I involve my team when conflicts arise. I listen to everyone's side, mediate the discussion, and guide them toward a fair solution so that everyone feels heard and respected.)

One of the informants R4 shared,

"Kapag may hindi pagkakaunawaan, hinihikayat ko ang aking mga manlalaro na ipahayag nang bukas ang kanilang saloobin. Tinutulungan ko silang makipag-usap nang mahinahon, unawain ang isa't isa, at maghanap ng solusyon nang magkakasama."

(When disagreements happen, I encourage my players to express their thoughts openly. I help them talk calmly, understand each other, and find a solution together.)

Participants R6 added,

"Minsan, tumatawag ako ng pulong ng koponan upang maibahagi ng mga manlalaro ang kanilang mga ideya. Nakakaramdam sila ng respeto at pagiging bahagi ng paggawa ng desisyon."

(Sometimes, I call a team meeting to let players share their ideas. This makes them feel respected and part of the decision-making process.)

The findings from key informants in Cotabato City indicate that leadership style plays a critical role in shaping how coaches prevent conflicts within their teams. Coaches who exhibit transformational leadership—characterized by inspiration, individualized care, and encouragement of resilience—tend to foster strong team cohesion, empathy, and understanding among players. This aligns with research by Peng and Wong (2025) and Karayel, Adilogullari, and Senel (2024), which shows that transformational coaches proactively create positive emotional environments, allowing teams to navigate conflicts constructively while maintaining unity.

Similarly, aspects of participative or democratic leadership were observed, where coaches involve players in decision-making, encourage open communication, and mediate conflicts collaboratively. This approach reflects findings from Jin, Kim, Love, Jin, and Zhao (2022), which highlighted that democratic leadership builds trust and supports motivation, enabling conflicts to be prevented through dialogue rather than command. In Cotabato City, informants shared that involving athletes in group discussions, team meetings, and open forums improves understanding, mitigates ego-driven clashes, and promotes fairness in decision-making.

The informants also described instances where more directive or autocratic approaches were necessary, particularly when enforcing rules, managing strong personalities, or addressing recurring disciplinary issues. This reflects Güneş and Kılıç's (2024) observation that effective leadership often requires blending styles—sometimes being participative, and other times assertive—to respond to situational demands and maintain team performance. Local research by Abayari, Tilan, Aton, and Reyes (2024) similarly emphasizes flexibility, as athletes in Philippine sports settings respond differently depending on the context and type of conflict.

In practice, coaches in Cotabato City implement a combination of transformational and participative strategies to prevent conflicts. They engage in open communication, mediation, structured team discussions, and establish clear rules and expectations. These approaches help in addressing personality clashes, miscommunications, and leadership style conflicts, while also enhancing overall team cohesion and player accountability. This supports Kim and Cruz's (2022) meta-analysis, which indicates that transformational behaviors—such as empathy and

individualized support—improve athlete satisfaction and commitment, key elements in effective conflict prevention.

The coaches' reliance on team meetings and group discussions reflects a deeply participative approach to leadership—one that aligns strongly with both Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Across their narratives, it becomes clear that these coaches do not simply impose decisions or discipline when conflicts arise. Instead, they create an environment where athletes are encouraged to speak openly, share their concerns, and work together toward mutually acceptable solutions.

From the perspective of Conflict Management Theory, this approach demonstrates a clear preference for collaborative and compromising strategies. Coaches bring the team together to collectively examine the issue, clarify misunderstandings, and determine the root of the conflict. Rather than relying on avoidance or domination, they guide their players through open dialogue, ensuring that each voice is heard (Rahim, 2011). This method acknowledges that conflicts—whether they involve communication breakdowns, performance issues, or disagreements over roles—are best resolved by addressing both the emotional and relational dimensions of the problem. Through structured discussions, coaches promote fairness, transparency, and shared problem-solving, allowing conflicts to become opportunities for stronger team cohesion.

At the same time, this participative approach strongly reflects the principles of Transformational Leadership Theory. Coaches act as role models who demonstrate calm communication, emotional maturity, and respect for every team member. Their use of team meetings exemplifies idealized influence, showing athletes how to handle disagreements constructively (Wang et al., 2011). By encouraging players to express ideas and consider different perspectives, they practice intellectual stimulation, fostering critical thinking and collaborative decision-making. When coaches listen attentively to players' concerns during group discussions or one-on-one conversations, they demonstrate individualized consideration, acknowledging the unique needs, emotions, and personalities within the team. These practices not only resolve the immediate issue but also motivate athletes to develop stronger interpersonal skills and a greater sense of commitment to shared team goals (Zhu et al., 2013).

