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## Self-Assessed Interest, Knowledge, and Confidence in Handling Common School Sports among Pre-Service Elementary Teachers of Benguet State University

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### Abstract

This study assessed the levels of interest, self-assessed knowledge, and confidence among pre-service elementary teachers (PSETs) at Benguet State University–La Trinidad Campus in handling common school sports. Amidst global declines in youth sports participation and the growing emphasis on physical education in the Philippines, evaluating PSETs' readiness is critical to improving sports instruction quality. Using a quantitative one-shot survey with a five-point Likert scale, findings revealed generally low levels of interest ( $M = 2.40$ ), self-assessed knowledge ( $M = 2.16$ ), and confidence ( $M = 2.15$ ), with badminton and volleyball leading in ranking and traditional sports like 'sepak takraw' ranking lowest. Significant positive correlations among these variables underscored their interdependence, aligning with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights reciprocal interactions between motivation, knowledge acquisition, and confidence building. The results emphasize the need for early sports exposure, interest-driven pedagogical strategies, continuous professional development, and practical mentoring to strengthen PSETs' competence and self-efficacy. In the Philippine context, deploying graduates of Bachelor of Physical Education programs across educational levels is highly encouraged to address gaps in specialized instruction. This study provides actionable insights for curriculum enhancement, teacher preparation, and policy reform aimed at fostering effective physical education delivery and promoting holistic student development through sustained physical activity. Future research with larger, diverse samples is recommended to inform broader educational reforms.

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**Keywords:** Common School Sports, Physical Education, Pre-Service Elementary Teachers, Interest in Coaching, Knowledge, Confidence

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### Introduction

Primary physical education lessons provide key opportunities for children to develop movement and sports skills in supportive environments (Spittle, 2015) [22]. Child movement development is a crucial, dynamic phase of growth that lays the foundation for future movement effectiveness and sustained participation in physical activity (Arif Al Ardha *et al.*, 2025). In South Africa, there is a prevalence of childhood obesity and because of this, there is need for improvement to the design and implementation of interventions to better the levels of physical activity of children ages 6 to 12 (Phetla & Skaal, 2024). Moreover, many review articles discovered 'physical literacy' as another emerging term for Physical Education. A recent narrative review in Spain described physical literacy as a dynamic, lifelong process that should be nurtured from early childhood to foster ongoing, active participation in physical activity (Valle-Muñoz *et al.*, 2025), which is mainly the goal of physical education. In some countries, physical education, also called Movement Education, is also recognized in primary schools as crucial for promoting physical activity. Generalist teachers commonly perceive the time allocated for physical activity as adequate and feel moderately positive

about their training adequacy, whereas sports professionals and principals view the training as insufficient, especially for teaching movement education. Consequently, there is broad agreement that including specialist teachers in all primary school grades would significantly enhance Movement Education delivery and improve the quality of physical education programs (Aliberti *et al.*, 2025).

Despite that motor skills, cooperation, and discipline are recognized as important for elementary school children (Fizi *et al.*, 2023), recent studies indicate a concerning decline in sports participation among children and adolescents worldwide. In the United States, only 54.1% of children aged 6–17 participated in sports within a year in 2020. By 2023, an estimated 55.4% of youth in this age group participated in organized sports (Rutledge, 2023) [38]. Seeing the data in three years, the improvement is slow. Furthermore, current data indicate that over 80% of adolescents aged 11–17 do not meet global physical activity recommendations (Guthold *et al.*, 2020). This is supported by findings from the Global Matrix 4.0 (Aubert *et al.*, 2022), which reported that only 27–33% of children and adolescents worldwide achieve the suggested daily levels of physical activity. These figures suggest a slight decline in participation rates in recent years, highlighting the need for sustained efforts to engage youth in physical activity and sports (Aubert *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, studies consistently show that non-Physical Education (PE) specialists often deliver poorly structured lessons or “supervised play”, which may limit children’s development and interest in sports (Morgan, 2008) [15]. Pre-service teachers specializing in physical education placed greater emphasis on correct skill performance and application in games which exhibits higher confidence in teaching practices, and focuses on ensuring content suitability for students compared to non-specialized pre-service teachers, who are more concerned about task selection, sequencing, and time allocation during lessons. These findings suggest that increasing PE course offerings, which include sports, within teacher education programs could enhance teaching confidence and instructional quality (Tsangaridou *et al.*, 2024).

