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LIVED EXPERIENCES OF COMBATIVE SPORTS ATHLETES IN THE FACE-TO-FACE SET-UP: MAINTAINING WEIGHT DIVISION IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aimed to describe and understand the experiences of combative sports athletes in maintaining weight division in the face-to-face set-up. In addition, this study also wanted to know the coping strategies and mechanisms of combative sports athletes and their insights into maintaining weight division. This study involved fourteen (14) students, seven (7) of the 14 participants were subjected to an in-depth interview (IDI), while the remaining seven (7) took part in a focus group discussion (FGD). Purposive sampling was used to select participants; data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The results revealed six (6) major themes of the participants' experiences: acquisition of essential attributes, progress in health and wellness, negative feelings from weight loss struggles, issues in physical and mental health, issues with food management, and achievement of set goals. Moreover, the participants revealed their coping strategies and mechanisms to confront their challenges in maintaining weight resulting in the emergence of four (4) themes: employing self-help techniques, managing food and drink intake, seeking guidance from mentors, and acquiring practical and emotional support. Lastly, the participants shared their insights that revealed four (4) major themes: giving value to weight management, having a positive disposition, ensuring a healthy lifestyle, and advocating the importance of preparation. Regardless of the difficulties presented in maintaining weight division during the face-to-face set-up, combative sports athletes work hard to overcome the challenges and explore different strategies to achieve the set goal.

KEYWORDS: *athletes, combative sports, weight division, maintaining weight, weight management, experience, face-to-face set-up, phenomenological inquiry, qualitative research, Carmen District, Davao del Norte.*

INTRODUCTION

Weight divisions are typically used to separate competitors in combat sports to promote fair competition. Combat sports events include boxing, arnis, wrestling, judo, karate, taekwondo, wushu, and mixed martial arts. Moreover, athletes prioritize their nutrition and focus on training exercises to achieve the desired weight requirement and be qualified to compete in their sports events, these athletes are consciously trying to reduce, increase, or maintain their weight. However, for the past years since the pandemic, the closure of schools and suspension of organized sports activities have directly affected student-athletes. Thus, inactivity and poor nutrition among combat sports athletes increased, resulting in weight gain as observed in the return of face-to-face classes.

In Malaysia, combat sports athletes who weighed more and had a high body mass index were under pressure to lose weight and turned to more extreme loss of body weight procedures to reach their weight division (Xiong, et al., 2017; Castor-Parga, et al., 2021). In Japan, a study by Kobayashi and Kida (2022) states that during the return of classes, high school Japanese boxers gained weight and had to reduce weight through diets and a reduction in water intake to obtain an edge over opponents' physiques, which places a physical and mental strain on the athlete. Furthermore, in Korea, combat sports athletes go to extreme lengths of fasting, saunas, vomiting, and laxatives to lose weight quickly and to be categorized into a lower weight division (Sundgot-Borgen & Garthe, 2013; Miles-Chan & Isacco, 2021).

Moreover, in Manila City, Philippines, a study by Puen et al. (2021) showed reports of reduced exercise and an increase in sedentary lifestyles among student-athletes during school closure. The implications of this observation could be connected to the findings that both male and female combative sports athletes experienced weight gain and an increase in BMI (He et al., 2021). In the Division of Davao del Norte, particularly in Carmen District, coaches in combat sports had noticed the weight gain of athletes as they returned to face-to-face classes. In support of this claim, athletes were having struggles in losing weight before the sports competition and some of them did not qualify to compete in their division due to weight problems. Despite the efforts of the coaches to provide weight management strategies, there were still

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athletes who forgot the importance of weight practices and made unwise dietary decisions.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe and understand the lived experiences of combative sports athletes in the Division of Davao del Norte, particularly in the Carmen District in maintaining their weight division in the face-to-face setup. Furthermore, this study encouraged them to share their coping strategies and insights in maintaining their weight.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The study aims to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the lived experiences of combative sports athletes in maintaining weight division during the face-to-face set-up?
2. How do combative sports athletes cope with the challenges of maintaining weight division during face-to-face set-up?
3. What insights can the athletes draw from their experiences on maintaining weight during face-to-face set-up?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Combative Sports in the Weight Division

Athletes are classified into weight divisions, primarily known as combative sports (Barley et. al., 2019). Combat sports weight division regulations were created to provide each participant with a fair opportunity to participate in their respective category (Lakicevic et al., 2020). Similarly, weight divisions in combative sports are employed to guarantee that athletes' body masses are equivalent, considering that this could have an impact on the endurance, strength, and power of players. Establishing safe and equitable competition is the main objective of this sport (Taim et. al., 2023).

