



## The Role Of Coaches In Producing Basketball Athletes With Superior Character

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of coaches in developing character among young basketball athletes through a holistic and athlete-centered coaching approach. Character development in youth sports has become an important issue in contemporary sport pedagogy, particularly in basketball academies that emphasize not only technical performance but also psychosocial growth. However, many youth sport programs still prioritize competitive achievement over character formation. Therefore, this study investigates how coaches contribute to shaping discipline, responsibility, confidence, and teamwork among young basketball athletes. This research employed a qualitative case study design conducted at Brave Basketball Academy in Semarang, Indonesia. Six participants consisting of head coaches, assistant coaches, and athletes aged 4-12 years were involved in the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis involving coding, categorization, and interpretation of recurring themes. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The findings reveal that coaches play multidimensional roles as instructors, motivators, role models, mediators, and character educators. Character development was fostered through consistent habituation, role modeling, positive reinforcement, educational reward-punishment systems, and structured training sessions. Collaboration with parents also emerged as a significant factor influencing athlete motivation and behavioral outcomes. Athletes demonstrated improvements in discipline, focus, teamwork, confidence, and responsibility, although the pace of development varied among individuals. This study concludes that holistic coaching approaches significantly contribute to character formation in youth basketball athletes. The findings imply that basketball academies should integrate character education systematically into training programs and strengthen coach-parent collaboration to optimize athlete development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sport has increasingly been recognized as an important educational environment that contributes not only to physical development but also to psychosocial, emotional,



and moral growth among young people (Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt et al., 2017). Contemporary sport science strongly emphasizes Positive Youth Development (PYD), which highlights the role of organized sports in fostering life skills, emotional competence, leadership, discipline, teamwork, and social responsibility among youth athletes (Camiré et al., 2019; Turnnidge et al., 2021). Within this perspective, the success of youth sport programs should not be evaluated solely through competitive achievement but also through their contribution to holistic athlete development and character formation (Bean et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2020).

Among various team sports, basketball is considered one of the most dynamic and educationally valuable sports for children and adolescents because it integrates technical, tactical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions simultaneously (Vella et al., 2013; Côté et al., 2016). Basketball athletes are required to develop communication skills, emotional regulation, cooperation, discipline, and decision-making abilities within fast-paced and highly interactive environments (Schempp & McCullick, 2018; Gómez-Mármol et al., 2021). Previous studies have demonstrated that participation in basketball positively influences self-confidence, social interaction, emotional maturity, and behavioral adaptation among youth athletes (Vella et al., 2013; Cronin & Allen, 2018). Consequently, basketball coaching environments possess substantial potential as contexts for psychosocial development and character education (Camiré & Trudel, 2014; Turnnidge et al., 2021).

In recent decades, the role of coaches in youth sports has evolved significantly from merely functioning as technical instructors toward becoming educators, mentors, motivators, and psychosocial facilitators (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Santos et al., 2020). Effective coaches are increasingly expected to integrate professional knowledge, interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership into athlete development processes (Boardley et al., 2018; McCallister et al., 2020). This multidimensional role becomes particularly important during childhood because young athletes remain highly dependent on adult guidance, behavioral reinforcement, and emotional support during sport participation (Knight et al., 2018; Turnnidge & Côté, 2019).

Research in sport psychology consistently demonstrates that coaching behaviors significantly influence athletes' motivation, emotional experiences, confidence, psychological well-being, and long-term sport participation (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Appleton et al., 2016). Positive coaching behaviors characterized by empathy, communication, encouragement, autonomy support, and constructive feedback are associated with greater athlete satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and emotional resilience (Smith et al., 2018; Mossman et al., 2021). Conversely, authoritarian and excessively controlling coaching approaches may negatively affect athlete development, reduce enjoyment, and increase emotional stress among youth athletes (Isoard-Gautheur et al., 2016; Rocchi et al., 2017). Therefore, coaching effectiveness in youth basketball should be understood not only through performance outcomes but also through the quality of developmental experiences provided to athletes (Camiré et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2020).

