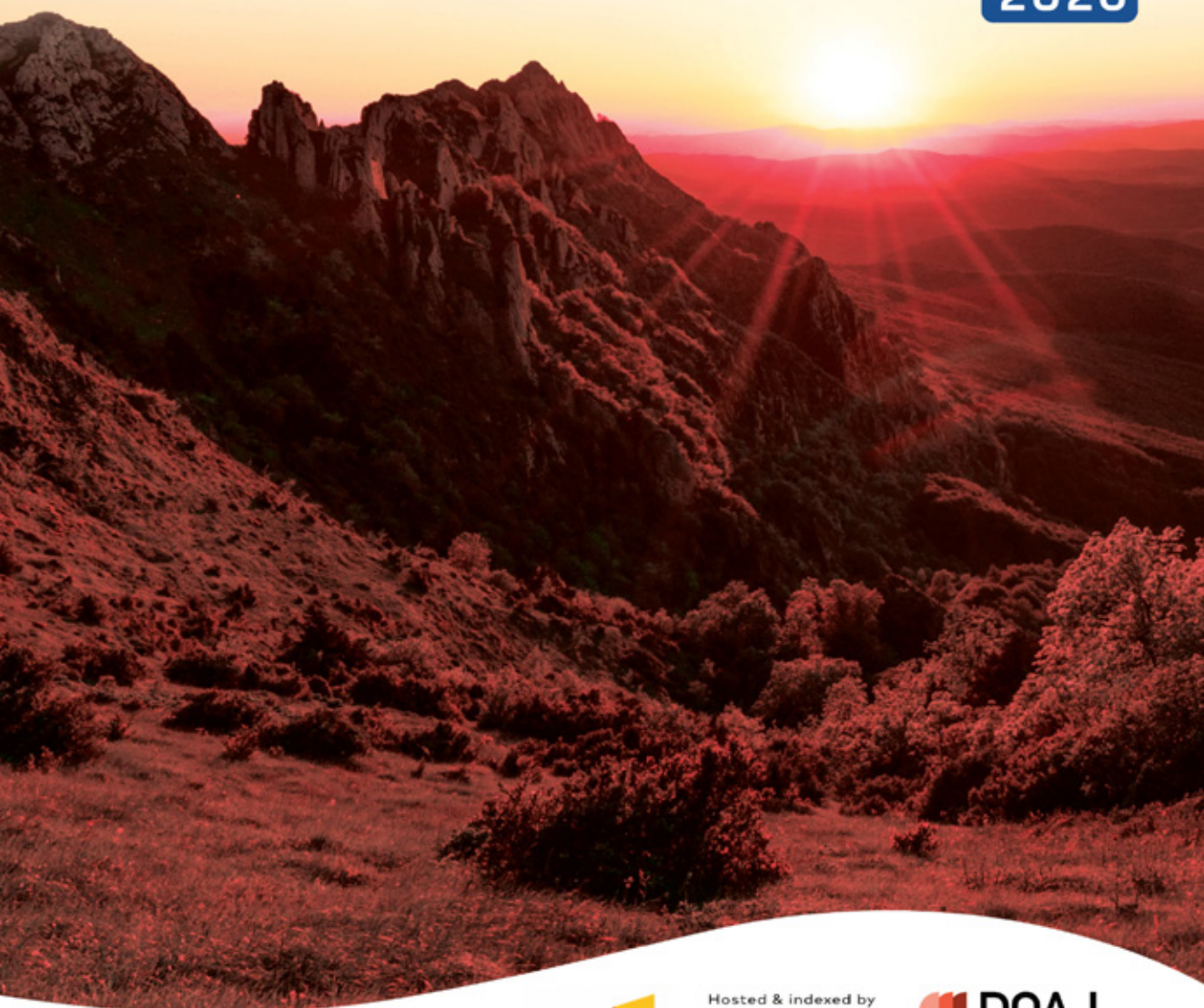


The Dyke

Volume 20 No.1

2026



Hosted & indexed by
Sabinet
African Journals

 **DOAJ**
Google Scholar

Promoting fair play in university sports in Zimbabwe

Kaves Zvapano^a

^aBindura University of Science Education

Abstract

This study explores the perceptions and lived experiences of university sports administrators in Zimbabwe regarding fair play violations, focusing on perceived causes, impacts, and mitigation strategies within university sport. Guided by a qualitative phenomenological design, data were generated through semi-structured interviews conducted in English with 35 administrators from 16 universities affiliated with the Zimbabwe Universities Sports Association (ZUSA). Of the participants, 23 formed the final sample, selected through stratified purposive sampling, with data saturation determining the endpoint. Ethical approval was granted by the ZUSA Executive, and all participants provided informed consent. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using iterative thematic analysis. Trustworthiness was strengthened through methodological transparency, reflexive engagement, and consistent application of the coding framework. Findings indicate that fair play violations, including the use of non-student athletes, doping, violence, and gamesmanship, are perceived as widespread and structurally embedded within university sport. Participants linked these practices to a “win-at-all-costs” culture driven by recognition, material incentives, and the emulation of professional athletes who normalise unethical conduct. Such violations undermine competitive integrity, compromise athlete safety, and damage institutional reputation, limiting sponsorship and development opportunities. The analysis also informed the inductively derived **Fair Play Restoration Model (FPRM)**, explaining how governance reform, ethical reorientation, and institutional accountability can restore fair play in university sport.

Keywords: fair play, clean sport, gamesmanship, sportsmanship

Introduction

University sport is widely recognised as a vehicle for holistic student development, fostering the education of the ‘whole person’, mind, body, and character (Hanson & Savage 2012; Krishnani & Kanade, 2025). In this context, university sport is expected to cultivate discipline, resilience, teamwork, leadership, and ethical responsibility while offering structured engagement that may deter destructive behaviours such as substance abuse and social deviance. Despite this developmental ideal, competitive university sport mirrors pressures found in professional environments. Institutional rivalry, performance expectations, and visibility often prioritise outcomes over ethical conduct, making cheating, doping, aggression, and rule manipulation more prevalent. Such trends contradict the educational purpose of sport and raise concerns regarding moral formation among student-athletes.

Fair play is central to the legitimacy of university sport. Sukys (2013) and Rodríguez et al. (2025) posit that sport’s societal value rests on respect, cooperation, and peaceful competition. Yet contemporary university sport often prioritises victory over integrity, reflecting a “win-at-all-costs” mentality. Fair play, encompassing adherence to rules, respect for opponents, and ethical conducts sustain trust and equity in sport (Aier, 2023). Given that university athletes frequently progress to professional careers, violations at this stage may perpetuate unethical practices and undermine sporting norms. In Zimbabwe, ethical concerns are intensified by weak enforcement mechanisms, safeguarding gaps, and increasing professionalisation of university sport, making systematic investigation essential.

Literature Review

‘Fair play’ is widely recognised as a foundational principle of sport and a defining ethical tenet of the Olympic tradition (Müller, 2021; IOC, 2024). The International Fair Play Committee approaches fair play as extending beyond formal compliance with rules to encompass values such as integrity, equality, solidarity, tolerance, care, excellence, and joy (IFPC, 2023). Yet, the translation of these normative ideals into sporting practice remains problematic. Competitive environments may incentivise gamesmanship, whereby ethically questionable conduct is rationalised as legitimate when it produces a competitive advantage. The increasing normalisation of a ‘winning is everything’ mentality consequently risks subordinating ethical responsibility to performance outcomes. Importantly, contemporary scholarship shifts attention beyond individual misconduct to the

institutional cultures, incentive structures, and governance arrangements that may enable, tolerate, or reproduce unethical behaviour (Anderson & White, 2020; Krishnani & Kanade, 2025). Fair play should, therefore, be understood not simply as an individual moral disposition, but as an institutional and organisational responsibility embedded within the governance of sport.

Ethical harm in sport also extends beyond overt rule violations to more subtle forms of symbolic and relational misconduct, including humiliation, exclusion, stigmatisation, and marginalisation (McCarthy, 2024; Lange et al., 2025). Such practices are particularly consequential within university sport, where unequal relationships among athletes, coaches, administrators, and other institutional actors may complicate conventional assumptions that participation in sport inherently promotes character formation and moral development. Hazing provides a particularly salient illustration of how harmful practices can become embedded and normalised within sporting cultures. Initiation rituals in collegiate sport, for example, have included coerced alcohol consumption, degrading activities, intimidation, and other practices associated with physical and psychological harm. The recognition of hazing as a form of non-accidental harm requiring institutional intervention further underscores the inadequacy of treating such conduct merely as individual deviance or harmless sporting tradition (Miguel et al., 2026). Instead, these practices raise broader questions concerning institutional accountability, safeguarding, organisational culture, and the ethical management of athletes.

Digitalisation has further expanded the terrain within which ethical harm occurs. Cyberbullying enables harassment, intimidation, and reputational harm to transcend the physical boundaries of sporting environments and persist across digital platforms. University athletes may be exposed to hate speech, appearance-based shaming, targeted harassment, and coordinated forms of online ridicule that amplify both the visibility and persistence of victimisation (Smith et al., 2019; Kowalski & Toth, 2025). Unlike conventional interpersonal misconduct, digitally mediated abuse may involve dispersed perpetrators, persistent content, large audiences, and limited institutional control, thereby creating distinctive challenges for athlete protection and organisational accountability. Collectively, gamesmanship, symbolic misconduct, hazing, and cyberbullying demonstrate that contemporary threats to fair play are neither exclusively individual nor confined to the field of competition. Rather, they are embedded within interconnected organisational, cultural, and digital environments. Addressing them, therefore, requires an integrated ethical

governance framework in which athlete welfare, safeguarding, institutional accountability, and responsible human capital management are treated as central components of sustainable sport management.

