

BULLSEYE: DOCUMENTING THE VOICES OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ARCHERY ATHLETES

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Abstract

Archery is recognized for its focus and accuracy. It benefits beyond competitive sports, making it a valuable physical education component. The phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of ten archery athletes at General Santos City National High School, examining their physical, mental, and emotional impact. Understanding these experiences, it is essential to comprehend their impact. Through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis revealed key themes. The findings revealed several key themes. Regarding lived experiences, (3) themes emerged, including archery as a vehicle for personal transformation and identity, the influence of external inspiration and the social environment, and experiential challenges, competitive encounters, and risks. A contextual analysis of these experiences highlighted (6) themes: social and interpersonal connections, personal transformation, growth and self-reflection, emotional landscape and affective responses, bodily changes, joy and positive experiences, challenges, barriers, and issues. Additionally, (2) themes emerged regarding future self-views and aspirations: personal growth and life lessons through archery, and future ambitions and envisioned identity in archery. Archery was a dynamic sport that fostered physical development, mental resilience, social interaction, and personal growth while offering valuable opportunities for skill enhancement and lifelong learning. To maximize its educational impact, it was recommended that schools integrate archery into the curriculum, provide resources and support, train qualified coaches, foster a supportive team environment, involve mentors and parents, and encourage further research to enhance its effectiveness.

Keywords: Archery Program, Physical and Mental Benefits, Personal Growth and Identity, Social and Emotional Impact, Challenges and Barriers.

Introduction

With its focus on precision and concentration, Archery offered benefits beyond competition, supporting physical, mental, and social development. It enhanced coordination, strength, balance, and emotional resilience, reducing stress and fostering teamwork. This study aimed to improve the program by exploring archery athletes' experiences, identifying benefits and challenges, and developing a training design for holistic growth.

Globally, programs like USA Archery's high-performance training camps focus on developing elite athletes through skill-building and psychological resilience, preparing them for national and international competitions (USA Archery, 2024). In the Philippines, research on archery training during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted adaptations such as self-video analysis and online classes to overcome training challenges (Yusmawati et al., 2024). Studies also emphasized the importance of mental toughness in archery, noting psychological resilience as key to performance (Innovation and Research, Center for Social, 2024). Mindanao Qualifying Leg, underscoring sports' physical and mental benefits (Saberón-Abalayan, 2019). Locally, archery programs helped junior high school athletes develop focus, discipline, and skills. Albuquerque Academy (2025) shared that archers performed well in a state tournament, showing the benefits of proper training.

Archery programs helped junior high school athletes develop focus, discipline, and skills. However, some schools struggled with limited training and equipment, making it harder for students to improve. The lack of trained coaches also affected the quality of instruction, slowing down skill development. In addition, many schools faced funding issues, which reduced opportunities for practice and competition. Despite these challenges, archery still helped students grow physically, mentally, and socially.

Hence, this study was essential to understanding how archery improved athletes' fitness, focus, and resilience while supporting personal growth. By examining participants' experiences, it explored effective training, community support, and the sport's mental benefits. The research also aimed to

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enhance training programs to promote teamwork, discipline, and overall athlete development.

Research Questions

The study answered the following questions:

- (1) What are the lived experiences of archery athletes?
- (2) How do archery athletes describe the contexts of their lived experiences? and
- (3) How do archery athletes view themselves in the future?

Methodology

This study employed a transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of archery athletes. It aims to understand social or cultural phenomena through observations, interviews, and document analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Alfaro & Protacio, 2025; Sonza et al., 2022; Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Tacogue et al., 2022; Felongco et al., 2022; Barroga & Tampus; 2023; Accad et al., 2015). A phenomenological approach was used to identify common themes in participants' experiences, distilling individual insights into a shared understanding (Yuksel et al., 2015). It focused on how individuals perceived and interpreted their experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019; Protacio, 2021). Data were gathered through structured interviews, which allowed athletes to share their motivations, challenges, and personal growth. The study aimed to extract common themes from these narratives to provide deeper insight into how archery impacted skill development and emotional resilience.

The study was conducted at General Santos City National High School due to its well-developed and recognized archery program. General Santos City National High School stands out as one of the few institutions in the region that actively promotes archery, making it an ideal setting for exploring the experiences, challenges, and development outcomes of archery athletes engaged in the sport.

Participants were purposely selected based on their involvement in the school's archery program. For In-Depth Interviews, at least ten archery athletes actively engaged in the program, with competition experience and personal motivations for joining. The participant count followed recommendations for phenomenological studies, which typically involve 6 to 10 individuals to allow for in-depth exploration of lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inclusion criteria required student or archery athletes to have at least one year of experience in the archery program, good academic standing, and willingness to share their experiences. Exclusion criteria ruled out students with less than one year in the program and those unwilling to participate.