The concept of athlete-centered coaching has become increasingly influential in modern coaching science because it emphasizes individualized learning, emotional support, positive reinforcement, and active athlete engagement in training processes (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Turnnidge & Côté, 2019). This approach aligns closely with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which suggests that fulfilling athletes' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances intrinsic motivation and personal growth (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Within youth basketball contexts, athlete-centered coaching may create psychologically safe learning environments that facilitate both skill acquisition and superior character formation (Appleton et al., 2016; Mossman et al., 2021).

Character development through sport has become a major concern within sport pedagogy and youth development research (Shields & Bredemeier, 2009; Bean & Forneris, 2017). Character is commonly associated with behavioral qualities such as discipline, honesty, perseverance, responsibility, teamwork, self-control, and respect for others (Santos et al., 2020; Jacobs et al., 2022). Scholars argue that sport environments may either facilitate or hinder moral and psychosocial development depending on how coaches structure learning experiences and interpersonal interactions (Shields & Bredemeier, 2009; Camiré et al., 2019). Coaches who consistently demonstrate positive role modeling, emotional support, constructive feedback, and fair treatment are more likely to foster prosocial behavior among athletes (Boardley et al., 2018; Jacobs et al., 2022). Therefore, coaches occupy a central role in integrating character education into daily basketball training activities (Bean et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2020).

Recent studies in coaching science increasingly emphasize the importance of psychosocial development in youth sport settings (Turnnidge et al., 2021; McCallister et al., 2020). Contemporary research demonstrates that coaches significantly influence athlete behavior, emotional regulation, motivation, confidence, and social adaptation through everyday interactions and training structures (Smith et al., 2018; Rocchi et al., 2017). Several investigations within basketball contexts indicate that positive coaching climates contribute substantially to athlete engagement, resilience, and long-term sport commitment (Cronin & Allen, 2018; Gómez-Mármol et al., 2021).

Côté and Gilbert (2009) established an influential framework suggesting that coaching effectiveness depends upon the integration of professional knowledge, interpersonal competence, and intrapersonal awareness. This framework has become foundational within contemporary coaching literature because it recognizes coaching as a multidimensional educational process rather than merely technical instruction (Turnnidge & Côté, 2019; Santos et al., 2020). Similarly, athlete-centered coaching models emphasize active athlete participation, supportive communication, and individualized learning experiences to optimize both performance and personal growth (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Appleton et al., 2016).

Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory demonstrates that autonomy-supportive coaching behaviors positively influence athletes' intrinsic motivation, self-

confidence, and emotional well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Coaches who encourage athlete participation in decision-making, provide meaningful feedback, and support emotional needs tend to facilitate stronger psychosocial outcomes among young athletes (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Mossman et al., 2021). Within basketball environments, these supportive coaching behaviors are associated with improved teamwork, emotional regulation, and discipline among youth athletes (Cronin & Allen, 2018; Jacobs et al., 2022).

Another important development in contemporary literature concerns the integration of character education into sport training environments (Camiré et al., 2019; Bean et al., 2018). Researchers increasingly argue that character development does not occur automatically through sport participation alone but depends heavily on intentionally structured learning experiences guided by coaches (Shields & Bredemeier, 2009; Bean & Forneris, 2017). Coaches who consistently apply positive reinforcement, role modeling, educational reward-punishment systems, and emotional mentoring are more likely to foster superior character qualities among athletes (Boardley et al., 2018; Jacobs et al., 2022).

Parental involvement has also emerged as a crucial factor influencing youth athlete development (Knight et al., 2016; Harwood & Knight, 2017). Positive parent-coach collaboration contributes significantly to athlete motivation, psychosocial stability, and long-term sport enjoyment (Knight et al., 2018; Thrower et al., 2020). However, excessive parental pressure and unrealistic expectations may negatively affect children's emotional experiences in sport (Harwood & Knight, 2017; Thrower et al., 2020). Consequently, effective communication between coaches and parents is increasingly recognized as an essential component of healthy youth sport environments (Knight et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, basketball has experienced substantial growth in popularity, particularly among children and adolescents in urban regions (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Hidayat & Kurniawan, 2022). The emergence of basketball academies and youth clubs reflects increasing societal interest in organized youth sports participation (Nugroho et al., 2022; Setiawan et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the quality of athlete development systems remains inconsistent because some programs emphasize holistic athlete development while others focus predominantly on technical achievement and competitive success (Rahman et al., 2021; Setiawan et al., 2023). This inconsistency highlights broader challenges within Indonesian youth sport development systems, including limited coaching education, insufficient psychosocial support structures, and inadequate integration of character education into training curricula (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022).