Fair play violations are driven by interrelated psychological, social, and institutional factors. Performance pressure, fear of failure, peer influence, weak governance, and inadequate ethical education increase the likelihood of misconduct (Collins, 2023; Pérez Triviño & López Frías, 2024). In contexts where ethical compliance is perceived to disadvantage athletes or teams, moral disengagement is facilitated (Ring et al., 2024; Boardley & Kavussanu, 2024).

Social Learning Theory suggests that observed and rewarded behaviours are likely to be replicated (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2024). Egooriented climates amplify the prioritisation of dominance over ethical responsibility, heightening risks of misconduct (Hogue, 2024; Gu & Cheng, 2025). Extrinsic incentives such as scholarships, fame, and financial rewards further erode intrinsic ethical motivation (RodaMoorhead, 2023; Carson et al., 2025). Institutional tolerance of misconduct reinforces deviance, embedding unethical practices within organisational culture (Dowling et al., 2024; Kihl et al., 2024). Recent African scholarship describes the ‘professionalisation of survival’ in sport, where unethical conduct is rationalised as adaptive behaviour under economic precarity (Mwaanga & Chifita, 2025). This highlights the intersection of ethics, structural constraints, and socioeconomic realities in shaping athlete behaviour.

Violations have far-reaching consequences for athletes, teams, and institutions. Reputational damage undermines career prospects and institutional credibility (Agnew et al., 2017; University of Edinburgh, 2022). Teams may experience sanctions, forfeited titles, and declining morale, while athletes risk scholarships and professional opportunities (University of Edinburgh, 2024). Doping and substance violations carry severe health, legal, and psychological repercussions (UK Anti-Doping, 2024). Bednář (2023) warns that neglecting athlete welfare erodes sport’s moral foundation. Repeated violations diminish public trust, deter sponsorship, and threaten organisational sustainability (Dowling et al., 2024; Sperber, 2024). Perceived injustice undermines intrinsic motivation and performance. Self-Determination Theory identifies fairness as essential for well-being and optimal functioning (Delrue et al., 2024). Athletes perceiving competition as unfair experience frustration, disengagement, and declining performance (Friehs et al., 2024; Schnitzer et al., 2024), emphasising ethical integrity as both moral and functional.

Promoting fair play within university sport is vital due to its developmental, ethical, and institutional implications. It strengthens team cohesion, enriches the student-athlete experience, and contributes to moral growth (Sipkins, 2023). At the international level, universities and governing bodies advance this agenda through values-based education, anti-doping initiatives, and the consistent enforcement of regulations (Cardiff University, 2018; Nottingham Trent University, 2023). Education is central to this process: structured reflection and moral reasoning enhance ethical judgment among student-athletes (Jadwiszczak et al., 2025). Interventions that address ambition, external pressures, and the pursuit of validation, combined with restorative practices, help foster accountability and renew ethical climates in campus sport (Carlson et al., 2016). Safeguarding frameworks further reinforce fair play by protecting athletes' physical and psychological well-being (Muñoz et al., 2025). Sustained trust and compliance in university sport depend on transparent regulations, consistent enforcement, and ethical leadership (Office of Sport, 2023; Choa et al., 2024).

In African and Global South universities, fair play requires culturally grounded and holistic strategies aligned with sport's educational mission (Idemudia & Adediji, 2023). Such approaches must integrate socio-economic realities, governance challenges, and the complex interplay between ethics and performance culture, ensuring that fair play is not only a principle but a lived practice within higher education sport systems. Despite the rich normative literature on fair play and ethical governance, evidence from African university sport, particularly in Zimbabwe, is sparse. Most studies focus on professional or school sport, neglecting the unique pressures and institutional contexts of higher education. Furthermore, existing research often describes ethical principles without interrogating the structural, motivational, and socio-cultural drivers of violations.

Against this background, the present study addresses these conceptual, empirical, and contextual gaps by examining fair play through the lived experiences and perspectives of university sports administrators in Zimbabwe. Specifically, it investigates the perceived prevalence and manifestations of fair play violations within university sport, explores the individual, organisational, cultural, and institutional factors perceived to underpin such violations, and examines their consequences for athletes, universities, and the integrity of university sport. Building on these insights, the study further seeks to

identify contextually appropriate strategies for strengthening fair play within Zimbabwean universities.

The study draws together the sportsmanship model, moral disengagement theory, social learning theory, and communitarian ethics to develop a multidimensional understanding of how fair play is constructed, negotiated, violated, and potentially reinforced within university sporting environments. This theoretical integration enables fair play to be examined not merely as a matter of individual moral conduct, but as an outcome shaped by interactions among personal agency, social learning, institutional cultures, community values, and governance structures. Such an approach is particularly important in the Zimbabwean and broader African context, where understandings of ethical sporting conduct may be mediated by locally situated social relations, cultural expectations, institutional constraints, and communal conceptions of responsibility.

By foregrounding the perspectives of those directly involved in administering university sport, the study contributes contextually grounded evidence to a literature that has predominantly conceptualised fair play through athlete-centred, normative, or Global North perspectives. Its contribution is therefore both theoretical and applied. Theoretically, it advances a context-sensitive and institutionally embedded conceptualisation of fair play that connects individual ethical agency with organisational and communitarian dimensions of sporting conduct. Further, the paper generates evidence on the forms, perceived drivers, and consequences of fair play violations within an under-researched African university sport setting. The findings provide a basis for strengthening ethical governance, safeguarding practices, institutional policy, administrator and athlete education, and accountability mechanisms. Ultimately, this paper informs the development of a culturally responsive and practically applicable framework for promoting sustainable fair play within Zimbabwean universities, with potential relevance to comparable university sport systems across sub-Saharan Africa.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the sportsmanship model, which positions sport as a site for moral education and character development rather than a purely competitive arena (Krishnani & Kanade, 2025). The model aligns with the Arizona Sports Summit Accord, which identifies trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship as core ethical pillars, and the True Sport

Framework (2024), emphasising integrity and accountability. Scholarship confirms that egooriented motivational climates, prioritising dominance over ethical norms, heighten the risk of misconduct (Hogue, 2024; Gu & Cheng, 2025). The perspectives resonate with the philosophy of Olympism, which values effort, ethical adherence, and learning through example (International Olympic Committee, 2024). African communitarian philosophy offers additional insight. *Ubuntu* ethics emphasise relational morality, reciprocity, and collective wellbeing (Metz, 2019). Sport in African contexts is, therefore, not merely competitive but educational and socially formative, contributing to holistic development and social transformation (Mwaanga & Chifita, 2025). Ethical erosion in university sport, thus, represents not only individual failings but broader cultural and developmental tensions.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative, exploratory design grounded in an interpretivist epistemological paradigm and informed by a phenomenological orientation. This approach was appropriate because the study sought to appreciate how university sports administrators interpret and experience issues of fair play within their institutional contexts, rather than to generate statistically representative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The phenomenological orientation enabled attention to participants' subjective experiences and meanings, while encouraging the researcher to bracket prior assumptions and focus on how fair play was understood and encountered in practice (Allen, 2023; Hassan, 2024).

The study population comprised sports administrators from the 16 universities affiliated to the ZUSA. The accessible population consisted of 35 administrators: 16 Sports Directors, nine Deputy Sports Directors, and 10 Sports Officers. These groups were selected because of their direct involvement in university sport governance, regulation, athlete supervision, policy implementation, and ethical oversight. Stratified purposive sampling was used to ensure representation across the three administrative levels while retaining the information-rich character of qualitative sampling (Patton, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). Sample size was determined by data saturation. Saturation was reached after 23 interviews involving 12 Sports Directors, five Deputy Sports Directors, and six Sports Officers, when recurring accounts and thematic redundancy indicated sufficient analytical depth (Guest et al., 2006; Saunders et al., 2018).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews because this format enabled participants to provide detailed accounts of their experiences while allowing the researcher to probe emerging issues through follow-up questions (Alsaawi, 2020; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2024). An interview guide was pre-tested with one participant from each administrative category and refined before full data collection. Interviews lasted approximately 40–60 minutes and were conducted in English. Fourteen interviews were conducted face-to-face and nine by telephone. Combining interview modes improved participant accessibility while maintaining the depth and credibility of qualitative inquiry (Archibald et al., 2019; Irvine et al., 2020).

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed manually using thematic analysis. Coding proceeded iteratively from open coding, where initial concepts were generated from participants' accounts, to axial coding, where related codes were grouped into broader conceptual categories, and finally to theme development aligned with the study objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Analytic memos were maintained throughout to strengthen transparency, reflexivity, and consistency in interpretive decisions (Nowell et al., 2022). The researcher retained full responsibility for coding, theme development, interpretation, and theoretical integration.

