

Students' Attitudes and Behaviors towards Fair Play in Sport

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Abstract

Based on the social cognitive theory, this paper employs the variables of exercise duration and frequency to construct a mechanism model of the influence of fair play (FP) awareness on student's related attitudes and behaviors when participating in sports. Students (n = 317) aged from 10 - 18 years in 17 different schools filled in questionnaires regarding FP variables. Factors which may have impacts on students' fair play attitudes and behaviors were measured using linear regression analysis. Path coefficient analysis was then adopted to examine the hypothesized relationships among the study variables. The research conclusion shows that the overall value of fairness has a positive impact on the formation of fair play awareness, and the three dimensions proposed in the theoretical model: compliance with rules, respect, and equal participation all have a significant positive correlation; the number of years of participation in sports has a direct impact on the formation of fair competition awareness, and the frequency of participating in sports has a partial impact on fair competition awareness; compliance with rules, respect, and equal participation awareness have a significant impact on most factors of fair competition attitudes and behaviors. The conclusions of the study have certain implications for the realization of the educational function of fair play values in sports in the future.

Keywords

Fair Play, Compliance with Rules, Respect, Equal Participation

1. Introduction

The world is changing at an unprecedented speed which has a fundamental impact on the well-rounded development of young people. Sports have been widely recognized as an efficient educational and learning tool. In addition to building a

strong body, young people can also gain valuable life experiences such as teamwork, overcoming difficulties and obeying rules by participating in sports. The 2021 “Olympic Charter” expresses the relationship between sports and education: “The Olympic spirit combines sports with cultural education, aims to create a way of life through hard work, fun and following good examples, and tries to integrate social responsibility. Integrate basic moral principles with respect and respect” (IOC, 2021). In order to encourage more young people to acquire the healthy value of sports, the International Olympic Committee has formulated the Olympic Education Program (OVEP), and put forward five core values: Pursue Excellence, Enjoy Struggle, Fairness Competition, respect for the world, balance of mind and body (IOC, 2017). As one of the core values, fair competition has attracted extensive attention from the academic circles for its connotation evolution and influence mechanism.

Originally, fair play was just a sports-related concept that emphasized compliance with rules, which were interpreted and enforced by referees and officials by punishing violators. Referees and officials interpreted and enforced the rules through penalties and punishments. Today, the meaning of fair play has gone beyond the sport itself, no longer just means following the rules. Its core is difficult to define precisely, but can be identified by specific behaviors such as the handshake of the participants at the end of the game. Fair play has gained global recognition as a fundamental human rights principle. Participation in sports can help children from different backgrounds, including orphans, disabled children, child laborers, left-behind children, etc., gain the opportunity to earn social respect. Meanwhile, various organizations are working hard to ensure that girls have equal opportunities to participate in sports they want to participate in, especially traditional. It is also a symbol of society’s increased respect for women. The Olympic Charter states: “The practice of sport is a human right. Everyone must have the opportunity to play sport without discrimination of any kind and with mutual understanding in the spirit of the Olympic spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play” (IOC, 2021). The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms to participate in sports shall be guaranteed without any form of discrimination. It can be seen that the core of fair competition has extended from obeying the rules to embodying respect and equal participation.

Coubertin (1894) said: “The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.” But not all people agree with this message. In some cases, they will cheat in order to win. Sometimes fierce competition and the pressure to win in both school and community sports can be deterrent to the realization of Olympic Values such as fair play. Fair play does not happen automatically when children and youth participate in team or group activities. In fact, research from many countries supports the concern that some competitive sports activities actually contribute to unfair behavior—cheating, substance abuse and aggression. Fair play—in sport or in any other context—has to be taught, and because it is

an idea that children seem to grasp readily, teaching fair play is a useful concept in a variety of educational contexts. Children have a strong sense of what is fair. Therefore, fair play can be taught in primary classes as well as in higher age groups. One of the most effective ways for young people to learn about fair play is to provide an opportunity for them to discuss the implications and consequences of their behavior. When they are given the chance to explore value conflicts and to discuss their feelings, beliefs and behaviors, values education has begun. Fair play can be developed through active participation in sport and physical activity. However, these outcomes are not the result of participation in sport alone; these desirable behaviors have to be taught.

