

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Women Arnis Coaches in Philippine Schools: Knowledge, Skills, and Perceptions Under Republic Act No. 9850

Melane M. Fernandez

Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Leisure Studies, College of Education, Central Luzon State University

Abstract

Republic Act No. 9850 declares Arnis as the National Martial Art and Sport of the Philippines and mandates its integration into the school curriculum. While historically male-dominated, women now actively serve as coaches, educators, and promoters of Arnis. This study assessed the knowledge, skills, and perceptions of women Arnis coaches in Nueva Ecija, examining their role in implementing RA 9850 and sustaining Arnis as both a sport and a cultural practice. Using a descriptive mixed-methods design, 46 elementary and secondary school coaches completed a structured questionnaire covering four promotion dimensions (education, promotion, activities, funding) and five coaching skill domains (basic skills, combative skills, Anyo, strategies and tactics, coaching practices). Quantitative data were analysed descriptively. Qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis to capture issues and challenges faced by coaches, along with their recommendations. Results indicated strong curriculum integration and active educational roles, with the highest scores in education and coaching practices. Funding and any other skills (e.g., Anyo skills or combative skills) were identified as areas needing improvement. Qualitative findings revealed insufficient resources, limited professional development, and weak institutional support. Coaches recommended increased funding, training programs, and stronger policy implementation. The study highlights the essential contributions of women coaches in promoting Arnis while emphasizing the need for targeted support to enhance their professional capacity and foster sustainable, inclusive martial arts education.

Introduction

Arnis, the national martial art and sport of the Philippines, represents both a cultural heritage and an educational practice. Although traditionally male-dominated, women are increasingly taking on coaching and educational roles. Coaching competence involves technical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills, which are essential for effective sport development (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Gender equity research indicates that women in coaching often face barriers, including limited professional opportunities, inadequate institutional

support, and restricted access to leadership roles (LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2020). Despite policy support under RA 9850, limited research has examined the knowledge, skills, and perceptions of women Arnis coaches, particularly in school-based implementation. This study addresses this gap by examining how women coaches contribute to sport promotion, coaching development, and policy implementation in educational settings.

Arnis represents both a martial practice and a cultural artifact, embodying Filipino values such as discipline, resilience, and

Keywords:

Arnis coaching; women in sports; women coaches; Arnis training implementation; gender equity

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national pride (Lewis, 2016). Its inclusion in education via RA 9850 positions it as a tool for physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development (Lobo, 2025; Santos et al., 2022). Studies show that martial arts instruction fosters teamwork, self-regulation, and cultural appreciation, highlighting the dual educational and cultural role of Arnis (Cristobal & Serrano, 2024; Martin & Santos, 2019).

Coaching effectiveness is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct involving technical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). Studies on women in coaching emphasize structural and cultural barriers, including gender stereotypes, limited access to professional development, and challenges balancing coaching responsibilities (LaVoi, 2016; Norman, 2020). Within martial arts and sport pedagogy, coaching competence is associated with athlete development, motivation, and program sustainability. In the Philippine context, RA 9850 provides institutional recognition of Arnis, yet implementation varies due to resource and training constraints. This study integrates gender, coaching competence, and policy implementation to provide empirical evidence on the experiences of women Arnis coaches.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a descriptive research design, utilizing a survey questionnaire to gather quantitative data and interviews to support and further explain the responses. Forty-six women Arnis coaches from elementary and secondary schools in Nueva Ecija were selected using purposive sampling. A structured questionnaire based on RA 9850 and coaching competency frameworks measured promotion and coaching dimensions using a 4-point Likert scale. The scale was selected to minimize neutral responses and improve response clarity (Taherdoost, 2022). Qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's

(2006) approach, involving familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation.

The participants included 46 women Arnis coaches who taught in elementary and secondary schools across Nueva Ecija, Philippines. A purposive sampling method was employed to select licensed teacher-coaches who were actively participating in Arnis within the school's Physical Education program. The participants varied in age, years of teaching experience, and tenure in Arnis coaching, ensuring a range of novice and more experienced practitioners.