Ethical approval and permission to conduct the study were obtained from the ZUSA Executive. Participants received information about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without penalty, and informed consent was obtained before participation (Israel & Hay, 2021). Data were stored securely, identifying information was removed from transcripts, and pseudonyms were used for reporting, including SD for Sports Directors, DSD for Deputy Sports Directors, and SO for Sports Officers. These procedures were intended to protect anonymity, encourage candid participation, and uphold established standards of qualitative research ethics (Tracy, 2020; Brinkmann, 2022).

Results

The final study sample comprised 23 participants. The distribution of the accessible population, interviewed participants, and saturation outcomes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Accessible Population, Sample Size, Sampling Coverage, and Saturation by Participant Category

Participant Category	Accessible Population (N)	Sample/ Interviewed (n)	Sampling Coverage (%)	Saturation Indicator
Sports Directors	16	12	75.0%	No new themes identified
Deputy Sports Directors	9	5	55.6%	Repetition of perspectives
Sports Officers	10	6	60.0%	Thematic redundancy observed
Total	35	23	65.7%	Data saturation achieved

Overall, 65.7% of the accessible population was interviewed, indicating substantial coverage for a qualitative study. The high participation rate among Sports Directors (75.0%) strengthened strategic-level insights, while adequate representation of Deputy Sports Directors (55.6%) and Sports Officers (60.0%) ensured operational depth. Importantly, saturation was achieved across all categories, confirming that analytical completeness was reached despite variations in proportional coverage.

To enhance credibility and provide contextual depth, selected illustrative quotations from participants are included, reflecting shared and divergent perspectives on the perceived prevalence of fair play violations, the causes of how fair play violations affect university sport environments and outcomes.

Table 2 provides a summary of the perceived violations of fair play in university sport in Zimbabwe. A theme was classified as *Very High* prevalence when it appeared across all respondent categories (Sports Directors, Deputy Sports Directors, and Sports Officers) and was mentioned by the majority of participants; *High* prevalence when it appeared consistently across respondent categories but with slightly fewer references; *Moderate–High* prevalence when mentioned recurrently but not uniformly across all interviews; and *Low but Notable* when raised by a limited number of participants yet judged analytically significant due to its ethical or institutional implications. Prevalence, therefore, reflects

patterns of recurrence and cross-case consistency, rather than numerical quantification, in keeping with qualitative research conventions.

Table 2: Perceived Prevalence of Fair Play Violations

Theme	Observed behaviours	Prevalence across participants	Illustrative condensed quote
Cheating	Use of performance-enhancing substances; match-fixing; manipulation of results; use of non-student athletes; identity-card fraud; ball tampering; diving and feigned injury	Very high — reported across all participant categories	“Teams accused each other of using non-student athletes ... an enquiry later confirmed the allegations.” (SD2)
Violence	Aggressive play; elbowing; tripping; rough play; deliberate fouling; intimidation of opponents and officials	Very high — consistently reported across all participant categories	“Our men’s football team was given a last warning for violence.” (SD1)
Incivility	Arguing with officials; booing; jeering; walkouts; delaying tactics; drunkenness; excessive or provocative celebrations	Very high — reported in nearly all interviews	“One player kept arguing with the referee until he was cautioned for being a nuisance.” (SD11)
Prejudice and discrimination	Discrimination based on institutional status; expressions of superiority; ridicule of opponents’ kits, transport, facilities, or institutional resources	High — frequently reported, particularly by SDs and DSDs	“Supporters mocked the opposing team’s kits as second-hand clothes ... the players looked visibly uncomfortable.” (SD3)
Gamesmanship	Psychological manipulation; distracting opponents; deliberate delays; feigned injury; strategic exploitation of rules	High — reported across multiple participant categories, particularly SDs and SOs	“A player pretended to be seriously injured, then jumped up to take a free kick.” (SD10)

Theme	Observed behaviours	Prevalence across participants	Illustrative condensed quote
Spectator-driven misconduct	Booing; vulgar songs and chants; drunken behaviour; verbal abuse; intimidation of players and officials	Moderate–high — particularly prominent in DSD and SO accounts	“Drunken spectators booed officials and sang vulgar songs, causing serious disruption.” (DSD5)
Emerging forms of abuse	Hazing; cyberbullying; digitally mediated harassment and intimidation	Low but notable — raised by a small number of participants	“Hazing and cyberbullying among athletes cannot be ruled out in this era of technology.” (DSD3; SO5)

Analysis of the interviews identified seven prominent forms of fair play violations within Zimbabwean university sport: cheating, violence, incivility, prejudice and symbolic exclusion, gamesmanship, spectator misconduct, and emerging forms of abuse. The frequency with which these themes occurred varied across participants, with cheating, violence, and incivility being the most widely reported. Prejudice, gamesmanship, and spectator misconduct were also prominent, while hazing and cyberbullying were less frequently reported but identified as emerging concerns.

Cheating emerged as one of the most prevalent forms of fair play violation and was reported across all three categories of participants. Administrators described a range of practices, including the use of performance-enhancing substances, match and result manipulation, use of non-student athletes, identity-card fraud, ball tampering, diving, and feigned injury. The use of ineligible athletes was particularly prominent in participants’ accounts. One Sports Director described an incident in which suspicions concerning player eligibility resulted in formal investigation:

Teams accused each other of using non-student athletes ... an enquiry later confirmed the allegations. (SD2)

Participants’ accounts indicated that cheating occurred both within competition itself and through administrative practices associated with athlete eligibility and identification.

Violence was also consistently reported across participant categories. The behaviours identified included aggressive play, deliberate fouling, elbowing, tripping, rough play, and intimidation directed towards opponents and match

officials. Participants described incidents ranging from physical aggression during matches to conduct that resulted in formal warnings and disciplinary action. One Sports Director reported:

Our men's football team was given a last warning for violence. (SD1)

The recurrence of such accounts across interviews positioned violence as one of the more visible forms of fair play violation encountered by university sports administrators.

Incivility was reported in nearly all interviews and encompassed both verbal and behavioural misconduct. Participants identified persistent arguing with referees, booing, jeering, walkouts, deliberate delaying tactics, drunken behaviour, and excessive celebrations intended to provoke or ridicule opponents. Disputes with match officials featured particularly prominently. As one participant explained:

One player kept arguing with the referee until he was cautioned for being a nuisance. (SD11)

The accounts showed that incivility involved athletes as well as other actors within the university sporting environment and frequently occurred during highly contested matches.

Participants also reported discriminatory and exclusionary conduct associated with differences in institutional status and resources. These behaviours included expressions of superiority and ridicule directed towards the perceived quality of other universities' sporting kits, transport, and facilities. One Sports Director recalled:

Supporters mocked the opposing team's kits as second-hand clothes ... the players looked visibly uncomfortable. (SD3)

Such incidents were reported particularly by Sports Directors and Deputy Sports Directors. Participants' accounts indicated that fair play violations could therefore involve symbolic and interpersonal conduct in addition to direct physical or rule-based misconduct.

Gamesmanship was another frequently identified theme. Participants described behaviours that did not always constitute explicit rule violations but were perceived as inconsistent with the spirit of fair competition. These included psychological manipulation of opponents, deliberate distractions,

time-wasting, feigned injury, and strategic exploitation of rules. One Sports Director provided the following example:

A player pretended to be seriously injured, then jumped up to take a free kick. (SD10)

Such accounts revealed situations in which participants distinguished between formally complying with sporting rules and behaving in ways they regarded as consistent with fair play.

Spectators were also identified as contributors to fair play violations. Reported behaviours included booing, vulgar songs and chants, drunkenness, verbal abuse, and intimidation of match officials and opposing teams. Spectator misconduct was especially prominent in the accounts of Deputy Sports Directors and Sports Officers. One Deputy Sports Director stated:

Drunken spectators booed officials and sang vulgar songs, causing serious disruption. (DSD5)

These findings demonstrate that perceived fair play violations were not restricted to athletes but also involved individuals surrounding university sporting competitions.

Hazing and cyberbullying emerged less frequently than the other forms of misconduct but were nevertheless identified by some participants as areas of concern. Administrators referred to the possibility of initiation-related practices among athletes and the increasing potential for harassment to occur through digital communication platforms. One account captured these concerns:

Hazing and cyber-bullying among athletes cannot be ruled out in this era of technology. (SO5)

Compared with cheating, violence, and incivility, participants provided fewer accounts of specific incidents involving these forms of abuse. They were, therefore, classified as low-frequency but notable emerging forms of fair play violation within the dataset.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Perceived Causes of Fair Play Violations

Theme	Definition/Scope	Illustrative Quotes (Pseudonyms)
Validation	Desire for recognition, approval, scholarships, selection by scouts, parental pride, and media visibility. For some athletes, participation also provides financial support linked to their education and livelihood.	SD1: "If their skills and techniques fail to yield the desired results and prove useless, dirty tactics become plan B." SO4: "Some students pay fees through sports allowances ... it's a matter of survival."
Ambition	Personal and institutional drive to win, including ego satisfaction, pride, legacy, institutional success, and progression to higher levels of competitive sport.	DSD1: "We are expected to bring medals as a sign of success in our key result areas." SD7: "If you don't win, you don't go to the next level of tertiary sport."
Rewards	Tangible incentives associated with sporting success, including monetary bonuses, prizes, scholarships, allowances, and advancement to subsequent stages of competition.	SD3: "When there is monetary reward, the game ceases to be a competition of skills, but tricks to get the reward ... at all costs." SO5: "Winning bonuses and scholarships create pressure to succeed, sometimes unethically."
Pressure	Institutional expectations, peer influence, parental demands, performance anxiety, and frustration associated with inadequate preparation or high-stakes competition.	SD2: "Teams accused each other of using non-student athletes ... the enquiry supported the accusers."
Culture	Normalisation of gamesmanship, tolerance of indiscipline, retaliatory practices, inconsistent enforcement of rules, and perceived weaknesses in sporting governance.	SD11: "If you don't punish offenders, you set the wrong precedent." SD9: "So much will be at stake, players and coaches cannot resist the temptation."

