



Effectiveness of Rewards as a Means of Motivation Among Student-Athletes

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated how varying forms of incentives shape the motivation of Filipino student-athletes during training, focusing on distinctions across age, gender, and competitive level. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected from 100 athletes in La Trinidad, Benguet, who had participated in regional and national tournaments. Results indicated that both internal and external incentives significantly influenced motivation, though public recognition was rated less impactful. Intrinsic factors—particularly self-development and personal fulfillment—emerged as the strongest and most consistent motivators across groups, underscoring their importance in sustaining commitment amid limited financial resources. In contrast, older and national-level athletes demonstrated higher motivation from tangible incentives, reflecting evolving motivational needs with experience and exposure. These findings affirm the centrality of intrinsic motivation in athlete persistence while highlighting the need for structured, context-sensitive reward systems that balance psychological and material forms of reinforcement to enhance engagement and performance in Philippine sports institutions.

KEYWORDS: motivation, personal growth, incentives, recognition, youth development

INTRODUCTION

Rewards have long been recognized as important factors influencing athlete motivation and performance in both training and competition. They serve not only as reinforcement for effort but also as signals of achievement and recognition within the sporting environment. Two types of rewards are commonly discussed in motivation literature: extrinsic rewards, which include financial support, scholarships, and public recognition, and intrinsic rewards, which encompass enjoyment, self-development, and personal satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Cerasoli et al., 2014). Both reward types are believed to influence athletes' willingness to exert effort, though their long-term effectiveness remains debated. Although both are commonly applied in sports settings, they serve different purposes and offer distinct benefits (Darmaki, 2019). Each form of reward can influence an athlete's motivation to train, yet their effectiveness in sustaining consistent effort and improvement remains a debated issue (Paulini, 2014).

According to Wilson (2003), reward systems function as organized programs and practices that influence individual behavior. Bayyat (2019) similarly emphasized that athletes engage in sports not merely for external outcomes but also for the opportunity to learn, experiment with new training approaches, and develop strategies they have not tried before.

The study of Omar (2024) found that the most influential factor in sports performance among collegiate athletes is intrinsic motivation, which provides athletes a sense of fulfillment. When a person is intrinsically driven, they experience happiness, skill development, personal accomplishment, and excitement. Likewise, Walker (2009) explained that rewards encourage athletes to exert more effort, learn from mistakes, and achieve personal bests, while effective feedback strengthens motivation. Weinberg and Gould (2015) added that intrinsically motivated athletes train for the love of the sport and enjoyment of competition rather than external recognition.

Meanwhile, Orbach et al. (2021) showed that intrinsic motivation was the dominant motive for female athletes both for starting and continuing competitive sport, while extrinsic motives such as popularity or fame were least important. Conversely, Amorose and Horn (2000) found that male athletes displayed higher motivation when tied to competence and intrinsic rewards. These findings highlight that, although differences exist across gender, intrinsic drivers remain essential to long-term engagement.

In terms of fame, Alkasasbeh and Akroush (2025) observed that public recognition can boost motivation to maintain consistent training. However, excessive focus on external rewards can sometimes lower intrinsic motivation, especially in highly competitive settings. When rewards are overemphasized by coaches, parents, or media, athletes may experience pressure that diminishes enjoyment. Empirical studies in sports settings have shown that athletes sometimes perform worse when high external rewards are attached to performance, producing mixed results depending on task type and cognitive demand.

Medic et al. (2007) studied athletic scholarships and found that male athletes reported higher motivation than females, supporting earlier evidence that male student-athletes exhibit stronger motivation toward athletics. In contrast, Weiss and Smith

(2001) revealed that female athletes aged 10 to 18 were more motivated by self-esteem, friendship, and enjoyment, emphasizing that social bonds also sustain participation.