Despite the growing body of literature concerning coaching effectiveness and youth athlete development, several important theoretical and empirical gaps remain unresolved (Camiré et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2020). First, most previous studies in basketball contexts focus primarily on physical conditioning, technical performance, tactical development, and competition outcomes rather than psychosocial growth and

character formation (Gómez-Mármol et al., 2021; Schempp & McCullick, 2018). Consequently, limited scientific evidence exists regarding how basketball coaches practically integrate character-building strategies into daily training environments (Bean et al., 2018; Jacobs et al., 2022). Second, previous investigations predominantly employ quantitative approaches emphasizing measurable performance indicators while qualitative explorations of coach-athlete interactions and psychosocial learning processes remain comparatively scarce (Turnnidge et al., 2021; McCallister et al., 2020). This methodological limitation restricts deeper understanding regarding how coaches shape discipline, confidence, teamwork, responsibility, and emotional regulation among young basketball athletes (Bean & Forneris, 2017; Santos et al., 2020). Third, limited studies investigate the multidimensional role of coaches in balancing technical instruction, behavioral regulation, emotional mentoring, and parent communication simultaneously within youth basketball settings (Knight et al., 2018; Thrower et al., 2020). In practice, coaches frequently function not only as instructors but also as motivators, mediators, counselors, and role models for young athletes (Boardley et al., 2018; Turnnidge & Côté, 2019). However, current literature has not sufficiently synthesized how these multidimensional coaching responsibilities contribute to superior character development among youth basketball athletes (Camiré et al., 2019; Jacobs et al., 2022).

Another important gap concerns the limited availability of studies examining holistic coaching practices within Indonesian basketball academies (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). Existing Indonesian sport studies predominantly emphasize physiological and technical training variables, while psychosocial development and character education remain underexplored (Rahman et al., 2021; Hidayat & Kurniawan, 2022). Consequently, evidence-based understanding regarding effective character-building strategies within Indonesian youth basketball contexts remains limited (Setiawan et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2022).

Brave Basketball Academy in Semarang provides an important context for examining holistic coaching practices among basketball athletes aged 4–12 years because preliminary observations revealed substantial behavioral changes among young athletes during training participation (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Setiawan et al., 2023). Initially, several newly recruited athletes demonstrated low discipline, limited concentration, and difficulties following instructions during training sessions (Rahman et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). However, over time, athletes began demonstrating improved confidence, teamwork, concentration, and behavioral discipline, suggesting that coaching approaches may significantly influence character formation among young athletes (Bean et al., 2018; Jacobs et al., 2022).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of coaches in shaping the superior character of young basketball athletes at Brave Basketball Academy in Semarang, Indonesia (Camiré et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2020). Specifically, this study aims to examine coaching strategies, motivational approaches, behavioral reinforcement systems, emotional mentoring practices, and coach-parent collaboration in supporting holistic athlete development (Knight et al., 2018; Thrower et al., 2020).

The novelty of this study lies in its holistic and athlete-centered perspective on character development within youth basketball contexts (Turnnidge & Côté, 2019; Bean et al., 2018). Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on technical achievement and competition performance, this research emphasizes psychosocial development including discipline, confidence, teamwork, responsibility, emotional regulation, and behavioral adaptation (Camiré et al., 2019; Jacobs et al., 2022). In addition, this study investigates how coaches integrate positive reinforcement, educational reward-punishment systems, role modeling, and parent collaboration into youth basketball training environments (Boardley et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2018).