Table 3 presents five interrelated themes identified from participants' accounts of the perceived causes of fair play violations in Zimbabwean university sport: validation, ambition, rewards, pressure, and culture. These themes were evident across the different categories of sports administrators, although participants described them in varying ways and contexts.

Validation emerged as a prominent theme in participants' accounts. Sports administrators reported that student-athletes sought recognition through sporting achievement, including scholarships, selection by scouts, parental

approval, institutional recognition, and media visibility. Participants indicated that the pursuit of these outcomes could influence how athletes approached competition, particularly when conventional performance strategies were perceived as insufficient. One Sports Director explained:

If their skills and techniques fail to yield the desired results and prove useless, dirty tactics become plan B. (SD1)

Participants also associated sporting success with access to material and educational benefits. For some student-athletes, sports allowances contributed directly towards meeting educational expenses. As one Sports Officer stated:

Some students pay fees through sports allowances ... it's a matter of survival. (SO4)

Thus, participants perceived recognition, educational opportunities, and financial benefits associated with sport as important factors influencing athlete behaviour.

Ambition was identified at both individual and institutional levels. Participants described student-athletes as aspiring to win competitions, gain recognition, progress to higher levels of sport, and establish personal sporting achievements. At the institutional level, administrators reported expectations to secure medals, trophies, and other indicators of competitive success. One Deputy Sports Director explained:

We are expected to bring medals as a sign of success in our key result areas. (DSD1)

Progression within competitive university sport was also described as dependent upon successful performance. As another participant stated:

If you don't win, you don't go to the next level of tertiary sport. (SD7)

Participants therefore described ambition as extending beyond athletes' personal aspirations to include expectations placed upon sports departments and university teams.

Rewards were another frequently reported factor associated with fair play violations. Participants identified scholarships, allowances, monetary bonuses, prizes, and progression to subsequent stages of tournaments as tangible benefits attached to sporting success. Several participants reported that the availability of material rewards increased the importance attached to winning. One Sports Director observed:

When there is monetary reward, the game ceases to be a competition of skills, but tricks to get the reward ... at all costs. (SD3)

A Sports Officer similarly reported:

Winning bonuses and scholarships create pressure to succeed, sometimes unethically. (SO5)

Participants' accounts therefore associated the perceived value of competitive outcomes with the material and educational rewards available to successful athletes and teams.

Pressure was reported across the interviews as arising from multiple sources. Participants identified institutional expectations, peer rivalry, parental demands, performance anxiety, inadequate preparation, and the high stakes attached to inter-university competitions. Some accounts linked these pressures to specific incidents of misconduct. For example, one Sports Director described disputes surrounding the eligibility of athletes:

Teams accused each other of using non-student athletes ... the enquiry supported the accusers. (SD2)

Participants also described situations in which teams perceived themselves as being under considerable pressure to remain competitive, particularly where progression, institutional reputation, or other benefits depended upon performance outcomes.

Culture emerged as a further theme in participants' explanations of fair play violations. Administrators described sporting environments in which gamesmanship, indiscipline, retaliatory behaviour, inconsistent sanctions, and weak enforcement of rules could become recurrent features of competition. Participants particularly emphasised the importance of responses to misconduct. One Sports Director stated:

If you don't punish offenders, you set the wrong precedent. (SD11)

Another participant highlighted the competitive circumstances surrounding misconduct:

So much will be at stake; players and coaches cannot resist the temptation. (SD9)

Participants' accounts indicated that repeated behaviours and institutional responses to violations contributed to perceptions about what conduct was tolerated within university sport.

Impact of Fair Play Violations in University Sport

This section presents the findings on the perceived impact of fair play violations in university sport in Zimbabwe, as reported by Sports Directors (SDs), Deputy Sports Directors (DSDs), and Sports Officers (SOs). The results are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Perceived Impact of Fair Play Violations in University Sport.

Theme	Core Impacts Identified	Frequency and Salience	Illustrative Quotations
Integrity	Undermining of fairness; erosion of public trust; corruption of the game; compromise of amateur sporting ideals; devaluation of genuine student effort; negative role-modelling	Universally reported across SDs, DSDs and SOs	"Universities should churn out young men and women who will practise and promote fairness, not only in sports, but in life in general." (SD2)
Safety	Increased risk of injuries; health-related harm; creation of unsafe, aggressive and potentially violent playing environments	Strongly emphasised by SDs and SOs	"The playing field can resemble a battlefield." (SD1)
Culture	Hostility; unhealthy sporting culture; disrespect for opponents and officials; normalisation of cheating; poor moral socialisation	Highly recurrent, particularly among SOs and DSDs	"Maybe we need to ask ourselves the kind of culture we want ... by letting them cheat we are not preparing them well for life after university." (SO4)
Discipline	Disruption of games; repeated challenges to officials; misconduct; disciplinary sanctions; potential long-term reputational damage to institutions	Widely acknowledged across all participant categories	"When fairness disappears, gamesmanship replaces it and spoils everything." (SD4)
Performance	Reduced quality of play; diminished competitiveness; frustration; impaired athlete performance and motivation	Consistently reported, particularly by SOs	"They feel betrayed by the system." (SO6)

Analysis of participants' accounts identified five major perceived impacts of fair play violations in Zimbabwean university sport: integrity, safety, culture, discipline, and performance. As summarised in Table 4, concerns relating to integrity were reported across all participant categories, while safety, culture, discipline, and performance also occurred recurrently in the interviews. Participants described these impacts as affecting athletes, sporting competitions, university teams, and institutions.

The erosion of sporting integrity emerged as the most consistently reported impact of fair play violations. Sports Directors, Deputy Sports Directors, and Sports Officers described unfair conduct as undermining the credibility of competition and diminishing confidence in sporting outcomes. Participants associated fair play violations with the devaluation of genuine student effort, compromised amateur sporting ideals, reduced public trust, and negative role-modelling.

One Sports Director emphasised the wider responsibility of universities in developing graduates who value fairness:

Universities should churn out young men and women who will practise and promote fairness, not only in sports, but in life in general. (SD2)

Participants further reported that where cheating or other forms of misconduct occurred, athletes who competed fairly could perceive sporting outcomes as less credible. Integrity concerns therefore extended beyond individual incidents to participants' perceptions of the credibility of university sport more broadly.

Safety emerged as another prominent impact, particularly in the accounts of Sports Directors and Sports Officers. Participants associated fair play violations with aggressive play, increased risk of injury, health-related harm, and unsafe competitive environments. The intensity of some sporting encounters was captured by one Sports Director:

The playing field can resemble a battlefield. (SD1)

Participants described situations in which excessive aggression and other forms of misconduct increased physical risks to athletes and altered the environment in which competitions were conducted.

Participants frequently reported that fair play violations affected the prevailing culture of university sport. Their accounts referred to hostility, disrespect towards opponents and officials, acceptance of cheating, and the reproduction

of inappropriate sporting behaviours. A Sports Officer reflected on the implications of tolerating such behaviour:

Maybe we need to ask ourselves the kind of culture we want ... by letting them cheat we are not preparing them well for life after university. (SO4)

This theme was particularly recurrent among Sports Officers and Deputy Sports Directors. Participants' accounts indicated concern about the behaviours and values that could become accepted within university sporting environments when misconduct was repeatedly tolerated.

Disciplinary consequences were widely reported across all three participant categories. Participants identified disruption of matches, repeated challenges to officials, misconduct by athletes and other sporting actors, disciplinary sanctions, and potential reputational consequences for teams and institutions. One Sports Director described the effect of declining fairness on the conduct of competitions:

When fairness disappears, gamesmanship replaces it and spoils everything. (SD4)

Participants also reported that misconduct could require intervention by match officials or university sports authorities and, in some cases, result in penalties against individuals or teams.

Participants also associated fair play violations with athlete and team performance. Sports Officers reported that perceived unfairness could generate frustration, reduce motivation, affect the quality of competition, and negatively influence athletes' performance. A Sports Officer described athletes' reactions to perceived unfairness: *"They feel betrayed by the system."* (SO6)

Participants reported that where athletes perceived competition as unfair, their motivation and confidence in the competitive process could be adversely affected. They also described unfair practices as diminishing the quality and competitiveness of sporting encounters.

Strategies for Promoting Fair Play in University Sport

Participants identified seven principal strategies for promoting fair play in Zimbabwean university sport: education, motivation, corrective action, preparation, team building, conflict resolution, and support systems. As presented in Table 5, these strategies encompassed measures directed at

athletes, coaches, sports administrators, institutional structures, and the wider university sporting environment.

Education emerged as a prominent strategy for promoting fair play. Participants advocated systematic education on sporting ethics, fair play values, acceptable conduct, and the consequences of violations. Suggested approaches included workshops, awareness programmes, coaching sessions, and activities incorporated into sporting events.

