

DESIGNING A HUMANISTIC CURRICULUM FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJOR IN SICHUAN PROVINCE UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the development of a humanistic curriculum for physical education programs offered to university students in Sichuan Province, China. The research aims to elucidate the roles of humanistic values, student-centered approaches, and holistic curriculum design in fostering multidimensional physical well-being and enhancing teaching practices. A quantitative methodology was employed, collecting data from 403 participants, comprising teachers and students from 26 universities. Structural equation modelling was utilized to analyze the relationships between the pertinent variables. The findings revealed that humanistic values exerted a substantial positive impact on promoting physical well-being ($\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$) and the implementation of teaching practices ($\beta = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, student-centred approaches positively influenced the promotion of physical well-being ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.009$) and the implementation of practices ($\beta = 0.250$, $p < 0.001$). The holistic curriculum demonstrated a significant effect on the promotion of physical well-being ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.004$), although its influence on the implementation of practices was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.061$, $p = 0.536$). These factors collectively accounted for 57.3 percent of the variance in the development of humanistic physical education programs. While the findings underscore the strengths in promoting health, fostering teacher-student relationships, and addressing emotional and social well-being, challenges persist in enhancing empathy, community engagement, and personalized learning opportunities. The study underscores the significance of teacher professional development, curriculum content revision, and incorporating student feedback to address these gaps. By addressing these issues, universities can develop more comprehensive physical education programs that holistically nurture students' physical, emotional, and social development. This research contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on humanistic education and provides practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers seeking to enhance the quality of higher education physical education programs.

Keywords: Humanistic Values, Physical Education, Humanistic Curriculum, Holistic Curriculum

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, the humanities and social sciences have increasingly intersected with sports disciplines, fostering a rich interdisciplinary integration. This integration has given rise to the concept of "humanistic literacy" within physical education, which has rapidly evolved as a critical pedagogical field. The foundation of this development lies in the incorporation of the

humanistic spirit within sports, a concept that has garnered substantial academic interest and shaped the construction of humanistic literacy as a discipline in its own right (Wang et al., 2021). This shift reflects the academic and theoretical value of humanistic literacy in sports, which has now become an essential component of higher education curricula, particularly in physical education programs.

While the growth of humanities in sports disciplines continues, its predominant characteristic lies in its interdisciplinary nature, which blurs the boundaries between various fields. Despite efforts to establish distinct disciplinary scopes and research areas, overlaps in content and methods remain prevalent. These intersections are crucial for understanding and advancing humanistic quality education in sports, often relying on foundational insights from the social sciences (Andrews & Silk, 2020). Furthermore, specialized physical education courses have emerged to cultivate sports professionals, further solidifying the integration of humanistic perspectives into sports education.

Professional sports education plays a pivotal role in inheriting and advancing research and technological developments within sports disciplines. Beyond imparting technical skills and knowledge, it encompasses the humanistic spirit, encompassing values, concepts, and theories that guide ethical and thoughtful professional practices. This dual focus technical and humanistic cultivates a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, with each enriching the other. As research contributes novel insights and innovations, it simultaneously sustains and revitalizes educational practices within professional sports programs (Cassidy et al., 2023).

The ongoing evolution of sports disciplines and professional education perpetuates a cycle of improvement. Advancements in sports education directly enhance the quality of training for sports professionals, who, in turn, serve as the foundation for furthering sports research and practice. Contemporary sports education emphasizes the integration of scientific and humanistic perspectives, fostering professionals who possess not only technical expertise but also ethical values and cultural awareness. Qualified sports professionals must harmonize scientific rigor, professional competence, and humanistic qualities in their practice. This holistic integration underscores the paramount importance of nurturing the humanistic spirit, which encompasses empathy, ethical conduct, and a profound comprehension of sports' cultural and societal dimensions (Murphy et al., 2021).