Moreover, motivation, interest, and self-efficacy or confidence are central to effective teaching and learning; confidence in one’s ability to handle sports interacts with knowledge and interest to influence teachers’ willingness and effectiveness in promoting physical activity (Goostree, 2021) [5]. According to Martens (2012) [13], effective coaching encompasses three primary goals: firstly, achieving competitive success; secondly, fostering enjoyment; and finally, supporting physical, psychological, and social development. Consequently, teaching and observing PE will significantly shape pre-service teachers’ beliefs and confidence in coaching and officiating sports. However, many university courses fail to provide adequate preparation (Morgan, 2008) [15]. In 2024, recent findings, published in Gutenberg University, states that there is an existing minor or significant discrepancies between the Physical Education program and the school where pre-service teachers were deployed to practice, making it difficult to transform all Physical Education knowledge into practice (Kougioumtzis, 2024). Because of this, low levels of confidence and motivation among pre-service and in-service elementary teachers are evident and this negatively affects the quality and quantity of primary physical education they deliver, including common school sports (O’Sullivan & Oslin, 2012). In addition, a recent study assessing the readiness of primary

school teachers to handle sports injuries in Saudi Arabia showed that many teachers feel prepared to do so, but the primary source of their knowledge are the contents like videos and photos posted on different social media platforms rather than from certified trainers. Therefore, certified training programs are needed to be provided to primary school teachers to ensure quality emergency management of sports injuries (Alharthy *et al.*, 2024).

Similarly, a qualitative analysis of the social context in primary schools concluded that revisions to school regulations and policies are necessary to enable schools to prioritize physical activity not just based on “passionate” individuals but on skilled and trained personnel with certifications (Walker *et al.*, 2025).

Interest describes the ways that individuals engage with activities or content. It refers to both the psychological state during engagement, and the motivation to reengage (Renninger, 2022). Akcaoglu *et al.* (2023) found that interest development is varied and is influenced by self-relation and knowledge and it is associated with reengagement with professional development activities. Higher levels of individual interest are more inclined to engage in Physical Education actively (Quering & Guillena, 2025). In the seminal work of John Dewey, it describes interest as “the evidence of how the self is engaged, occupied, taken up with, concerned in, absorbed by, carried away by” the subject matter (John Dewey, 1913). According to Dewey, key elements of interest include self-relation to a task or topic, encompassing self-identification with the process and its outcomes. Importantly, interest is a dynamic and fluctuating construct that can develop or diminish; be lost or regained over time as individuals engage differently with activities and content. Dewey’s perspective highlights that interest is deeply tied to emotional engagement and the alignment of the individual’s self with the educational material, which influences learning and motivation profoundly.

Knowledge, on the other hand, was used as Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in this study. PCK is defined as the integration of pedagogy and content which basically covers the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the lesson. It is a long accepted understanding that there is an influential relationship between knowledge and behavior. How one perceives something impacts the way they act towards it (An *et al.*, 2023; Bowman *et al.*, 2022). As early as 1987, studies already showed that teachers who lack content knowledge face difficulties and do not have confidence in their teaching (Lee Shing *et al.*, 2015). In this study, confidence refers to the pre-service elementary teachers’ belief in their ability to effectively self-organize, self-reflect, self-regulate, and proactively manage their professional behavior (Nolan & Molla, 2017) as they train and coach sports among the elementary students, which Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) identify as a crucial element of teaching professionalism. This definition highlights confidence as a multidimensional capacity essential for competent and autonomous teaching practice. According to (Huang *et al.*, 2025), teacher confidence is improved by professional learning experiences such as mentoring and this enhances teachers’ self-efficacy making them confident in their teaching.