Table 5: Participant-Proposed Strategies for Promoting Fair Play in University Sport

Theme	Description of Strategy	Key Illustrative Quotations
Education	Systematic education on ethics, fair play values, and consequences of violations through workshops, coaching sessions, rituals, and awareness campaigns. Emphasis on reorienting athletes away from “win-at-all-costs” mentalities.	“The mind is the factory of all the retrogressive mentalities like the ‘win-at-all-cost’ ... that need to be erased from their minds and replaced by mentalities that uphold fair play.” (SD2) “It’s unfortunate that coaches focus on technical aspects and negate ethical issues during coaching sessions.” (DSD1)
Motivation	Use of incentives, recognition, and awards that acknowledge sportsmanship alongside competitive performance. Emphasis on recognising integrity, respect, and appropriate sporting behaviour.	“There should be lots of carrots to dangle in the process of promoting fair play.” (SO1) “Is it not natural that we all love a pat-on-the-back for good behaviour?” (DSD4)
Corrective Action	Enforcement of sanctions such as suspensions, fines, and bans; strengthening disciplinary committees and reporting mechanisms; and aligning disciplinary responses with student ordinances and applicable national laws.	“The Disciplinary Committee must be capacitated. Its teeth must be sharpened so that it bites offenders.” (SO4) “Even if these are student games, law enforcement personnel should be roped in.” (SD12)
Preparation	Psychological preparation, stress management, counselling, mentoring, and pre-competition practices intended to reinforce sportsmanship before, during, and after competition.	“We need rituals that precede matches ... when players shake hands ... the spirit of sportsmanship should start from the onset.” (SD1)

Theme	Description of Strategy	Key Illustrative Quotations
Team Building	Promotion of cooperation, mutual respect, shared values, and cohesion through structured team-building activities and exemplary conduct by sports administrators and coaches.	"... if the culture of teamwork is established, it will solve many things." (SO3) "Administrators should be exemplary ... youths will be copying." (SD6)
Conflict Resolution	Open communication, mediation, and early resolution of disputes to prevent disagreements from escalating into hostility, aggression, or violence.	"If conflicts are not resolved properly the playing field will become toxic and violent." (SO5)
Support Systems	Provision of sports psychologists, counsellors, mentoring structures, multi-stakeholder involvement, institutional support, and participation of relevant university departments such as Student Affairs.	"Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach ... involving other university departments like Student Affairs." (SO6)

Participants particularly emphasised changing attitudes towards competition and challenging the "win-at-all-costs" mentality. One Sports Director stated:

The mind is the factory of all the retrogressive mentalities like the 'win-at-all-costs' ... that need to be erased from their minds and replaced by mentalities that uphold fair play. (SD2)

Participants also reported that ethical issues received insufficient attention during routine coaching. A Deputy Sports Director observed:

"It's unfortunate that coaches focus on technical aspects and negate ethical issues during coaching sessions." (DSD1)

The accounts therefore identified both formal educational activities and the integration of fair play education into routine coaching as proposed approaches.

Participants also proposed the use of motivation and recognition to encourage fair play. Suggested measures included incentives, awards, public acknowledgement, and other forms of recognition for athletes and teams demonstrating sportsmanship and ethical conduct. One Sports Officer stated:

There should be lots of carrots to dangle in the process of promoting fair play. (SO1)

Similarly, a Deputy Sports Director emphasised recognition of appropriate behaviour:

Is it not natural that we all love a pat-on-the-back for good behaviour? (DSD4)

Participants therefore proposed extending recognition beyond sporting performance and competitive outcomes to include behaviour consistent with fair play.

Corrective action was another major strategy identified by participants. Their proposals included suspensions, fines, bans, reporting mechanisms, strengthened disciplinary structures, and consistent application of institutional regulations. Participants particularly emphasised strengthening the capacity of disciplinary structures. One Sports Officer stated:

The Disciplinary Committee must be capacitated. Its teeth must be sharpened so that it bites offenders. (SO4)

For conduct considered sufficiently serious, participants also suggested involvement of authorities beyond university sporting structures. As one Sports Director explained:

Even if these are student games, law enforcement personnel should be roped in. (SD12)

The accounts therefore emphasised institutional mechanisms for responding to violations and holding offenders accountable.

Participants identified preparation before competition as another strategy for promoting fair play. Suggested measures included psychological preparation, stress management, counselling, mentoring, and activities designed to reinforce appropriate conduct before, during, and after competition. Some participants specifically emphasised pre-match practices intended to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect. One Sports Director explained:

We need rituals that precede matches ... when players shake hands ... the spirit of sportsmanship should start from the onset. (SD1)

Participants thus proposed incorporating fair play into the preparation of athletes rather than addressing misconduct only after it had occurred.

Team building was also identified as a strategy for strengthening fair play. Participants proposed activities promoting cooperation, cohesion, mutual respect, shared values, and collective responsibility among athletes. One Sports Officer stated:

If the culture of teamwork is established, it will solve many things. (SO3)

Participants also emphasised the behaviour of sports administrators and coaches as part of this process. One Sports Director observed:

Administrators should be exemplary ... youths will be copying. (SD6)

The findings therefore showed that participants associated team building with both relationships among athletes and the conduct demonstrated by those responsible for managing and coaching university teams.

Participants proposed early and structured resolution of conflicts arising within university sport. Open communication, mediation, and timely intervention in disputes were identified as mechanisms for preventing disagreements from escalating. A Sports Officer warned that:

If conflicts are not resolved properly, the playing field will become toxic and violent. (SO5)

Participants therefore emphasised addressing disputes before they developed into hostility, aggression, or violence during sporting competitions.

Support systems emerged as a cross-cutting strategy in participants' accounts. Participants proposed access to sports psychologists, counsellors, mentors, university administrators, and other institutional structures capable of supporting athletes and sports programmes. They also emphasised involvement of university departments beyond sports administration. A Sports Officer stated:

Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach ... involving other university departments like Student Affairs. (SO6)

Participants proposed a multi-stakeholder approach involving sports structures alongside other relevant university departments and support services.

Discussion

This study provides a contextually grounded account of how fair play is understood, violated, and potentially restored within Zimbabwean university sport. Four interrelated findings are particularly significant. First, fair play violations extend considerably beyond conventional cheating to encompass violence, incivility, prejudice and symbolic exclusion, gamesmanship, spectator misconduct and emerging digitally mediated forms of abuse. Second, these violations are associated with an interconnected motivational and institutional architecture comprising validation, ambition, rewards, pressure and culture. Third, their consequences extend beyond individual athletes to the integrity, safety, culture, discipline and performance of university sport. Finally, participants

proposed education, motivation, corrective action, preparation, team building, conflict resolution and institutional support as mutually reinforcing strategies for restoring fair play. Taken together, these findings challenge individualistic explanations of sporting misconduct and suggest that fair play in university sport is better understood as an institutionally produced ethical climate in which individual behaviour interacts with incentive structures, organisational norms, governance arrangements and wider socio-economic conditions.

The prominence of cheating, violence and incivility across all participant categories suggests that ethical violations are not perceived as exceptional occurrences at the margins of Zimbabwean university sport. Rather, administrators encounter misconduct in multiple forms and at different points in the sporting process. Particularly significant is the breadth of cheating reported, including performance-enhancing substances, result manipulation, identity fraud, use of non-student athletes, ball tampering, diving and feigned injury. This finding expands the meaning of fair play beyond conduct occurring during competition. The reported use of ineligible athletes and identity manipulation demonstrates that unfairness may be embedded in administrative and eligibility processes before athletes enter the field of play.

This finding supports contemporary arguments that fair play cannot adequately be reduced to compliance with the technical rules of a sport. The International Fair Play Committee (2023) conceptualises fair play more broadly through integrity, equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect, while Müller (2021) similarly locates it within the ethical foundations of sport. The findings extend this position by showing that the legitimacy of competition depends not merely on whether athletes obey rules during a match, but also on whether institutions create credible conditions under which legitimate competitors participate. This reinforces Anderson and White's (2020) and Kihl et al.'s (2024) arguments that sporting misconduct should be examined through institutional cultures and governance arrangements rather than exclusively through individual moral failure.

The distinction becomes particularly apparent in relation to gamesmanship. Participants described time-wasting, psychological manipulation, feigned injury and strategic exploitation of rules, behaviours that may remain technically within or close to the rules while violating their ethical purpose. The finding exposes an important distinction between *legality* and *legitimacy*: behaviour can exploit the rules without necessarily embodying fair play. This

resonates with Krishnani and Kanade's (2025) conception of sportsmanship as extending beyond formal compliance towards respect, responsibility and ethical competition. The finding therefore suggests that regulatory systems based exclusively on detecting explicit rule breaches will address only part of the fair play problem.

Violence and incivility further reveal how ethical deterioration becomes embodied in interpersonal relations. Reports of deliberate fouling, elbowing, tripping, intimidation, arguing with officials, jeering and provocative celebrations demonstrate that violations affect the social environment in which sport occurs. These practices contradict the educational rationale of university sport as a context for developing discipline, cooperation, leadership and character (Hanson & Savage, 2012). They also undermine the sportsmanship model underpinning this study, which conceptualises sport as a moral and educational space rather than simply a mechanism for producing winners (Krishnani & Kanade, 2025).

