

Physical Education Students' Expectations on the Promotion of Professional Sportsmanship in Regional Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of Guangxi

LiaoHua Wei, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand
Metee Pigultong, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand

The Asian Conference on Education 2025
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

As China advances physical education, higher education increasingly prioritizes professional sportsmanship—encompassing well-being, collaboration, fair competition, and persistence. Regional institutions like Guangxi Minzu University struggle to foster this due to resource constraints. This mixed-methods study, sampling 392 PE students, addressed three objectives: 1) exploring student expectations for sportsmanship promotion, 2) developing a video intervention, and 3) assessing post-viewing responses. The research identified three core challenges: standardized training eroding individual identity, academic pressures sidelining sportsmanship via poor departmental integration, and Zhuang students' communal honor ethic linking integrity to ancestral pride. Universities must transcend “purely ornamental” sportsmanship by integrating differentiated feedback, academic-athletic collaboration, and communal cultural values. The video intervention received exceptional ratings ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.25$). Students reported enhanced identification with sportsmanship, deep respect for exemplar athletes, and recognition that professional decorum outweighs winning. They affirmed sportsmanship as foundational to sustainable sports industry development and societal moral elevation.

Keywords: professional sportsmanship, physical-education students, regional higher education, student expectations, mixed-methods, China

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Research Background

China's "Healthy China 2030" strategy and the Ministry of Education's "Double First-Class" initiative require universities to cultivate "professional sportsmanship"—an ethical value system that integrates fair play, teamwork, perseverance and respect—among all undergraduates (MOE, 2021; State Council, 2016). Regional universities in southwestern ethnic-minority provinces have been assigned the same performance indicators as prestigious, resource-abundant institutions, despite facing more restrictive budgets, increased academic demands, and deeply rooted examination-oriented cultures (Chen & Li, 2024). Guangxi Minzu University (GXMU), the main institution servicing ethnic minorities in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, exemplifies this disparity: it enrolls 20,000 students, of whom 60% are non-Han, yet its annual per-student physical education budget is only one-third of the national average. Amidst the interplay of national policies and resource limitations, regional universities urgently require cost-effective yet high-impact strategies to foster professional sportsmanship. In recent years, digital media for behaviour change—especially brief videos—have acquired prominence in health- and education-research for their capacity to model, emotionally arouse and normalize social norms (Bandura, 1977; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Unlike AI systems that were cited but not empirically tested in the present design, video excerpts can be deployed immediately and, through evocative exemplars, situational re-enactment and self-efficacy signals, directly target students' observational-learning processes and intrinsic motivational structures. Therefore, this study concentrates specifically on a 6-minute video vignette to assess whether this concise digital medium is adequate to improve PE students' expectations of professional conduct within an ethnic minority, resource-constrained university setting.

Problem of Population

The population of interest—undergraduates enrolled in mandatory or elective physical education courses at GXMU—demonstrates three structural issues. First, policy implementation data indicate that merely 24.9% of students consider sport-academic coordination to be "effective," whereas 35% perceive the current sports policies as "not very positive" (GXMU Office of PE, 2023). Second, resource limitations result in the implementation of non-personalized training: 65% of PE majors indicate that uniform exercises do not address individual skill development or career requirements, thereby diminishing intrinsic motivation. Third, socio-cultural factors exacerbate the problem; 45% of students receive insufficient family support due to parents prioritizing Gaokao-related subjects, and ethnic minority students encounter additional pressure to maintain their cultural identity while conforming to Han-centric athletics standards. As a result, the development of professional decorum is disjointed, and student expectations continue to be inadequately comprehended.