In the Philippines, official data and educational policies reflect a strong emphasis on physical education and sports. The Department of Education provides a comprehensive K-10 curriculum guide that includes Physical Education (PE) and Health for all grade levels, and the recently implemented

MATATAG curriculum emphasizes PE and Health for grades 1, 4, and 7. These curricula aim to develop learners' health and physical literacy, promoting lifelong healthy habits through sustainable practices (Department of Education, 2024) [40]. The issuance of Department Orders such as Republic Act No. 10588 (Palarong Pambansa Act of 2013) further underscores the importance of sports in holistic student development by instilling values, life skills, and resilience. Altogether, these policies reflect adaptations to contemporary challenges, including emerging health issues and technological advancements, highlighting the importance of effective physical education programs that engage students and foster active lifestyles. Therefore, assessing pre-service elementary teachers' (PSETs) sports interest, self-assessed knowledge, and confidence is essential to ensure that children receive effective guidance and maximize their potential that will sustain active lifestyles as they develop over the years. The present study aimed to examine these variables while exploring their relationships, contributing to the development of structured teaching models that enhance student learning outcomes (Backes *et al.*, 2019).

### Objectives

This study aimed to find whether a significant relationship exists among the pre-service teachers' self-assessed level of sports interests, knowledge and confidence to train and coach common school sports. Specifically, it answers the following research questions:

1. What is the level of sports interest of the pre-service elementary teachers?
2. What is the level of self-assessed sports knowledge of the pre-service elementary teachers?
3. What is the level of confidence to train and coach school sports among the pre-service elementary teachers?
4. Is there a significant relationship among the pre-service elementary teachers' sports interests and self-assessed level of knowledge and confidence to train and coach common school sports?

### Methodology

This quantitative study aimed to establish an initial observation between the self-assessed level of interest, knowledge, and confidence in handling common school sports among Pre-Service Elementary Teachers of Benguet State University. Thus, the study employed a one-shot survey with three simple statements to be assessed, and is measured on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Kusmaryono *et al.* (2022) [32] found in their review after analyzing 60 papers published between 2012 to 2021 that the most popular Likert scale used by researchers is the 5-point Likert scale because of its simplicity and ease of use which is why this study utilized such. The descriptive interpretations used for this study are as follows: 1= extremely low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5= extremely high. In the school year 2021–2022, approximately two hundred (200) PSETs were enrolled at the Benguet State University La Trinidad Campus, fifty students in each year level from freshmen to seniors.

The survey was administered online through Google Forms. According to Heck-Großek (2021) [31], the application of machine simulations in survey research has yielded valuable insights, suggesting that there is no huge difference on doing surveys either face to face or online and is contrary to what is commonly perceived. To obtain reliable and valid results,

weighted mean was used as the statistical treatment to find the level of self-assessed interests and knowledge and confidence, while Pearson r-correlation was used to find the significant relationship.

### Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the level of the PSET's interest in handling common school sports. The total result showed a low descriptive interpretation having a mean of 2.40. This finding could be due to the less exposure during their formative years to the common sports. According to Somerset & Hoare (2018) [23], the physical education subject provides the first exposure to sport for most children and that early exposure is crucial on sports participation and interests in the later years. Thus, the level of exposure corresponds to the degree of interest.

Badminton is ranked first having a weighted mean of 3.25 which is equivalent to moderate level. This could be because of the easy objective of the game, equipment is available that anyone can afford, recreation areas are also available whether urban or rural areas, and because badminton initially takes only two players to play. This sport is also played not just professionally but also recreationally, making the PSETs more exposed to it.

Sipa or Sepak Takraw has the mean of 1.86, garnering the last rank among the fourteen common sports in BSU. This could be due to the hard and unfamiliar mechanics of the game and the need for complex skills to play successfully. According to Wood (2016) [26], sipa or sepak takraw is a Philippine traditional sport and it is a difficult sport to play, where players are required to have high skills of ball control, speed and agility.