Consequently, humanistic skills are integral to the competencies of sports professionals, complementing technical expertise to establish a comprehensive skill set. By emphasizing the humanistic dimensions of sports, professional sports education equips individuals to navigate the multifaceted demands of their field with integrity, creativity, and a commitment to societal well-being. This approach ensures that sports professionals not only possess technical proficiency but also serve as ambassadors of the values and principles that underpin the humanistic spirit in sports.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The field of physical education in China has experienced substantial progress, particularly since the late 1970s. These advancements have modernized the discipline and introduced the integration of humanities into sports education, with the aim of fostering a comprehensive

understanding of sports that encompasses its cultural, social, and ethical dimensions (Zhao et al., 2021). However, existing literature reveals a fragmented approach to integrating humanistic values into physical education programs. This underscores the necessity for a comprehensive framework that addresses these challenges while drawing upon the unique regional context of Sichuan Province. A critical research gap exists in the absence of an integrated and holistic discipline path that effectively cultivates humanistic literacy among physical education majors. Such a framework is imperative for preparing students to navigate and contribute to the multifaceted world of sports, deeply rooted in its humanistic ethos (Liu & Wang, 2022).

The growing emphasis on physical health, driven by rising living standards and national health goals, underscores the necessity of reforming traditional physical education (PE) ideologies. These ideologies often fail to meet the demands of contemporary education, which prioritizes holistic health encompassing physical, mental, and social well-being. University students today seek a more integrated approach to health, significantly influenced by social interactions and institutional environments. However, traditional PE programs remain constrained by outdated boundaries, necessitating reforms that address key issues in curriculum design, pedagogy, and institutional practices. The increasing importance of PE, coupled with the broader adoption of quality education, has elevated its role in higher education. Simultaneously, universities face increased competition for talent, resources, and recognition, creating challenges in maintaining the ecological and educational quality of their campuses (Kuh et al.2020; Tremblay et al., 2019).

Developing a comprehensive discipline path for humanistic literacy within physical education majors in Sichuan Province universities presents several challenges. Firstly, there is a clear disconnect between external goals, methods, and strategies, and the internal content and training pathways necessary for cultivating humanistic literacy. This lack of cohesive integration undermines the effectiveness of current educational strategies (Adomat et al., 2021). Secondly, the prevailing focus on skill-based education often overshadows the humanistic aspects of sports, limiting students' understanding of its broader societal and cultural implications (Dai, 2020). Thirdly, students frequently lack exposure to the diverse humanities dimensions of sports, including its history, politics, and traditional practices, which restricts their appreciation of sports' cultural heritage (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2018). Lastly, the heavy reliance on Western models fails to adequately address the unique challenges and opportunities within the Chinese context, further limiting the potential for a locally relevant and impactful curriculum (Li & Chen, 2021).

Despite these advancements, a persistent gap remains in the actualization of humanistic literacy within physical education programs in Sichuan Province. Addressing this gap requires tackling challenges such as insufficient integration of internal and external dimensions of discipline construction, the dominance of technical curricula, limited exposure to the humanities, and a lack of regional contextualization (Adomat et al., 2021; Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2018; Liu & Wang, 2022). The identified research gap underscores the absence of a framework that harmonizes these dimensions into a cohesive discipline path.

This study aims to establish a comprehensive discipline path for humanistic literacy in physical education, tailored to the specificities of Sichuan Province while adhering to global standards. By integrating professional humanistic knowledge, attitudes, and values as fundamental curriculum elements, this research seeks to elevate the educational experience of physical

education majors. It endeavors to produce graduates who are not only technically proficient but also possess a profound understanding of the cultural, ethical, and societal dimensions of sports (Zhao et al.2021). Through this initiative, the study seeks to address the existing gaps in humanistic literacy within physical education programs, contributing significantly to the field of physical education by fostering professionals who can navigate the complexities of their roles with both technical competence and humanistic awareness. This approach promises to enhance the quality of education for physical education majors in Sichuan Province universities, addressing current challenges and setting a precedent for broader reforms in the field.