Sports, and life, can often present us with dilemmas. When faced with complicated situations we make decisions that we believe will best deal with these situations. As we get older, we can draw on our experiences as adults to help us to manage to moral implication issues such as cheating in sports. We become skilled at identifying practices that are clearly right or wrong and can use these lessons to guide our young athletes. Sadly, there are examples of athletes who have not complied with the rules that govern our sports and this can be perplexing. Today, sports activities are confronted by numerous attempts to undermine its principal philosophy of fair play and rule adherence. The major threat to fair play comes from the excessive importance now attached to winning. This pressure to be the best at any cost, to be “faster, higher, stronger”, has led to ever-increasing cases of violence, cheating, drug abuse and exploitation. Fair play is a movement based on adhering to and respecting the rules and regulations of the game and are not solely directed at participants of sport—but also extended to those involved in sport; parents, teachers, coaches, referees, administrators, journalists, and spectators. They all have their own special responsibilities for the promotion of fair play—and it is an imperative for sport that each group recognizes these responsibilities and acts on them. Sport is a great training ground for real life—what has been gained in sport can be demonstrated in everyday life. Aiming at the above problems, this study introduced participants’ sports training duration and frequency variables into the empirical research based on social cognitive theory, and explored the influence mechanism of the concept of fair play on students’ regarded attitudes and behaviors through compliance with rules, respect, and equal participation. It also aims to examine the specific ways in which the concept of fair play can achieve this impact.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypothesis

2.1. Social Cognition of Fairness Awareness

Social cognitive theory holds that individual cognition and behavior influence each other, individual behavioral decisions will occur under the influence of individual cognition, and individual behavioral decisions will also affect individual cognitive adjustments (Bandura, 2001). The concept of fairness in the overall social values of individuals will directly affect their perception of fair competition

in sports. The value of fairness plays a positive role in promoting the awareness of fair competition among athletes, because the individual's internal cognition will eventually adapt to individual behavior (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019); Restrain individual behavior, and then encourage individuals to pursue the pursuit of competition results without burden by harming the interests of individuals and others. At this time, in order to get rid of the supervision of the moral standard of fairness, individuals often choose to adjust their cognition to get rid of moral condemnation, such as emphasizing the competitive nature of the game that the result of victory is above all else, and finding moral excuses for their immoral behaviors such as taking prohibited drugs (Boardley & Kavussau, 2010).

2.2. Fair Play and Compliance with the Rules

Some researchers believe that the desire to win is the correct attitude for sports participants, and competition is a necessary way to maintain the true meaning of competition. Thus, the ensuing emphasis on the value of winning became a central axis of the sport, and the idea that it was enough to win regardless of the means was rationalized in this context. According to this theory, sports should be eliminated as an educational topic because it has a very negative value orientation (Cecchini et al., 2014; Pérez-Triviño, 2012). But other researchers have also suggested that the competitive nature of sport actually provides a solid foundation for the establishment of positive moral principles and, in turn, provides a channel through which desirable values are disseminated (Loland, 2007; Storm, 2012).

According to International Fair Play Committee, Fair play is a complex concept that comprises and embodies a number of fundamental values that are not only integral to sport but relevant in everyday life (IFPC, 2023). Vallerand et al. (1996) stated that fair play as a multidimensional concept includes: sports, rules, referees, social conventions and positive attitudes to avoid winning at all costs. Nlandu (2017) pointed out that the essence of fair play is difficult to express in abstract and simple concepts. Winning itself is not an inherent moral issue in sports. The reason for the misunderstanding of the concept of fair play is that winning is the only important thing in sports factors (Serrano-Durá et al., 2020). In this regard, the development of fair play means that athletes should abide by the rules of the game and follow the various norms related to fair play. Sheridan (2003) specifically defines fair play as an honest and noble way of behaving in competition, as “a way of behaving in a sport based on respect for the rules, the opponent, and oneself, where victory at all costs is to be renounced. It promotes fairness by upholding equality of opportunity and dealing with victory and defeat with dignity.” Fair play thus represents a situation beyond the competition, beyond the playing field, and even beyond the outcome of the game. Competition is considered an essential feature of competition, and the imposition of principles of fairness on competition means that athletes must not only abide by the corresponding rules, but must also commit themselves to the moral prin-

principles that form the basis of this competition (Serrano-Durá et al., 2020). Therefore, fair play has been defined by many scholars as an important research area, trying to explore its role in conveying positive social values. In view of this, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:

H1: The concept of fair play has a positive and significant impact on participants' compliance with the rules when playing sports.