The findings concerning prejudice and symbolic exclusion deepen this argument. Ridiculing another institution's kits, transport, facilities or resources demonstrates that harm may be produced without physical violence or formal rule-breaking. Such practices correspond with scholarship on symbolic and relational misconduct in sport, where humiliation, exclusion and stigmatisation reproduce status inequalities and compromise belonging (Lange et al., 2025; McCarthy, 2024). In the Zimbabwean university context, this finding is particularly consequential because institutions compete from unequal resource positions. Material inequality may therefore become symbolically reconstructed as institutional inferiority, allowing competitive rivalry to become a mechanism through which socio-economic differences between universities and athletes are publicly performed.

The identification of spectator misconduct similarly demonstrates that fair play is an ecosystem property rather than an athlete-only responsibility. Booing, vulgar chanting, drunkenness and intimidation implicate spectators in the production of the ethical climate surrounding competition. The unit of ethical analysis must consequently extend from the athlete to coaches, administrators, supporters, institutions and governing structures. This is consistent with social learning theory: behaviour is shaped not only by individual dispositions but also by conduct that is observed, modelled, rewarded or tolerated within the surrounding environment (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2024).

Although hazing and cyberbullying were less frequently reported, their emergence is important. Their relatively low visibility should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of negligible risk. Cyberbullying, for example, can occur outside the physical and administrative visibility of sports officials, while hazing may be concealed within team cultures and initiation practices. Kowalski and Toth (2025) demonstrate that digital environments extend sporting abuse beyond conventional temporal and spatial boundaries, while Miguel et al. (2026) conceptualise hazing as non-accidental harm requiring safeguarding responses. The present findings therefore suggest an expanding ethical jurisdiction for university sports governance, from regulating conduct on the field to protecting athletes within physical, relational and digital environments.

The five perceived drivers, validation, ambition, rewards, pressure and culture, provide perhaps the strongest evidence that unethical behaviour cannot be understood solely through the character of individual athletes. Instead, the findings reveal a political economy of winning in which sporting success carries social, educational, economic and institutional value.

Validation was associated with recognition, scholarships, parental pride, media visibility and selection by scouts. Most significantly, some participants linked sporting success directly to educational survival, with sports allowances contributing towards university fees. This changes the ethical meaning of competition. Where sporting success determines not merely prestige but educational access or economic security, losing may carry consequences considerably greater than sporting disappointment. The observation that for some athletes it becomes “a matter of survival” demonstrates the importance of interpreting fair play within Zimbabwe’s socio-economic context rather than importing assumptions from more affluent university sport systems.

This finding gives empirical substance to Mwaanga and Chifita’s (2025) broader argument that African sport must be interpreted within its developmental and socio-economic realities. It also complicates conventional moral disengagement explanations. Moral disengagement theory explains how individuals reconstruct unethical behaviour through mechanisms that neutralise guilt and make misconduct psychologically acceptable (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2024; Ring et al., 2024). The present study suggests that such rationalisation may be intensified when athletes perceive tangible educational and livelihood consequences. “Dirty tactics” can then be reconstructed not simply as cheating

but as necessary adaptation to circumstances in which substantial opportunities depend on success.

This does not legitimise misconduct; rather, it demonstrates why interventions based exclusively on moral exhortation are unlikely to be sufficient. Ethical behaviour is more difficult to sustain when institutions simultaneously preach fair play while structuring rewards, progression and recognition overwhelmingly around winning.

Ambition reinforces this tension. Participants described success not only as an athlete aspiration but as an organisational performance expectation. The statement that sports administrators are expected to produce medals as evidence of achievement in their “key result areas” is especially revealing. It suggests that competitive outcomes may be incorporated into institutional performance systems. The win-at-all-costs mentality is potentially produced not only from below by ambitious athletes but also from above through organisational expectations.

This finding corresponds with research on ego-oriented motivational climates, in which success is evaluated primarily through superiority and competitive outcomes rather than mastery, development and ethical participation (Bortoli et al., 2024; Gu & Cheng, 2025; Hogue, 2024). The implication is that an institution cannot credibly demand fair play from athletes while assessing coaches and administrators principally through medals, victories and tournament progression. Ethical reform therefore requires scrutiny of the institutional metrics through which sporting success itself is defined.

Rewards intensify this dynamic. Scholarships, allowances, prizes, winning bonuses and tournament progression increase the material value of competitive outcomes. This finding supports Carson et al. (2025) and Delrue et al. (2024), who caution against motivational climates excessively dominated by extrinsic rewards. The critical issue is not that rewards are inherently unethical, but that reward architecture communicates what an institution values. When recognition is attached almost exclusively to winning, while sportsmanship, ethical leadership and respect receive little institutional recognition, incentives may inadvertently privilege outcomes over processes.

Pressure connects these motivational forces. Participants identified institutional expectations, parental demands, peer rivalry, inadequate preparation, performance anxiety and high-stakes competition. Pérez Triviño and López

Frías (2024) and Ring et al. (2024) similarly associate ethical stress with conditions under which competitive demands weaken ethical decision-making. The present findings add contextual specificity by demonstrating how pressure can arise simultaneously from interpersonal, institutional and material sources. An athlete may therefore experience a convergence of expectations from family, peers, coaches, university authorities and personal economic circumstances, rather than a single pressure to win.

Culture occupies a distinctive position among the findings because it appears simultaneously as a cause and consequence of fair play violations. Participants described gamesmanship, indiscipline, retaliation, inconsistent sanctions and weak enforcement as practices capable of becoming normalised. At the same time, the impact findings showed that repeated violations themselves produce hostility, disrespect and acceptance of cheating. Culture therefore operates recursively: existing norms enable misconduct, while repeated misconduct further consolidates those norms.

This circular relationship is well explained by social learning and institutional perspectives. Social learning theory suggests that individuals reproduce behaviours they observe being modelled or rewarded (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2024). Institutional theory extends this logic to organisations, explaining how repeated practices acquire legitimacy and become embedded as expected ways of behaving (Dowling et al., 2024; Kihl et al., 2024). If athletes repeatedly observe successful competitors cheating without meaningful consequences, misconduct communicates an institutional lesson regardless of formal fair play policies.

The finding has particular significance for university sport because universities are educational institutions. Participants themselves understood sporting conduct as preparation for life beyond university. This resonates strongly with the sportsmanship model and with the broader conception of higher education sport as contributing to whole-person development. If university sport normalises manipulation, aggression or dishonesty in pursuit of success, it risks teaching precisely the behaviours that its educational mandate is expected to challenge.

African communitarian ethics provides an additional interpretive dimension. *Ubuntu* locates moral value in relationships, reciprocity, human dignity and collective flourishing (Metz, 2019). From this perspective, cheating does more than advantage an individual competitor: it damages relationships among

competitors, officials, institutions and communities. Likewise, humiliating an under-resourced university or intimidating officials undermines relational dignity. Fair play within this framework is therefore not simply obedience to abstract rules but maintenance of morally appropriate relationships. The Zimbabwean findings consequently support a more relational understanding of sporting ethics in which the question is not only *Did the athlete break a rule?* but also *What kind of relationships and sporting community does the behaviour create?*

The impacts identified by participants demonstrate why fair play should be regarded as a governance and institutional sustainability issue rather than merely an ethical aspiration. Integrity was the only impact universally identified across participant categories, suggesting that administrators regard credibility as the foundational casualty of unethical sport. Once athletes believe competitors may be ineligible, officials can be intimidated, or results can be manipulated, uncertainty extends beyond individual incidents to the legitimacy of the competitive system itself.

This supports Aier's (2023) argument that trust and equity are foundational to meaningful sporting competition. Integrity is, in this sense, a form of institutional capital. Sporting outcomes possess value because participants and audiences believe that the procedures producing them are legitimate. Repeated violations weaken that assumption and can consequently damage public trust and institutional reputation, consistent with Agnew et al. (2017), Dowling et al. (2024) and Sperber (2024).

The safety findings demonstrate that ethical failure can also become physical harm. When aggressive play and violence are tolerated, fair play ceases to be an abstract moral principle and becomes an athlete-welfare issue. This aligns with Bednář's (2023) argument that athlete welfare forms part of sport's moral foundation and with contemporary safeguarding scholarship that places responsibility on institutions to protect both physical and psychological well-being (Muñoz et al., 2025). Universities therefore have a duty of care that extends beyond providing facilities and medical responses to creating competitive environments in which foreseeable ethical risks are actively governed.

Disciplinary consequences further illustrate the relationship between enforcement and institutional legitimacy. Repeated challenges to officials, disruptions and misconduct weaken confidence in regulatory authority. Choa et al. (2024) similarly emphasise transparent governance, consistent rule

enforcement and ethical leadership. Importantly, the findings imply that sanctions matter not merely because they punish offenders, but because they communicate institutional boundaries. Inconsistent punishment may effectively communicate tolerance, thereby linking discipline back to culture and social learning.

The performance finding is particularly important because it challenges the instrumental logic underpinning unethical behaviour. Misconduct may be adopted because athletes or institutions believe it enhances the likelihood of success, yet participants reported frustration, demotivation, reduced competitive quality and feelings of betrayal. This is consistent with self-determination research indicating that perceived injustice can undermine motivation, well-being and performance (Delrue et al., 2024; Friehs et al., 2024; Schnitzer et al., 2024). Unethical behaviour may therefore produce a paradox: strategies adopted to secure competitive advantage can ultimately damage the motivational and institutional conditions required for sustainable performance.