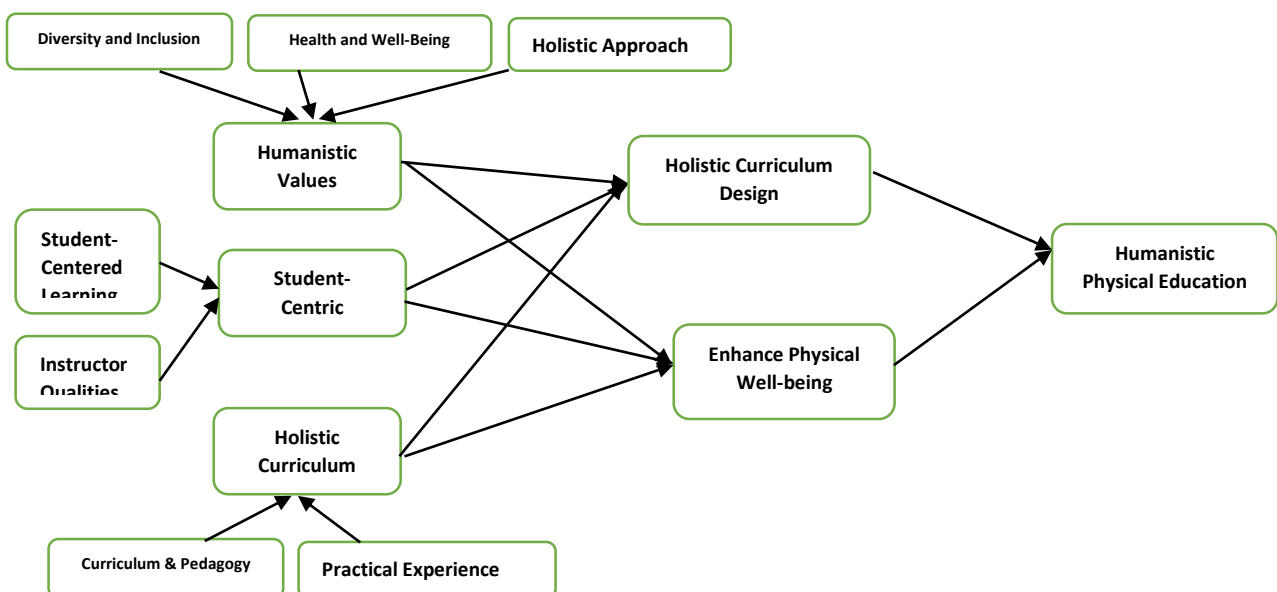
This study primarily addresses the following specific research questions:

1. How do humanistic values influence the design of a holistic curriculum and the promotion of physical well-being in physical education programs?
2. What is the impact of student-centered approaches on the holistic curriculum design and physical well-being pathways?
3. Does the holistic curriculum directly and indirectly affect the cultivation of holistic physical education?
4. To what extent do the holistic curriculum design pathway and physical well-being pathway mediate the relationship between humanistic values, student-centered approaches, and holistic physical education outcomes?

2.1 The conceptual framework

This study analyzes the influence of various factors on cultivating humanistic qualities among physical education (PE) majors in universities across Sichuan Province, China. Drawing on the interconnected themes in the conceptual framework, it emphasizes three key pillars: humanistic values, student-centric approaches, and holistic curriculum design.

Figure 1.1 The conceptual framework for the Construction Path of Humanistic Quality of Physical Education



The conceptual framework for this study is designed to explore how humanistic approaches can be effectively integrated into physical education (PE) curricula in universities across Sichuan Province, China. The framework combines principles of humanistic values, student-centric pedagogy, and holistic curriculum design, aiming to foster physical, mental, and social well-being among students. It aligns with global educational goals of holistic development and societal well-being (Elliott & Greenberg, 2007; Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2022).

1. Humanistic Values: Diversity, inclusion, health, and well-being create an educational environment where students feel valued and included.

- Diversity and inclusion address students' diverse needs, ensuring meaningful participation for all. Recognizing individual differences promotes a sense of belonging and engagement.
- Health and well-being nurture mental resilience and emotional stability, aligning with holistic education and preparing students for life's challenges.
- A holistic approach integrates physical, mental, and emotional dimensions, emphasizing the whole person beyond academics.

By embedding these values, physical education fosters empathy, ethical behavior, and societal harmony.