2.3. Fair Play and Respect

Respect means that young people in multicultural environments need to learn to accept diversity, abide by peaceful personal codes of conduct and promote understanding and peace. Essentially, respect means taking into account the feelings of others. Pérez-Triviño (2012) further pointed out that respect is a virtue that goes beyond obedience, and it constitutes the basic condition of social life. Respect not only means obeying the rules, but its core essence is the integration of endogenous values that are not completely subject to external rules. Loland (2007) puts forward more specifically that respect in sports is based on respect for the rules (not just obeying the referee's judgment), respect for competitors (including on and off the field) and respect for oneself (not limited to improve performance). The sportsmanship of winning at all costs has been abandoned, and respect effectively promotes fair play by maintaining equal opportunity and facing the outcome with equal dignity (Sheridan, 2003). Friendship formed in mutual respect is the core value of the Olympic spirit, which fully exchanges diverse values and realizes mutual support by establishing friendship among participants. Multicultural education should incorporate the principle that all people, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and minorities have human rights and that violence is not the best way to resolve conflicts (IOC, 2017).

Fair play is based on observance of the rules of the game and respect, not only for the participants in the sport, but also for the various people involved in the sport such as parents, teachers, coaches, referees, administrators, journalists and spectators. They all have their own special responsibilities in promoting mutual respect, and every group should recognize and act on these responsibilities. Friendships based on respect are also at the core of the Olympic Spiritual values, and such friendships are formed through mutual respect for each other's different backgrounds and multiple value systems. Contemporary education should advocate such a principle based on respect, regardless of the other party's gender, age, race or physical condition, etc. This is also the best way to effectively avoid conflicts between parties (IOC, 2017). Based on this, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:

H2: The concept of fair play has a positive and significant effect on building respect in sport.

2.4. Fair Play and Equal Participation

Nlandu (2017) believes that fair competition is a dynamic cognitive process,

which cannot be simply defined by an abstract definition, but should be interpreted in multiple dimensions. The origin of fair play refers to the observance of rules and regulations to maintain competition on the basis recognized by the participants. Fair competition also includes the concept of equal participation. Unequal economic conditions, competition arrangements involving gender and diversity, etc. may be related to this. Previous studies have mentioned, for example, the grouping criteria for swimming competitions for the disabled (Uscinowicz et al., 2013), equipment standards for the Winter Paralympics (Burkett, 2012), etc. In this sense, the understanding of fair competition is more inclined to allow participants to enjoy the process through equal participation rather than being limited to the results of the game.

In addition to following the rules, positive behaviors such as respect for all stakeholders and dignity in the face of failure that are included in fair play outside the playing field are also considered to be important components of sportsmanship (Lee et al., 2008). Further, fair play is considered to include two aspects: equal opportunity and related inequalities (Loland, 2007). The former mainly refers to rule violations within the concept of fair play associated with informal rules, such as voluntary game suspensions for feigning injuries or deliberate fouls to deceive sports officials (Morris, 2014). Related inequalities research has focused on inequalities caused by discrimination and exclusion in gender classification systems; game classification criteria based on levels of mental impairment; and others such as game timetables or game equipment. Therefore, this paper proposes the following assumptions:

H3: The concept of fair play has a positive and significant impact on the rights of all parties to participate in sports on an equal footing.