Participants' proposed strategies are significant because they do not converge on punishment alone. Instead, education, motivation, corrective action, preparation, team building, conflict resolution and support systems collectively indicate a preference for a multidimensional response. This supports the central proposition emerging from the study: systemically produced misconduct requires a systemic intervention.

Education addresses the cognitive and normative foundations of behaviour. Participants' concern that coaches emphasise technical performance while neglecting ethical issues suggests that fair play currently risks being treated as peripheral to athlete development. Jadwiszczak et al. (2025) similarly emphasise structured moral reflection and ethical education. The present study goes further by suggesting that ethical learning should be embedded in routine coaching rather than confined to occasional workshops. Fair play would consequently become part of sporting competence itself.

Motivation reform directly responds to the identified problem of reward structures. If recognition contributes to unethical pressure, then recognition can also be redesigned to reinforce ethical conduct. Awards for sportsmanship, integrity and respect could broaden institutional definitions of success beyond medals. This interpretation is consistent with self-determination perspectives emphasising motivational environments that support internalised values rather

than excessive dependence on external outcomes (Carson et al., 2025; Delrue et al., 2024).

Corrective action remains necessary because education without accountability may have limited effect where misconduct produces competitive benefits. Participants' calls for stronger disciplinary committees, sanctions and, where appropriate, involvement of law-enforcement authorities reflect concern about regulatory credibility. Deterrence perspectives similarly suggest that compliance depends partly upon the perceived certainty and legitimacy of consequences (Hirtenlehner & Leitgöb, 2024). However, the findings suggest that punishment should form one component of a broader restorative architecture rather than constitute the entire response.

Preparation introduces an important psychological dimension. Stress management, counselling, mentoring and pre-match rituals recognise that ethical decisions occur under conditions of emotional intensity and competitive pressure. Preparing athletes psychologically for such moments may strengthen their capacity to maintain ethical standards when stakes are high. Pre-match handshakes and similar rituals are also symbolically important because they frame opponents as legitimate co-participants rather than enemies to be defeated at any cost.

Team building and exemplary leadership address social learning directly. The observation that young athletes copy administrators is consistent with the proposition that ethical culture is learned through modelling (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2024). Coaches and administrators consequently function as moral actors whether they deliberately undertake that role. Their conduct towards opponents, officials, rules and competitive outcomes provides a practical curriculum through which athletes learn what their institution genuinely values.

Conflict resolution similarly responds to the reported violence and incivility. Early mediation and open communication can interrupt the progression from disagreement to retaliation and aggression, consistent with constructive approaches to sports conflict management (Atare, 2024). Finally, participants' emphasis on psychologists, counsellors, Student Affairs departments, mentors and other institutional actors demonstrates recognition that sports departments cannot independently resolve complex behavioural problems. Fair play

therefore requires a whole-institution approach integrating sport governance, student welfare, counselling, safeguarding and disciplinary systems.

The integration of these findings provides the empirical foundation for the proposed Fair Play Restorative Model (FPRM). Its principal contribution lies in moving beyond a linear assumption that unethical athletes simply cause unethical behaviour. Instead, the model conceptualises fair play violations as emerging from interaction among motivational pressures, incentive structures, institutional expectations, social learning and organisational culture.

The empirical pattern suggests a cyclical process. Validation, ambition, rewards and pressure create conditions of ethical vulnerability; organisational culture influences whether those pressures are resisted or normalised; violations then manifest as cheating, violence, incivility, prejudice, gamesmanship and other abuses; and these behaviours generate consequences for integrity, safety, discipline, culture and performance. Critically, damaged culture can feed back into the causal environment, making subsequent misconduct more acceptable. Culture therefore connects antecedents and consequences and explains how episodic violations may become institutionalised.

The restorative dimension interrupts this cycle. Education challenges cognitive justifications for misconduct; motivation reform changes what institutions reward; corrective action re-establishes boundaries; preparation strengthens ethical decision-making under pressure; team building reconstructs relational norms; conflict resolution limits escalation; and support systems embed fair play within wider institutional structures. The FPRM therefore integrates moral disengagement, social learning, sportsmanship and communitarian ethics rather than treating them as competing explanations.

This integration is especially relevant to the African university context. Much fair play scholarship has been developed around athlete-centred or Global North settings, whereas the present findings highlight conditions in which sport intersects with educational access, economic vulnerability, institutional prestige and communal responsibility. The FPRM consequently introduces context without reducing ethical standards to cultural relativism. Cheating and violence remain violations, but their prevention requires understanding the social and institutional conditions within which they become thinkable, justifiable and reproducible.

The central implication is that Zimbabwean universities should reconsider how sporting success is institutionally defined. An institution cannot sustainably promote integrity if its formal and informal reward systems communicate that winning is the dominant indicator of success. Medals, trophies and advancement remain legitimate objectives, but they should coexist with measurable expectations concerning sportsmanship, athlete welfare, disciplinary records, ethical leadership and respect for opponents.

The findings also reposition fair play as part of the educational mission of universities. University athletes occupy a developmental space between education and elite sport. The values normalised at this stage may consequently travel with graduates into professional sport and wider social life. This supports Sipkins' (2023) argument that university sport can contribute to moral development and resonates with the communitarian proposition that sporting behaviour carries consequences for the wider community.

More fundamentally, the study suggests that fair play is simultaneously an ethical, educational, safeguarding, performance and governance resource. Integrity protects the legitimacy of competition; safety protects athletes; ethical culture supports moral development; credible discipline protects institutional authority; and perceived fairness sustains motivation and competitive quality. Investment in fair play should therefore not be understood as competing with sporting performance. Rather, ethical governance constitutes part of the infrastructure through which sustainable sporting excellence becomes possible.

In this respect, the study extends existing fair play scholarship by demonstrating that the central question for university sport is not simply how to persuade individual athletes to behave ethically. The more consequential question is how universities can construct sporting systems in which ethical behaviour is taught, modelled, supported, rewarded and consistently protected. The findings from Zimbabwe indicate that restoring fair play ultimately requires alignment between what universities teach, what sports administrators' model, what institutions reward, what governing structures enforce and what sporting communities collectively regard as legitimate. It is this alignment that transforms fair play from an aspirational principle into an institutional practice.

Conclusion

Drawing on interviews with Sports Directors (SDs), Deputy Sports Directors (DSDs), and Sports Officers (SOs), the findings reveal that violations of fair play are widespread, normalised, and structurally embedded within university sport systems rather than isolated acts of individual deviance. Practices such as cheating, violence, incivility, prejudice, gamesmanship, substance misuse, and emerging forms of bullying collectively indicate a profound ethical deficit that undermines the educational and developmental mandate of university sport.

The study confirms that fair play violations are driven by an interlocking set of factors, validation, ambition, rewards, pressure, and culture, which jointly shape ethical decision-making. Validation-seeking reflects athletes' desire for recognition, social mobility, and institutional legitimacy; ambition and rewards institutionalise a results-oriented climate; pressure arises from performance expectations and competitive rivalry; and culture mediates these dynamics through tacit tolerance, inconsistent enforcement, and unethical role modelling by senior athletes and administrators. From a moral disengagement perspective, these conditions rationalise and legitimise unethical conduct, framing it as adaptive rather than deviant. Institutional theory further explains how repeated exposure to such behaviours normalises rule violations, embedding them across cohorts and competitions.

The impacts of these violations are multidimensional and systemic. Integrity is eroded as fairness, trust, and credibility of competitions are undermined; safety is compromised through violence, aggressive play, and substance abuse, violating universities' duty of care. Culture is also degraded, perpetuating hostility, disrespect, and symbolic violence with spill-over effects into schools and communities. Disciplinary systems are weakened, reducing governance legitimacy, institutional reputation, and sponsorship prospects, and performance suffers as unethical practices undermine intrinsic motivation, athlete development, and long-term competitiveness. These findings confirm that violations do not confer sustainable advantage, producing only an illusion of success.

The FPRM offers a theoretically grounded and empirically informed framework for addressing these challenges. It conceptualises violations as outcomes of motivational pressures, cultural norms, and governance weaknesses rather than isolated acts. The model identifies **restorative strategies**, education, motivation reform, corrective action, preparation, team building, conflict resolution, and support systems, as central mechanisms for ethical renewal. Education targets moral reasoning and ethical awareness, countering cognitive frames that normalise misconduct. Motivation reform recalibrates reward structures to recognise sportsmanship alongside performance, supporting intrinsic ethical behaviour. Corrective action enforces accountability and deterrence, reducing institutional tolerance of violations. Preparation and psychological readiness enhance athletes' ethical decision-making under competitive stress. Team building fosters ethical culture and social learning while conflict resolution mitigates escalation into violence. Support systems, including counselling, sports psychologists, and multi-stakeholder coordination, ensure institutional coherence and sustainability.

Future Research

Future research may adopt multi-stakeholder, longitudinal, and mixed-methods designs to capture athlete, coach, referee, and spectator perspectives, examine temporal evolution of ethical cultures, compare cross-contextual practices, and evaluate the effectiveness of FPRM-informed interventions. Such research will strengthen the empirical and theoretical foundations for promoting fair play in university sport.

Recommendations

Following the thematic analysis of fair play violations, causes, and impacts in Zimbabwean university sport, this study recommends the Fair Play Restorative Model (FPRM; Figure 1) as a conceptual framework that can be adopted. The FPRM is a development inductively produced from the qualitative data provided by Sports Directors, Deputy Sports Directors, and Sports Officers, reflecting the systemic and interrelated nature of ethical breaches.