A structured questionnaire was developed in accordance with RA 9850 guidelines and previous studies on sports coaching competencies. It covered two sections: promotion of Arnis (education, promotion, activities, funding) and coaching skills (basic skills, combative skills, Anyo, strategies and tactics, and coaching practices). Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree). Content validation was conducted by three experts in Physical Education, Arnis instruction, and educational research, with revisions made for cultural and contextual relevance. A pilot test produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. In addition to the closed-ended items, open-ended questions were included to capture richer qualitative insights into the challenges faced by Arnis coaches and their recommendations for improvement. These were designed to complement the quantitative findings and provide contextual depth to the study.

After obtaining approval from school authorities, the questionnaire was administered to participants in person during scheduled professional gatherings. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was assured. The ethical principles of informed consent, anonymity, and respect for participants' rights were strictly adhered to.

Descriptive statistics (Haden, 2019), including mean and standard deviation, were used to describe the coaches' perceptions across all dimensions. Additionally, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data enabled the study to confirm strengths, clarify moderate competencies, and identify contextual challenges not evident in the survey alone. This approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the promotion of Arnis and the factors shaping coaching effectiveness under RA 9850.

Results

Extent of Promotion of Arnis under RA 9850

Table 1 presents the mean scores of women coaches' perceptions on the promotion of Arnis in schools. Overall, respondents reported positive perceptions

across all four dimensions, reflecting a high level of promotion. Education received the highest mean score (M = 3.19, SD = 0.42), indicating strong integration of Arnis into school curricula and active involvement of women in instructional initiatives. Activities (M = 3.13, SD = 0.38) and Promotion (M = 3.09, SD = 0.40) were also rated High, highlighting women's leadership in advocacy campaigns, tournaments, and workshops that support the visibility and growth of Arnis. Funding, while slightly lower (M = 2.98, SD = 0.44), was still interpreted as High, pointing to ongoing financial and material challenges that may affect the scope of promotional efforts. These results suggest that while educational integration and program activities are well-supported, sustained attention to funding could further strengthen the promotion of Arnis in schools.

Table 1. Respondents' Perceived Extent of Promotion

Dimension	Mean	SD	VI
Education	3.19	0.42	High
Promotion	3.09	0.40	High
Activities	3.13	0.38	High
Funding	2.98	0.44	High

Note: 3.26-4.00 Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 High; 1.76 – 2.50 Low; 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Coaching Skills of Women Coaches

Table 2 presents the mean scores of coaching skills across five domains, indicating that respondents generally perceive themselves as competent in Arnis instruction. The highest ratings were observed in Basic Skills (M = 3.20, SD = 0.39) and Coaching Practices (M = 3.20, SD = 0.41), both interpreted as High, reflecting confidence in demonstrating fundamental techniques such as striking, blocking, and footwork, as well as in designing training programs, managing sessions communicating with stakeholders, and engaging in professional development. Moderate competence, also interpreted as High, was reported in Strategies and Tactics

(M = 3.10, SD = 0.36) and Combative Skills (M = 3.04, SD = 0.40), suggesting that coaches feel capable of planning and teaching offensive and defensive approaches and applying techniques under dynamic conditions, while still having room to enhance strategic and real-time decision-making.

The lowest score was observed in Anyo (M = 2.99, SD = 0.43), interpreted as High, highlighting a relative need for further development in performing and teaching choreographed forms, which are essential for structured skill progression and competition. Pooled mean scores reinforce these findings, with Basic Skills and Coaching Practices reflecting strong

self-perceived competence, and Anyo showing moderate agreement among coaches regarding proficiency in forms. Overall, the results suggest that respondents are confident in their foundational and

program management skills, yet targeted professional development in Anyo and combative application could further enhance the overall effectiveness of coaching practices.

