

BEYOND PHYSICAL FITNESS: THE ROLE OF THE PATHFIT CURRICULUM IN PROMOTING FAIR PLAY AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR AMONG TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *Physical education plays an important role in promoting not only physical fitness but also ethical values and character development among students. This study examined the role of the Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) curriculum in promoting fair play and ethical behavior among College of Teacher Education (CTED) students. Specifically, it investigated students' engagement in PATHFIT activities, their level of fair play and ethical behavior, the perceived contribution of PATHFIT to character development, and the relationships among these variables. The study employed a mixed-methods research design using a descriptive–correlational approach supported by qualitative responses. A researcher-developed questionnaire was administered to CTED students enrolled in PATHFIT courses. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the level of engagement, fair play, and ethical behavior, while Spearman rho correlation was used to examine relationships among the variables. Qualitative responses were analyzed through thematic analysis. Results revealed that students reported very high engagement in the PATHFIT curriculum ($M = 4.37$), as well as very high levels of fair play ($M = 4.53$) and ethical behavior ($M = 4.53$). Students also strongly perceived that PATHFIT contributes to their character development ($M = 4.51$). Significant high correlations were found between participation in PATHFIT and fair play ($\rho = 0.725$) and ethical behavior ($\rho = 0.721$). The findings indicate that the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of fair play, ethical behavior, and character among future educators.*

Keywords: PATHFIT curriculum, fair play, ethical behavior, character development, physical education, teacher education

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical education plays an important role in holistic education by promoting not only physical fitness but also the social, moral, and psychological development of students. Participation in sports and physical activities provides opportunities for learners to develop important values such as fairness, respect, responsibility, and integrity. These values are closely associated with the concept of fair play, which emphasizes respect for rules, opponents, teammates, and the spirit of competition. In educational contexts, fair play is considered a fundamental component of character formation and ethical development among students [1; 2].

Fair play in sports extends beyond simple adherence to rules and includes broader ethical behaviors such as honesty, respect for others, and acceptance of both victory and defeat. According to Popescu *et al.* [3], fair play reflects not only athletes' conduct during competitions but also their attitudes toward others in social interactions. Similarly, Milanovic *et al.* [4] emphasized that sports ethics is grounded in moral principles such as fairness, justice, and respect, which guide behavior within sports environments.

Several studies have highlighted the role of school-based sports and physical education programs in promoting fair play and prosocial behavior among students. Participation in sports activities has been associated with greater adherence to sportsmanship principles and respect for rules and opponents [5; 6]. However, research suggests that moral development does not automatically occur through sports participation alone; rather, ethical values must be intentionally integrated into physical education programs through effective teaching strategies and curriculum design [7].

In the Philippine higher education context, the Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) curriculum aims to promote lifelong physical activity and holistic student development. The program encourages student engagement

in physical activities while fostering teamwork, discipline, and positive attitudes toward health and fitness [8]. Despite these goals, limited research has examined the role of the PATHFIT curriculum in promoting ethical values such as fair play and responsible behavior among students.

For teacher education students, the development of fair play and ethical behavior is particularly significant because they will eventually serve as role models and educators in future learning environments. Their attitudes toward fairness, integrity, and sportsmanship can influence how these values are transmitted to future learners. Studies have shown that individuals' perceptions of fair play are closely associated with ethical attitudes in sports and the rejection of unethical behaviors [9].

Given the importance of ethical values in physical education, it is necessary to explore how the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of fair play and ethical behavior among students. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of the PATHFIT curriculum in promoting fair play and ethical behavior among College of Teacher Education (CTED) students.

Specifically, it purports to shed light to the following questions:

1. What is the level of students' engagement in the PATHFIT curriculum in terms of participation in physical activities, teamwork, and understanding of sportsmanship principles?
2. What is the level of fair play demonstrated by CTED students as influenced by their participation in PATHFIT activities, particularly in terms of respect for rules and regulations, respect for opponents and teammates, honesty in sports participation, and acceptance of victory and defeat?
3. What is the level of ethical behavior among CTED students as influenced by the PATHFIT curriculum in terms of integrity during sports participation; responsibility

in group activities; respect for instructors and peers; and discipline and self-control?

4. What is the contribution of PATHFIT to character development as perceived by CTED students?
5. Is there a significant relationship between participation in the PATHFIT curriculum and students' fair play and ethical behavior?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of fair play ethical behavior among CTED students and their perception of the contribution of PATHFIT to their character development?
7. What are the students' experiences and perceptions regarding how the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of fair play and ethical behavior?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Fair play and ethical behavior have long been recognized as essential values in sports and physical education. These concepts are closely linked to moral development, respect for rules, and responsible participation in competitive and recreational activities. Sports environments provide opportunities for individuals to internalize ethical principles such as fairness, integrity, respect for opponents, and responsibility toward teammates and officials [2]; [4]. In this context, fair play represents a moral framework that encourages participants to demonstrate honesty, self-control, and respect for the spirit of competition beyond merely complying with formal rules.