2. Student-Centric Pedagogy: Teaching prioritizes students' needs, interests, and abilities.

- Student-centered learning involves designing lessons that resonate with students' unique characteristics, empowering them to take ownership of their learning.
- Instructors act as facilitators, creating a supportive environment where students explore their potential. Positive teacher-student relationships enhance motivation and engagement, leading to improved learning outcomes.

By prioritizing student agency and active participation, the framework ensures physical education becomes both educational and personally enriching.

3. Holistic Curriculum Design: A well-designed curriculum integrates theoretical knowledge, practical experiences, and interdisciplinary approaches to create a comprehensive educational model.

- The curriculum should include diverse courses catering to foundational, professional, and elective needs, ensuring a broad and balanced education. Humanistic elements like leadership training, teamwork, and ethical decision-making prepare students for real-world challenges.
- Hands-on activities like sports, games, and community engagement projects connect theory to practice, fostering skills like collaboration, resilience, and adaptability.

Interdisciplinary approaches enrich students' understanding of the broader role of sports in human life. You and Mun (2017) suggest that such integration helps students appreciate sports as a cultural and historical phenomenon, promoting a sense of pride and identity.

3.0 THE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the development of a humanistic curriculum for physical education programs at universities in Sichuan Province, China. A structured survey questionnaire was employed to systematically collect data from educators and students. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized to analyze the relationships among key variables, providing robust insights into the factors influencing humanistic physical education.

3.2 Population, Sampling Size, and Location

The study targeted 26 universities in Sichuan Province, systematically selected from a total of 52 undergraduate institutions. These universities represent diverse academic levels, including undergraduate, master's, and doctoral colleges, ensuring comprehensive coverage of varying educational contexts. The sample consisted of 403 participants, including faculty members and students, to provide a holistic understanding of the factors shaping humanistic physical education.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The sampling process followed these steps:

1. University Selection: Using systematic sampling, every second institution from the list of 52 universities was selected, resulting in 26 universities.
2. Participant Selection: From each selected university, 10 faculty members and a proportionate number of students were randomly sampled, ensuring diverse and representative input.

This approach ensured a wide range of perspectives from educators and students across the selected institutions.

3.4 Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was developed to measure the following key dimensions of humanistic physical education:

1. Curriculum and Pedagogy: Integration of humanistic principles into physical education programs.
2. Holistic Approach: Empathy, self-expression, and social awareness in education.
3. Instructor Qualities: Teacher training and support in humanistic education.
4. Diversity and Inclusion: Efforts to address student needs and promote equity.
5. Practical Experience: Application of theory through sports and activities.
6. Student-Centered Learning: Student involvement in educational processes.
7. Health and Well-Being: Impact on physical and mental health.
8. Holistic Curriculum Design: Alignment of curriculum strategies with humanistic goals.
9. Physical Well-Being: Promotion of teamwork, self-esteem, and resilience.

All questionnaire items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability and validity of the questionnaire were assessed, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.705 to 0.909, ensuring the instrument's reliability.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using PLS-SEM to evaluate the relationships among humanistic values, student-centered approaches, holistic curriculum design, and their impact on physical education outcomes. The analysis included measurement model validation (construct reliability and validity) and structural model testing (path coefficients, significance levels, and explained variance). The use of PLS-SEM allowed for detailed exploration of the direct, indirect, and total effects of the measured constructs, offering actionable insights to guide curriculum development and policy recommendations for physical education programs in Sichuan Province universities.

4.0 THE FINDINGS

This study uses PLS-SEM to analyze the integration of humanistic principles in university physical education programs in Sichuan Province, China. The findings highlight the importance of humanistic values, student-centered learning, and holistic curriculum design in promoting physical well-being and enhancing holistic physical education outcomes.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The assessment of the measurement model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) confirmed the reliability and validity of the constructs. Key checks included convergent validity, collinearity, outer loadings, outer weights, and collinearity statistics.

Assumptions Check

Convergent validity was confirmed through redundancy analysis, with all constructs showing correlations above the threshold of 0.70. Collinearity statistics indicated acceptable Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, with most indicators falling below 3. While "Curriculum and Pedagogy" and "Practical Experience" had slightly elevated VIFs of 3.594, these remained within acceptable limits. No critical collinearity issues were detected, ensuring the model's robustness.