This study utilized in-depth interviews with participants and focus group discussions for cross-validation. IDIs are qualitative research techniques that involve intensive one-on-one interviews to explore participants' perspectives on a specific idea or experience. They are useful for gathering detailed insights into thoughts, behaviors, and motivations, providing deeper context to other data sources (Boyce et al., 2018). To maintain data reliability, audio recordings of the IDI sessions were secured with participant consent. A cellular phone recording device captured responses accurately without bias, ensuring precise transcription and analysis. Additional research instruments included a questionnaire validation tool, interview protocols, an assent and informed consent form, and a transcription writing guide to ensure methodological rigor and ethical research practices.

Data were gathered using methodical scientific techniques. The stages of the data collection process are described as a researcher's guide to help the researcher collect thorough data. The researcher ensured proper authorization and institutional approval (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, permissions were obtained. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by coding participant information and using pseudonyms in all documentation and reporting, which aligned with established ethical research practices (Tracy, 2020). Participant identification followed specific inclusion criteria. (Protacio, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide with probing questions. During the transcription process, the researcher and an assigned transcriber collected and transcribed all responses. Finally, participants reviewed and verified their responses and the validated transcripts were used for thematic analysis, following established qualitative research interviewing techniques (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

The researcher employed thematic analysis to conduct data analysis. According to Moustakas (1994), thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the data. It organizes and describes all data in detail. The six steps process involved: 1) familiarization with the data through repeated readings data to identify recurring patterns; 2) Generating initial themes by categorizing data in meaningful labels; 3) Searching for clustered themes by grouping codes into overarching themes that accurately depict the data; 4) Reviewing themes, to ensure alignment with the data; 5) Defining and naming emerging themes by clearly articulating their meaning; 6) Producing the report focusing on the most meaningful themes identified (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Results and Discussion

This study presents its results and deliberates the implications of data gathered through interview guide questionnaires during the interviews conducted with the participants. The following are the emergent themes (ET) after a rigorous process of thematic analysis.

ET 1: Personal Transformation and Identity

Archery was more than just a sport. It fostered discipline, focus, and patience, shaping an individual's mindset and influencing daily life. The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggested that engaging in activities that required autonomy, competence, and relatedness led to intrinsic motivation and personal growth. The mental concentration required to aim and release an arrow enhanced self-regulation, promoted mindfulness, and reduced stress (Mindful Archery, 2024; Turner, 2023). The participants shared:

...Ahm looking back, that moment was turning point of me. It showed me that dedication and perseverance I could overcome challenges and achieve my goals... [Looking back, that moment was a turning point for me. It showed me that with dedication and perseverance, I could overcome challenges and achieve my goals...] – P3

...Dahil sa archery natuto akong mag focus at nagiging mapagpasensya at mas naging kalmado ako... [Because of archery, I learned to focus, became more patient, and became calmer...] – P2

ET 2: Influence of External Inspiration and Social Environment

External influences, such as family, coaches, peers, and media, significantly shaped an individual's motivation to participate in archery. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that individuals develop interests and skills by observing and imitating role models. Parents play a crucial role in introducing children to the sport, providing financial and emotional support, and shaping their level of recreational or competitive involvement (Bunting et al., 2015). The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) further explained how coaches and peers contributed to motivation by fostering an environment that fulfilled athletes' autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. When archers experienced supportive coaching and positive peer interactions, they developed a stronger sense of commitment and well-being in the sport (Chu & Zhang, 2019; Keegan et al., 2019). The participants shared:

...So, the instance that connected me to this part was when my sister, who used to do archery, had a competition in GSKAA.

During that time, I went to her competition to watch and support her, and when I saw people shooting and playing the sport, I fell in love with ano talaga. Kasi, it looked like it was very cool and free, unlike other sports... [So, the moment that connected me to this sport was when my sister, who used to do archery, had a competition in GSCAA. I watched and supported her, and when I saw people shooting and playing the sport, I fell in love with it. It seemed so cool and free, unlike other sports...] – P5

...Ahh, when I was a little kid, man kasi ma'am, favorite ko Talaga mag watch ng movies at may isang movie na nag stick Talaga sa akin, ang Brave Talaga ma'am, na amaze ako kasi bow and arrow Talaga ang kanyanggna shoot at na hook Talaga ako sa movie...[When I was a little kid, ma'am, I loved watching movies, and there was one movie that stuck with me—Brave, ma'am. I was amazed because she was shooting with a bow and arrow, and I got hooked on the movie...] – P6