Several studies emphasize that fair play plays a significant role in the character development of learners within physical education settings. According to Bronikowska *et al.* [1], physical education programs can serve as effective platforms for promoting moral development and sportsmanship among students. Their findings indicate that students' understanding of fair play is influenced by various factors, including parents, teachers, and school environments. Similarly, Ludwiczak and Bronikowska [5] found that adolescents who actively participate in physical education and sports activities tend to demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behavior, including rule adherence and respect for referees and opponents.

Fair play is also closely associated with broader ethical principles in sports. Ethical behavior in sports involves respect for rules, transparency, responsibility, and fairness in competition [10]. Ethical principles guide athletes and participants in maintaining integrity and honesty, ensuring that sports competitions remain fair and meaningful. Milanovic *et al.* [4] further explained that sports ethics is rooted in moral values such as honesty, justice, and respect, which regulate interactions among participants in sports activities. When these ethical principles are integrated into sports education, they can contribute significantly to students' moral and social development.

Research has also highlighted the role of sports participation in promoting fair play behaviors among students. Gorun [6] examined fair play behaviors among students participating in school sports and found that participation in organized sports activities contributes to the development of sportsmanship and ethical attitudes. Similarly, Temel and Akdağcık [11]

reported that students engaged in school sports frequently demonstrate fair play behaviors, particularly in team interactions and respect for opponents. Another study by Yıldız and Özgül [12] revealed that students with higher levels of physical activity tend to exhibit stronger fair play behaviors and positive sports conduct.

Studies focusing on athletes and sports participants further emphasize the importance of fair play in shaping moral behavior. Altın *et al.* [13] investigated fair play behaviors among high school students participating in football and futsal and found that female athletes generally demonstrated stronger fair play attitudes compared to male athletes. Similarly, Yüce and Alp [14] found significant differences in fair behavior tendencies among university students studying sports sciences based on demographic and educational variables. These findings suggest that exposure to sports education can influence individuals' ethical awareness and attitudes toward fair competition.

Education plays a critical role in the development of fair play behavior. Popescu *et al.* [3] found that athletes with higher levels of education tend to demonstrate stronger fair play attitudes both in competition and in social settings. Likewise, Tomova [15] emphasized the importance of integrating fair play principles in physical education classes, highlighting that students develop a better understanding of sportsmanship when teachers actively promote respectful communication, rule adherence, and cooperation in sports activities.

Teachers and coaches are key agents in fostering ethical behavior within sports environments. According to Güzel and Görgüt [16], physical education teachers contribute significantly to students' understanding of fair play by modeling ethical behavior and promoting sportsmanship during physical education classes and sports competitions. Similarly, Palou *et al.* [17] demonstrated that educational interventions directed at coaches can positively influence athletes' attitudes toward fair play and reduce antisocial behaviors such as cheating and gamesmanship. These findings emphasize the importance of instructional strategies and mentorship in reinforcing ethical values within sports contexts.

In addition to instructional influence, curriculum design also plays a crucial role in promoting ethical values in sports education. Domínguez *et al.* [7], through a systematic review, found that pedagogical models such as the Sport Education Model and the Personal and Social Responsibility Model effectively promote respect for rules, commitment to fair competition, and responsible behavior among students. Similarly, Abidin *et al.* [18] emphasized the importance of integrating ethical values such as fairness, responsibility, and cooperation into sports learning to support character development among students.

The broader literature on sports ethics also highlights the importance of moral identity and personal values in shaping ethical behavior in sports. Sukys *et al.* [9] found that athletes with stronger moral identities and greater awareness of fair play principles tend to exhibit more negative attitudes toward unethical practices such as doping. This finding suggests that ethical awareness and value internalization can serve as protective factors against unethical behaviors in sports.

Sports environments also function as social contexts where ethical values and prosocial behaviors can be cultivated. Pignato *et al.* [19] emphasized that youth sports provide an important educational environment in which individuals learn cooperation, respect, and social responsibility. Similarly, Federici and Cocco [20] argued that sports education can contribute to the development of ethical values and social skills that extend beyond sports settings and influence behavior in broader social contexts.

In higher education, physical education programs continue to play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward sports participation and ethical behavior. Tagare *et al.* [8] examined student engagement in the Philippine Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) program and found that student engagement in physical education is influenced by factors such as motivation, teaching environment, and perceived benefits. Their findings suggest that well-designed physical education programs can enhance students' experiences and encourage positive attitudes toward sports participation.

Despite the growing body of research on sports ethics and fair play, studies focusing specifically on the role of higher education physical education curricula in promoting ethical behavior remain limited. In particular, limited research has examined how the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of fair play and ethical behavior among teacher education students.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of physical education in promoting ethical values and character development among students. By examining the influence of the Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) curriculum on fair play and ethical behavior among College of Teacher Education (CTED) students, the study provides insights into how physical education programs can support not only physical fitness but also the development of moral and social values in higher education.

For teacher education students, the findings of this study may enhance their awareness of the importance of fair play, sportsmanship, and ethical conduct in sports and physical activities. As future educators, developing these values is crucial because they will eventually influence how these principles are taught and modeled in their own classrooms and school communities.

For physical education instructors and curriculum developers, the study may provide valuable information regarding how the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of students' ethical values. The findings may serve as a basis for improving instructional strategies and integrating fair play and ethical behavior more explicitly into physical education courses.