Outer Loadings

Outer loadings confirmed the reliability of the indicators, with values exceeding 0.7 for all constructs. Key indicators included "Health and Well-Being" (0.964) for Humanistic Values, "Practical Experience" (0.998) for Holistic Curriculum, and "Instructor Qualities" (0.972) for Student-Centered Learning. Holistic Curriculum Design Pathway, Physical Well-Being Pathway, and Holistic Physical Education showed perfect loadings of 1.000, confirming precise construct representation.

Outer Weights

Outer weights highlighted the relative importance of each indicator. "Health and Well-Being" (0.545) emerged as the most significant contributor to Humanistic Values, while "Practical Experience" (0.909) was pivotal for Holistic Curriculum. "Instructor Qualities" (0.692) had the highest weight within Student-Centered Learning, demonstrating its central role in shaping educational practices.

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

The VIF values demonstrated that all indicators contributed uniquely to their constructs without redundancy. Most values were below 3, with slightly elevated values (e.g., 3.594 for "Curriculum and Pedagogy") still within acceptable limits, ensuring the validity of the constructs.

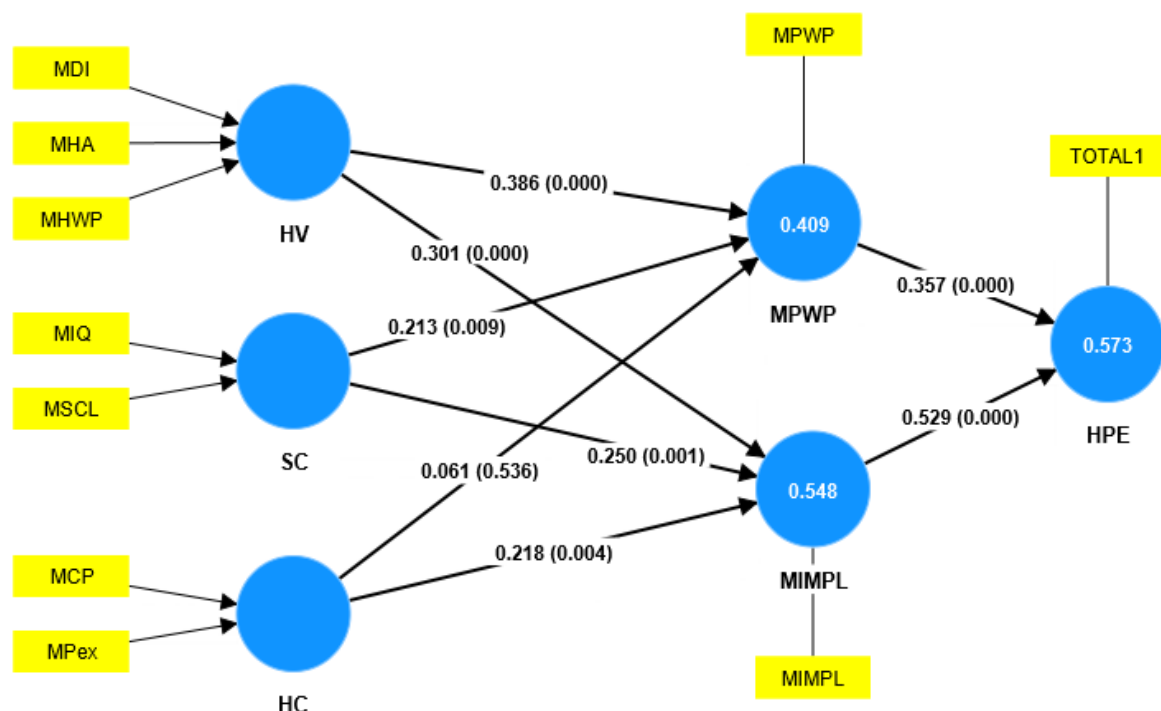
Overall, the results confirmed the reliability and validity of the measurement model, providing a strong foundation for structural model assessment.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment Results

The structural model analysis, conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), evaluated the relationships among humanistic values, student-centric approaches, holistic curriculum, and their effects on curriculum design and physical well-being pathways, ultimately influencing holistic physical education outcomes. The assessment included hypothesis testing, explanatory power (R²), effect sizes (f²), predictive relevance (Q²), and model fit evaluation.