Bringing these two theoretical lenses together shows a unified picture: the coaches are not just preventing conflicts—they are transforming them into learning experiences that strengthen trust, unity, and collective responsibility. Through

participative leadership grounded in open communication, guided dialogue, and mutual respect, coaches build a team culture where conflicts become stepping stones toward growth rather than sources of division. This integration of conflict management and transformational leadership creates an environment where athletes feel valued, empowered, and aligned with the team's larger purpose, ultimately enhancing both performance and relationships within the group (Wang et al., 2011).

Theme 2: Transformative Leadership

The responses of the key informants indicate that transformational leadership is a highly valued approach among coaches in Cotabato City. Coaches who adopt this style focus not only on directing their teams but also on inspiring, motivating, and developing their athletes. They emphasize understanding the emotional and psychological needs of players, fostering mutual respect, and encouraging personal and team growth.

Many informants described their approach as guiding rather than controlling. They actively listen to players' concerns, validate their feelings, and facilitate discussions that help athletes learn from conflicts rather than simply comply with rules. This leadership style promotes collaboration, teamwork, and shared problem-solving, reflecting the coach's role as a mentor who helps players build both competence and character.

Transformational coaches also prioritize modeling the behavior they expect from their athletes. Through open communication, empathy, and consistent reinforcement of values such as discipline, respect, and integrity, these coaches cultivate a supportive and motivating team environment. Conflicts are treated as opportunities for learning and improvement, allowing the team to emerge stronger and more cohesive.

Examples from the informants illustrate this style clearly. Coaches reported using open communication, mediation, collaborative decision-making, and participative strategies to ensure that players are engaged in resolving conflicts and contributing to team goals. They strive to empower athletes to take responsibility for their actions, develop problem-solving skills, and maintain harmonious relationships with teammates.

Participant R6 narrated,

"Kadalasan, kinakausap ko nang paisa-isa ang mga kasapi ng team na may kinalaman sa isyu, at pagkatapos ay pinagsasama ko sila para sa isang pinamamagitanang talakayan kung saan kami ay nagkakompromiso at naghahanap ng solusyon nang magkakasama."

(I usually talk to the concerned team members individually, then bring them together for a mediated discussion where we compromise and find a solution together.)

Supported by the response of participant R10,

"Nakatuon ako sa paggabay sa mga manlalaro kaysa sa pagkontrol sa kanila. Sa pamamagitan ng talakayan, natututo sila mula sa tunggalian at nauunawaan ang pananaw ng bawat isa."

(I focus on guiding players rather than controlling them. Through discussion, they learn from the conflict and understand each other's perspectives.)

Finally, participant R12 mentioned,

"Isinasali ko ang team sa paggawa ng desisyon, lalo na kung apektado ang lahat ng miyembro ng koponan. Nakakatulong ito upang itaguyod ang katarungan at nagbibigay sa mga manlalaro ng pakiramdam ng responsibilidad at pagmamay-ari sa solusyon."

(I involve the team in decision-making, especially when the conflict affects everyone. This helps promote fairness and gives players a sense of responsibility and ownership of the solution.)

In essence, transformational leadership among these coaches is characterized by inspiration, mentorship, emotional intelligence, and a focus on holistic development, ensuring that conflict prevention is not just about immediate compliance but about fostering long-term growth, trust, and team unity.

The narratives of the key informants reveal that coaches in Cotabato City approach conflict in ways that reflect both Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Coaches consistently emphasize open communication, active listening, mediation, team meetings, and participative decision-making as primary strategies for preventing disputes within their teams (DeChurch & Marks, 2010). According to Conflict Management Theory, effective

conflict resolution requires understanding the root causes of disagreements, facilitating dialogue, and selecting strategies that suit the situation—whether collaboration, compromise, or neutral facilitation. The informants' descriptions illustrate how these principles are applied in practice, ensuring that conflicts are addressed fairly and constructively.

At the same time, the coaches' approaches embody the principles of transformational leadership. They guide their athletes not only toward preventing immediate conflicts but also toward personal and collective growth. By modeling discipline, respect, and ethical behavior, they demonstrate idealized influence (Bass, 2015). Through encouragement, goal reinforcement, and collaborative problem-solving, they provide inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, while attending to each athlete's perspective and needs reflects individualized consideration. This combination allows conflicts to become opportunities for learning, fostering trust, teamwork, and cohesion rather than causing division (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

Ultimately, the integration of conflict management strategies with transformational leadership principles shows that effective coaches in Cotabato City do more than mediate disputes—they create an environment where athletes are empowered to express themselves, learn from disagreements, and contribute to team solutions. Conflicts are not seen as obstacles but as catalysts for developing communication skills, strengthening relationships, and reinforcing shared values, resulting in a supportive and resilient team culture.