**Table 1:** Sports with the highest and lowest rank in interest of PSETs

Sports	Mean	DI	Rank
Badminton	3.25	Moderate	1
Volleyball	3.14	Moderate	2
Sipa/ sepak takraw	1.86	Low	14
Total	2.40	Low	

The level of self-assessed knowledge on the mechanics of the common school sports is generally low, having a weighted mean of 2.16. This could be due to the less exposure of the respondents to the different common sports or even did not play sports as young athletes. As a result, their self-assessed knowledge may be the limit of their training and coaching abilities. Evidence found in the study conducted by Hardman & Marshall (2001) confirms the tendency of non-PE specialists to deliver inappropriate lesson content and only provide 'supervised play' in poorly organized lessons.

Badminton, for the second time, is on the first rank having a mean of 3.02, garnering a moderate interpretation, followed closely by Volleyball with a mean of 2.84. This study suggests that the simplicity of badminton's objectives and mechanics may have led respondents to self-assess a higher level of knowledge in the sport. Volleyball ranked second to badminton and this could be due to its simple nature and easy objective especially when played recreationally. However, since volleyball is a sport in contact with the ball, the fear of handling the ball and body consciousness could be the reason why it was ranked second in comparison with Badminton. A local study conducted at San Isidro College in Bukidnon noted that a high popularity of badminton and volleyball

stems from their ability to deliver enjoyment, social interaction, and skill development (Taja-on *et al.*, 2024).

**Table 2:** Sports with the highest and lowest rank in self-assessed knowledge of PSETs

Sports	Mean	DI	Rank
Badminton	3.02	Moderate	1
Volleyball	2.84	Moderate	2
Sipa/ sepak takraw	1.73	Low	13
Gymnastics	1.62	Low	14
Total	2.16	Low	

Furthermore, the knowledge of sports highly influences the confidence to train and coach. Yang *et al.* (2024) [33] examined how coaching quality and self-efficacy influence sports performance and found that athletes performed better when they felt their teachers were performing better. For the same reason, the PSETs were also asked about their self-assessed confidence to train and coach the listed sports. The result showed a low level with a mean of only 2.15. For three consecutive rankings, badminton remained at the highest order with a mean of 2.95, equivalent to moderate level. Sipa or Sepak Takraw retained the lowest rank with a mean of 1.70, alongside gymnastics in this instance. Sipa, as established in this paper, is a difficult sport to play. Similarly, the biomechanics of gymnastics are critical components influencing performance and injury risk (Goodin, 2024) [34]. Both Sipa and gymnastics demand high levels of speed, agility, and control. In essence, while the performance context is different, both disciplines cultivate explosive movement, quick reaction, and refined movement control which would explain the lowest ranking.

**Table 3:** Sports with the highest and lowest rank in terms of confidence of PSETs

Sports	Mean	DI	Rank
Badminton	2.95	Moderate	1
Volleyball	2.60	Moderate	2
Sipa / sepak takraw	1.70	Low	13.5
Gymnastics	1.70	Low	13.5
Total	2.15	Low	

Based on the analysis, the relationships among the levels of self-assessed interest, knowledge, and confidence of the PSETs were found to be significant using Pearson’s r correlation. As shown in Table 4, the relationships among the three variables (interest, knowledge, and confidence) were found to be statistically significant. Interest was moderately correlated with knowledge ( $r = 0.608$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and with confidence ( $r = 0.539$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Likewise, knowledge demonstrated a strong positive correlation with confidence ( $r = 0.712$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This implies that if one variable is low, the overall effectiveness of the PSETs in handling common school sports is reduced. Conversely, higher levels across the variables contribute to more satisfactory outcomes.

**Table 4:** Inter-correlation table among the three variables

	Interest	Knowledge	Confidence
Interest	1		
Knowledge	0.608**	1	
Confidence	0.539**	0.712**	1

\*\*Significant

The significant positive correlations among self-assessed interest, knowledge, and confidence underscore the mutually reinforcing nature of these constructs in shaping pre-service elementary teachers’ (PSETs) readiness to handle common school sports. Fundamentally, interest functions as a powerful motivational catalyst, encouraging deeper engagement, which in turn fosters knowledge acquisition. Enhanced knowledge nurtures competence, translating into increased confidence. The study of Feltz *et al.* (2014) [35] supports that this process echoes the proposition of Bandura’s social cognitive theory that confidence is shaped by mastered experiences, indirect learnings, verbal persuasion, and affective spirits.