For higher education institutions, particularly colleges offering teacher education programs, the results may support the development of more holistic educational approaches that combine physical activity, character education, and values formation. This may help institutions strengthen their physical education programs to ensure that students develop both physical competencies and ethical attitudes.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the role of the Physical Activity Toward Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) curriculum in promoting fair play and ethical behavior among College of Teacher Education (CTED) students. The quantitative component employed a descriptive–correlational design to determine the level of students' engagement in the PATHFIT curriculum and to examine the relationship between participation in PATHFIT activities and students' fair play and ethical behavior. The qualitative component was included to explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding how the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of fair play and ethical values. This approach allowed the study to obtain both numerical data and in-depth insights into students' perspectives.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were CTED students who were enrolled in PATHFIT courses during the academic year in which the research was conducted. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who had direct experience with PATHFIT activities involving physical participation, teamwork, and sports-related interactions. These students were considered appropriate respondents because they had firsthand exposure to the curriculum and were able to provide meaningful information regarding their engagement in PATHFIT activities and their perceptions of fair play and ethical behavior within the sports learning environment.

Research Instrument

The study employed a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to measure students' engagement in the PATHFIT curriculum as well as their fair play and ethical behavior in sports-related activities. The instrument consisted of several sections, including items measuring participation in physical activities, teamwork, and understanding of sportsmanship principles under PATHFIT engagement. Additional sections assessed fair play behaviors, such as respect for rules and regulations, respect for opponents and teammates, honesty in sports participation, and acceptance of victory and defeat. Ethical behavior was also measured in terms of integrity during sports participation, responsibility in group activities, respect for instructors and peers, and discipline and self-control. The questionnaire also included open-ended questions that allowed respondents to describe their experiences and perceptions regarding the influence of the PATHFIT curriculum on their development of fair play and ethical behavior. The quantitative items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to conducting the study, permission was obtained from the appropriate university authorities and instructors handling the PATHFIT courses. The researcher then distributed the questionnaires to the selected respondents. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their

responses would be treated with confidentiality. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. For the qualitative component of the study, respondents were asked to provide written responses to open-ended questions regarding their experiences and perceptions of how the PATHFIT curriculum contributed to the development of fair play and ethical behavior.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of students’ engagement in the PATHFIT curriculum as well as their fair play and ethical behavior. To determine whether there was a significant relationship between participation in PATHFIT activities and students’ fair play and ethical behavior, the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient was employed. For the qualitative responses, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns related to students’ experiences and perceptions of the PATHFIT curriculum’s role in promoting fair play and ethical behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.1 Level of Students’ Engagement in The PATHFIT Curriculum

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
PATHFIT classes encourage participation in physical activities.	4.45	1.01	Strongly Agree
PATHFIT activities emphasize teamwork and cooperation.	4.38	1.09	Strongly Agree
My PATHFIT instructor discusses the importance of sportsmanship.	4.28	1.01	Strongly Agree
PATHFIT activities promote respect among students.	4.33	1.04	Strongly Agree
The PATHFIT curriculum encourages discipline during physical activities.	4.39	1.00	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	4.37		Strongly Agree

Table 1.1 presents the respondents’ level of exposure to the PATHFIT curriculum in terms of participation in physical activities, teamwork, sportsmanship, respect, and discipline. The results show that all indicators received high mean scores, indicating that students strongly perceive the PATHFIT curriculum as promoting active engagement and ethical values within the learning environment. The composite mean of 4.37 (SD = 0.99), interpreted as Strongly Agree, suggests that the PATHFIT curriculum effectively encourages students to participate in physical activities while fostering values such as cooperation, discipline, and sportsmanship.

Among the indicators, the statement “PATHFIT classes encourage participation in physical activities” obtained the highest mean score of 4.45 (SD = 1.01), indicating that

students strongly recognize the curriculum as promoting active engagement in physical activities. This finding supports the primary goal of physical education programs, which is to encourage students to adopt active lifestyles and develop positive attitudes toward physical fitness. Similarly, Tagare *et al.* [8] emphasized that engagement in PATHFIT activities helps enhance students’ interest, motivation, and overall participation in physical education programs.

The indicator “The PATHFIT curriculum encourages discipline during physical activities” also received a high mean score of 4.39 (SD = 1.00), suggesting that students perceive PATHFIT activities as promoting responsible behavior and self-control during physical participation. Discipline is a fundamental aspect of sports ethics and contributes to the development of respect for rules and proper conduct in sports settings. According to Milanovic *et al.* [4], sports participation reinforces moral values such as responsibility, honesty, and respect, which are essential components of ethical behavior in sports.

In terms of teamwork and social interaction, the indicator “PATHFIT activities emphasize teamwork and cooperation” recorded a mean of 4.38 (SD = 1.09). This indicates that the curriculum provides opportunities for students to collaborate and work effectively with others during sports and physical activities. Previous research has shown that sports participation enhances social interaction and cooperation among participants, promoting prosocial behavior and teamwork [19]. Likewise, Bronikowska et al. [1] highlighted that physical education environments provide valuable opportunities for students to develop social values and interpersonal skills through cooperative activities.