Part 4. Challenges Encountered by the City Coaches in Implementing Conflict Prevention Strategies

In exploring the challenges faced by city coaches in implementing conflict prevention strategies, it is important to understand that managing team dynamics involves more than addressing disputes between players. Coaches encounter a range of obstacles, from interpersonal differences and emotional tensions to limited resources and lack of institutional support. These challenges can affect the effectiveness of conflict prevention efforts, the overall cohesion of the team, and the development of players' skills and relationships.

The responses of the key informants reveal recurring themes in the difficulties they face, highlighting both the internal dynamics of the team and the external factors that complicate conflict management. By presenting the findings thematically, this study aims to provide a structured understanding of the specific challenges coaches encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome them.

Theme 1: Clash of Opinions and Strong Personalities

The interviews reveal that one of the most common challenges city coaches face in managing team conflicts is the presence of differing opinions and strong personalities among players and, occasionally, among coaches themselves. Conflicts often arise when team members hold firm beliefs about strategies, roles, or responsibilities, which may clash with the perspectives of others. Similarly, players with dominant personalities may resist collaboration or compromise, intensifying tensions within the group.

Coaches emphasized that handling these situations requires a balance of patience, understanding, and strategic intervention. Many shared that the initial step in addressing conflicts is to listen to each party individually, giving them space to express their viewpoints and emotions. This approach allows coaches to gather a clearer understanding of the underlying issues, identify potential compromises, and prevent further escalation. As one informant noted, managing the ego of team members is often challenging because individuals may insist their actions are correct, making consensus more difficult to achieve.

The key informants R1, R10, and R19 emphasized the following:

"Minsan ay nagkakasalungatan kami ng aking mga kapwa coach sa opinyon. Ang ego at pride, kahit ano pa ang edad o posisyon, ay minsang nakakaapekto. Sinisikap kong maging maunawain at propesyonal upang maayos ang ganitong sitwasyon."

(Sometimes my fellow coaches and I clash in opinions. Ego and pride, regardless of age or position, sometimes get in the way. I try to stay empathetic and professional to manage these situations.)

"Isa sa pinakamalaking hamon na aking nararanasan ay ang pamahalaan ang malalakas na personalidad at magkakaibang opinyon sa aking koponan. Hinaharap ko ito sa pamamagitan ng pagiging kalmado ngunit patas, bukas na komunikasyon, at pagtatakda ng malinaw na alituntunin na susundin ng lahat."

(One of the biggest challenges I face is handling strong personalities and differing opinions in my team. I deal with this by staying calm but fair, communicating openly, and setting clear rules everyone can follow.)

“Minsan, nagiging dependsibo ang mga manlalaro at tumatangging makinig sa panahon ng alitan. Pinapaalalahanan ko ang sarili kong manatiling kalmado at neutral upang matulungan silang makita nang malinaw ang sitwasyon.”

(Sometimes players become defensive and refuse to listen during conflicts. I remind myself to remain calm and neutral to help them see the situation clearly.)

The responses also suggest that strong personalities, when not guided effectively, can disrupt teamwork and affect overall team cohesion. Coaches therefore employ a combination of mediation, dialogue, and structured discussion to ensure that all voices are heard while guiding the group toward a mutually acceptable resolution. By encouraging mutual respect and promoting active participation, coaches can turn potential conflicts into opportunities for learning and team growth.

Overall, this theme highlights that clashes of opinion and strong personalities are inevitable in team settings. However, with thoughtful conflict management strategies, coaches are able to transform these challenges into constructive experiences that strengthen communication, cooperation, and trust among team members.

The theme “Clash of Opinions and Strong Personalities” can be analyzed through the lens of Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, revealing how coaches navigate interpersonal tensions within their teams.

From the Conflict Management Theory perspective, coaches employ strategies such as collaboration, mediation, and compromise to resolve disputes arising from differing opinions or dominant personalities. Individual listening sessions, structured discussions, and guided dialogue reflect collaborative conflict prevention, where the goal is to understand all perspectives and jointly develop solutions (DeChurch & Marks, 2010). This approach aligns with the theory’s emphasis on managing disagreements constructively, preventing escalation, and maintaining group cohesion. Coaches also demonstrate awareness of potential biases and emotional influences, ensuring that decisions are impartial and that all parties feel heard and respected (O’Neill, Allen, & Hastings, 2013).