2.5. Sports Participation and Fair Play

Whether there is a significant correlation between the length and frequency of athletes participating in the event and fair competition has also attracted the attention of some researchers. Social cognitive theory holds that people who agree with a certain social structure for a long time will have similar values, and this value will continue to affect people's cognition and behavior (Bandura, 2001). People who persist in sports training for a long time and maintain a similar frequency of exercise are more inclined to rationally treat the complex situation they are in and take appropriate behaviors based on their inner beliefs and external conditions. Therefore, this paper puts forward the following assumptions:

H4: The length of participation in sports is positively related to the awareness of fair play

H5: The frequency of sports training is positively related to the awareness of fair play.

2.6. Internal Connections of Different Aspects of Fair Play

The development of a fair competition means that sports people must not only

comply with rules and regulations, but also commit to the ethical principles on which such competition is based. Whilst different characterizations of fair play are found, it can be generically defined as a way of behaving honestly and nobly in competition (Arnold, 1983; Loland, 2007; Sheridan, 2003). The scientific reviews that we have found on fair play have focused on aspects such as its conceptualization (Sheridan, 2003), its relationship with equity when categorizing according to disability level in swimming (Uscinowicz et al., 2013) and the standardization of equipment in Paralympic winter sports (Burkett, 2012). Despite fair play being largely considered as the moral nucleus of sport (Pérez-Triviño, 2012) and being a term to which constant references are made in sport, we consider it to be a term that has been generically studied in relation to the transmission of positive social values in sport practice.

Values have become an intrinsic part of any social and educational project and value education can be identified as the perspective of education which aims to instil in students' different ideals of conduct enabling them to become in the future more solidary, democratic and socially committed citizens. One of these basic values that should be integrated into education is fair play (Tortella & Fumagalli, 2017). From the perspective of education, fair play can be defined as "respect and recognition for the game rule, have an appropriate relationship with the opponent, an attitude of integrity in victory and defeat, and promoting equality among all participants during sport, as well as rejecting violent attitudes and show maximum commitment". Therefore, it is necessary to design tools to help convey appropriate behaviors as well as favoring sport activities based on fair play in the educational environment. The practice of sport in educational contexts help to improve cognitive, social and affective experience, to promote knowledge and respect for ethical values such as gender equality, which are the foundation of civil coexistence and also essential for the implementation of active and conscious citizenship (Tortella & Fumagalli, 2017). Take the importance of pro-social behavior into consideration and more specifically, of fair play with school-age boys and girls, the aims of this study are further identified as to conduct a survey on the awareness and attitude in regard to fair play among students aged 11 - 18 and to explore the perception differences of fair play in different groups according to age, gender, sport experience etc.

3. Research Design

3.1. Questionnaire Design and Variable Measurement

This research adopts the method of questionnaire survey to collect data, and the questionnaire contains four parts. The first part is the instructions for filling out the questionnaire, explaining the purpose of the research to the respondents, ensuring that the information is absolutely confidential, and encouraging them to fill in with confidence; the second part is the demographic characteristics variables, including gender, age, etc.; the third part is the survey of the respondents' participation in sports, including the main sports involved, the duration

of participation, and the frequency of training. The fourth part is the main content of the questionnaire, including the measurement of fair competition awareness, attitude and behavior.

In order to ensure the reliability of the measurement tools, the measurement of all variables regarding compliance of rules, respect and equal participation comes from mature scales in authoritative journal literature. Except for control variables, sports participation items, sports participation duration and frequency are multiple-choice questions, and all other items are measured by Likert 5-point scoring method, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Specifically, the compliance part is derived from the scale developed by [Popescu and Masari \(2011\)](#), including 6 items. The esteem part comes from the scale of [Serrano-Durá et al. \(2020\)](#), including 6 items. The equal participation part comes from the scale of [Cecchini et al. \(2014\)](#), including 7 items. In this study, gender and age were used as control variables to avoid interference with the conclusions of this study. The specific measurement items are shown in [Table 1](#).

3.2. Research Sample

This study takes primary and middle school students in Shanghai as the survey object. Considering the possible answering difficulties, especially among primary school students, a small-scale pre-investigation was conducted before the formal survey, and adjustments were made according to the respondents' opinions and suggestions on the measurement items, so that the questionnaire measurement items were easier for the respondents to understand. After further revisions to the wording of the questionnaire, the final questionnaire was formed. Formal answers will be conducted by means of offline face-to-face invitations and online questionnaire filling. The survey time will be from September to November 2022, and the venues will be well-known basketball, tennis, ice hockey and other sports training venues in Shanghai, as well as some primary and secondary schools. A total of 317 valid questionnaires were recovered by various means, with a total of 25 items in the questionnaire, and the number of valid questionnaires met the standard of 5 - 10 times the items.