Furthermore, the statement “PATHFIT activities promote respect among students” obtained a mean of 4.33 (SD = 1.04), suggesting that students perceive the curriculum as fostering respect within sports participation. Respect for teammates, opponents, and instructors is a key principle of fair play and sportsmanship. Studies have shown that sports-based learning environments can contribute to the development of respectful behavior and ethical awareness among participants [3; 5].

The indicator “My PATHFIT instructor discusses the importance of sportsmanship” received a mean score of 4.28 (SD = 1.01), which also falls within the Strongly Agree category. This finding suggests that instructors play a significant role in promoting ethical values within the PATHFIT curriculum. Teachers and instructors serve as important role models who guide students in understanding and practicing fair play and sportsmanship. According to Güzel and Görgüt [16], physical education teachers play a critical role in promoting fair play by modeling ethical behavior and encouraging students to demonstrate sportsmanship during physical activities.

Overall, the results indicate that the PATHFIT curriculum effectively exposes students to learning experiences that promote active participation, cooperation, discipline, respect, and sportsmanship.

Table 2.1 Level of Fair Play Demonstrated by CTED Students as Influenced by Their Participation in PATHFIT Activities

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I follow the rules of the game during sports activities.	4.51	0.90	Strongly Agree
I show respect toward my opponents during games.	4.50	0.96	Strongly Agree
I treat my teammates fairly during sports activities.	4.54	0.94	Strongly Agree
I accept the outcome of a game whether I win or lose.	4.52	0.94	Strongly Agree
I avoid cheating behavior during games	4.53	0.89	Strongly Agree
I value honesty and integrity in sports participation	4.56	0.88	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	4.53		Strongly Agree

Table 2.1 presents the level of fair play demonstrated by College of Teacher Education (CTED) students as influenced by their participation in PATHFIT activities. The results reveal that all indicators obtained high mean scores, indicating that students strongly agree that they practice fair play during sports activities. The composite mean of 4.53 (SD = 0.92), interpreted as Strongly Agree, suggests that the respondents consistently demonstrate fair play behaviors such as respect for rules, honesty, and sportsmanship during physical activities.

Among the indicators, “I value honesty and integrity in sports participation” obtained the highest mean score of 4.56 (SD = 0.88), indicating that students strongly recognize honesty and integrity as essential values in sports participation. This finding reflects the ethical dimension of sports, where fairness, transparency, and moral responsibility are emphasized. According to Mindrescu *et al.* [2], sports environments encourage individuals to practice ethical values such as fairness, responsibility, and respect for others, which contribute to the development of positive character traits. Similarly, Milanovic *et al.* [4] emphasized that honesty and fairness are fundamental principles that guide ethical behavior in sports activities.

The indicator “I treat my teammates fairly during sports activities” recorded a mean score of 4.54 (SD = 0.94), indicating that students strongly demonstrate fairness in their interactions with teammates. Fair treatment among teammates promotes cooperation, trust, and positive group dynamics during sports participation. Research has shown that sports participation can strengthen social relationships and promote prosocial behaviors such as cooperation and mutual respect among participants [19]. Likewise, Bronikowska *et al.* [1] noted that sports and physical education settings provide opportunities for learners to develop interpersonal values that support teamwork and collaboration.

Another indicator with a high mean score is “I avoid cheating behavior during games”, which obtained a mean of 4.53 (SD = 0.89). This result suggests that students strongly reject dishonest practices during sports activities. Avoiding cheating behaviors reflects the internalization of fair play principles and moral responsibility in sports participation. In support of this finding, Sukys *et al.* [9] reported that

individuals who strongly value fair play tend to exhibit negative attitudes toward unethical practices in sports, reinforcing the importance of moral awareness in shaping ethical conduct.

The indicator “I accept the outcome of a game whether I win or lose” obtained a mean score of 4.52 (SD = 0.94), indicating that students demonstrate sportsmanship by accepting both victory and defeat. Acceptance of game outcomes is a core element of fair play, as it reflects emotional maturity and respect for the competitive process. According to Popescu *et al.* [3], fair play includes the ability to respect opponents and accept the results of competitions without resorting to unsporting behavior.

Similarly, the statement “I follow the rules of the game during sports activities” obtained a mean score of 4.51 (SD = 0.90), indicating strong agreement among respondents. Rule adherence is a fundamental aspect of fair play, as it ensures fairness and order in sports competitions. Studies have consistently emphasized that respect for rules and regulations is a key component of ethical behavior in sports [6; 11].

Finally, the indicator “I show respect toward my opponents during games” received a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.96), suggesting that students demonstrate respect toward competitors during sports participation. Respect for opponents is a central principle of sportsmanship and reflects the moral values promoted through physical education. Ludwiczak and Bronikowska [5] emphasized that sports participation encourages prosocial behavior, including respect for opponents, referees, and teammates.