In the context of Transformational Leadership Theory, coaches act as inspirational and guiding figures rather than mere enforcers of rules. By encouraging players to articulate their viewpoints, reflect on the impact of their

actions, and engage in problem-solving, coaches foster intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration—two key components of transformational leadership. Through this approach, coaches not only prevent conflicts but also promote personal growth, mutual understanding, and team cohesion, transforming challenges into learning opportunities. Their leadership encourages players to internalize shared values, prioritize teamwork, and develop conflict-resolution skills that extend beyond the sport.

The integration of these two theories illustrates that effective conflict management in sports is not solely about resolving disputes but also about building a positive, trust-based team culture (Bass, 2015). Coaches who combine structured conflict management techniques with transformational leadership principles are able to handle strong personalities constructively, sustain high morale, and cultivate an environment where disagreements lead to collaboration rather than division (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

Theme 2: Emotional Management and Bias

In the interviews, city coaches consistently highlighted that managing emotions—both their own and those of their players—is a critical aspect of preventing conflicts effectively. Emotional reactions such as anger, frustration, or defensiveness often exacerbate disagreements and make resolution more challenging. Coaches noted that when either they or their team members allow emotions to dominate, rational decision-making and fair problem-solving can be compromised.

Several informants shared that personal biases, whether stemming from favoritism, prior experiences, or preconceived notions about players, could also interfere with conflict resolution. Coaches stressed the importance of recognizing and controlling these biases to maintain fairness and credibility within the team. By actively practicing self-awareness and emotional regulation, coaches were able to approach conflicts calmly, ensuring that preventions are based on facts and team welfare rather than personal feelings.

Participant R7 shared,

“Ang pinakamahirap na bahagi ng paglutas ng mga konflik sa loob ng koponan ay ang pamamahala sa matinding emosyon at pagsisiguro ng patas na pagtrato sa lahat ng kasali. Mahirap minsan na maiparamdam sa parehong

panig na sila ay nauunawaan habang pinananatili ang pagkakaisa ng koponan.”

(The most difficult parts of resolving conflicts within the team are managing strong emotions and ensuring fairness to everyone involved. It can be challenging to make both sides feel understood while keeping team harmony intact.)

Another informant R15 mentioned,

“Ang mga isyu sa emosyon at personal na pagkiling, tulad ng galit, frustration, o paboritismo, ay maaaring makaabala sa patas na paggawa ng desisyon.”

(Emotional issues and personal bias, such as anger, frustration, or favoritism, can interfere with fair decision-making.)

The subsequent review of literature substantiates and contextualizes the findings:

The presence of strong personalities and conflicting opinions often creates tension within teams. Literature confirms that “personality clashes” are a major source of interpersonal conflict in sports, especially in competitive environments where dominant egos resist compromise. Wachsmuth et al. (2023) note that power struggles and rigid hierarchies intensify these conflicts, requiring structured dialogue and mediation—strategies similarly used by city coaches.

Coaches also struggle with regulating emotions—both their own and those of athletes. Studies show that emotional strain, burnout, and pressure can hinder coaches’ ability to remain fair and composed during conflicts (Kang & Lee, 2025). Research on emotional intelligence further emphasizes that coaches with low EI may display bias or inconsistent discipline, making conflict prevention more difficult. Supportive and democratic leadership styles are found to encourage healthier emotional regulation among athletes (Sport Journal, 2023).

Communication breakdowns are another major challenge. Karafil and Ulaş (2024–2025) identified issues such as unclear expectations, misaligned goals, and ineffective feedback as common barriers between coaches and athletes. These

findings align with the study's results, where miscommunication often escalates minor conflicts. Secaras et al. (2023) also highlight that lack of consistent communication channels and unclear roles contribute to misunderstandings and weaken team relationships.

Overall, literature suggests that coaches need stronger skills in managing personality differences, regulating emotions, and establishing clear communication systems. These challenges indicate the importance of integrated conflict-prevention training that enhances emotional intelligence, communication competence, and adaptive leadership—particularly for city coaches like those in Cotabato City.

The theme of emotional management and bias aligns closely with principles from both Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Conflict Management Theory emphasizes that effective prevention requires addressing the underlying causes of disagreements while maintaining fairness, reducing escalation, and facilitating cooperation among parties. Coaches' strategies of remaining calm, neutral, and empathetic directly reflect the collaborative and integrative approaches advocated in conflict management, where the goal is to satisfy both individual and collective interests rather than impose unilateral solutions (De Dreu, 2015). Recognizing personal biases and mitigating favoritism ensures that conflicts are prevented objectively, fostering trust and credibility—core components of successful conflict management.