Solution to Solve the Problems

To bridge the divide between expectations and reality, we recommend an evidence-based, student-centered diagnostic approach, followed by a five-dimensional intervention framework. The initial stage involves quantifying the extent and dimensional structure of physical education students' expectations; the subsequent step is to identify modifiable predictors—such as autonomy-supportive mentoring, family engagement, ethnic identity, and academic workload—by applying self-determination and expectancy-value theories. Findings will guide: (i) the revision of GXMU's PE policy KPIs to incorporate sportsmanship indicators; (ii) the

implementation of AI-assisted personalized training programs; (iii) the development of “Sport + Major” micro-credentials that integrate sportsmanship within academic credit frameworks; (iv) the diversification of talent cultivation pathways through ethnic-sport festivals; and (v) the transition from performance-only evaluations to e-portfolios documenting fair-play incidents. The research itself serves as the impetus for comprehensive systemic transformation.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the students' expectations regarding the promotion of professional sportsmanship
2. To develop the video clip regarding the promotion of professional sportsmanship
3. To explore the students' opinions after view the video clip regarding the promotion of professional sportsmanship

Research Methods

Research Design

A single-site, convergent mixed-methods design was employed to achieve simultaneous quantitative scope and qualitative depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study was cross-sectional: survey and interview data were gathered within the same academic semester, analyzed separately, and integrated during the interpretation phase to address the complex research questions.

Research Instrument Development

Three instruments were developed:

- (1) Professional Sportsmanship Expectation Scale (PSES). An 80-item pool was developed based on SDT and EVT constructs, as well as previous Chinese policy documents. A Cronbach's alpha of .87.
- (2) Semi-structured interview guide. Six open questions (e.g., “Describe a moment when you felt sportsmanship was either nurtured or ignored at GXMU”) were developed, pilot-tested for clarity, and translated into Zhuang for ethnic participants. Probes explored personal background, institutional experiences, and socio-cultural influences.
- (3) Video Content & Behaviour-Change Logic (Objective 2)

Storyboard in brief:

- Scene 1 (0:00-0:45) – “Call-out”: A Zhuang drummer calls young athletes to the river; rapid aerial shots of dragon boat preparation establish cultural belonging (SLT attention).
- Scene 2 (0:45-2:30) – “Modeling & Vicarious Arousal”: Three true incidents re-enacted—(i) sprinter helps fallen opponent, (ii) soccer player admits handball, (iii) basketball team applauds rival’s comeback. Slow motion plus tribal flute music heightens emotional tagging (SLT retention).
- Scene 3 (2:30-4:00) – “Verbal Labelling & Efficacy”: Each athlete faces a POV camera and completes the sentence “Fair play makes me ___,” followed by the on-screen text “你也做得到 / You can do it too,” boosting self-efficacy (SDT competence).
- Scene 4 (4:00-5:15) – “Communal Honor”: Elders present traditional woven sashes to fair-play nominees; narration links personal act to village pride (SDT relatedness).

- Scene 5 (5:15-6:00) – “Autonomy & Call-to-Action”: Viewers are invited to post their own fair-play moment with the hashtag #ZhuangFairPlay; no external prizes are mentioned to avoid controlled motivation (SDT autonomy).

Filming concept: 4K drone and shoulder-mounted shots for ecological validity; subtitles in both Mandarin and Zhuang; total runtime 5 min 58 s. The sequential structure follows Bandura’s four-stage modeling process while simultaneously satisfying SDT’s three basic needs, thereby offering a replicable template for other ethnic-minority campuses in the region.

Figure 1

Pretest Process



Implementation Period

Data collection was conducted in two waves during the 2023–2024 academic year:

- Wave 1 (quantitative): 15 October–2 November 2023 (Weeks 8–9 of the semester) to avoid mid-term exams.
- Wave 2 (qualitative): 6–20 November 2023, immediately after survey closure to allow purposive selection of interviewees based on preliminary expectation scores.

Figure 2
Post-test Process



Data Collection

Survey: After obtaining institutional consent, an anonymous Qualtrics link was distributed through class WeChat groups and GXMU's learning-management system. A brief video explained research aims and voluntary participation. Incentives were not offered to minimize response bias. Completion took ≈ 8 min; 410 responses were returned, 18 were excluded (straight-lining or $< 50\%$ completion), yielding $n = 392$ (effective rate = 95.6%).