Although international research confirms that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators shape athletic effort, recent Philippine studies reveal that intrinsic factors often play the dominant role, particularly where financial incentives are inconsistent. Dimarucot (2018) found that financial, regional, and psychological factors influence performance among participants of the Philippine National Games, while Tungpalan (2020) reported that recognition and awards predict both motivation and academic success. Similarly, studies of university programs, such as those conducted at Silliman University, indicate that athletes value both tangible rewards (scholarships, allowances, equipment) and intangible ones (praise and recognition), though institutions frequently rely on non-monetary forms due to financial limitations. Richardson and Ompoc (2024) also observed that athletes in Iligan City were motivated by competence, appearance, and social interaction, underscoring the importance of non-financial rewards in sustaining motivation.

Beyond these individual findings, however, existing research remains limited in several ways. Most studies emphasize financial incentives or examine athletes from well-funded programs, leaving gaps in understanding how motivation operates in resource-constrained environments where funding is limited and support systems are uneven. National and regional reports further note that incentives such as travel allowances or cash rewards are often ad hoc and primarily directed at high-level athletes, while others receive little or no material support (Dimarucot, 2018; local government sports reports). Consequently, many Filipino athletes depend on intrinsic motivators—such as enjoyment, self-discipline, and personal growth—to maintain commitment.

Furthermore, few studies differentiate motivational patterns by age and level of competition, even though both factors likely influence the relative importance of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Emerging evidence suggests that older athletes and those competing at higher levels respond more to extrinsic rewards, while younger or grassroots athletes rely more on intrinsic satisfaction and peer relationships (Omar, 2023; Tungpalan, 2020). This highlights the need to examine how motivation shifts across developmental stages and competitive contexts in Philippine sports.

Taken together, these studies suggest two main research gaps. First, there is a lack of systematic evidence on how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards jointly influence motivation among Filipino student-athletes in under-resourced programs. Second, little is known about differences across age, gender, and competition level in such contexts. Addressing these issues will clarify whether intrinsic motivation alone can sustain athletic participation or whether carefully designed extrinsic supports are necessary to complement it.

This gap highlighted the need to examine the effectiveness of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards among Filipino student-athletes who competed at regional and national levels. The present study explored a broader range of rewards that may sustain athletes' training commitment despite limited funding and institutional support.

Therefore, this study aimed to determine the level of agreement of student-athletes regarding the effects of rewards as a source of motivation during training. Specifically, it aimed to: (a) evaluate the effectiveness of extrinsic rewards, including monetary incentives, publicity or fame, and awards; (b) assess the effectiveness of intrinsic rewards, such as self-development and self-satisfaction; and (c) examine the differences in the perceived effectiveness of these rewards when student-athletes are categorized according to age, gender, and level of participation in school sports.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research design was used in the study, specifically employing the descriptive type to determine the extent to which intrinsic and extrinsic rewards motivate student-athletes during training.

The study was conducted in La Trinidad, Benguet, and involved 100 purposively selected student-athletes from various schools and universities who had competed in regional tournaments such as the Cordillera Administrative Region Athletic Association (CARAA) Meet and the Cordillera Administrative Region Association of State Universities and Colleges (CARASUC) Meet, as well as national tournaments like the Palarong Pambansa and the State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association (SCUAA).

Purposive sampling was utilized to ensure that the respondents met specific inclusion criteria. To qualify, participants had to be: (A) Currently enrolled as student-athletes during the academic year of data collection; (B) Actively participating in training programs sanctioned by their respective institutions; and (C) Have represented their school, municipality, or region in at least one regional or national athletic competition.

The researchers coordinated with coaches and sports coordinators to identify qualified athletes. After initial coordination, participants were contacted through the Messenger application and invited to answer the questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and confidentiality of responses was assured.

A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data. The instrument consisted of two major parts: (A) demographic profile of the student-athletes, and (B) their level of agreement on the effectiveness of rewards as motivation during training.

To ensure content and face validity, the instrument was evaluated by six experts in the fields of physical education, sports psychology, and research methods. Each expert rated the questionnaire using a validation checklist focusing on the clarity,

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comprehensiveness, appropriateness, and readability of items. As shown in Table 1, the instrument achieved a grand mean of 4.70 (Excellent), confirming that the questions were well-constructed and aligned with the study's objectives.