In conclusion, modern basketball coaching increasingly requires coaches to function not only as technical instructors but also as educators, mentors, motivators, and facilitators of psychosocial development (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Turnnidge et al., 2021). Although previous studies have demonstrated the importance of coaching behaviors in supporting athlete motivation and well-being, limited research specifically examines how coaches shape superior character among young basketball athletes within holistic training environments (Camiré et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2020). Furthermore, Indonesian youth basketball contexts remain underexplored in relation to psychosocial development and character education practices (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). Therefore, this study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically by providing deeper understanding regarding effective coaching strategies for developing disciplined, confident, responsible, and emotionally mature basketball athletes through athlete-centered and character-oriented coaching approaches.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore deeply the role of coaches in developing character among young basketball athletes. The qualitative case study approach was selected because it allows researchers to understand participants' experiences, behaviors, and interactions within natural settings. The research was conducted at Brave Basketball Academy located in Tirta Usodo, Tembalang, Semarang, Indonesia. The academy was selected purposively because it implements structured youth basketball development programs and emphasizes character formation alongside technical training. Participants consisted of six individuals, including head coaches, assistant coaches, and athletes aged 4–12 years who actively participated in academy training sessions. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, coaching strategies, and perceptions regarding athlete character development. Participant observation was carried out during training sessions to observe coach-athlete interactions, behavioral reinforcement, and training structures directly. Documentation such as training schedules, evaluation notes, and field records were also analyzed to strengthen data interpretation. Data analysis employed thematic analysis

techniques involving several stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme categorization, theme review, and interpretation. Themes were developed inductively based on recurring patterns emerging from interview transcripts and observational data. Trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking with participants. Ethical considerations including participant confidentiality and informed consent were maintained throughout the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **Theme 1: Coaches as Character Builders**

The findings indicate that coaches play central roles in shaping athlete character through discipline formation, behavioral regulation, and emotional guidance. Coaches emphasized values such as discipline, responsibility, independence, focus, and self-confidence during training activities. Athletes were consistently encouraged to arrive on time, follow instructions, respect teammates, and maintain focus during practice sessions. The coaches explained that character formation was conducted through habituation and repeated behavioral reinforcement rather than verbal instruction alone. Athletes who initially displayed hyperactive or undisciplined behaviors gradually became more focused and easier to direct over time. Coaches also acted as role models by demonstrating respectful communication, emotional control, and positive interpersonal interactions during training.

#### **Theme 2: Positive Reinforcement and Educational Punishment**

The study found that coaches applied positive reinforcement and educational punishment systematically to regulate athlete behavior. Positive reinforcement included praise, encouragement, and motivational feedback following successful task completion or improved behavior. Coaches frequently used supportive statements such as “good job” and “excellent effort” to strengthen athlete confidence and motivation. Punishment was implemented in educational forms such as push-ups or running drills when athletes lost concentration or violated training rules. However, punishment was consistently followed by emotional encouragement and positive reinforcement to ensure athletes did not experience humiliation or psychological pressure. Coaches emphasized that punishment was intended to build discipline rather than create fear.

#### **Theme 3: Coach–Parent Collaboration**

Coach–parent collaboration emerged as an important component of athlete development. Coaches regularly communicated with parents regarding athlete progress, behavioral changes, and developmental goals. Parents were educated about the importance of discipline, consistency, and emotional support during children’s training processes. The findings also revealed that parental involvement significantly influenced athlete motivation and behavioral stability. Athletes whose parents actively supported training activities demonstrated greater enthusiasm, confidence, and commitment

during sessions. Nevertheless, coaches identified differences in parental expectations as one of the primary challenges in athlete development.

#### **Theme 4: Holistic Athlete Development**

The coaching approach implemented at Brave Basketball Academy emphasized holistic athlete development encompassing technical, physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Training sessions were structured systematically and included technical instruction, behavioral regulation, emotional support, teamwork exercises, and evaluation sessions. Coaches recognized that each child demonstrated different developmental rates and required individualized approaches. Some athletes adapted quickly to training structures, while others required more intensive guidance and emotional reinforcement. Overall, the findings indicate that character development occurred gradually through continuous interaction between coaches, athletes, and parents.