Table 3.1 Level of Ethical Behavior Among CTED Students as Influenced by The PATHFIT Curriculum

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I demonstrate discipline during PATHFIT activities.	4.48	0.93	Strongly Agree
I respect my instructor and classmates during physical activities.	4.56	0.94	Strongly Agree
I take responsibility for my actions during sports activities.	4.56	0.93	Strongly Agree
PATHFIT activities encourage me to behave ethically.	4.53	0.93	Strongly Agree
I practice fairness and respect even outside sports activities.	4.54	0.94	Strongly Agree
Participation in PATHFIT helps me develop good character.	4.52	0.95	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	4.53	0.94	Strongly Agree

Table 3.1 presents the level of ethical behavior among College of Teacher Education (CTED) students as influenced by the PATHFIT curriculum. The results indicate that all indicators obtained high mean scores, demonstrating that students strongly agree that the PATHFIT curriculum contributes to the development of ethical behavior during physical activities. The composite mean of 4.53 (SD = 0.94), interpreted as Strongly Agree, suggests that participation in PATHFIT activities significantly supports the cultivation of discipline, responsibility, respect, and fairness among students.

Among the indicators, “I respect my instructor and classmates during physical activities” and “I take responsibility for my actions during sports activities” both obtained the highest mean score of 4.56, with standard deviations of 0.94 and 0.93, respectively. These results suggest that students strongly recognize the importance of respect and personal accountability in sports participation. Respect for others and responsibility for one’s actions are essential ethical principles that guide appropriate behavior in sports environments. According to Milanovic *et al.* [4], ethical conduct in sports is grounded in moral principles such as honesty, responsibility, and respect, which regulate relationships among participants during sports activities. The indicator “I practice fairness and respect even outside sports activities” recorded a mean score of 4.54 (SD = 0.94), indicating that students extend ethical values learned from sports participation into their everyday interactions. This finding supports the idea that sports can function as a platform for moral education, allowing individuals to internalize ethical values that influence their behavior beyond sports contexts. Similarly, Pignato *et al.* [19] emphasized that sports education contributes to the development of socio-relational skills and ethical values that can shape individuals’ behavior both within and outside sports environments. The statement “PATHFIT activities encourage me to behave ethically” obtained a mean score of 4.53 (SD = 0.93), suggesting that students perceive the curriculum as promoting ethical awareness and responsible behavior during sports participation. The integration of ethical values into sports learning is essential for character formation. According to Abidin *et al.* [18], sports education that integrates values such as fairness, cooperation, and responsibility can significantly enhance students’ ethical awareness and positive behavior. Similarly, “Participation in PATHFIT helps me develop good character” obtained a mean score of 4.52 (SD = 0.95), indicating that students perceive the PATHFIT curriculum as contributing to their overall character development. Physical education programs that emphasize ethical values can influence students’ attitudes, behaviors, and moral decision-making. Mîndrescu *et al.* [2] highlighted that sports participation supports holistic development by encouraging individuals to practice ethical principles such as fairness, respect, and responsibility. The indicator “I demonstrate discipline during PATHFIT activities” received a mean score of 4.48 (SD = 0.93), which also falls under the Strongly Agree category. Discipline is an important aspect of ethical behavior in sports, as it reflects self-control, adherence to rules, and commitment to fair competition. Previous research has shown that structured physical education programs help students develop discipline and responsible behavior during sports activities [6; 1]. Table 4.1 presents the perceived contribution of the PATHFIT curriculum to the character development of College of Teacher Education (CTED) students. The results indicate that respondents strongly agree that the PATHFIT program contributes positively to their character formation through the promotion of ethical values, sportsmanship, and responsible behavior. The composite mean of 4.51 (SD = 0.96), interpreted as Strongly Agree, suggests that students

perceive the PATHFIT curriculum as an important platform for fostering values that support both personal and social development.

Table 4.1 Contribution of PATHFIT to Character Development as Perceived by CTED Students

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
PATHFIT promotes positive values such as respect and fairness.	4.54	0.95	Strongly Agree
PATHFIT helps students develop good sportsmanship.	4.53	0.95	Strongly Agree
PATHFIT encourages ethical decision-making during sports activities.	4.50	0.98	Strongly Agree
The lessons learned in PATHFIT influence my behavior in everyday life.	4.49	0.94	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean	4.51	0.96	Strongly Agree

Among the indicators, “PATHFIT promotes positive values such as respect and fairness” obtained the highest mean score of 4.54 (SD = 0.95), indicating that students strongly recognize the curriculum’s role in cultivating fundamental ethical values. Respect and fairness are central principles of sportsmanship and fair play, which guide individuals in interacting responsibly with others in competitive environments. According to Mîndrescu *et al.* [2], sports participation provides a social context where individuals can practice ethical values such as fairness, respect, and responsibility, thereby contributing to their moral development. Similarly, Milanovic *et al.* [4] emphasized that sports ethics promotes moral behavior grounded in honesty, justice, and respect among participants.

The indicator “PATHFIT helps students develop good sportsmanship” recorded a mean score of 4.53 (SD = 0.95), suggesting that students perceive sports activities in PATHFIT as opportunities to learn appropriate conduct in competitive situations. Sportsmanship involves demonstrating respect toward teammates, opponents, and officials, as well as maintaining integrity and fairness during sports participation. Previous studies have highlighted that physical education programs can enhance students’ sportsmanship and moral awareness when ethical values are integrated into sports instruction [1; 5].