Experiences of Combative Sports for Student-Athletes in Maintaining Weight Division

Maintaining a particular weight division is essential both for fair competition and success in combative sports. This is made more difficult for student-athletes by the additional demands of their extracurricular activities and academics (Santos & Mallari 2021). Athletes trying to lose weight often suffer from emotional and intellectual issues, which impact their studies and sports performance (Zhong et. al., 2024). Moreover, student-athletes' performance is impacted by weight management and changes in physical composition, which are essential components for tournament preparation (Langan-Evans et al., 2020).

Coping with Challenges in Maintaining Weight Division in Combative Sports

Coping strategies help student-athletes when faced with disappointments, problems, and stresses of life due to maintaining weight division being affected by the objectives of seeking performance success (Vealey, 2024). Thus, appropriate coping techniques, including optimism, seeking social support, and proactive stress management are beneficial for maintaining combative sports athletes' well-being and aiding them in overcoming discomfort and stress (Daumiller et. al., 2022).

Insight of Maintaining Weight Division in Combative Sports

Athletes choose the desired food that addresses recovery and enhances performance by carefully planning, testing, and consulting with a sports nutrition specialist (Štangar et. al., 2022). Also, coaches and athletes ought to engage with nutrition and educate themselves on tactics for maintaining weight before significant matches and constantly improve this procedure to optimize opportunities according to the sport's rules (Rueda Flores et. al., 2023).

METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative research utilized the phenomenological design in delving into the lived experiences of combative sports athletes in maintaining their weight division in the face-to-face setup. Bhandari (2023) asserted that qualitative investigation is utilized to gain insight into how others perceive the world. This methodology appears to be adaptable and focuses on maintaining rich meaning while evaluating data. In this study, the researcher chose a qualitative phenomenological design considering that the data was collected based on the actual experiences of combat sports athletes in maintaining their weight division by means of interviews. Every information collected was utilized for analysis, interpretation, and understanding of the phenomena highlighted in this study.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this phenomenological study were high school combative sports athletes. There was a total of 14 participants in this study, 7 of them underwent in-depth interviews while the other 7 were asked to join a focus group discussion. Moreover, in determining the number of participants, the researcher adhered to the recommendation of Creswell (2013) as cited by Ishtiaq (2019) that the studied group have three to 14 members. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher to select participants for this study. As stated by Andrade (2021), purposive sampling is defined as having characteristics that are relevant to the study. The participants were determined by using criteria that allowed the researcher to collect accurate data on the combative sports athletes' lived experiences with the phenomenon that is under investigation.

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RESULTS

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Combative Sports Athletes in Maintaining Weight Division During the Face-to-Face Set-Up

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Acquisition of Essential Attributes	• earned self-discipline and a positive mindset in overcoming challenges • attained self-control and adjustments in maintaining weight • perceived improvement in performance during training and physical activities • gained self-confidence after the consistent training experience • felt fearless after gaining self-confidence every weigh-in
Progress in Health and Wellness	• acquired health benefits and social relations because of losing weight • improved eating habits and achieved a balanced diet for a healthier body • performed actively both work and school-related activities after losing weight • enjoyed training activities with friends when maintaining weight • expressed satisfaction and enjoyment in training and maintaining weight with teammates
Negative Feelings from Weight Loss Struggles	• felt hopeless amidst weight challenges • experienced difficulties during weigh-in as it is a must before playing a game • confused and doubtful of the chosen sports because of the difficulties • developed fear and trauma during weigh-in due to a bad experience
Issues on Physical and Mental Health	• experienced physical and mental health issues due to the demands of losing weight • struggled in balancing school duties and sports responsibilities because of keeping up with the demands of losing weight • had trouble losing weight which resulted in taking supplements for weight loss with side effects • obtained injuries and health risks due to extreme weight loss methods
Issues on Food Management	• felt hopeless despite the effort of food resistance and training due to weight loss • had an imbalanced diet leads to a lack of bodily strength • had trouble in resisting and overcoming temptations to achieve the target weight • had internal conflict in dealing with eating habits to maintain weight • experienced food restrictions and extreme limitations amidst weight loss
Achievement of Set Goals	• achieved target weight and won the game because of persistence • attained goals due to hard work and persistence • achieved target goals regarding the desired weight • appreciated the impact of coach and trainers towards acquiring control and self-discipline • attained satisfaction and mindfulness after getting the desired weight • thought of enjoying the game despite the agitation felt during weigh-in.