Male students accounted for 51.42% of the respondents, and female students accounted for 48.58%. 10 - 12 years old (higher primary school) accounted for 32%, 13 - 15 years old (junior high school) accounted for 33%, 16 - 18 years old (high school) accounted for 35%. The team sport with the highest participation is basketball, accounting for 25%, and the individual event is badminton, accounting

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of participation length and frequency.

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------|--------|----------------------|
| Participation Length (Years) | Within 1 year | 2 - 3 | 3 - 4 | More than 5 years |
| | 11.67% | 23.34% | 27.44% | 37.54% |
| Participation Frequency (Hours per week) | Less than 2 | 3 - 5 | 5 - 8 | More than 8 |
| | 35.65% | 32.49% | 20.5% | 11.36% |

for 28% (multiple choice). Participation length and frequency can be seen from **Table 1**.

4. Research Analysis

4.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

The purpose of reliability analysis is to test the consistency, stability and reliability of the scale. In this study, internal consistency Cronbach's α coefficient and composite reliability (composite reliability, CR) were used for evaluation. Usually, the Cronbach's α coefficient is positively correlated with the reliability of the scale, and the higher the coefficient value, the better the reliability, and the more suitable for exploratory factor analysis. This article uses SPSS 23.0 for data measurement. The results are shown in **Table 2**. The Cronbach's α coefficient and the combined reliability coefficient are both higher than 0.8, indicating that the measurement items in this study have good internal consistency and the reliability of the questionnaire is high. In terms of validity evaluation, this study uses content validity and convergent validity for evaluation. The measurement items

Table 2. Questionnaire measurement items and results of reliability and validity analysis.

| Variables | Items | Factor loading | CR | AVE | Cronbach's α |
|-----------------------|---|----------------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Compliance with rules | A1 Under any circumstances I should compliance with rules. | 0.919 | | 0.685 | 0.827 |
| | A2 I shouldn't argue with the referee even I believe he/she has made a mistake | 0.933 | | | |
| | A3 Committing a tactical foul to win a game is against fair play spirit. | 0.836 | | | |
| | A4 Aggressive behavior towards opposing players is against fair play spirit. | 0.981 | | | |
| | A5 Rough play is not justified even if the rival team uses rough play. | 0.773 | | | |
| | A6 Players should receive permanent bans for certain violent behaviors. | 0.933 | | | |
| Respect | B1 The respect for all stakeholders is in the spirit of fair play. | 0.962 | 0.947 | 0.916 | 0.816 |
| | B2 I should shake hands with my opponents even after losing the game. | 0.852 | | | |
| | B3 The public expression of negative feelings by athletes should be minimized. | 0.779 | | | |
| | B4 If accidentally pushes or hits an opposing player, it's common to apologize | 0.995 | | | |
| | B5 I should not fight back verbally even if an audience member insults me, | 0.877 | | | |
| | B6 I will report the situation in a game honestly that might be disadvantageous | 0.910 | | | |
| Equal Participation | C1 Having the equal opportunity to attend sports is important for fair play. | 0.807 | 0.815 | 0.799 | 0.854 |
| | C2 Females should be allowed to participate in all sports male players can. | 0.927 | | | |
| | C3 Female athletes shouldn't be paid differently compared to male players. | 0.647 | | | |
| | C4 Sports including multiple genders simultaneously are fairer. | 0.864 | | | |
| | C5 It's unfair having barriers of entry for financially disadvantaged groups | 0.790 | | | |
| | C6 Players should be provided with the same set of gear to ensure fairness` | 0.927 | | | |
| | C7 Paralympic Games represents the essential value of fair play. | 0.820 | | | |

have been verified by previous research to have good content validity. In terms of convergent validity, the loading values of all items in this study on their corresponding causes have reached the recommended standard of 0.6 and are significant, and the average variance extraction value (AVE) of each variable is also greater than the benchmark value of 0.5. At the same time, the results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that the five-variable and five-factor fitting conditions set in this study met the relevant standards ($\chi^2/df = 1.125$; $df = 160$; $CFI = 0.921$; $IFI = 0.926$; $RMSEA = 0.032$), indicating that the measurement in this study has good convergent validity.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