From the lens of Transformational Leadership Theory, coaches demonstrate emotional intelligence, individualized consideration, and moral integrity in handling team disputes. Transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and guide followers not through coercion but by modeling ethical behavior and emotional regulation (Bass, 2015). In this case, coaches manage their emotions and set an example for their players, encouraging them to respond constructively rather than react impulsively. By promoting self-awareness, empathy, and fair decision-making, coaches elevate the team's collective capability to handle disagreements, strengthen relational bonds, and maintain a cohesive team culture (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2013).

Moreover, transformational leaders often encourage open communication and participative problem-solving, which complements the conflict management strategies of addressing both sides' perspectives. The combined effect of emotional regulation, impartiality, and reflective leadership enables coaches to prevent conflicts in a way that is both procedurally fair and morally inspiring, enhancing both team performance and interpersonal trust.

In essence, integrating these two theories highlights that successful conflict prevention in coaching is not only a technical process of negotiation and rule enforcement but also a transformational process that nurtures players' emotional maturity, fairness, and collaborative mindset.

Part 5. Recommendations of Coaches to Improve Conflict Prevention Practices in Sports Settings in Cotabato City

The study sought to gather insights from city coaches regarding ways to improve conflict prevention practices in sports settings in Cotabato City. After conducting interviews with key informants, several recommendations emerged that reflect the coaches' experiences, challenges, and innovative approaches to managing conflicts within their teams. These recommendations are presented in thematic form to provide a clear and organized understanding of the practical strategies and best practices that coaches believe can strengthen conflict management in local sports programs.

Theme 1: Strengthening Communication and Feedback Mechanisms

This theme captures the informants' strong emphasis on the importance of clear, open, and continuous communication as a foundation for effective conflict prevention within sports teams. Coaches repeatedly highlighted that many misunderstandings arise not from major issues, but from communication gaps—such as unclear instructions, unexpressed concerns, and misinterpretations between coaches and players.

The informants explained that establishing structured communication practices helps prevent conflicts from escalating. Several coaches noted that when expectations, rules, and responsibilities are clearly communicated from the beginning, players are less likely to misinterpret instructions or feel unfairly treated. This underscores the need for regular team meetings, open forums, and pre-training huddles where concerns can be freely discussed.

Coaches also pointed out that feedback must be two-way. Instead of communication flowing only from coach to player, they stressed the importance of allowing athletes to express their thoughts, frustrations, or suggestions. This creates a sense of mutual respect and helps coaches understand underlying issues that may not be immediately visible.

Moreover, the informants emphasized that effective communication requires not only speaking clearly but also active listening. Listening to both sides during disagreements allows coaches to gather accurate information, assess the emotional state of each athlete, and respond fairly. Some added that conflicts are easier to prevent when players feel heard and valued, leading to more cooperative behavior.

The informants also highlighted the need for structured feedback systems—such as post-game debriefings, periodic evaluation sessions, and private consultations—where concerns can be addressed promptly and constructively. These mechanisms help resolve issues before they intensify and foster a culture of transparency and trust.

Participant R6 mentioned,

“Sa tingin ko, kailangan pa naming dagdagan ang regular team meetings para mas marami kaming pagkakataon na mag-usap nang maayos.”

(I think we need more regular team meetings so we have more opportunities to communicate properly.)

Participant 11 said,

“Makakatulong talaga kung may structured feedback system para may malinaw na proseso ang mga players sa pagpapahayag ng kanilang mga concerns.”

(It would be helpful to have a structured feedback system so players have a clear process for expressing their concerns.)

Participant 14 added,

“Makakatulong kung may pre-season orientation tungkol sa communication channels para alam ng lahat kung saan at kanino lumapit kapag may isyu.”

(Post-game debriefings should be regular so players can give feedback on teamwork and performance.)

Overall, the narratives of the key informants point to the necessity of building consistent communication channels and feedback processes. Strengthening these mechanisms not only minimizes conflicts but also promotes team harmony, improves coach-athlete relationships, and enhances overall team performance.

The theme Strengthening Communication and Feedback Mechanisms

reflects the interplay between Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory in the coaching practices of the informants.

