



Analyzing Coaches' Behaviors in the Relationship Between Motivational Climate and Performance Satisfaction Among Table Tennis Athletes

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1 Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the final sentence of the Abstract, "Practical implications are offered for coach education, particularly the need to train coaches in reflective self-regulation, autonomy-supportive communication, constructive feedback, and goal-setting methods," the implications are appropriate but rather broad. The authors should specify whether these recommendations are derived directly from participant accounts, the interpretive model, or existing theory. At present, the abstract moves from findings to recommendations without clearly indicating the evidentiary bridge between the themes and the proposed coach-education content.

In the first paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence "A coach can therefore act as a technical instructor, behavioral model, social supporter, and psychological regulator at the same time" is conceptually strong, but it would benefit from clearer positioning within coaching science. The authors should explain how these roles specifically operate in table tennis rather than youth sport generally. For example, rapid technical correction, one-to-one feedback, psychological control during rallies, and immediate post-error communication are distinctive features of table tennis coaching that should be introduced earlier to justify the sport-specific relevance of the study.

In the Introduction paragraph beginning “Motivational climate is one of the main mechanisms through which coaches influence athletes,” the discussion of achievement goal theory is accurate but too generic. The authors should better connect task-involving and ego-involving climates to performance satisfaction, not only to persistence, enjoyment, and competence beliefs. Since performance satisfaction is a central construct in the title, the Introduction should define it explicitly and explain whether it refers to satisfaction with competitive outcomes, perceived improvement, emotional evaluation of performance, or broader sport experience.

In the Participants and Sampling paragraph, the manuscript states that “Recruitment was stopped when additional accounts no longer produced substantially new overarching themes.” This claim should be supported with more procedural transparency. Please report how saturation or information power was assessed, after which interview no new themes emerged, whether coaches and athletes were assessed separately, and whether saturation was determined during data collection or retrospectively during analysis.

In Table 1, the participant characteristics are too minimal for a qualitative manuscript. The table currently reports only “Group,” “Number,” “Age range,” and “Sampling and data source.” Please expand the table to include gender, experience level, years of coaching or playing experience, competitive level, and possibly number of interviews per group. A richer demographic and contextual table would substantially improve the manuscript’s transferability and methodological rigor.

In the Data Collection section, the sentence “Data were collected through semi-structured interviews” should be supplemented with operational details. Please report who conducted the interviews, whether the interviewer had prior relationships with participants, where interviews were conducted, whether interviews were individual or group-based, average duration, language of interview, audio-recording procedures, and whether a pilot interview was conducted. These details are standard expectations for qualitative transparency.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the updated document.

1.2 Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Introduction paragraph on self-determination theory, the sentence “Coaches support autonomy when they provide rationale, acknowledge athletes' perspectives, and create meaningful involvement” is theoretically sound, but the manuscript should clarify whether autonomy support was used only as a sensitizing theoretical concept or whether interview questions and coding were explicitly informed by self-determination theory. This distinction is methodologically important because the study currently moves between phenomenology, achievement goal theory, self-determination theory, and coach-athlete relationship theory without fully explaining how these frameworks shaped design, analysis, or interpretation.

In the paragraph beginning “Although research on motivation and coaching is extensive,” the research gap is stated but remains underdeveloped. The authors write that “less is known about how table tennis coaches and athletes describe the lived experience of coaching behavior,” yet they do not sufficiently review prior qualitative work on coaching behavior, motivational climate, or youth racket sports. Please expand the gap statement by distinguishing what is already known in general youth sport and what remains specifically unknown in table tennis contexts.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the study presents two research questions: “how do coaches describe their own behaviors...” and “how do athletes experience these behaviors...?” These questions are appropriate, but they are broader than

the title, which emphasizes the relationship between motivational climate and performance satisfaction. The authors should either revise the title to better reflect a two-perspective qualitative exploration of coaching behaviors or revise the research questions to focus more directly on motivational climate and perceived performance satisfaction.

In the Research Design section, the manuscript states, “This study used a qualitative phenomenological design,” and later states that “The analysis was informed by reflexive thematic analysis.” This creates a methodological tension that requires clarification. Phenomenology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, and reflexive thematic analysis are not interchangeable traditions. If the study is phenomenological, the authors should clarify the specific phenomenological orientation and analytic procedure. If the study primarily uses reflexive thematic analysis, then the design may be more accurately described as an interpretive qualitative study rather than phenomenology.

In the Research Design paragraph, the sentence “The study was positioned as an interpretive phenomenological inquiry rather than a purely descriptive account” should be revised or expanded. The phrase “interpretive phenomenological inquiry” may be confused with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, especially because Smith et al. are cited. If IPA was not actually used, the authors should avoid terminology that implies IPA or explain why Braun and Clarke’s reflexive thematic analysis was selected instead of IPA.

In the Participants and Sampling section, the manuscript states that “Participants were selected through snowball sampling.” This needs more methodological detail. Please describe the initial recruitment points, how the first participants were identified, whether coaches recruited athletes directly, how power dynamics were managed, and whether athletes could decline without coaches knowing. This is especially important because the athlete participants were adolescents and may have felt pressure to participate if recruitment occurred through coaches or clubs.

In the Participants and Sampling section, the sentence “The athletes were between 14 and 18 years old, and the coaches were between 30 and 40 years old” is insufficient for participant characterization. The authors should report gender distribution, training history, competitive level, frequency of training, club affiliation type, and coach certification or coaching experience. Without these details, readers cannot judge whether the sample reflects novice, developing, elite youth, recreational, or competitive table tennis environments.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the updated document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.