Furthermore, the statement “PATHFIT encourages ethical decision-making during sports activities” obtained a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.98), indicating that students believe the curriculum helps them develop the ability to make responsible and ethical choices during sports participation. Ethical decision-making is an important aspect of character development in sports because athletes are often faced with situations that require them to choose between fair and unfair actions. According to Abidin *et al.* [18], sports education that integrates ethical values can strengthen students’ moral awareness and encourage responsible decision-making in competitive environments.

The indicator “The lessons learned in PATHFIT influence my behavior in everyday life” received a mean score of 4.49 (SD = 0.94), indicating that the ethical values and behaviors learned through sports activities extend beyond the sports

environment. This finding suggests that the PATHFIT curriculum contributes not only to sports participation but also to students' broader character development. Pignato *et al.* [19] noted that sports serve as an important educational environment where individuals learn values such as cooperation, respect, and responsibility that can influence behavior in social contexts outside sports.

Table 5.1 Relationship Between Participation in The PATHFIT Curriculum and Students' Fair Play and Ethical Behavior

Participation	Spearman Rho	Degree of Relationship	p-value	decision
Fair Play and	0.725	High	<0.001	Significant, Reject the Null
Ethical Behavior	0.721	High	<0.001	Significant, Reject the Null

*Adapted from Calmorin

An r ± 0.00 denotes zero correlation.

An r from 0.01 to ± 0.20 deals on negligible correlation

An r from ± 0.21 to ± 0.40 denotes low or slight relationship.

An r from ± 0.41 to ± 0.70 indicates marked or moderate correlation.

An r from ± 0.71 to ± 0.90 shows high relationship.

An r from ± 0.91 to ± 0.99 denotes very high correlation.

An r ±1.0 indicates perfect relationship.

Table 5.1 presents the relationship between participation in the PATHFIT curriculum and students' fair play and ethical behavior. The results show that participation in PATHFIT has a Spearman rho correlation coefficient of 0.725 with fair play and 0.721 with ethical behavior, both with p-values less than 0.001, indicating that the relationships are statistically significant. Based on the correlation interpretation adapted from Calmorin, both coefficients fall within the range of 0.71 to 0.90, which denotes a high degree of relationship. Since the computed p-values are lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between participation in the PATHFIT curriculum and students' fair play and ethical behavior is rejected.

The findings suggest that greater participation in PATHFIT activities is strongly associated with higher levels of fair play and ethical behavior among CTED students. Physical education programs provide opportunities for students to experience structured sports participation where adherence to rules, respect for opponents, and responsible behavior are emphasized. Through these experiences, students develop sportsmanship and ethical decision-making skills that extend beyond sports activities. Bronikowska *et al.* [1] emphasized that physical education settings play a significant role in developing students' understanding of fair play and moral responsibility, as they provide real-life contexts where values such as honesty, respect, and cooperation can be practiced.

Similarly, research has shown that engagement in sports and physical education contributes to the development of ethical attitudes and sportsmanship among students. Gorun [6] found that students participating in school sports demonstrated fair play behaviors in different stages of competition, indicating that structured sports participation strengthens students' respect for rules and opponents. In addition, Yüce and Alp [14] reported that students in sports science programs exhibit differences in fair behavior tendencies depending on their engagement in sports activities, suggesting that exposure to

sports-related learning environments significantly influences ethical behavior.

The results also support the idea that sports participation contributes to moral and character development. Sukys *et al.* [9] highlighted that individuals who possess stronger perceptions of fair play are more likely to demonstrate ethical attitudes and reject unethical behaviors such as cheating or doping. This indicates that fair play values can serve as an important mediator in shaping ethical behavior within sports contexts. Likewise, Pignato *et al.* [19] emphasized that sports, when practiced within educational settings, serve as an effective environment for promoting pro-social behaviors, responsibility, and respect for others.

Table 6.1 Relationship Between the Level of Fair Play Ethical Behavior among CTED Students and Their Perception of the Contribution of PATHFIT to their Character Development

Contribution of PATHFIT	Spearman Rho	Degree of Relationship	p-value	decision
Fair Play and	0.762	High	<0.001	Significant, Reject the Null
Ethical Behavior	0.822	High	<0.001	Significant, Reject the Null

*Adapted from Calmorin

An r ± 0.00 denotes zero correlation.

An r from 0.01 to ± 0.20 deals on negligible correlation

An r from ± 0.21 to ± 0.40 denotes low or slight relationship.

An r from ± 0.41 to ± 0.70 indicates marked or moderate correlation.

An r from ± 0.71 to ± 0.90 shows high relationship.

An r from ± 0.91 to ± 0.99 denotes very high correlation.

An r ±1.0 indicates perfect relationship.

Table 6.1 presents the relationship between the level of fair play and ethical behavior among CTED students and their perception of the contribution of the PATHFIT curriculum to their character development. The results indicate a Spearman rho correlation coefficient of 0.762 for fair play and 0.822 for ethical behavior, both with p-values less than 0.001, showing that the relationships are statistically significant. Based on the interpretation adapted from Calmorin, both coefficients fall within the range of 0.71 to 0.90, which indicates a high degree of relationship. Since the computed p-values are lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between students' fair play and ethical behavior and their perception of the contribution of PATHFIT to character development is rejected.