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Acquisition of Essential Attributes

This was supported by the claims of IDI-01 who mentioned:

The positive thing that I have experienced is that I acquired self-discipline. I always think that I can do it, I can lose weight, and that I will not lose hope even if it's hard.

IDI-03 also added that:

I can easily adjust and control what I eat to maintain my weight according to the category that I'm in. I'm happy that I can just play without thinking of any problems.

Progress in Health and Wellness

Most of the participants expressed their notable progress in their health and wellness.

My body can't easily acquire disease. IDI-02

I learn how to maintain my weight and the proper way of eating to have a balanced diet. IDI-04

Negative Feelings from Weight Loss Struggles

Participants shared their struggles and the challenges they had to face to achieve their desired category.

Negative experience that I have is that I cannot avoid being hopeless. I keep on thinking that I cannot keep up with my weight and just want to give up. IDI-03

During training, it is so painful. I am doubtful as to why I have chosen this sport but I realize that it's my passion. FGD-02

Issues on Physical and Mental Health

Participants pointed out their troubles, frustrations, various side effects, and health risks due to the demands of losing weight.

It's one of those times when I got sick. I would lose my appetite and I would stop eating. It was difficult because I kept thinking about my weight, and my mental health was also affected. IDI-05

I don't have a proper cycle of sleep, diet, school, and training. I cannot rest well. It's difficult to keep up with both school activities and training. I don't have enough sleep and proper food intake. IDI-07

Issues in Food Management

The participants spoke about the issues they encountered in food management such as extreme food limitations and restrictions.

When it comes to food, I rarely eat, I only ate 2 spoons when losing weight. IDI-01

I tend to skip meals and sometimes forget to eat 3x a day. I only eat biscuits. IDI-04

Achievement of Set Goals

Athletes in combat sports have stated that one of the most crucial abilities to have is goal setting, which helps them provide their best effort. They shared how it helped them focus on what is important and gave them a sense of control and positive self-direction.

I continued training even if it was difficult. I hit my target weight and I won. I didn't give up even though my mind kept telling me that I couldn't do it but I fought and gave my all just to win. IDI-01

I felt relieved knowing the result of what I did. When I qualified, I was the happiest. IDI-03

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Strategies of Combative Sports Athletes with the Challenges in Maintaining Weight Division During Face-to-Face Set-Up

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Employing Self-Help Techniques	• training independently and imposing self-discipline and self-control to maintain weight • innovating own techniques such as jogging and walking that are all relevant for weight loss • overeating by underweight athletes before or on the day of weigh-in to avoid unnecessary problem • focusing more on training than losing weight alone to ensure effective game performance • applying regular exercise and weight loss methods to maintain weight
Managing Food and Drink Intake	• eating healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits to overcome challenges • controlling food intake and avoiding temptations to maintain weight. • drinking warm water and avoiding sugary foods and drinks to avoid gaining weight • training and eating twice as much for underweight athletes before the game • Drinking only half-glass of water to maintain weight
Seeking Guidance of Mentors	• receiving the dos and don'ts of being an athlete from the coach which is essential for weight loss • getting constant reminders from coaches and trainers on food consumption • listening and following coaches' instructions to be productive

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	• looking for assistance and guidance from a coach regarding a healthy diet
Acquiring Practical and Emotional Support	• making relevant people a source of motivation to overcome challenges • looking after rewards and motivation from important people • working together with my coach, friends, family, and teammates to avoid being disqualified • getting constant reminders and guidance from loved ones to be ready for the game • sharing weight loss journey with family to build a support system • recognizing family, friends, coaches, and trainers as sources of motivation

Employing Self-Help Techniques

As to the exact example of how athletes innovate, IDI-01 narrated:

Our strategy during training is even though we don't have a trainer, we still do our best to learn about our sports. We are trying to train even if it's just me and my teammate. We jog and we maintain the food that we eat, we avoid eating much.

Comparatively, IDI-05 stated:

I was doing my own strategy to lose weight. It was effective so I did it every day. When I come home from school, I jog around the oval for about an hour with a weighted sandbag attached to my feet.