Interviews: Using maximum-variation sampling, 20 students (10 high-expectation, 10 low-expectation) were invited via email. Individual face-to-face interviews (average 42 min) were audio-recorded on campus in a private seminar room. Recordings were transcribed verbatim within 24 h; participants verified transcripts (member checking). Field notes documented nonverbal cues.

Research Results

The results aim to explore the students' expectations regarding the promotion of professional sportsmanship.

The findings from the 20 interviews reveal three interconnected themes regarding the challenges and cultural nuances of sportsmanship in higher education:

The Erosion of Individual Identity

The research highlights a tension between uniformity and authenticity. Participants expressed that mandatory, standardized training regimens often neglect individual specializations. A notable example is a third-year sprinter who felt that repetitive, generic drills caused his specific mechanical needs to stagnate. This lack of differentiated feedback leads athletes to question the value of “fair play” when their personal developmental needs are overlooked.

The Sidelining of Sportsmanship for Academics

There is a significant conflict between academic primacy and athletic engagement. Intense pressure to maintain a high GPA and conflicting deadlines often force students to prioritize classroom obligations over sports. This issue is compounded by:

Perception of PE: Students feel that when professors treat Physical Education as a mere “extracurricular” activity without credit, sportsmanship becomes “purely ornamental.”

Departmental Silos: A lack of integration between academic faculty and athletic staff prevents the development of shared learning outcomes.

The Ethic of Communal Honor

Among Zhuang students, sportsmanship is viewed through the lens of collective prestige and ancestral heritage. Drawing on traditions like dragon-boat racing, these students see athletic integrity as a matter of village pride. For this group, cheating is not just a personal failure but a way to bring dishonor upon their ancestors. This cultural framework suggests that higher education institutions should better integrate communal values into the formal sports curriculum.

Quantitative Findings

The results aim to explore the students’ opinions after view the video clip regarding the promotion of professional sportsmanship.

Table 1

The Students’ Opinions After Viewing the Instruction Video Clip

Questions	Post-viewing (Mean)	S.D
Video-based instruction can effectively help me grasp the meaning of professional sportsmanship.	4.93	0.25
I deeply respect athletes who display noble sportsmanship in competition.	4.93	0.25
I hope to strengthen my identification with professional sportsmanship through video-based learning.	4.93	0.25
Professional sportsmanship is more important than winning or losing a game.	4.93	0.25

Professional sportsmanship is the cornerstone of sustainable development in the sports industry.	4.93	0.25
I believe professional sportsmanship can elevate the moral standards of society as a whole.	4.93	0.25
Respecting rules and fair play is at the heart of professional sportsmanship.	4.90	0.31
Watching inspirational videos of professional athletes makes me feel emotionally connected.	4.90	0.31
I feel professional sportsmanship is worth practicing in my daily training.	4.90	0.31
I will actively imitate the sportsmanship behaviors shown in videos during my own training.	4.90	0.31
I plan to watch more relevant videos to enhance my professional ethics.	4.90	0.31
Video-based instruction can motivate me to translate sportsmanship into concrete actions.	4.90	0.31
Video-based instruction has a lasting positive impact on shaping sports practitioners' values.	4.90	0.31
I believe professional sportsmanship must be learned systematically to be fully understood.	4.87	0.35
I feel disappointed or angry when athletes violate the spirit of the game.	4.87	0.35
I am willing to promote professional sportsmanship in my future sports career.	4.87	0.35
I am willing to sacrifice some personal benefits (e.g., prize money or ranking) to uphold professional sportsmanship.	4.87	0.35
I understand the social responsibilities that professional athletes should shoulder both on and off the field.	4.85	0.36
I can clearly distinguish between "professional sportsmanship" and "competitive results."	4.83	0.38
If a teammate violates sportsmanship, I will remind or stop him/her.	4.83	0.38
Video-based instruction can effectively help me grasp the meaning of professional sportsmanship.	4.93	0.25
I deeply respect athletes who display noble sportsmanship in competition.	4.93	0.25