ET 3: Experiential Challenges and Competitive Encounters

Archery presented various challenges, including competitive pressure, technical issues, and physical risks. The Stress Inoculation Theory (Meichenbaum, 1985) suggested that exposure to controlled stress in training helped athletes develop coping mechanisms essential in high-stakes competitions. Competitive pressure could cause anxiety, but strategies like controlled breathing, mindfulness, and cognitive restructuring helped archers maintain focus and composure (Mindful Archery, 2023). Equipment malfunctions, such as bowstring breakage or sight misalignment, emphasized the need for regular maintenance to ensure safety and consistent performance (Global Marksman, 2023; The Archery Equipment Review, 2021). The participants expressed the following:

...The incident I made, ma'am, I accidentally shot my coach... [The incident I had, ma'am, was when I accidentally shot my coach...] – P1

...Gi work out ko Talaga ma'am nung Batang Pinoy, naka silver ako don... [I worked hard, ma'am, during the Batang Pinoy, and I won a silver medal there...] – P6

ET 4: Social and Interpersonal Connections

Interpersonal relationships played a vital role in the archery experience, offering emotional encouragement and practical support. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

emphasizes the importance of relatedness, autonomy, and competence in motivation, highlighting how social support enhances an athlete's drive and persistence. Strong connections with family, coaches, friends, and teammates created a positive environment that boosted motivation and overall success (Deci & Ryan, 2017). The participants communicated:

...Ahh parents, number one gyud ang parents, coaches, tapos seniors...[Parents, number one are the parents, then coaches, and then the seniors...] – P6

...As an archer, my sports involvement can be positive and negative towards others... [As an archer, my involvement in the sport can have both positive and negative effects on others] – P4

ET 5: Personal Transformation, Growth, & Self-Reflection

Archery fostered personal growth by enhancing focus, discipline, and self-reflection. Rooted in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the sport promoted autonomy and intrinsic motivation, enabling archers to develop mental discipline and self-regulation. The intense concentration required in archery enhances present-moment awareness, improving athletic performance and cultivating emotional resilience and mental calm (Josefsson et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2023). They stressed:

..As a player, the thought that stands out is how hard the training is. However, at the same time, since dahil mahirap siya, nakakatulong din ito para mag grow ako physically, mentally, and emotionally... [As a player, the thought that stands out is how hard the training is, but at the same time, because it is difficult, it also helps me grow physically, mentally, and emotionally...] – P9

...As an archer, before ko nag start ug archery not oriented. Pero pag start nakog enter sa archery, nag goal-oriented nako, mas nag develop akong focus and the same time nadevelop jud akong calm as a person... [As a former archer, before I started archery, I was not goal-oriented. But once I entered archery, I became goal-oriented, my focus improved, and at the same time, I developed calmness as a person...] P10

ET 6: Emotional Landscape and Affective Responses

Archery evoked a spectrum of emotions, from calmness and satisfaction to frustration and self-doubt. The sport's emphasis on precision and focus induced a flow state, a concept from

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) Flow Theory, which described deep engagement in an activity that led to enhanced well-being and intrinsic motivation. However, the emotional intensity of competition and the demand for consistency could lead to anxiety and performance pressure, requiring effective coping strategies (Han et al., 2021). The participants conveyed the following:

...My involvement in archery generates a wide range of emotions. From positive feelings like accomplish and confidence to negative emotions like frustrations and disappointments...[My involvement in archery generates a wide range of emotions, from positive feelings like accomplishment and confidence to negative emotions like frustration and disappointment...] – P4

...It depends but I'll give one – relief. Relief generate when I shoot because it relieves me or relaxes me from all of my problems or stress... [It depends, but I'll give one – relief. Relief is generated when I shoot because it helps me relax and eases all of my problems or stress...] – P7

ET 7: Bodily and Physical Changes

Archery promoted significant physiological adaptations, enhancing muscular strength, endurance, and postural stability. Rooted in Motor Learning Theory (Schmidt & Lee, 2019), the sport's repetitive nature improved neuromuscular coordination, particularly in the upper body. The participants shared:

...When I started archery, ma'am, I was not very, you know, king strong. Pero tong tong nag training nakog archery, nagkapisikal mi diria, naga develop ang muscles and strength ma'am, and core... [When I started archery, ma'am, I was not very strong. But when I started training in archery, we worked on our physical strength here, and my muscles, strength, and core began to develop...] – P1

...Number one gyud na witness gyud nako ma'am kay ang physical strength jud nako ma'am kasi naga pull man kami ng heavy bows man gud ma'am, usually ang back muscles and upper body po... [The number one thing I have witnessed, ma'am, is my physical strength because we pull heavy bows, and it usually affects the back muscles and upper body...] – P6