Furthermore, FGD-02 explained a strategy that was used to lose weight by sharing:

When we did some kicking every morning, we wore heavy clothing. We also wear weighted sandbags to lighten our kick.

Managing Food and Drink Intake

Combative sports athletes divulged their ways and strategies in managing the food and drink that they consume through eating healthy foods and drinking the right liquid.

Just eat fruits, vegetables, and healthy foods. Don't overeat. Get exercise and warm up. IDI-02

Drink warm water instead of cold. Also, avoid soft drinks because it adds up to my weight. Then, less your sugar intake. FGD-01

Seeking Mentors' Guidance

Combative sports athletes maintain weight division, they also appreciate the guidance of their mentors, trainers, and coaches.

Our coach kept reminding me about self-discipline, they told me about the dos and don'ts of losing and gaining weight, and always on my side reminding me about the restrictions. IDI-01

I listen to the coaches on how to maintain and lose weight. I follow instructions on what to eat. I also exercise alone after training and sometimes we jog outside. IDI-04

Acquiring Practical and Emotional Support

Participants make relevant people as their source of strength and motivation.

One of the strategies is that I get strength from people around me. That is my motivation. IDI-03

My teammates, coaches, and even my friends motivated me. They told me that I could get the prize if I kept on training. IDI-04

I can say that my family, loved ones, and relatives are my supporters. IDI-07

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on Insights of the Combative Sports Athletes on Maintaining Weight During Face-to-Face Set-Up

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Giving Value to Weight Management	• Emphasize the need to maintain weight to avoid disqualification • Striving hard to overcome the fear of disqualification by maintaining weight • Considering weight as a responsibility of an athlete to qualify for a game • Right weight is a prerequisite to qualify for a game • Stress the importance of maintaining weight to avoid self-loathing and regrets • Emphasize the importance of self-discipline, a balanced diet, and active listening to coaches • Implementing a healthy diet and strict weight management
Having a Positive Disposition	• Determination and discipline is important in overcoming struggles • Promoting the right attitude in managing weight • Advocate self-discipline and respect for teammates and sport • Encourage self-discipline and a positive mindset to achieve target weight
Ensuring a Healthy Lifestyle	• Being careful of what you eat is important in maintaining weight • It is a must to have a balanced diet and regular exercise

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	• Promote a healthy diet and self-control to avoid difficulties • Food consumption is integral in maintaining weight
Advocating the Importance of Preparation	• Preparing for weight loss should be done ahead of time rather than forcing it. • Emphasize training time as preparation time to ensure an equipped body. • Emphasize the importance of preparing ahead of time to avoid unnecessary weight loss methods.

Giving Value to Weight Management

For combative sports athletes, maintaining weight division is very important to be qualified in the game and to avoid disqualification. Since maintaining weight is undeniably challenging, the participants of this study gave value to weight management.

This is especially true as IDI-01 said:

What's important is that you maintain your weight so that you can play all the time. If you are underweight or overweight, most likely you will be disqualified. You will not be able to play, and will not be given the chance if you don't meet your expected weight.

In addition, IDI-02 commented:

Maintaining weight is important, if you can't maintain your weight, you will be disqualified.

IDI-03 also emphasized the importance of weight management:

It is important because in combative sports, weight is one of the athlete's responsibilities. Maintaining your weight is needed because if you can't qualify for your weight category, you will no longer be able to play.

Having a Positive Disposition

Through learning determination and discipline in maintaining weight, IDI-01 exclaimed:

I've learned that it's never easy to catch up with your desired weight. There will be a lot of struggles that you must go through, but you need to overcome them, you must be determined to maintain your weight. Determination is important because if you're too lazy, you won't gain anything.

Moreover, FGD-03 emphasized self-discipline and respect:

It is not just about health, it's also about your discipline as an athlete and respect. You should respect the sport and your teammates because if your weight is affected, the rest of the team will be affected too.

Ensuring a Healthy Lifestyle

According to the responses of the athletes as participants, the best approach to keeping healthy is to lead an active lifestyle, engage in regular exercise, and follow a balanced diet

Be mindful of what you eat, listen to whatever that coach says, eat healthy foods, and drink lots of water. IDI-02

Have a balanced diet, then exercise. IDI-04

If you are trying to lose weight, make sure to have a healthy diet. You should know how to have a balanced diet, and how to control and limit yourself. FGD-01

Advocating the Importance of Preparation

Don't neglect your weight. Be prepared as early as possible, and pay attention to getting the right weight. IDI-03

You should prepare ahead of time so that during weigh-in or game day, you don't have to worry about your weight anymore. FGD-06

The responses of the participants imply the importance of preparation to them as athletes.