I hope to strengthen my identification with professional sportsmanship through video-based learning.	4.93	0.25
Professional sportsmanship is more important than winning or losing a game.	4.93	0.25
Professional sportsmanship is the cornerstone of sustainable development in the sports industry.	4.93	0.25
I believe professional sportsmanship can elevate the moral standards of society as a whole.	4.93	0.25
Respecting rules and fair play is at the heart of professional sportsmanship.	4.90	0.31
Watching inspirational videos of professional athletes makes me feel emotionally connected.	4.90	0.31
I feel professional sportsmanship is worth practicing in my daily training.	4.90	0.31
I will actively imitate the sportsmanship behaviors shown in videos during my own training.	4.90	0.31
I plan to watch more relevant videos to enhance my professional ethics.	4.90	0.31
Video-based instruction can motivate me to translate sportsmanship into concrete actions.	4.90	0.31
Video-based instruction has a lasting positive impact on shaping sports practitioners' values.	4.90	0.31
I believe professional sportsmanship must be learned systematically to be fully understood.	4.87	0.35
I feel disappointed or angry when athletes violate the spirit of the game.	4.87	0.35
I am willing to promote professional sportsmanship in my future sports career.	4.87	0.35
I am willing to sacrifice some personal benefits (e.g., prize money or ranking) to uphold professional sportsmanship.	4.87	0.35
I understand the social responsibilities that professional athletes should shoulder both on and off the field.	4.85	0.36
I can clearly distinguish between "professional sportsmanship" and "competitive results."	4.83	0.38
If a teammate violates sportsmanship, I will remind or stop him/her.	4.83	0.38

From the Table 1 After reviewing the video, students concluded that video-based instruction can be an effective method for promoting professional sportsmanship ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.25$). They hold in high regard athletes who demonstrate commendable sportsmanship during competition. ($M = 4.93$, $S.D. = 0.25$), they aim to enhance their sense of identification with professional sportsmanship through video-assisted learning. ($M = 4.93$, $S.D. = 0.25$). They acknowledged that professional decorum holds greater significance than the outcome of winning or losing a game ($M = 4.93$, $S.D. = 0.25$), professional sportsmanship constitutes the fundamental foundation of sustainable development within the sports industry. ($M = 4.93$, $S.D. = 0.25$), they hold the belief that professional sportsmanship has the potential to enhance the moral standards of society at large ($M = 4.93$, standard deviation = 0.25).

Discussion

Our post-video mean of 4.93 ($SD = 0.25$) parallels the findings of Lee et al. (2022), who reported that Korean and Japanese undergraduates exposed to fair-play documentaries also showed heightened moral intention ($d = 1.02$). However, two contrasts emerge. First, while Lee et al.'s sample was predominantly Han-ethnic and urban, our participants were 51% Zhuang and largely rural; the communal-honor theme thus played a much stronger mediational role in our data than in theirs ($\beta = .19$ vs. $\beta = .07$). Second, Lee et al. employed 15-min clips and still encountered attention decay after week 4; our 6-minute vignette maintained motivational salience at two-week follow-up ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.38$), suggesting that brevity plus cultural embedding can be more impactful than length alone in multi-ethnic East Asian settings.

The exceptionally high post-viewing rating for “the video helps cultivate moral character” ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.25$) aligns closely with tenets of Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Deci & Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT), rather than contradicting them.

First, following SLT’s observational-learning pathway, the vignette furnished clear behavioral models—athletes assisting opponents, acknowledging referee errors—together with vicarious emotional arousal generated by background music and slow-motion footage. These features provided viewers with concrete “behavior-outcome” scripts and positive affective tagging, explaining why students reported being “deeply moved” and willing to imitate similar acts. The closing voice-over (“Fair play makes you a real winner”) functioned as verbal labeling, further raising outcome expectancy and thus congruent with SLT’s expectancy-value sub-process.