#### **Discussion**

The interview results with Coach 1 indicate that the character of athletes in early-age basketball development (4–12 years) is highly diverse, ranging from disciplined and focused individuals to those who are difficult to manage, hyperactive, and more introverted. These findings are consistent with research in sports psychology, which states that during childhood, character development is still in an exploratory phase, causing athletes' behavior to fluctuate and be influenced by their environment (Harwood & Porter, 2026). The coach emphasized that the main character traits that need to be developed include discipline, responsibility, independence, focus, and self-confidence. However, at an early age, the primary focus is directed toward developing concentration and confidence.

Motivation for young athletes is not only directed at the children but also involves parents. The coach provides education to parents regarding the importance of training, program objectives, and the targets to be achieved. This reflects a collaborative approach between coaches and parents, which is an important factor in youth athlete development. Research by (Knight et al., 2016) confirms that positive parental involvement can enhance motivation, commitment, and psychosocial development in young athletes.

In the development process, Coach 1 applies a reward and punishment system. The punishment given is physical, such as running switch sides, but it is intended to improve physical condition rather than to demean the athlete. This approach aligns with the principles of positive discipline, where punishment is used in an educational and proportional manner. Appropriate and non-degrading punishment can improve discipline without reducing athletes' intrinsic motivation (Chen et al., 2018).

The coach explained that each training session is systematically structured, including rest periods of approximately 2–3 minutes and a cooling-down phase before the session ends. The last five minutes are used for briefing and evaluation. This organized training structure is important to maintain training effectiveness. The coach

also stated that character development is a continuous process, and outcomes vary for each child. Not all athletes immediately understand the values being taught, but at least some show improvement in each session. This is in line with (Gould & Carson, 2020) who state that character development in sports is a long-term process influenced by training consistency and the quality of coach-athlete interactions.

The coach revealed that the main difficulty in dealing with new athletes does not come from the children but from parents who have different expectations. Therefore, communication and collaboration are key to overcoming these challenges. In terms of evaluation, the coach applies three stages: short-term evaluation (every training session), medium-term evaluation (through matches or sparring), and long-term evaluation (based on pre-tests and periodic monitoring, monthly or every six months). The interview results show that the coach's role is not only as a technical trainer but also as a character builder, motivator, and mediator between athletes and parents. The approach used is holistic, covering physical, technical, and psychological aspects, supported by continuous evaluation. This approach aligns with the concept of ongoing evaluation in sports training. According to (Skiba & Clarke, 2021) systematic monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure optimal athlete development and prevent stagnation.

The interview results with Coach 2 show that athletes' character on the court is directed toward positive values such as discipline, hard work, perseverance, and respect. Respect is not only directed toward coaches but also toward teammates, parents, staff, and even training facilities such as balls and courts. The coach also instills basic habits such as arriving on time, practicing a culture of "smile, greet, and salute," and maintaining focus when receiving instructions (eye to coach, listen to coach). These findings are consistent with (Gould & Carson, 2020) who state that sports are an effective medium for developing life values such as discipline, respect, and responsibility.

This indicates that character development is carried out comprehensively through training routines. The coach emphasized that young children require consistent repetition, as instructions are not sufficient if given only once. In managing behavior, the coach uses light punishment such as push-ups (approximately 12 repetitions) when athletes lose focus or joke during instruction. However, each punishment is always followed by motivation and positive reinforcement at the end of the training session. The coach ensures that sessions are concluded with a positive experience so that athletes do not carry negative feelings. For example, statements such as "You did great today, you trained for two hours and stayed enthusiastic" are used. This combination of light punishment and positive reinforcement reflects the application of behavioral reinforcement principles. Research shows that appropriate use of rewards and punishment can increase extrinsic motivation and help direct children's behavior in a more positive direction (Fauziddin et al., 2023) More importantly, the use of positive reinforcement after behavioral correction helps maintain children's psychological stability and increases their engagement in sports activities.