Using Cronbach's alpha, the internal consistency of each subscale was computed. The results indicated that the subscales for extrinsic rewards (monetary/logistics = 0.94, publicity/fame = 0.86, awards = 0.95) and intrinsic rewards (self-development = 0.94, self-satisfaction = 0.88) demonstrated good to excellent reliability (see Table 2). These results confirmed that the instrument was both consistent and dependable for measuring athletes' motivational perceptions.

Table 1. Content and Face Validity Test Result of the Data Collection Instrument

VALIDATOR	QUESTIONS					TOTAL	MEAN	DE
	1	2	3	4	5			
1	5	5	5	5	5	25	5	Excellent
2	5	5	5	5	5	25	5	Excellent
3	5	5	5	5	5	25	5	Excellent
4	5	5	5	5	5	25	5	Excellent
5	4	5	4	2	4	19	3.80	Above Average
6	4	5	4	4	5	22	4.40	Excellent
Grand Mean						23.5	4.70	Excellent

Legend:

Numerical Rating	Descriptive Equivalent	Statistical limit
1	Poor	1.00 – 1.79
2	Fair	1.80 – 2.59
3	Average	2.60 – 3.39
4	Above average	3.40 – 4.19
5	Excellent	4.20 – 5.00

Questions: Comprehensiveness to collect all the information needed to address the purpose and objectives of the study (1), Appropriateness of the questions for the intended sample/population (respondents) (2), Clarity of directions/instructions (3), Appropriateness of scales used to what they are expected to measure (4), Readability and understandability of the words/sentences (5)

Table 2. Reliability Testing of Data Collection Instrument

Type of Reward	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
Extrinsic Rewards		
A. Monetary/Logistic	0.94	Excellent
B. Publicity/Fame	0.86	Good
C. Awards	0.95	Excellent
Intrinsic Rewards		
A. Self-Development	0.94	Excellent
B. Self-Satisfaction	0.88	Good

Legend:

Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
0.91-1.00	Excellent
0.81-0.90	Good
0.71-0.80	Good and Acceptable
	Acceptable
0.61-0.70	Non-acceptable
0.01-0.60	

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Survey method was used to collect the data. After the pilot study, validity and reliability tests were conducted. The researchers then started gathering data by administering the questionnaires to the respondents by using Google Forms. The researchers personally contacted the respondents and sent the link of the form through online via Messenger application.

Mean was used to determine the level of agreement of the student-athletes on the effectiveness of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards as motivations during trainings. The data was interpreted using a 4-point Likert scale as presented on Table 3.

Table 3. Likert-scale Describing the Level of Agreement of the Student-athletes on the Effectiveness of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards as Motivations During Trainings

Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
2.51 – 3.25	Agree
1.76 – 2.50	Disagree
1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree

RESULTS

This section presents the analyses and interpretations of the study on the research problems. The contents of this chapter were the responses of the student-athletes gathered through survey questionnaire.

Level of Agreement of Student-Athletes on the Effectiveness of Rewards as Motivations during Trainings in Terms of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards

The findings revealed that the student-athletes strongly agreed that both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards motivate them to train, except for publicity/fame rewards, in which they only agreed. In terms of intrinsic motivation, it was found out the student-athletes strongly agreed that intrinsic rewards, specifically self-development and self-satisfaction, motivated them to continue training.

Level of Effectiveness of Extrinsic Rewards to the Student-Athletes' Motivation in Training Compared According to Age, Gender and Level of Participation in School Sports

The data gathered revealed that there was a significant difference when the student-athletes were grouped according to age, gender and level of participation in school sports.

When categorized to age, there was a significant difference between age groups 13 to 19 years old and above 19 years old when it came to monetary/logistics and publicity/fame. On the other hand, there was no significant difference of the two age groups when it came to the awards. The data in the table implied that the age groups 19 and above were more motivated to train when earning publicity or fame for being known as a student-athletes than the 13-19 years old.

There was no significant difference on the extrinsic rewards when it came to gender. Both male and female student-athletes strongly agreed that all the extrinsic rewards motivated them to train except for the publicity/fame, in which the female student-athletes only agreed.

Table 4. Level of Effectiveness of Extrinsic Reward to Student-Athletes as Motivations during Trainings Compared According to Age.