From the lens of Conflict Management Theory, effective communication is considered a core strategy across multiple conflict-handling modes—particularly collaboration, compromise, and problem-solving. The informants’ emphasis on open dialogue, active listening, and structured feedback aligns with the collaborative approach described by Thomas and Kilmann. Coaches prevent conflicts not by imposing authority but by encouraging open expression of concerns, ensuring both sides are heard, and guiding athletes toward mutually acceptable solutions. This demonstrates a shift away from avoidance or dominance, favoring instead communication-based resolution mechanisms (O’Neill, Allen, & Hastings, 2013).

Meanwhile, the principles of Transformational Leadership are evident in how coaches view communication not merely as a tool for preventing conflict, but as a means of developing their athletes. Transformational leaders inspire trust, foster open interaction, and encourage personal growth through supportive communication (Bass, 1985). The coaches’ narratives—highlighting fairness, emotional understanding, and shared decision-making—reflect attributes of individualized consideration and idealized influence, key components of transformational leadership. By creating spaces where players feel valued and heard, coaches build stronger relational bonds and reinforce mutual respect within the team (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

Furthermore, the emphasis on two-way feedback mirrors the transformational practice of promoting empowerment and shared ownership. Instead of unidirectional instruction, coaches encourage athletes to participate in discussions, share their insights, and reflect on their behavior. This collaborative feedback system nurtures a sense of autonomy, responsibility, and collective commitment to team harmony.

Theme 2: Enhancing Leadership Competence and Adaptive Coaching Skills

The theme highlights the strong and consistent call among key informants for continuous professional development to enhance conflict prevention practices in Cotabato City's sports environment. Coaches emphasized that while they rely on their existing experiences and intuition, many of the conflicts they encounter—ranging from emotional tensions to communication breakdowns—require more structured training and updated knowledge.

Several informants stressed that regular and targeted training programs are essential in equipping coaches with the skills needed to address complex interpersonal issues. They noted that training in communication skills, emotional intelligence, mediation techniques, and psychological first aid would significantly improve their ability to manage disputes fairly and effectively. For others, capacity building extends to refreshing their understanding of updated rules and regulations, especially in competitive settings where new guidelines are frequently introduced.

Coaches also highlighted the importance of workshops, seminars, and hands-on simulations, explaining that these interactive learning sessions help them practice dealing with real-life scenarios. They believe that conflict prevention is not merely a technical skill but a competency strengthened through consistent practice, reflection, and exposure to diverse strategies.

Furthermore, many informants recognized that capacity building should not be limited to technical skills alone. Instead, there is a need for training focused on mental conditioning, stress management, building support systems, and reflective leadership, enabling coaches to navigate emotionally charged situations with clarity and fairness. This also includes learning how to model positive conflict-handling behaviors that athletes can emulate, reinforcing the idea that effective conflict prevention begins with the coach's ability to lead with empathy and composure.

Two informants (R3, R4) narrated, respectively,

"Base sa karanasan ko bilang coach, napansin kong maraming alitan sana ang naiwasan kung mas malakas lang ang kasanayan namin sa conflict resolution at emotional management. Kaya naniniwala talaga ako na kailangan namin ng mas marami pang pormal na training. Kapag may ganitong kasanayan ang mga coach, mas gumaganda ang takbo ng buong team."

(In my experience as a coach, I've realized that many conflicts could have been avoided if we had stronger skills in conflict resolution and emotional management. If coaches are equipped with these skills, the whole team benefits.)

"Hindi lahat ng coach ay pare-pareho ang pinanggalingan pagdating sa leadership, kaya tingin ko malaking tulong ang mga workshop na nakatuon sa leadership development. Kailangan din namin ng training sa paghawak ng team dynamics dahil magkakaiba ang bawat team."

(Not all coaches have the same leadership background, so I think workshops

focused on leadership development would really help. We also need training on managing team dynamics because every team is different.)

Overall, the responses reveal that the informants view capacity building as a crucial foundation for improving conflict prevention within sports teams. By strengthening coaches' competencies through continuous training and supportive development programs, sports organizations in Cotabato City can create an environment where conflicts are addressed constructively, fairly, and proactively—ultimately contributing to healthier team dynamics and improved athletic performance.

Respondents repeatedly recommended regular training, workshops, and professional development, such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, mediation, and stress management. Conflict Management Theory supports this by emphasizing that successful conflict prevention requires specific skills—particularly in negotiation, emotional control, and structured intervention (DeChurch & Marks, 2010).

Likewise, Transformational Leadership Theory views continuous learning as part of the leader's role in intellectual stimulation, encouraging self-improvement to effectively guide others. Coaches who seek training are demonstrating transformational qualities, recognizing that their growth directly influences their ability to inspire, mentor, and prevent conflicts within the team (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

The integration of theories shows that capacity building is crucial for developing both conflict competence and transformational leadership effectiveness.