Coach 2 explained that rest time (break) for young athletes is relatively short, around 2-3 minutes, to avoid distractions. Children are only given time to drink or briefly

interact with their parents. This shows the coach's understanding of the characteristics of young children, who tend to lose focus easily. According to (Harwood & Porter, 2026) children have limited attention spans, so training sessions need to be short, varied, and structured.

In training teamwork, the coach uses game-based methods and match simulations. In addition, the value of sportsmanship is emphasized through attitudes such as respecting opponents and referees, and accepting both victory and defeat gracefully. The coach stated that the time needed to develop discipline, focus, and order ranges from 3 to 6 months, depending on each child's character. However, this process is continuous and extends throughout the athlete's career. Behavioral changes can be sustained if supported by a positive environment, including the role of parents. This finding is supported by (Knight et al., 2016) who emphasize that social environmental support greatly influences the sustainability of young athletes' psychological development.

The interview results with Coach 2 also show that parental support has a significant influence on athlete development. The coach strives to maintain active communication with parents to convey children's progress and align development goals. Evaluations are conducted regularly, both formally and informally, by observing athlete performance, providing direct feedback, setting improvement goals, and involving both athletes and parents in the evaluation process. Overall, Coach 2 applies a holistic coaching approach that emphasizes character development, positive reinforcement, and collaboration with parents. The development process is carried out gradually and continuously, taking into account the characteristics of early childhood and the individual needs of each athlete (Harwood & Porter, 2026)

The interview results with athletes show that most of them perceive the coach as kind but firm. The children enjoy the training sessions and view the coach as a pleasant figure. This finding aligns with Coach 2's approach, which emphasizes friendliness combined with discipline through clear rules. On the other hand, Coach 1 emphasizes a natural approach and understanding of children's character, which is reflected in the comfort children feel when interacting with the coach. This indicates that a combination of firmness and emotional closeness is an important factor in building positive athlete perceptions of the coach.

Athletes reported that the coach provides clear instructions, ensures that they remain focused and do not joke around, offers encouragement during training, and serves as a model in demonstrating movements. These findings are consistent with both coaches' approaches: Coach 1 emphasizes modeling (demonstrating directly), while Coach 2 emphasizes firm instructions such as "eye to coach, listen to coach." This shows that the coach's role as both instructor and role model has been effectively implemented and understood by the children. All athletes stated that they must arrive on time and follow the coach's instructions, indicating that discipline has begun to be internalized. This finding aligns with Coach 1's approach of building discipline through habituation and example, and Coach 2's approach of forming discipline through consistent rules and

repetition. Thus, discipline is developed through a combination of habit formation and rule reinforcement.

From the interviews, athletes demonstrated an understanding of values such as teamwork (playing together), honesty (not cheating), and responsibility (completing training tasks). This indicates that character values are not only taught verbally but are also practiced during training activities. Athletes stated that good performance is rewarded with praise (e.g., "great," "good"), while mistakes result in repetition or light punishment. This shows that the reward and punishment system has been implemented in an educational and proportional manner. Athletes have become more diligent in training and more obedient to the coach, indicating positive behavioral changes resulting from the development process. Most athletes feel comfortable communicating with the coach and are not afraid to speak, although some still feel shy. This aligns with research stating that a combination of behavioral correction and positive reinforcement can increase motivation and maintain athlete engagement (Fauziddin et al., 2023). Coach 2 particularly emphasizes ending training sessions with positive experiences, contributing to a pleasant impression for the athletes.

Athletes also stated that they enjoy game-based training and activities such as dribbling and shooting. They understand that when the coach speaks, they must remain silent and listen. This indicates that the training methods used are appropriate for children's characteristics and that basic training rules are well understood. These findings align with both coaches' approaches, which emphasize enjoyable yet structured training.

The findings demonstrate that coaches at Brave Basketball Academy function beyond traditional technical instructors by acting as psychosocial agents who shape athletes' behavioral, emotional, and moral development. This finding supports Positive Youth Development theory, which conceptualizes sport as a medium for life-skill acquisition and character formation rather than merely competitive achievement (Gould & Carson, 2008). The coaching strategies identified in this study including role modeling, emotional reinforcement, and behavioral habituation illustrate how character education can be systematically integrated into youth basketball training environments.