Extrinsic Reward	Age, Gender and Level of Participation in school sports	Mean	DE	T-value	P-value
Monetary/Logistics	13-19 years old	3.50	SA	-3.005**	0.00
	Above 19 years old	3.73	SA		
Publicity/Fame	13-19 years old	3.03	A	-2.117*	0.04
	Above 19 years old	3.29	SA		
Awards	13-19 years old	3.46	SA	-0.724 ^{ns}	0.47
	Above 19 years old	3.53	SA		
Monetary/Logistics	Male	3.70	SA	1.454 ^{ns}	0.15
	Female	3.59	SA		
Publicity/Fame	Male	3.30	SA	1.744 ^{ns}	0.08
	Female	3.09	A		
Awards	Male	3.54	SA	0.712 ^{ns}	0.48
	Female	3.47	SA		
Monetary/Logistics	Regional	3.58	SA	-2.409*	0.02
	National	3.76	SA		

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Publicity/Fame	Regional	3.06	A	-3.238**	0.00
	National	3.44	SA		
Awards	Regional	3.41	SA	-3.098**	0.00
	National	3.68	SA		
Legend	Descriptive Equivalent				
Scale	(DE)				
3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)				
2.51 – 3.25	Agree (A)				
1.76 – 2.50	Disagree (D)				
1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree (SD)				

** - significant at 1% level of significance

* - significant at 5% level of significance

ns- not significant

Meanwhile, there was a significant difference when the student-athletes were categorized according to their level of participation in school sports. The student-athletes who achieved national level had a higher level of agreement in motivating them to train when it came to the publicity/fame rewards. As mentioned earlier, student-athletes who experienced playing in Palarong Pambansa or SCUAA had more competitive, pressuring, training time and generally a higher amount of incentives/allowance than college and high school student-athletes who were able to compete only in regional athletic meets (CARAA or CARASUC).

Level of Effectiveness of Intrinsic Reward (Self-Development and Self Satisfaction) to Student-Athletes' Motivation during Trainings Compared According to Age, Gender and Level of Participation in School Sports

Tables 5 and 6 featured that there was a significant difference on the two age groups when it came to the intrinsic rewards. Regardless of age, the student-athletes strongly agreed that intrinsic rewards motivate them to train.

Table 5. Level of Effectiveness of Intrinsic Reward (Self-Development) to Student-Athletes' Motivation in Training Compared According to Age, Gender and Level of Participation in School Sports

Intrinsic Reward	Age, Gender and Level of Participation in School Sports	Mean	DE	T-value	P-value
Self-Development	13-19 years old	3.61	SA	-4.018**	0.00
	Above 19 years old	3.89	SA		
	Male	3.80	SA	0.337 ^{ns}	0.74
	Female	3.77	SA		
	Regional	3.76	SA	-1.044 ^{ns}	0.30
	National	3.83	SA		
Legend	Descriptive Equivalent (DE)				
Scale	Strongly Agree (SA)				
3.26 – 4.00	Agree (A)				
2.51 – 3.25	Disagree (D)				
1.76 – 2.50	Strongly Disagree (SD)				

** - significant at 1% level of significance

ns - not significant

It was prevailed that there was no significant difference on the level of effectiveness of intrinsic rewards as motivations among student-athletes during trainings when categorized according to gender and level of achievement in school sports. Both categories of student-athletes had the same level of agreement on the effectiveness of intrinsic rewards in motivating them to train.

Table 6. Level of Effectiveness of Intrinsic Rewards (Self-Satisfaction) to Student-Athletes as Motivations during Trainings According to Age, Gender and Level of Participation in School Sports

Intrinsic Rewards	Age, Gender and Level of Participation in School Sports	Mean	DE	T-value	P-value
Self-Satisfaction	13-19 years old	3.65	SA	-1.708 ^{ns}	0.09
	Above 19 years old	3.77	SA		
	Male	3.77	SA	1.192 ^{ns}	0.24
	Female	3.69	SA		
	Regional	3.71	SA	-0.470 ^{ns}	0.64
	National	3.75	SA		

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This study demonstrated that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards play significant roles in motivating student-athletes to train, with intrinsic factors such as self-development and self-satisfaction emerging as the strongest and most consistent motivators. Extrinsic rewards, particularly monetary support and awards, were also effective, though publicity and fame were less influential overall, except among older and more experienced athletes. Differences were observed across age and level of participation, underscoring that motivational drivers vary depending on the athletes' developmental stage and competitive exposure.