Figure 2

The Structural Model



The structural model reveals the relationships between key constructs in the study of humanistic physical education.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The explanatory power of the model is reflected in the R^2 values for key constructs:

1. Holistic Physical Education ($R^2 = 0.573$): Predictors explained 57.3% of the variance in holistic physical education, indicating moderate explanatory power and the significant influence of curriculum design and physical well-being pathways.
2. Holistic Curriculum Design Pathway ($R^2 = 0.548$): Predictors accounted for 54.8% of the variance, emphasizing the role of humanistic values, student-centric approaches, and holistic curriculum in curriculum design.
3. Physical Well-Being Pathway ($R^2 = 0.409$): Predictors explained 40.9% of the variance, highlighting their moderate contribution to physical well-being goals.

Effect Sizes (f^2)

The f^2 results revealed the importance of specific constructs:

1. Holistic Curriculum Design Pathway ($f^2 = 0.528$): A large effect on holistic physical education, confirming its central role in achieving program objectives.
2. Physical Well-Being Pathway ($f^2 = 0.241$): A medium effect, highlighting its critical but slightly lesser role compared to curriculum design.
3. Humanistic Values: Small but meaningful effects on both curriculum design ($f^2 = 0.032$) and physical well-being ($f^2 = 0.040$).
4. Student-Centric Approaches: Small effects on curriculum design ($f^2 = 0.023$) and physical well-being ($f^2 = 0.013$).
5. Holistic Curriculum: A small effect on curriculum design ($f^2 = 0.016$) and negligible impact on physical well-being ($f^2 = 0.001$).

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Predictive relevance was assessed using Q^2 values:

1. Holistic Physical Education ($Q^2 = 0.57$): Large predictive relevance, confirming the model's strong predictive power for educational outcomes.
2. Holistic Curriculum Design Pathway ($Q^2 = 0.534$): Large predictive relevance, underscoring its significance in curriculum implementation.
3. Physical Well-Being Pathway ($Q^2 = 0.402$): Medium predictive relevance, reflecting adequate predictive accuracy.

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path coefficients confirmed significant relationships between constructs, validating the hypotheses:

1. Humanistic Values: Strong positive effects on curriculum design ($\beta = 0.301, p < 0.001$) and physical well-being pathways ($\beta = 0.386, p < 0.001$).

2. Student-Centric Approaches: Positive effects on curriculum design ($\beta = 0.250$, $p = 0.001$) and physical well-being pathways ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.009$).
3. Holistic Curriculum: Significant effect on curriculum design ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.004$) but negligible on physical well-being ($\beta = 0.061$, $p = 0.536$).
4. Mediating Pathways: Curriculum design ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < 0.001$) and physical well-being pathways ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$) were critical determinants of holistic physical education.

Indirect Effects

Indirect effects demonstrated that:

1. Humanistic Values ($\beta = 0.297$, $p < 0.001$): Strongly influenced holistic physical education through both curriculum design and physical well-being pathways.
2. Student-Centric Approaches ($\beta = 0.208$, $p < 0.001$): Contributed significantly through mediated pathways.
3. Holistic Curriculum ($\beta = 0.137$, $p = 0.016$): Indirectly influenced holistic physical education via curriculum design and physical well-being.

Model Fit

The model fit indices supported the robustness of the structural model. Saturated model fit was excellent (SRMR = 0.016, NFI = 0.987), while the estimated model showed slight deviations (SRMR = 0.103, NFI = 0.863), indicating room for improvement in the estimated pathways.

The findings confirm that humanistic values and student-centric approaches are key drivers of curriculum design and physical well-being pathways, which in turn significantly enhance holistic physical education. While the holistic curriculum directly impacts curriculum design, its influence on physical well-being is mediated through other constructs. These results emphasize the importance of integrating values-based education and student-centered practices to achieve comprehensive and effective humanistic physical education programs.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the integration of humanistic values, student-centric approaches, and holistic curriculum design within physical education (PE) programs at universities in Sichuan Province. The results highlight key strengths in fostering physical well-being and teacher-student engagement, while also underscoring significant challenges in enhancing empathy, inclusivity, and interdisciplinary learning.