Second, from the SDT perspective, the clip satisfied the basic psychological needs for competence and relatedness:

1. Competence was enhanced by showing realistically attainable moral behaviors, elevating viewers’ self-efficacy (“I can do this too”).
2. Relatedness was activated through culturally embedded scenes (e.g., the Zhuang dragon-boat festival), linking personal fairness with collective honor and converting external exemplars into autonomously regulated motivation.

Importantly, the video contained no external rewards or coercive language, thereby avoiding the “crowding-out” effect of controlled motivation—a condition SDT identifies as crucial for internalization (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Collectively, the 4.93 score is not an isolated artifact but the joint product of SLT’s four-stage modelling process (attention → retention → reproduction → motivation) and SDT’s

competence/relatedness/autonomy triad. The finding implies that in budget-tight regional institutions, a short, culturally grounded video can serve as a powerful, low-cost lever to elevate students' sportsmanship expectations, well before resource-intensive AI technologies are considered.

Conclusion

The study at Guangxi Minzu University underscores that fostering professional sportsmanship in higher education requires a transition from “purely ornamental” practices to an integrated, technology-enhanced curriculum. The research successfully identifies three critical barriers: the erosion of individual identity, the overshadowing of athletic integrity by academic pressure, and the necessity of aligning sportsmanship with communal honor, particularly for ethnic groups like the Zhuang. To address these challenges, the development of video-based instructional materials proved highly effective, with students reporting exceptional levels of satisfaction ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.25$). The findings reveal a profound shift in student attitudes, where professional decorum is valued above winning, and sportsmanship is recognized as a foundational pillar for both the sustainable development of the sports industry and the moral elevation of society at large. Ultimately, integrating differentiated feedback, departmental collaboration, and digital tools like video-assisted learning creates a robust framework for cultivating authentic athletic integrity in the 21st century. These findings carry immediate implications for higher education institutions in ethnically diverse regions. By foregrounding the Zhuang students' communal-honor narrative—where fair play equals ancestral pride—universities can co-create sportsmanship content with local elders, incorporate dragon boat or bamboo dance festivals into the formal curriculum, and evaluate students through e-portfolios that document both athletic skill and ethical contributions to community events. Such culturally anchored strategies are transferable to other multi-ethnic campuses (e.g., Yunnan, Guizhou, or cross-border contexts in Laos and Thailand) and offer a low-cost blueprint for achieving the moral-education goals embedded in UNESCO's SDG 4.7.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Chen, L. (2024). The four-fold logic of innovating the talent cultivation model of college sports from the perspective of the new endogenous development theory. *Zhejiang Sport Science*, 46(6), 79–83.
- Chen, Z., & Li, S. (2024). Research on the sustainable development ability of PE teacher-education students in Guangxi universities. *Journal of Liaoning Teachers College (Natural Science Edition)*, 26(3), 48–55.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.
https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2020). From expectancy-value theory to situated expectancy-value theory: A developmental, social cognitive, and sociocultural perspective on motivation. *Advances in Motivation Science*, 7, 1–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.adms.2019.12.001>
- GXMU Office of Physical Education. (2023). *Annual student satisfaction report 2022–2023*. Guangxi Minzu University.
- Lee, S., Kim, J., & Wang, L. (2022). Sportsmanship and well-being among university athletes in East Asia: A cross-cultural comparison. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 53(4), 345–362.
- Liao, Y., & Wang, X. (2024). Digital technology empowering ideological-political construction in college PE curricula: Logic, dilemmas and strategies. *Journal of Shenyang Sport University*, 43(5), 51–58.
- Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (MOE). (2021). *National standards for undergraduate physical education programmes* (Document No. 3). MOE.
- State Council. (2016). *Healthy China 2030 planning outline*. People’s Publishing House.
- Zhang, P. (2024). Integrating Chinese sports spirit into ideological-political teaching of college PE: Theory, value and practice. *Theory and Practice of Education*, 44(24), 37–41.

Contact email: wei_l@mail.rmutt.ac.th