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Extrinsic Rewards

The experiences of student-athletes in La Trinidad, Benguet highlight the limited role of extrinsic rewards in sustaining motivation. As a former competitor, I observed that publicity or fame was not emphasized by coaches, and despite winning regional competitions, we did not receive incentives or training allowances. Support was often limited to free uniforms, while scholarships were not directly tied to athletic participation but rather provided through CHED's memorandum for all state university students. These conditions illustrate that financial and material rewards were scarce, and recognition alone was not sufficient to sustain long-term motivation.

The findings of this study align with these realities, showing that student-athletes strongly agreed that extrinsic rewards such as monetary and logistical support and awards motivated them to train, while publicity and fame were less influential. However, the limited emphasis on fame and recognition may also reflect the localized sports culture in La Trinidad, where community acknowledgment is modest and resources are scarce. This finding suggests that in such environments, extrinsic rewards function more as essential support mechanisms rather than as symbols of prestige, emphasizing the importance of consistent institutional and financial backing instead of sporadic publicity.

Walker (2009) noted that rewards encourage athletes to exert more effort, learn from mistakes, and improve their performances, while Cerasoli et al. (2014) emphasized that extrinsic and intrinsic rewards can work together in sustaining motivation. In the Philippine context, Dimarucot (2018) and Tungpalan (2020) also highlighted the importance of financial support, recognition, and awards in shaping athlete performance and persistence. However, the weaker influence of publicity or fame in this study supports Orbach et al. (2021), who found that fame was one of the least important motivators, especially among female athletes. While recognition may inspire commitment (Alkasasbeh & Akroush, 2025), Burgener (2016) and Kissinger et al. (2015) warned that overreliance on fame could undermine long-term development by shifting focus away from personal growth and intrinsic enjoyment.

Effectiveness of Intrinsic Rewards

While extrinsic rewards provided important external reinforcement, the study revealed that intrinsic factors played an even more vital and consistent role in sustaining athletes' motivation. Because extrinsic rewards were rarely emphasized by coaches, intrinsic motivators such as self-development, discipline, and enjoyment of training became central to athlete engagement. Teamwork and camaraderie provided a sense of belonging, while the satisfaction of improving performance gave meaning to continued participation. These experiences show why intrinsic rewards remain the foundation of motivation for student-athletes in resource-limited communities.

The results of this study confirmed this perspective, showing that student-athletes strongly agreed that intrinsic rewards—particularly self-development and self-satisfaction—motivated them to continue training. This finding reinforces Self-Determination Theory, which argues that individuals who participate for personal fulfillment and growth are more likely to sustain long-term motivation. In contexts like La Trinidad, where financial incentives are limited, this suggests that athletes' resilience and commitment are maintained primarily through internal satisfaction and a sense of competence.

Local studies support this conclusion. Richardson and Ompoc (2024) reported that athletes in Iligan City were motivated not only by appearance and competence but also by social interaction, emphasizing that fulfillment and self-esteem are strong motivational anchors in Philippine sports. Similarly, Tungpalan (2020) found that recognition and enjoyment in sports were crucial for both academic and athletic persistence. These findings align with the present study, where athletes valued enjoyment, confidence, and self-discipline as key motivators. This highlights the enduring value of intrinsic rewards in maintaining athletic engagement, even in the absence of financial or institutional incentives.

Although earlier research reported gender-based differences in intrinsic motivation—Amorose and Horn (2000) noted that male athletes often tied their motivation to competence, while Weiss and Smith (2001) found that female athletes valued self-esteem and supportive relationships—this study revealed minimal gender differences. This outcome may reflect the shared cultural and training environments in Philippine sports, where both male and female athletes face similar conditions, challenges, and motivations. Consequently, motivation in these settings appears to be shaped more by social and institutional context than by gender itself.