The findings suggest that students who demonstrate higher levels of fair play and ethical behavior are more likely to perceive the PATHFIT curriculum as contributing significantly to their character development. Participation in structured physical education programs exposes students to experiences that emphasize respect for rules, cooperation, and responsible behavior, which are essential components of character formation. Physical education environments provide meaningful contexts where students can practice ethical conduct, teamwork, and sportsmanship, reinforcing the development of moral values and personal discipline. Bronikowska *et al.* [1] emphasized that physical education plays an important role in shaping students' moral

development by promoting values such as fairness, respect, and responsibility through sports participation.

Similarly, research indicates that fair play behaviors and ethical attitudes developed through sports participation can positively influence students' character formation. Pignato *et al.* [19] highlighted that sports serve as an important educational context where young individuals learn pro-social behaviors, respect for others, and responsibility, which contribute to their overall personal development. In addition, Gorun [6] found that students who actively participate in school sports demonstrate fair play behaviors that can extend beyond the sports environment and influence their social interactions.

The strong relationship observed between ethical behavior and students' perception of PATHFIT's contribution to character development further supports the role of physical education in fostering moral values. Sukys *et al.* [9] noted that individuals who strongly endorse fair play principles tend to demonstrate more ethical attitudes and behaviors in sports contexts. Likewise, Yüce and Alp [14] emphasized that sports education programs help cultivate fair behavior tendencies among students, which are closely linked to their moral and ethical development.

Overall, the results suggest that the PATHFIT curriculum significantly contributes to students' character development by fostering fair play and ethical behavior. The high correlations indicate that students recognize the important role of physical education programs in shaping their values, attitudes, and responsible behavior. This highlights the value of integrating character education and ethical principles within physical education curricula, particularly in teacher education institutions where future educators are expected to embody and promote positive values in their professional practice.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended responses of the respondents were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to the influence of campus sports participation and the PATHFIT curriculum on students' academic motivation, ethical behavior, and character development. Several dominant themes emerged from the responses, which provide deeper insights into students' experiences regarding sports participation and character formation.

Campus Sports Participation Enhances Academic Motivation and Discipline

A large proportion of respondents reported that participation in campus sports activities positively influenced their academic motivation and performance. Students frequently mentioned that sports helped them develop discipline, time management, and responsibility, which in turn contributed to improved focus and commitment to academic tasks. Many respondents indicated that balancing sports and academic responsibilities encouraged them to organize their time effectively and maintain good academic standing.

Some students emphasized that sports participation served as a mechanism for stress reduction and mental refreshment, enabling them to return to academic tasks with renewed focus and motivation. These perceptions support the findings of

Tagare *et al.* [8], who reported that engagement in the PATHFIT program contributes to students' motivation, satisfaction, and overall learning experience in tertiary physical education. The authors emphasized that physical activity programs can strengthen students' interest and involvement in both academic and physical education contexts.

However, a small number of respondents reported that campus sports activities did not significantly affect their academic motivation or performance, particularly among those who were not actively involved in sports. Despite this, the dominant perception among respondents was that sports participation generally supports academic motivation through discipline, stress management, and improved self-confidence.

PATHFIT Curriculum Promotes Understanding of Fair Play and Sportsmanship

Another key theme that emerged from the responses is the role of the PATHFIT curriculum in strengthening students' understanding of fair play and sportsmanship. Many respondents indicated that PATHFIT activities helped them realize that sports are not solely about winning but also about respecting rules, teammates, opponents, and officials.

Students consistently emphasized that the curriculum reinforced the importance of honesty, respect, and integrity during sports participation. Several participants highlighted that PATHFIT taught them to accept both victory and defeat with humility and a positive attitude. These findings align with the study of Bronikowska *et al.* [1], which emphasized that physical education programs play an important role in developing students' understanding of fair play, moral values, and ethical conduct in sports settings.

Similarly, Pignato *et al.* [19] explained that sports serve as an important educational environment where individuals learn pro-social behavior, respect for rules, and responsible participation. The authors highlighted that sports education provides opportunities for students to internalize ethical principles such as fairness, loyalty, and respect for others.

Development of Core Values: Respect, Honesty, and Teamwork

The qualitative responses also revealed that participation in PATHFIT activities fostered the development of important values such as respect, honesty, cooperation, and teamwork. Many students stated that engaging in group activities and team sports encouraged them to respect the abilities and differences of their classmates while working toward common goals.

Respondents frequently noted that teamwork played a crucial role in achieving success during sports activities. Students learned to communicate effectively, support teammates who struggled with certain tasks, and cooperate to complete group challenges. These findings are consistent with the work of Han [21], who reported that ethical practices in sports training environments help cultivate fairness, cooperation, and respect among athletes.

In addition, honesty was identified as an essential value learned through PATHFIT, particularly in situations where students admitted mistakes or followed rules even when referees or instructors did not notice violations. This supports

the argument that sports participation contributes to the development of moral values and character formation.