Theme 3: Promoting Team-Building

The key informants emphasized that one of the most effective ways to prevent and manage conflicts within sports teams is through consistent and well-designed team-building activities. According to them, conflicts often arise when players lack familiarity with one another's personalities, strengths, and emotional triggers.

Several informants shared that team building does not only refer to games or outings; it also includes simple practices such as group reflections after training, shared problem-solving exercises, and collaborative goal-setting discussions. These activities help players see themselves as part of a collective rather than isolated individuals. When athletes feel that they are valued members of a team, they

become more open to communication, more willing to compromise, and more receptive to feedback.

Team-building sessions also allow coaches to observe the natural dynamics among players—who takes the lead, who prefers to stay quiet, and who struggles to work with others. This awareness enables coaches to anticipate potential conflicts and intervene early. Informants noted that when players build trust and learn to rely on each other, emotional tensions decrease, teamwork improves, and conflicts become easier to prevent.

Participant R1 shared,

“Dapat palaging hikayatin ng mga coach ang kanilang mga manlalaro na makilahok sa mga pangkatang gawain na nagpapalago ng tiwala at pag-unawa. Sa pagtutulungan nila sa labas ng laro, mas nauunawaan nila ang pananaw ng bawat isa, kaya mas nagiging madali ang paglutas ng mga alitan.”

(Coaches should consistently encourage players to participate in group activities that foster trust and understanding. By working together outside of the game, players can better appreciate each other’s perspectives, making conflict resolution easier.)

Participant R8 emphasized,

“Ituon ang pansin sa pagpapalago ng tiwala at pananagutan sa loob ng kanilang koponan. Sa pamamagitan ng maayos na mga aktibidad sa team-building at pagbibigay ng pagkakataon sa bukas na talakayan, matututuhan ng mga manlalaro kung paano pamahalaan ang mga hindi pagkakaunawaan nang maayos at mabisa.”

(Focus on fostering trust and accountability within their teams. By implementing structured team-building exercises and encouraging open discussions, players can learn to manage disagreements constructively.)

Ultimately, promoting team building serves a dual purpose: it fosters camaraderie and strengthens the team’s emotional resilience. For the informants, a team that laughs together, communicates openly, and supports one another is far less likely to experience destructive conflicts. Instead, disagreements become opportunities for reflection, growth, and unity.

Effective communication is widely recognized as a cornerstone for conflict

prevention in sports teams. Open dialogue, transparent communication channels, and active listening help build trust and prevent misunderstandings between coaches and athletes (Quartz Program, 2024). These strategies directly support the recommendation of the coaches to enhance communication mechanisms within teams.

Additionally, leadership communication styles are closely linked to emotional intelligence and conflict management. A systematic review in educational contexts identified interpersonal communication skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness as critical leadership attributes that enhance conflict management effectiveness (RSIS International, 2023). Although the study focused on education, its principles apply to sports coaching: coaches who communicate openly and model emotionally intelligent behavior are better equipped to handle disputes and maintain team harmony.

On the other hand, structured training programs for coaches are essential to develop both technical and interpersonal competencies. Research on emotionally intelligent leadership shows that emotional intelligence — including self-regulation, empathy, and social awareness — significantly improves leaders' effectiveness and fosters team cohesion (Ćwiąkała et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the coaches' recommendation for training programs that address conflict prevention, emotional management, and leadership skills.

Modern sports environments also demand transformational and charismatic leadership combined with emotional intelligence to maintain team satisfaction and engagement. A 2024 study on youth sports teams found that leaders with these competencies were more successful in guiding teams through conflict and change (Gong et al., 2024). This underscores the importance of capacity building that goes beyond technical coaching to include leadership development.

Team-building is a well-established strategy to enhance cohesion and reduce interpersonal conflict in sports. A meta-analysis of team-building interventions demonstrated that structured exercises lasting more than two weeks significantly improve team cohesion, leading to better communication and fewer conflicts (Kwon, 2024).

Practical guides also emphasize that team-building should go beyond entertainment, serving as a preventive and problem-solving tool. Activities such as one-on-one dialogue, role clarification, and collaborative problem solving foster mutual trust, accountability, and collective responsibility (Britts Imperial, 2022). These approaches reinforce the coaches' recommendation to use team-building to

strengthen interpersonal relationships and proactively address potential conflicts.