Differences in Rewards' Effectiveness Across Age, Gender, and Level of Participation

Beyond identifying which rewards were effective overall, the study also examined how motivational patterns varied across age, gender, and level of participation. Reward systems for athletes remain uneven across competition levels. At the regional level,

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recognition was often limited to certificates, while allowances and training support were largely unavailable. At the national level, however, athletes competing in tournaments such as the Palarong Pambansa or SCUAA often received modest incentives, transportation allowances, or training meals. This disparity demonstrates how extrinsic motivators are inconsistently distributed, creating inequities between athletes who reach different competitions.

The results parallel these realities, revealing significant differences when athletes were categorized by age and level of participation, though not by gender. Older athletes (19 and above) were more motivated by publicity and fame compared to younger athletes. This suggests a developmental shift in motivational priorities: as athletes mature and invest more years in training, they tend to value external recognition as acknowledgment of their effort and progress. This insight highlights the need for coaches and institutions to adapt motivational strategies as athletes grow—introducing structured recognition programs for older athletes while maintaining mastery and enjoyment as the focus for younger ones.

In terms of competition level, athletes who reached the national stage reported higher motivation from extrinsic rewards compared to regional athletes. This indicates that exposure to high-level competition increases awareness of performance-based incentives and institutional recognition. For policymakers, this finding implies the importance of developing tiered reward systems that provide consistent, fair incentives across all levels—reducing motivational disparities between regional and national athletes. Such systems could include small stipends, public acknowledgment, or enhanced training support that scales with the athlete's level of participation.

Interestingly, gender did not show significant differences in either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. This outcome suggests that male and female athletes in the Cordillera region share similar motivational contexts and challenges. In contrast with findings from Western studies that often report gendered motivational tendencies, this study implies that contextual equality in training conditions—rather than gender—plays a more decisive role in shaping athlete motivation in the Philippines.

Overall, these differences emphasize that athlete motivation is multidimensional and evolves with experience and exposure. Intrinsic motivation remains a stable foundation, but extrinsic recognition gains importance as athletes progress to higher levels of competition. Recognizing this dynamic can help coaches, schools, and local governments design more effective and equitable athlete development programs.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite yielding valuable insights, this study has several limitations. First, the use of a purposive sampling technique and a relatively small sample size of 100 student-athletes from La Trinidad, Benguet, limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions or sports programs. Second, as a descriptive quantitative study, the results are based on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Third, the study focused only on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, excluding other possible motivational factors such as coaching style, peer influence, or institutional culture. Future research may address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples, incorporating qualitative methods, and examining additional motivational variables across different athletic contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations were suggested:

For Coaches

1. Autonomy-supportive coaching: Offer athletes choices (e.g. training modalities, role input), which reinforces intrinsic motivation.
2. Mastery-focused feedback: Emphasize improvement, effort, and process rather than just outcomes.
3. Peer recognition systems: Create non-monetary awards (e.g. “Athlete of the Week”, wall displays) to foster extrinsic motivation affordably.
4. Mentorship pairing: Pair younger athletes with older ones to help transfer motivational habits and foster community.

For Policymakers / Institutions

1. Tiered incentive structure: Allocate small stipends, gear, or travel support preferentially to athletes competing regionally or nationally.
2. Public acknowledgment: Use school or local government platforms to highlight athlete achievements (e.g. social media).
3. Grant / fund partnerships: Partner with local businesses or Non-Government Organizations to support athlete incentives.
4. Training programs: Sponsor workshops for coaches on motivational psychology and resource-efficient incentives.

For Athletes

1. Self-set goals: Encourage athletes to set their own intrinsic goals (e.g. personal bests).
2. Reflective journaling: Have athletes reflect on progress, challenges, and internal satisfaction to strengthen intrinsic drive.
3. Peer support groups: Organize small groups for mutual encouragement, recognition, and accountability.

1. Include athletes from different regions and competition levels to enhance generalizability. Future studies may also use qualitative interviews to explore how athletes interpret rewards and maintain motivation in resource-limited environments.

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