DISCUSSION

The Lived Experiences of Combative Sports Athletes in Maintaining Weight Division During the Face-to-Face Set-Up

Acquisition of Essential Attributes

Participants increased their willingness to participate in combative sports by acquiring self-discipline, a positive mindset, self-control, and self-confidence. This study result is supported by the study of Bédard Thom et al., (2021) states that attributes assessed in combative athletes include self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-expectations and motivation. In addition, Kostorz et al., (2019) expressed that combative sports are intended to foster self-control, determination, and self-discipline.

Progress in Health and Wellness

Combat sports athletes acknowledged that combat sports provide a dynamic and effective way to manage their weight and improve their health and wellness. Relevant to this, Görner et al., (2019) stressed that fitness, autonomy, mental wellness, and physical health are the four main goals for martial arts practice. Furthermore, this result supported the study of Theeboom et al., (2021) which indicated that combative sports practice is primarily motivated by four factors: self-determination, physical activity, mental wellness, and physical well-being.

Negative Feelings from Weight Loss Struggles

Student-athletes shared that they also felt hopeless amidst their weight challenges and that they experienced difficulties during weigh-in as it is a must before playing a game. In consonance with this notion, studies by Steen and Brownell (2020) specified that weight-loss athletes showed low energy levels, unfocused, low self-esteem, and memory retention. Likewise, Degoutte et al., (2021) mentioned that athletes undergoing weight loss, struggled with attention and concentration which easily got distracted during the game, leading to low performance.

Issues on Physical and Mental Health

Participants experienced physical and mental health issues due to

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the demands of losing weight. To support this idea, Martínez-Aranda et al., (2023) revealed that restricting the water and food intake of combative sports athlete while seeking to lose weight can have a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health by increasing stress, frustration, exhaustion, anxiety, and weakening their fitness level.

Issues in Food Management

Combat sports athletes shared how they had an imbalanced diet that led to a lack of bodily strength and that they had trouble resisting and overcoming temptations to achieve the target weight. According to the findings of the study conducted by Bagot et al., (2024), shows that athletes participating in combat sports frequently follow diets that defy these guidelines and start restricting their calorie intake by fasting and dehydration. Furthermore, combat athletes drastically restrict their carbohydrate intake, especially in losing weight (Štangar et. al., 2022).

Achievement of Set Goals

Combat athletes believed that goal setting improved their performance, influenced their motivation, and helped athletes reach their potential. This study on the achievement of goals is supported by Williamson (2022) explaining that in sports, goals are commonplace. Setting goals is a common way for combat sports athletes to push themselves and get better. Furthermore, it is supported by the study of Wilson & Brookfield (2019) suggested that those who are physically active can benefit from goal-setting tactics and procedures, especially if they intend to improve exercise compliance.

Coping Strategies of Combative Sports Athletes with the Challenges in Maintaining Weight Division During Face-to-Face Set-Up

Employing Self-help Techniques

Participants exhibited training independently and imposing self-discipline and self-control to maintain weight. They were also innovating own techniques such as jogging and walking that are all relevant for weight loss. Employing self-help techniques is further supported by the study of Englert & Taylor (2021) which highlighted that athletes frequently create their own fitness methods. In addition, Devi et al., (2022) stated that in this contemporary era, it has become commonplace to innovate one's training methods and techniques given the unwavering focus on enhancing athletic performance.

Managing Food and Drink Intake

To cope with the challenges of maintaining weight division combat sports athletes shared eating healthy foods, controlling food intake and avoiding temptations, avoiding sugary foods and drinks helped them to avoid gaining weight. In relation to this, the study of Ali et al., (2020) stated that in managing food and drink intake the significance and advantages of nutrition and dietary tactics are frequently addressed concerning this particular requirement in order to avoid fatigue and maximize training adaptations. Moreover, the study conducted by Petri et al., (2021) mentioned that good eating and nutritional habits are indicated by high dietary habit scores.

Seeking Guidance of Mentors

Combat sports athletes shared their utmost appreciation to their coaches who served as their mentors. They shared how they received the dos and don'ts of being an athlete from the coach which is essential not only for weight loss but in their entire being. From an educational perspective, the study of Randell et al., (2021) mentioned that to enhance player performance, coaches viewed feedback as an essential component of their job duties. Likewise, the study of Adams et al., (2020) stated that student-athletes can always turn to their scholastic adviser, coaches, and sports administrators for additional assistance if they need it.