ET 8: Joy and Positive Experiences

Archery fostered intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being, aligning with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The sport provided autonomy, competence, and social relatedness—essential elements for sustaining long-term enjoyment. Traveling for competitions introduced archers to diverse cultures and environments, enriching their perspectives and personal growth (Archery in Motion, 2023; Hanrahan & Cerin, 2019). They conveyed:

...Travel anywhere to competitions with these archers ma'am... [Traveling anywhere for competitions with these archers, ma'am...] – P1

...Ahh yung nabubuo pong Samahan ng mga kasama since same po kayo ng hobby, ng mga gusto... [Ah, it's the camaraderie that forms with others since you share the same hobby and interests....] – P8

ET 9: Resource Constraints

Archery enthusiasts encountered various obstacles that could impede their participation and progress. Financial constraints were a primary deterrent, as purchasing bows, arrows, safety gear, and professional training was costly. The Socioeconomic Barrier Model (Coalter, 2018) explained how economic disparities impacted sports participation, limiting access for those from lower-income backgrounds. The research highlighted that financial costs were among the top barriers that prevented new participants from engaging in archery (Coakley, 2021; Funahashi et al., 2022). The participants shared the following:

...Ahm main problem po ay financial issue kasi kung wala ka pera mahihirapan ka sa archery kasi expensive ang equipment eh... [Ah, the main problem is financial issues because if you don't have money, it will be difficult in archery since the equipment is expensive...] – P2

...Mostly money, ma'am, because archery is a sport leading to buying equipment so, and, the higher level you are, the more, the higher equipment you will buy, which is more expensive... [Mostly, it is money, ma'am, because archery is a sport that requires purchasing equipment. And the higher your level, the more advanced equipment you will need to buy, which is more expensive...] – P5

ET 10: Personal Growth and Life Lessons

Engaging in archery imparted invaluable life lessons that extended beyond the sport, fostering patience, resilience, and self-awareness. The Self-

Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggested that intrinsic motivation, fueled by personal mastery, enhanced psychological growth and well-being. In archery, patience was a fundamental skill, as archers had to wait for the right moment to release the arrow, mirroring the importance of timing in decision-making. The participants shared:

...Through archery, ma'am, I have gained valuable insight and learnings that extend beyond the shooting range... [Through archery, ma'am, I have gained valuable insights and lessons that extend beyond the shooting range...] – P1

I learned that determination is really important because this powers us na mag tuloy tuloy lang and listening to the coaches along the way. After all, what they say can also be used in the future... [I learned that determination is really important because it is what drives us to keep going, and listening to the coaches along the way is crucial because what they say can also be useful in the future...] – P9

ET 11: Envisioned Identity

Engaging in archery profoundly shaped participants' future aspirations, career trajectories, and self-identity, reflecting the sport's lasting influence beyond competition. Many archers aspired to achieve elite-level success, such as winning gold medals, securing national titles, or representing their countries internationally (Archery GB, 2023). According to Self-Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), individuals aligned their aspirations with the roles and groups they associated with—archers often saw themselves as athletes first, reinforcing their commitment to long-term excellence (Stambulova et al., 2020). The participants communicated:

..For me ma'am, wala man masama mag ream kunti, pero ang dream ko Talaga ay makapasok sa Olympics, gusto ko maging Olympic medalist... [For me, ma'am, there's nothing wrong with dreaming a little, but my real dream is to make it to the Olympics. I want to become an Olympic medalist...] – P6

...I see myself in the future with Philippine team and competing outside the country... [I see myself in the future as part of the Philippine team, competing outside the country...] – P8

Conclusion

Archery's transformative role is not only as a sport but also as a platform for personal growth, identity formation, and social interaction. Key themes

emphasized the influence of external inspiration, social environments, and the various competitive and experiential challenges encountered by archery participants.

Furthermore, the study explored the contextual analysis of lived experiences, revealing archery's role in fostering interpersonal connections, emotional resilience, self-reflection, and physical development. It also examined the future aspirations of archery participants, illustrating how the sport instills lifelong values and influences career and personal growth trajectories. Notably, the study identified the potential and challenges of emphasizing the need for adequate resources, training, and institutional support.

This research contributes to the growing discourse on the importance of archery in youth development and sports education. By understanding stakeholders' lived experiences and identifying key areas for improvement, the study provides a foundation for designing a structured archery training program. Future initiatives may focus on securing resources, fostering community involvement, and implementing policies that will sustain and expand archery programs in educational institutions.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the authors in this manuscript.

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