Positive Changes in Students' Social Behavior and Interpersonal Relationships

Another recurring theme in the responses relates to the positive influence of PATHFIT activities on students' behavior toward classmates and teammates. Many respondents reported becoming more supportive, cooperative, and respectful when interacting with peers. Participation in team-based activities allowed students to develop stronger interpersonal relationships and foster a sense of camaraderie within the class.

Some students noted that PATHFIT helped them overcome shyness and build confidence in social interactions. The collaborative nature of physical activities encouraged students to communicate with classmates from different sections or academic programs, thereby expanding their social networks and improving teamwork skills. According to Tagare *et al.* [8], engagement in physical education programs is closely associated with improved student interaction, satisfaction, and learning experiences in higher education.

Challenges in Practicing Fair Play During Competitive Situations

Despite the generally positive perceptions of fair play, respondents acknowledged several challenges in practicing ethical behavior during sports activities. The most frequently cited difficulty involved managing emotions during highly competitive situations. Students reported that intense desire to win sometimes led to frustration, disagreements about rules, or emotional reactions during games.

Some respondents also mentioned challenges related to biased officiating, misunderstandings of rules, or conflicts among teammates during competitions. These situations occasionally made it difficult for students to maintain composure and uphold fair play principles. Similar observations were noted by Bronikowska *et al.* [1], who found that emotional responses and competitive pressures can sometimes influence ethical behavior in sports contexts.

Suggested Improvements for Enhancing Fair Play and Ethical Behavior

Participants also offered several suggestions to strengthen the effectiveness of the PATHFIT curriculum in promoting fair play and ethical behavior. One of the most common recommendations was the inclusion of reflection sessions or discussions after games, where students could analyze their behavior, resolve conflicts, and reflect on the values of sportsmanship.

Other respondents suggested incorporating more team-building activities, workshops on sports ethics, and real-life scenario discussions that allow students to practice ethical decision-making during sports activities. These suggestions align with the recommendations of Han [21], who emphasized the importance of ethics training, mentorship, and structured guidance in strengthening ethical behavior in sports environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the PATHFIT curriculum plays a meaningful role in promoting fair play, ethical behavior, and

character development among College of Teacher Education students. The quantitative findings showed that students reported a very high level of engagement in the PATHFIT curriculum, particularly in terms of participation in physical activities, teamwork, sportsmanship, respect, and discipline. In the same way, respondents demonstrated very high levels of fair play and ethical behavior, indicating that PATHFIT experiences are associated with rule adherence, honesty, respect for opponents and teammates, responsibility, and self-discipline.

The findings further reveal that students strongly perceive PATHFIT as contributing to their character development. They recognized the curriculum as a valuable platform for cultivating respect, fairness, sportsmanship, and ethical decision-making not only in sports participation but also in everyday life. The significant and high correlations between participation in PATHFIT and students' fair play and ethical behavior, as well as between fair play, ethical behavior, and perceived character development, provide strong evidence that the curriculum is closely linked to students' moral and social formation.

The qualitative findings reinforce these statistical results. Students described PATHFIT and campus sports participation as experiences that enhance academic motivation, discipline, time management, and self-confidence. They also emphasized that PATHFIT deepened their understanding of fair play and sportsmanship, helped them develop respect, honesty, and teamwork, and positively influenced their behavior toward classmates and teammates. Although challenges such as emotional control during competition and disagreements in games were acknowledged, these experiences also appeared to serve as opportunities for ethical reflection and growth.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the PATHFIT curriculum continue to be strengthened as a value-laden component of teacher education, with greater emphasis on fair play, ethical behavior, and character development alongside physical fitness outcomes. Since students already perceive PATHFIT as highly influential in shaping respect, honesty, discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship, instructors may further maximize its impact by intentionally integrating value formation in the planning, implementation, and assessment of activities.

Physical education instructors are encouraged to incorporate more structured discussions, reflection activities, and debriefing sessions after games and physical tasks to help students process experiences related to fairness, respect, honesty, and emotional control. These reflective opportunities may deepen students' understanding of ethical decision-making and reinforce the transfer of sportsmanship values from physical education settings to everyday life and future teaching practice.

The inclusion of more cooperative and team-based activities is also recommended to further strengthen students' interpersonal skills, collaboration, and appreciation of shared responsibility. Activities that simulate real-life conflicts in

sports, such as disagreements about rules, pressure to win, or emotional responses during competition, may be useful in helping students practice self-control, empathy, and fairness in authentic situations.

For curriculum developers and higher education institutions, it is recommended that PATHFIT be continuously reviewed not only in terms of physical activity engagement but also in terms of its contribution to moral and character formation. Clear learning outcomes related to fair play, ethical behavior, and sportsmanship may be made more explicit in the curriculum to ensure that these dimensions are consistently emphasized across instructors and course offerings.

Since the respondents are future educators, teacher education programs may also consider linking PATHFIT experiences with professional formation by helping students reflect on how the values learned in physical education can influence their future roles as teachers and role models. This may strengthen the alignment between physical education, values education, and teacher preparation.

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