In this paper, SPSS 23.0 software was used to conduct correlation analysis on variables such as fair competition concept, compliance with rules, respect, equal participation, and training length and frequency. The results are shown in **Table 3**, in which the concept of fair competition is significantly correlated with compliance with rules, respect, and equal participation at the level of 0.01, and the correlation coefficients are 0.423, 0.266, and 0.324, respectively, which initially supports the first-level direct effect hypothesis of this study (H1, H2, H3), the concept of fair competition has a positive and significant impact on fair competition attitudes and behaviors. Other fair play factors (factors 6 7 8) also showed a correlation at the level of 0.01. In order to obtain more robust data analysis results, multiple regression analysis was performed next.

4.3. Linear Regression Analysis

In order to further study which factors may have an impact on students' fair play attitudes and behaviors, this paper then uses multiple regression methods to test the research hypothesis. H4 assumes that the years of participation in sports will

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficient matrix.

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| 1. Gender | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age | 0.336** | | | | | | | |
| 3. Training Length | 0.013 | 0.174** | | | | | | |
| 4. Training time/week | 0.130* | 0.232** | 0.420** | | | | | |
| 5. Fair Play perception | 0.047 | -0.093 | 0.116* | 0.169** | | | | |
| 6. Compliance of Rules | -0.023 | 0.016 | 0.198** | 0.192** | 0.423** | | | |
| 7. Respect | -0.16 | -0.009 | 0.153** | 0.084 | 0.266** | 0.327** | | |
| 8. Equal Participation | 0.020 | -0.074 | 0.115* | 0.115* | 0.324** | 0.248** | 0.340** | |
| Mean | 2.028 | 1.486 | 2.076 | 2.909 | 4.678 | 3.994 | 4.139 | 4.615 |
| Standard Deviation | 0.817 | 0.501 | 1.007 | 1.035 | 0.644 | 1.177 | 0.981 | 0.663 |

Note: $N = 317$; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

have a significant positive impact on fair competition awareness, attitudes and behaviors. The results are showing in **Table 4**. The correlation coefficients of sports years to G, A1, B1, and C1 are 0.116, 0.198, 0.153, 0.115, p at 0.01 or 0.05. Significantly correlated at the level of, so H4 is established. H5 assumes that participating in weekly training hours will have a significant positive impact on fair competition awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. The results show that only A1 and B1 have a significant correlation at the p level of 0.05, so H5 is partially supported. Generally speaking, students who have participated in sports for a longer period of time and have higher training frequency at this stage will be more supportive of the concept of fair competition, and will respond with more positive attitudes and behaviors. In addition, the data show that neither grade nor gender has a significant correlation with each factor of fair play.

4.4. Path Coefficient Analysis

In order to deeply analyze the impact of fair competition awareness on students' related attitudes and behaviors, this paper conducts a path analysis of related factors for fair competition attitudes and behaviors. It can be seen from **Table 5**: A1 "I should abide by all competition rules under any circumstances". For A2, the standardized path coefficient value is $0.121 > 0$, and it shows significance at the 0.05 level ($z = 2.169$, $p = 0.030 < 0.05$), thus indicating that A1 will have a significant positive impact on A2. For the same reasons as **Table 4**, we can see that A1 "follow the rules" and its sub-paths A2 "I can argue with the referee if the penalty is wrong", A3 "taking tactical fouls violates the concept of fair play", A5 "even if the opponent uses brutal means I shouldn't treat the game equally" had a significant positive correlation; however, A1's response to A4's "taking aggressive moves towards the opponent is not in line with the concept of fair play" and A6 sports should be punished if fouls are taken in extremely rough ways. A

Table 4. Results of multiple linear regression analysis (N = 317).