Table 2. Respondents' Perceived Coaching Skills

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Basic Skills	3.20	0.39	High
Combative Skills	3.04	0.40	High
Anyo	2.99	0.76	High
Strategies and Tactics	3.11	0.80	High
Coaching Practices	3.20	0.61	High

Note: 3.26-4.00 Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 High; 1.76 – 2.50 Low; 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Issues/Concerns and Recommendations of Coaches in the Arnis Training

The study's results present the issues and concerns encountered by coaches during the actual conduct of Arnis training, along with their corresponding recommendations to address these challenges.

Theme 1: Inadequate Equipment and Facilities

Coaches emphasized the lack of adequate equipment, protective gear, and facilities as one of the most pressing challenges in implementing Arnis. These deficiencies compromise the safety of students and limit their opportunities for meaningful practice.

Sample Responses:

“We didn't have enough resources for the equipment and protective gear, so it's hard to train them when it comes in combative.”

“Lack of facilities and equipment.”

“Budget to buy enough mats and weapons.”

Recommendations for Theme 1: Provision of Adequate Resources and Infrastructure

To overcome equipment and facility shortages, coaches called for dedicated

funding, provision of standard protective gear, and partnerships with local government and stakeholders. These measures aim to ensure safe, inclusive, and sustainable training environments.

Sample Responses

“Seek for sponsors and donation from stakeholders.”

“Training gears and other materials needed should be provided by the school or LGU.”

“Proper funding, inclusion, and focus should be given to Arnis in the school and community.”

Theme 2: Limited Training and Professional Development

Many coaches expressed limited knowledge in teaching Arnis, especially those without prior playing experience. The absence of continuous professional training diminishes instructional confidence and student learning outcomes.

Sample Responses:

“Sometimes need to refresh the skills in coaching.”

“I am not a player of Arnis, I have little knowledge.”

“More training and seminars to the coaches.”

Recommendations for Theme 2: Continuous Professional Development for Arnis Coaches

Coaches recommended sustained training opportunities through workshops, refresher courses, and seminars to build confidence and strengthen instructional skills in Arnis.

Sample Responses:

“Conduct regular seminars and workshops on Arnis.”

“Train non-Arnis players in basic and advanced techniques.”

“More training opportunities for coaches to master coaching.”

Theme 3: Institutional and Government Support Gaps

Despite RA 9850 recognizing Arnis as the national martial art, coaches reported weak implementation of the policy at the local level. Insufficient funding, limited competitions, and a lack of advocacy hinder its integration into schools and communities.

Sample Responses:

“Lack of support in local government.”

“Budget and support.”

“Make the Arnis have local competition in every barangay.”

“Arnis should be given focus and importance in the school, community, and society.”

Recommendations for Theme 3: Strengthening Institutional and Govern- ment Support

To close the implementation gap, coaches recommended stronger institutional involvement through budget allocation, promotion campaigns, and local competitions to raise the visibility of Arnis and ensure policy compliance.

Sample Responses:

“Government should provide proper suits for the protection of students.”

“Include Arnis in school and community activities.”

“Make Arnis competitions available in local barangays.”

Discussion

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of Arnis promotion under Republic Act No. 9850, focusing on the experiences of women coaches by integrating survey data and interview responses to identify both strengths and challenges.

Survey findings reveal generally positive perceptions of Arnis promotion, especially in education, activities, and advocacy, with education receiving the highest mean score. Interview data supports these results, indicating that women coaches are actively involved in curriculum integration, instructional delivery, and community-based initiatives. These findings underscore the dual role of women coaches as both implementers of RA 9850 and cultural stewards, sustaining the Philippine national martial art and sport through formal instruction and community engagement. High scores in activities and promotion are further supported by evidence of participation in tournaments, workshops, and advocacy campaigns, highlighting the significance of community-based initiatives in preserving traditional sports (Garcia, 2020).