Bandura’s social cognitive theory provides a robust framework to understand this interdependence observed among self-assessed interest, knowledge, and confidence in handling common school sports. According to Bandura (1986), human behavior and learning arise from the reciprocal interaction between personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences. In this study, PSETs’ interest serves as a personal motivator that drives the desire to engage with different sports. This engagement facilitates the acquisition of self-assessed knowledge about the mechanics and skills of these sports.

As knowledge deepens, it fosters a sense of self-efficacy or confidence, which Bandura identifies as critical to performance and motivation (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura outlines four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. The findings showing that PSETs’ confidence increases with knowledge and exposure suggest that mastery experiences from direct teaching or playing, and vicarious experiences from observing peers or mentors, are key for building confidence. Conversely, sports perceived as complex and requiring higher skill levels, such as sepak takraw and gymnastics, correspond with lower confidence levels, reflecting the challenge of mastery experiences influencing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

The significant positive correlations among self-assessed interest, knowledge, and confidence underscore Bandura’s concept of reciprocal determinism, where these factors reinforce one another in a cyclical fashion (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Higher interest promotes deeper learning and knowledge acquisition, leading to greater confidence, which further motivates engagement. Environmental factors, such as the availability of equipment and social popularity of sports like badminton, also play a role in shaping exposure and motivation, highlighting Bandura’s emphasis on environmental influences (Bandura, 1986).

Based on observations made by Sun *et al.* (2025) [36], studies with pre-service physical education (PE) teachers confirm that self-efficacy strengthens their professional identity, implying a similar pattern may exist between knowledge, interest, and confidence in sports contexts. Specifically, Bandura’s framework emphasizes that mastery in successfully performing tasks increases self-efficacy, while observing peer success, receiving constructive feedback, and positive emotional experiences further reinforce confidence. Moreover, prior experience to training practices significantly affect PSETs’ confidence levels. For instance, those with more exposure to PE teaching, either through practicum or

coursework, report noticeably higher confidence in both planning and implementation than those with minimal exposure (Spittle *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[37]</sup>. This suggests that as PSETs gain direct experience and knowledge through training, their confidence naturally strengthens.

In sum, the interplay of interest, knowledge, and confidence aligns with theoretical foundations and empirical observations: interest inspires engagement, engagement promotes knowledge, knowledge fosters confidence, and confidence feeds back into interest and willingness to apply what is known. This mutually reinforcing cycle explains the observed significant correlations and highlights that deficiencies in any of the variables can compromise overall effectiveness. On the other hand, high levels among the variables yield more satisfactory outcomes on the interrelationship.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the pre-service elementary teachers of Benguet State University- La Trinidad Campus (PSETs) demonstrate low levels of self-assessed interest, knowledge, and confidence in training and coaching common school sports, indicating limited exposure and foundational experience during their formative years that hinder their readiness. Sports like badminton and volleyball rank higher due to accessibility and popularity, whereas traditional and skill-intensive sports like sipa and gymnastics rank lowest. The significant positive correlations among self-assessed interest, knowledge, and confidence confirm their interdependence and reflect Bandura's social cognitive theory emphasizing the reciprocal influence between these factors. In the Philippine context, where elementary teachers are generalists, the lack of specialized training and confidence poses challenges necessitating a balanced teacher education curriculum integrating theory and hands-on training. Enhancing active engagement, modeling, and constructive feedback in curricula is critical to fostering a cycle of interest, knowledge, and confidence that nurtures professional readiness. The study recommends interest-driven learning strategies through gamified teaching and recreational leagues, continuous professional development through but not limited to workshops and certifications, deployment of BPE graduates to elementary schools as this is a formative stage in developing lifelong physical literacy to the children, and expanded research to improve PSETs' competence and confidence, ultimately promoting holistic physical education. Limitations include reliance on self-reports, sample size constraints, and cultural factors influencing responses, which may affect generalizability. Consequently, it is recommended that future studies may replicate this research in a larger and more diverse sample across different regions to strengthen validity and generalizability.

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