| Independent variable | G | A1 | B1 | C1 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Dependent Variable | | | | |
| Grade | 0.827 | 0.721 | 0.063 | 0.882 |
| Gender | 0.427 | 0.250 | 0.568 | 0.665 |
| Length of Sports Participation | 0.031* | 0.017* | 0.006** | 0.000** |
| Training Frequency | 0.415 | 0.016* | 0.034* | 0.960 |
| R^2 | 0.059 | 0.034 | 0.051 | 0.072 |
| <i>Adjusted R²</i> | 0.047 | 0.021 | 0.039 | 0.060 |
| F | 4.919** ($p = 0.001$) | $F = 2.731^*$ ($p = 0.029$) | $F = 4.189^{**}$ ($p = 0.003$) | $F = 6.041^{**}$ ($p = 0.000$) |
| Value of D-W | 1.946 | 2.167 | 1.918 | 2.016 |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; VIF less than 2; G = Fair play spirit is a must for all sport competitions.

Table 5. Results of path coefficient analysis.

| X | Y | N/N Path Coefficient | SE | z (CR Value) | P | Path Coefficient | Result |
|----|----|----------------------|-------|--------------|-------|------------------|----------|
| A1 | A2 | 0.121 | 0.056 | 2.169 | 0.030 | 0.121* | support |
| | A3 | 0.232 | 0.071 | 3.283 | 0.001 | 0.181** | support |
| | A4 | 0.051 | 0.057 | 0.882 | 0.378 | 0.049 | opposing |
| | A5 | 0.034 | 0.071 | 0.268 | 0.004 | 0.251** | support |
| | A6 | -0.092 | 0.065 | -1.430 | 0.153 | -0.080 | opposing |
| | B1 | B2 | 0.240 | 0.039 | 6.191 | 0.000 | 0.328** |
| B3 | | 0.313 | 0.049 | 6.356 | 0.000 | 0.336** | support |
| B4 | | 0.274 | 0.046 | 5.920 | 0.000 | 0.315** | support |
| B5 | | 0.000 | 0.068 | 0.006 | 0.995 | 0.000 | opposing |
| B6 | | 0.146 | 0.055 | 2.677 | 0.007 | 0.149** | support |
| C1 | | C2 | 0.402 | 0.068 | 5.879 | 0.000 | 0.314** |
| | C3 | 0.559 | 0.060 | 9.290 | 0.000 | 0.463 | support |
| | C4 | 0.432 | 0.097 | 4.454 | 0.000 | 0.243** | support |
| | C5 | 0.232 | 0.092 | 2.518 | 0.012 | 0.140* | support |
| | C6 | 0.370 | 0.077 | 4.826 | 0.000 | 0.262** | support |
| | C7 | 0.491 | 0.056 | 8.820 | 0.000 | 0.444** | support |

Note: $N = 317$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

significant positive effect of lifetime bans does not exist. The influence of following the rules, a cornerstone of fair play, on the attitudes and behavior of young athletes is not fully supported.

B1 “Respect” is the sub-path B2 “I should shake hands with my opponent after losing the game”, B3 “Athletes should not overexpress their negative emotions on the field”, B4 “I accidentally bumped or pushed during the game Opponents should apologize.”, B6 “In any case I should be honest about the game situation” has a significant positive impact, but on the sub-path B5 “Even if the audience is rude to me, I should not fight back” was not supported. It can be seen that the attitude of respect is recognized, but there are differences in the cognition of the specific expression methods.

C1 “Equal participation” pairs sub-path C2 “Allowing female athletes to participate in all sports is an important part of fair play”, C3 “Female professional athletes should be paid the same as men in competitions”, C4 “Competitions involving athletes of different genders It can better reflect the concept of fair competition”, C5 “It is difficult for low-income people to participate in expensive sports and it is not in line with the concept of fair competition”, C6 “All athletes should be provided with the same level of equipment to ensure fair competition”, C7 “Paralympics and Special Olympics will perfectly embody the

core concept of fair competition” have a significant positive impact relationship. The hypothesis that the concept of equal participation in fair competition has positive and significant effects on all factors related to the respondents’ attitudes and behaviors is fully supported.