According to Conflict Management Theory, understanding the sources and dynamics of these conflicts is crucial for preventing escalation. Team-building provides a proactive avenue for addressing these challenges by improving communication, promoting trust, and creating shared expectations among team members. These activities act as preventive mechanisms, ensuring that misunderstandings do not develop into destructive conflicts (O'Neill, Allen, & Hastings, 2013).

At the same time, Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the critical role of coaches in shaping the team's culture and behavior. Coaches who lead by example, inspire their athletes, and cultivate a shared vision foster a sense of purpose and unity. Team-building exercises support this by encouraging collaboration, intellectual engagement, and mutual respect (Bass, 2015). They allow coaches to practice individualized consideration, understanding the unique motivations, triggers, and needs of each player. This approach not only helps in resolving conflicts when they arise but also empowers athletes to navigate disagreements constructively, contributing to overall team harmony (Turnnidge & Côté, 2018).

Integrating these theories provides a comprehensive understanding of how team-building functions as both a conflict management strategy and a transformational leadership tool. By facilitating open communication, mutual trust, and collaborative problem-solving, team-building activities strengthen team cohesion, reduce the likelihood of conflict, and create a culture where athletes feel supported and motivated.

Summary of Findings

The study explored the common sources of conflict, conflict prevention strategies, leadership influences, and challenges encountered by coaches in Cotabato City. Four major findings emerged:

1. Conflicts primarily stem from resource limitations, communication gaps, personality differences, and inconsistent coaching and leadership styles. Misunderstandings, unclear expectations, and competing perspectives within teams often intensify tensions.
2. Coaches commonly implement open communication, mediation, team meetings, and clear rule-setting as mechanisms to prevent disputes. These strategies reflect key concepts of Conflict Management Theory, emphasizing

dialogue, collaboration, and structured processes to manage disagreements.

3. Coaches who embody principles of Transformational Leadership—such as motivation, individualized support, and role modeling—tend to handle conflicts more effectively. Meanwhile, authoritarian or inconsistent leadership styles contribute to heightened friction and reduced team cohesion.

4. Coaches face persistent challenges including clash of strong personalities, emotional biases, and communication barriers. These issues complicate the application of conflict prevention strategies and often hinder the establishment of harmonious team environments.

Overall, the findings emphasize that the effectiveness of conflict prevention in sports teams is shaped not only by formal strategies but also by the relational dynamics and leadership approaches of coaches.

Conclusion

The study established that conflict within sports teams in Cotabato City is largely shaped by differences in coaching leadership styles, interpersonal dynamics, and organizational demands. Consistent with Conflict Management Theory, the findings showed that coaches employ a range of prevention strategies—such as open communication, mediation, team meetings, and the establishment of clear rules—to address tensions and maintain team cohesion. These strategies align with the theory's emphasis on constructive dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and the selection of management styles that fit the nature of the conflict.

The influence of leadership style also emerged as a central factor in how conflicts are handled. Coaches who demonstrate qualities consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory, such as individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and supportive communication, were better positioned to prevent misunderstandings and foster trust among athletes. Their ability to model positive behavior, encourage open expression, and guide players through emotionally charged situations contributed to more effective conflict prevention outcomes. In contrast, inconsistent or overly authoritarian approaches were associated with heightened friction and confusion within teams.

Despite the use of these strategies, coaches continue to face challenges, including clashes of strong personalities, emotional biases, and communication barriers. These challenges reflect the limitations of applying conflict management

strategies without sufficient emotional regulation, leadership training, or institutional support.

In conclusion, aligning coaching practices with the principles of Conflict Management Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory is essential to strengthening team relationships and improving conflict prevention processes. Enhancing coaches' leadership capacities, cultivating open and respectful communication systems, and supporting continuous professional development can contribute to healthier team environments, higher athlete performance, and more sustainable sports programs in Cotabato City.

Recommendations

Grounded in the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

3. Establish structured communication channels such as regular dialogue sessions, feedback loops, and grievance systems to reduce misunderstandings and promote transparency.
4. Develop capacity-building programs focused on transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and mediation skills. Strengthening these competencies will enable coaches to better prevent and manage conflicts.
5. Creating unified guidelines for discipline, roles, responsibilities, and conflict-handling procedures can minimize confusion and ensure fairness across teams.
6. Encourage consultation with athletes during planning, rule-setting, and resolving team issues. Involvement fosters ownership, reduces resistance, and leadership principles.
7. Integrate sports psychologists or trained facilitators to assist teams in navigating emotional tensions, personality clashes, and stress from competitions.

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