However, funding emerged as the lowest-rated aspect in the survey, a finding corroborated and elaborated upon by interview data. Coaches consistently

reported inadequate equipment, insufficient protective gear, and limited training facilities as significant barriers to effective instruction. These financial constraints compromise safety, hinder skill development, and restrict program implementation. Inadequate or unsafe facilities may discourage participation and pose risks to learners (Burton et al., 2021), whereas adequate facilities are essential for maintaining motivation and ensuring program continuity (Aljehani et al., 2022).

These structural limitations indicate that the sustainability of Arnis programs is at risk if resource gaps remain unaddressed, underscoring the need for institutional support and investment in physical infrastructure (Plotnikoff et al., 2015).

Survey data on coaching competence indicate high proficiency in basic skills and coaching practices, moderate competence in strategies, tactics, and combative skills, and lower competence in Anyo. Interview responses confirm that coaches are confident in teaching fundamental techniques such as striking, blocking, and footwork, as well as in managing training sessions and engaging stakeholders. Nevertheless, interviews also highlight challenges in teaching advanced techniques and applying strategies in competitive contexts, suggesting that coaches' expertise is strongest in foundational areas and less developed in specialized or advanced applications.

The lower competence in Arnis is attributed to limited experience and training in teaching choreographed forms and sequences, which are identified as a priority for targeted professional development (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Variability in coaches' backgrounds further underscores the need for ongoing capacity-building initiatives, as differences in prior experience affect instructional confidence and depth. Teacher competence has been shown to directly influence student engagement, underscoring the need for continuous development of specialized

skills (Raven & Pels, 2021; Vasconcellos et al., 2020).

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings highlights the interconnectedness of resource limitations, professional development, and institutional support. Inadequate equipment and facilities reinforce low funding ratings and restrict safe, effective training. Limited opportunities for advanced training account for moderate and lower ratings in specialized coaching domains, indicating that insufficient professional development contributes to skill gaps (Lyle & Cushion, 2017; Vasconcellos et al., 2020). Additionally, interview responses reveal broader systemic challenges, such as limited local government support, inadequate enforcement of RA 9850, and minimal competitive opportunities. These factors complicate the generally positive perceptions of promotion and demonstrate that program sustainability is shaped by structural and institutional influences (Garcia, 2020; Burton et al., 2021).

In summary, the findings reveal a consistent yet nuanced pattern. Women coaches exhibit strong competence and active engagement in promoting Arnis, although their effectiveness is limited by systemic challenges related to resources, training, and institutional support. The effective implementation of RA 9850 depends not only on the dedication of coaches but also on sustained institutional support, increased funding, and expanded professional development opportunities. Addressing these factors is crucial to ensure the long-term growth, cultural preservation, and integration of Arnis in educational and community contexts (Garcia, 2020; Plotnikoff et al., 2015).

Limitations and Future Directions

The study's scope, limited to 46 women coaches from Nueva Ecija, restricts the generalizability of the findings. Interpretations of women coaches' competence, training, and cultural roles should be contextualized within this specific geographic

and demographic setting. Nevertheless, the study demonstrates that women coaches possess strong competence in Arnis instruction, particularly in educational and coaching practices, and serve as essential cultural bearers.

Key challenges identified include inadequate resources, limited professional development, and weak policy implementation. Addressing these gaps through targeted funding, capacity-building initiatives, and enhanced institutional support is necessary to sustain Arnis as both a sport and a component of cultural heritage. The findings contribute to the understanding of gender equity in coaching, cultural preservation, and the implementation of RA 9850. Future research should include male coaches and other regions, and should explore the broader impact of Arnis on cultural identity.

In conclusion, although women coaches play a central role in promoting and

teaching Arnis, achieving their full potential requires increased investment, targeted capacity-building, and supportive policies to sustain both the practice and the cultural legacy of the sport.

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Notes on Contributors

Melane M. Fernandez is an Associate Professor of the Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Leisure Studies in the College of Education at Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. She works as a faculty member and as a coach

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