5. Conclusion

Based on the perspective of social cognitive theory, this study divides the concept of fair competition into three dimensions: compliance with rules, respect and equal participation. On this basis, a theoretical model of the concept, attitude and behavior of fair competition is constructed. The main research object, empirically tested the correlation and influence path among the variables of fair competition. On the one hand, this paper exploratorily applies fair competition to Chinese primary and middle school students from the perspective of social cognitive theory, which expands the research context of fair competition. On the other hand, it deconstructs young sports participants’ behavior and attitude towards fair competition in sports activities, and analyzes its influencing factors and formation paths. This study draws the following three main conclusions.

First, holding the overall value of fairness is significantly positively correlated with the concept of fair competition, which positively affects compliance with rules, respect, and equal participation. The idea that society should operate according to the principle of fairness has been overwhelmingly recognized by the interviewees. Compared with the previous surveys on the general public, the proportion of people who agree very much is higher, indicating that young students’ awareness and desire for fairness are in the crowd. It is extremely prominent, and under the influence of such values, it is also implied that the concept of fair competition is generally recognized. Looking further, there is also a significant positive correlation between fair play and the three manifestations proposed in the theoretical model of this study: compliance with rules, respect, and equal participation, which also supports the legitimacy of them as research perspectives of fair play.

Second, the introduced variables that represent the degree of sports participation have varying degrees of impact on the concept of fair play as a whole and on the three dimensions it covers. The years of participating in sports has a significant positive impact on each factor, which fully shows that as time goes by, young students will agree more with the concept of fair competition in the process of participating in sports. The degree of approval is significantly higher than that of respondents with shorter participation years. From this perspective, the educational function of sports positive values is undoubtedly evident. Weekly frequency of sport participation was partially associated with fair play ideals, which were significantly positively associated with rule compliance and respect, but an association with equal participation was not supported. Movement frequency reflects the current participation status of respondents in sports, and its weak connection with equal participation shows the hidden attributes of the concept, which

cannot be widely recognized through short-term high-frequency participation. However, as the number of years of participation increases, this concept will be generally recognized, and it has also been confirmed from another aspect that the importance of long-term persistence in the education of values is higher than that of short-term radical participation.

Thirdly, the hypothesis that obeying the rules, respect, and equal participation concepts has a positive impact on most of the factors related to attitudes and behaviors related to fair competition of the respondents when participating in sports has received a relatively high proportion of support. Judging from the analysis of the impact path, there are certain differences in the interpretation of the impact of obeying the rules on related behaviors. Future rule education may need to take into account the unique perspective of young students, such as the clear definition of rough behavior on the field and the discussion of consequences. The attitude towards the audience in terms of respect was not recognized by the interviewees, and it is also closely related to the weak ability of young people to control their emotions. In terms of equal participation, all sub-paths are supported, indicating that young people's understanding of equality perfectly fits the connotation of fair competition.

This study has certain implications for sports and education managers. As an important value, the concept of fairness is of great significance to the growth of young people. Fair competition, as an important component of fair values, has a high sense of identity among young people. Participation in three subdimensions was confirmed. Secondly, the length of time participating in sports has a very significant positive impact on the concept of fair competition, which shows that if young people start to develop their exercise habits, it can play a positive role in the formation of positive life values in the future. Sports participation and related values Education should come sooner rather than later. Finally, rule awareness education needs to overcome the characteristics of young students' lack of self-cognition and weak emotional control ability, and guide them in a targeted manner, so as to finally promote the stable formation of their correct values.

However, the samples of this study are mainly concentrated in Shanghai, and whether the research conclusions are applicable to other regions remains to be further verified. Meanwhile, this study focuses on the influencing factors and paths of school students on the concept, attitude and behavior of fair competition, but the sports mode as an influencing variable is limited by the research design and data results and has not been discussed in depth. In the future, it can be considered to add more variables other than frequency to enhance the correlation analysis of variables to research conclusions. In addition, the research model can also be expanded in dimensions. For example, motivation can be included in the model as a pre-value variable that affects the concept of fair competition. At the same time, whether there are moderator variables can be considered to build a more comprehensive theoretical research model.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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