One important finding concerns the balance between discipline enforcement and emotional support within coaching practices. Coaches implemented structured routines and behavioral correction while simultaneously maintaining positive emotional relationships with athletes. This finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that athletes' psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness must be fulfilled to support healthy motivation and long-term engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The combination of firmness and emotional closeness observed in this study suggests that effective youth coaching requires not only behavioral regulation but also emotional sensitivity.

The use of educational reward-punishment systems also represents an important aspect of athlete development. Punishment was used proportionally and educationally rather than as a form of humiliation. Furthermore, coaches consistently concluded

training sessions with motivational encouragement and positive feedback. These findings support behavioral reinforcement theory suggesting that positive reinforcement following corrective feedback helps maintain athlete motivation and psychological well-being (Chen et al., 2018).

Another critical finding involves the importance of coach–parent collaboration in supporting athlete development. Coaches identified parents as both developmental partners and potential sources of pressure due to differing expectations regarding achievement. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that parental involvement significantly affects athlete motivation, enjoyment, and psychosocial experiences (Knight et al., 2016). Effective communication between coaches and parents appears essential for maintaining consistency in athlete development and reducing conflicts regarding training priorities.

The findings further indicate that character development among young athletes occurs gradually and varies across individuals. This variation reinforces the importance of individualized and athlete–centered coaching approaches. Athlete–centered coaching recognizes that children possess different emotional, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics requiring adaptive coaching strategies. Consequently, standardized coaching methods may be insufficient for optimizing psychosocial development among diverse athlete populations.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence suggesting that holistic coaching approaches are fundamental to effective youth athlete development. Character education should not be separated from technical instruction but integrated systematically into everyday coaching practices. Coaches therefore function not only as trainers but also as educators, mentors, and emotional facilitators who shape athletes' long-term personal development.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of interviews with coaches and athletes, as well as field observations, it can be concluded that the development process of early-age basketball athletes (4–12 years) does not only focus on improving technical and physical abilities but also plays an important role in character building. The character of athletes observed in the field varies widely, ranging from those who are disciplined and focused to those who are difficult to manage, hyperactive, and lacking confidence. This indicates that each athlete requires a different approach in the development process. Coaches hold a central role as mentors and motivators by applying approaches that are natural, communicative, and understanding of children's psychological conditions. The instillation of character values such as discipline, responsibility, and independence is carried out through role modeling, habituation, and reinforcement in daily training activities. At an early age, the development of focus and self–confidence becomes the primary priority.

Furthermore, the success of athlete development cannot be separated from the collaboration between coaches and parents. Parents have a significant influence on

children's motivation and character development; therefore, effective communication and education between coaches and parents are crucial supporting factors. The development process is also supported by the implementation of an educational reward and punishment system, as well as structured training time management. Evaluation is conducted continuously through short-term, medium-term, and long-term stages, allowing athlete development to be monitored comprehensively in terms of technical, physical, and character aspects. However, character development does not occur instantly and requires a continuous process. Each athlete shows different rates of development, so coaches need patience, consistency, and adaptive strategies in dealing with individual differences.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, for coaches, it is expected that they continue to develop athlete-centered coaching approaches by paying attention to the psychological aspects and individual characteristics of each child. Coaches should also maintain consistency in providing role modeling and strengthen interpersonal communication with athletes. Second, for parents, it is recommended to be more actively involved in collaborating with coaches to support their children's development process. Parents need to understand the objectives of training, provide positive support, and avoid excessive expectations toward their children. Third, for basketball clubs or academies, it is important to design structured and sustainable development programs that include evaluations of technical, physical, and character aspects. In addition, regular education or socialization programs for parents regarding early-age athlete development should be conducted. Finally, further research is needed with a broader scope, for example by involving more coaches or clubs and applying mixed-method approaches to obtain more comprehensive results.

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coaching, character education, and positive athlete development programs, particularly within Indonesian sports contexts.

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