Acquiring Practical and Emotional Support

Combat sports athletes shared how the discipline of combat sports equips them for success, both in their academic pursuits and in life. They shared how getting constant reminders and guidance from loved ones helped them to be ready for the game. In connection, social support has also been recognized as a significant factor in maintaining physical health and psychological health (Malinauskas, 2018).

Insights Athletes Draw from Their Experiences on Maintaining Weight During Face-to-Face Set-Up

Giving Value to Weight Management

Combat sports athletes shared that optimal body weight for sports should strive to minimize health risks, including sports injuries, and promote good health and eating habits. This is further supported by the study of Tektunalı Akman et al., (2024) who mentioned that for everyone, creating a weight-management strategy is important. Also, a study by Lebron et al., (2024) highlighted that to acquire a competitive advantage over opponents, combat sports athletes frequently resort to weight management techniques that result in phases of rapid weight loss, reluctant weight loss, and even regaining weight.

Having a Positive Disposition

Athletes valued determination as an important tool in overcoming struggles, as well as having the right attitude and mindset to achieve weight goals. This finding on having a positive disposition is further supported by the study of Johnson et al., (2020) explaining that sports optimism improves performance because a positive interpretative approach is a key factor in determining how well a player performs. Relevant to this, having a positive disposition or optimism has benefits such as enhanced motivation and success across multiple domains (Shepperd et al., 2019).

Ensuring a Healthy Lifestyle

Combat sports athletes believe that maintaining healthy habits can aid in the prevention of long-term illnesses and chronic disorders. In addition to living a healthy lifestyle and taking care of your body, they mentioned how important it is to eat a balanced diet and get enough exercise. This is supported by the study of Hita

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(2024) indicates that a healthy lifestyle has significant positive effects on athletes. Healthy lifestyle practices, including good nutrition and stress management, also contribute to athletes' mental well-being. In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) identifies that the psychological and psychomotor balance of one's body is the basis for a holistic functional understanding of health.

Advocating the Importance of Preparation

For combat sports athletes, preparation and conditioning are the most important. The study of Andrade et al., (2021) highlighted that athletes in the majority of sports require exceptional physical preparation to execute activities and physical abilities including flexibility, muscle strength, agility, and muscle endurance. Additionally, sports preparation can also be referred to as mental and skills training (Napolitano et al., 2021) this is often interpreted as the use of strategies intended to enhance and develop behavioral, social, emotional, and mental skills in addition to the abilities of athletes.

IMPLICATION FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

The participants expressed their varied experiences on the phenomenon being studied. This implies that teacher-coaches should always be willingly upskilled to advance their skills in sports training, be more open to the trends, and in general be more humane to overcome any possible, unexpected, and drastic changes that may occur in the future. In addition, they also expressed the effective coping strategies they employed in facing the challenges of maintaining weight in combative sports training. This implies that teaching is equivalent to continuous learning, hence, teachers must be diligent in finding timely methods, approaches, and strategies in teaching new breed of student-athletes and be even more resourceful in finding or creating training tools and materials appropriate for the present context and needs. Lastly, the varied insights of the participants on maintaining weight indicate that it can be further utilized in the years to come. This also implies that to fully experience the effectiveness of combat sports particularly weight management, its gaps, and limitations should be carefully assessed and be immediately addressed with the utmost support of authorized personnel, concerned sports, and educational officials.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has shown that a particular field of study demands further emphasis. Further research could focus on formulating guidelines for appropriate weight management among combative sports student-athletes. This may include examining the consequences of existing weight management malpractice in school and creating a list of rational suggestions that promote athletes' mental and physical well-being. Another recommendation is determining the influence of coach assistance on weight management techniques. It involves investigating coaches' knowledge and skills in weight management, their constructive support of athletes' psychological state, and compliance with safe weight guidelines.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that combative sports athletes frequently resort to drastic weight loss methods, which negatively impact their athletic performance and health. The results emphasize the necessity of well-rounded, scientifically supported weight-management plans that promote long-term wellness to stop the malpractice that still happening until now. Moreover, coaches should assist athletes in maintaining weight divisions without harm, improving well-being and athletic performance by cultivating an environment that prioritizes sustainable strategies and offering them appropriate guidance and help.

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