5.1 Integration of Humanistic Values

The structural model results demonstrate that humanistic values significantly contribute to the promotion of physical well-being ($\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$) and holistic curriculum implementation ($\beta = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$). These findings emphasize the importance of embedding health, diversity, and inclusion within PE curricula to nurture students' physical, emotional, and social development. However, the relatively weaker focus on fostering empathy and community engagement highlights a gap in current educational practices. Existing literature

underscores the importance of care, interpersonal relationships, and emotional intelligence in humanistic education (Noddings, 2013). The findings suggest a need to expand the curriculum to integrate these elements more effectively. Enhancing activities that promote community engagement, collaborative learning, and ethical development can address these gaps, aligning with broader educational goals of holistic student development.

5.2 Student-Centric Approaches

Student-centered learning approaches positively influenced both physical well-being ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.009$) and holistic curriculum design ($\beta = 0.250$, $p < 0.001$). These results align with global perspectives on the importance of active student engagement and personalized learning in enhancing educational outcomes (Rus & Radu, 2014). Positive teacher-student relationships emerged as a pivotal factor, reflecting the role of instructor qualities in shaping effective learning environments. However, the limited emphasis on individualized learning and cultural responsiveness points to areas for improvement. Fletcher and Ní Chróinín (2022) emphasize the value of adapting teaching strategies to address diverse student needs. To strengthen these approaches, universities should prioritize teacher training programs focused on inclusive pedagogy, cultural integration, and professional development, ensuring educators are equipped to support diverse learning needs effectively.

5.3 Holistic Curriculum Implementation

The results indicate moderate progress in holistic curriculum implementation, with significant contributions to curriculum design ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = 0.004$) but a negligible direct effect on physical well-being ($\beta = 0.061$, $p = 0.536$). This suggests that the curriculum's impact on physical well-being is mediated through humanistic values and student-centric practices rather than direct intervention. Research highlights the potential of interdisciplinary approaches to enhance the educational experience, particularly through the integration of sociology, psychology, and cultural studies within PE programs (You & Mun, 2017). Despite leveraging technology and practical experiences effectively, challenges remain in addressing broader social and emotional aspects of education. As de Oliveira Freire et al. (2020) argue, PE curricula must prioritize leadership, teamwork, and ethical development to prepare students for real-world challenges. Addressing these gaps can help universities in Sichuan Province align their programs with global best practices.

5.4 Practical Implications

The findings underscore the critical role of integrating humanistic principles into physical education to foster holistic development. To address the identified gaps, universities should:

1. **Enhance Curriculum Content:** Include modules on empathy, ethics, and community engagement to promote broader social and emotional development.
2. **Strengthen Teacher Training:** Implement professional development programs focused on inclusive pedagogy, cultural competence, and student engagement strategies.
3. **Leverage Interdisciplinary Learning:** Integrate sociology, psychology, and cultural studies into PE curricula to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the societal dimensions of sports.

4. Foster Practical Learning Opportunities: Expand hands-on activities, such as community sports programs and leadership workshops, to connect theory with practice.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study highlights the interplay between humanistic values, student-centric approaches, and holistic curriculum design in shaping physical education programs at universities in Sichuan Province, China. While significant progress has been made in promoting health and fostering teacher-student relationships, critical gaps in empathy, inclusivity, and interdisciplinary integration remain. By addressing these challenges, universities can develop transformative PE programs that contribute to students' holistic development, aligning with global educational goals and the unique needs of the region. These findings offer valuable guidance for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers seeking to enhance the quality and impact of physical education programs.

6.1 Ethical Approval

This study involving human subjects was conducted following ethical standards, and ethical approval was obtained from UPSI.

6.2 Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare no potential conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

6.3 Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this research are not publicly available due to confidentiality agreements with participants. However, data can be made available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author, subject to approval and adherence to ethical guidelines.

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