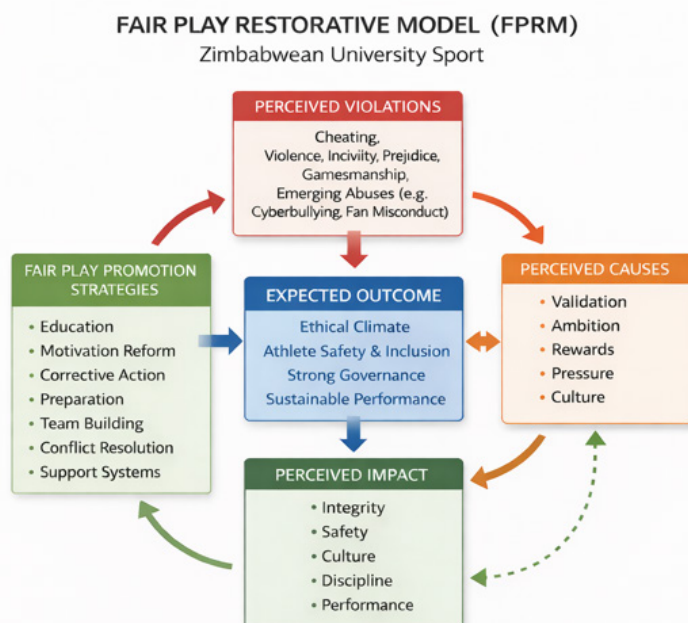


Figure 1: The Proposed Fair Play Restorative Model (FPRM):

The Fair Play Restorative Model (FPRM) situates violations, cheating, violence, incivility, prejudice, gamesmanship, and emerging abuses within underlying causes such as ambition, rewards, pressure, validation, and institutional culture. Drawing on institutional theory, moral disengagement, selfdetermination theory, social learning, and African communitarian ethics, the model demonstrates how these antecedents generate multidimensional impacts on integrity, safety, culture, discipline, and performance. Crucially, the FPRM identifies restorative strategies, education, motivation reform, corrective action, team building, conflict resolution, and support systems that

mediate these dynamics, fostering sustainable ethical climates, safeguarding athletes, and strengthening governance. It provides a coherent, contextually grounded pathway for restoring credibility and aligning university sport with developmental mandates. Promoting fair play is thus a governance, educational, and developmental imperative essential for nurturing ethical athletes, reinforcing institutional credibility, and leveraging university sport as a transformative social and moral instrument within the Global South.

To operationalise the Fair Play Restorative Model (FPRM), universities must embed ethical education into coaching and athlete development, deliberately reorienting cognitive frames that valorise winning at all costs. Motivation reform should recalibrate reward systems to recognise sportsmanship alongside performance, while corrective action requires capacitated disciplinary committees and consistent enforcement of ordinances. Preparation strategies, rituals, psychological readiness, and stress management, must be institutionalised to strengthen resilience under competitive pressure. Team building and leadership modelling should foster collective accountability, while conflict resolution mechanisms must prevent escalation into hostility. Finally, holistic support systems, including counselling, mentoring, and multistakeholder collaboration, should underpin all interventions. Collectively, these measures position fair play promotion as a governance, educational, and developmental imperative, essential for nurturing ethical athletes and leveraging university sport as a transformative instrument within the Global South.

References

- Adams, W. C. (2020). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In J. Wholey, H. Hatry, & K. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (4th ed., pp. 492–505). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19>
- Agnew, D., Marks, S., & Clarke, J. (2017). The impact of misconduct on institutional reputation in sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 31(4), 345–359. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2016-0185>
- Aier, S. (2023). Fair play and integrity in competitive sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 58(2), 215–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902221123456>
- Allen, M. (2023). Phenomenology in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 23(1), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-09-2022-0101>
- Alsaawi, A. (2020). A critical review of qualitative interview methods. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 7(11), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4291234>
- Anderson, E., & White, A. (2020). Institutional complicity in fair play violations. *Sport in Society*, 23(9), 1502–1518. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1777102>
- Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using Zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596>
- Arizona Sports Summit Accord. (1999). *Report of the Arizona Sports Summit Accord*. Character Counts Coalition.
- Atare, A. (2024). Conflict resolution in sports: Management and constructive processes. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 24(1), 88–95.
- Bednář, M. (2023). Athlete welfare and the moral foundation of sport. *Ethics in Sport*, 12(3), 201–214. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-09876>
- Boardley, I. D., & Kavussanu, M. (2024). Moral disengagement in sport: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 70, 102–118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102118>
- Bortoli, L., Robazza, C., & Bertollo, M. (2024). Achievement goal theory and ego-oriented climates in sport. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1124. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.01124>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.

- Brinkmann, S. (2022). Qualitative interviewing. In D. Wyse (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1192>
- Cardiff University. (2018). *Values-based education and fair play policy*. Cardiff University Press.
- Carlson, M., Hogue, C., & Ryan, R. (2016). Positive psychology and ethical behaviour in sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 28(3), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2016.1153245>
- Carson, H. J., Vansteenkiste, M., & Haerens, L. (2025). Extrinsic rewards and ethical motivation in sport. *Motivation and Emotion*, 49(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-024-10012>
- Choa, L., Kim, J., & Park, S. (2024). Ethical leadership in sport governance. *Sport Management Review*, 27(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2023.101234>
- Collins, R. (2023). Performance pressure and misconduct in university sport. *Journal of Sport Ethics*, 40(1), 55–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2023.101234>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2024). Semi-structured interviewing in qualitative research. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, 12(1), 45–52. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2023-001234>
- Delrue, J., Vansteenkiste, M., & Haerens, L. (2024). Self-determination theory and fairness in sport. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 13(2), 123–137. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000345>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Dowling, M., Leopkey, B., & Smith, L. (2024). Institutional theory and sport governance. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 24(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2023.101234>
- Franz, B. (2024). Open-ended questioning in qualitative sport research. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 16(3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2024.101234>
- Friehts, M. A., Schnitzer, M., & Seiler, R. (2024). Perceived injustice and athlete

motivation. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 47(2), 145–162.

George, R. (2021). Exploratory research in sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 24(5), 567–580. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2020.101234>

Gu, Y., & Cheng, L. (2025). Motivational climate and youth sport outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, Article 1716745. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1716745>

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2021). A simple method for assessing data saturation in qualitative research. *Public Health Research Methods*, 29(2), 123–135.

Hanson, D., & Savage, J. (2012). Holistic development through university sport. *Journal of Higher Education*, 83(5), 677–694.

Hassan, R. (2024). Bracketing in phenomenological research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 30(1), 78–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004231123456>

Hirtenlehner, H., & Leitgöb, H. (2024). Deterrence theory and rule compliance in competitive environments. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 47(2), 112–129.

Hogue, C. M. (2024). Ego-involving motivational climates and athlete wellbeing. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2023-0104>

Hufton, J., et al. (2024). Emotional regulation and impulsive behavior in sports. *Sport Psychology Journal*, 38(1), 45–58.

Idemudia, E., & Adedeji, T. (2023). Fair play and ethics in African sport. *African Journal of Physical Activity and Health Sciences*, 29(4), 345–360.

International Fair Play Committee. (2023). *Fair play values and principles*. <https://www.fairplayinternational.org>

International Olympic Committee. (2024). *Olympism and fair play: Ethical guidelines*. <https://olympics.com/ioc>

Irvine, A., Drew, P., & Sainsbury, R. (2020). ‘Am I not answering your questions properly?’ Telephone interviewing in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23(6), 641–656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2019.1636849>

- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2021). *Research ethics for social scientists* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Jadwiszczak, M., Wawrzyniak, M., & Pezdek, K. (2025). Moral development and ethical education in sport. *Journal of Moral Education*, 54(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2024.101234>
- Jain, S. (2023). Qualitative research design in sport studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Sport*, 12(2), 101–115.
- Kavussanu, M., & Ring, C. (2024). Moral socialization and understanding of success in sports. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 71, 102–115.
- Kihl, L., Skinner, J., & Engelberg, T. (2024). Organisational tolerance and misconduct in sport. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 189(2), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-101234>
- Kowalski, R. M., & Toth, A. (2025). Cyberbullying in sport contexts. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 40(5), 1123–1145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605231123456>
- Krishnani, H., & Kanade, R. (2025). Sportsmanship in sport: An ethical and performance-based lens. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 12(5), 314–317. <https://doi.org/10.22271/kheljournal.2025.v12.i5e.3995>
- Lange, S., McCarthy, J., & O'Neill, P. (2025). Symbolic misconduct and exclusion in sport. *Sport in Society*, 28(3), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2025.101234>
- McCarthy, J. (2024). Symbolic violence and exclusion in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 59(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902231123456>
- Metz, T. (2019). Ubuntu ethics and communitarian philosophy in sport. *African Journal of Ethics*, 14(2), 123–135.
- Miguel, P., Torres, J., & Silva, R. (2026). Hazing as non-accidental harm in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 61(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902231123457>
- Müller, J. (2021). Fair play and the Olympic ethos. *Olympic Studies Journal*, 15(2), 145–160.
- Muñoz, L., García, P., & Torres, R. (2025). Safeguarding policies in university sport. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 17(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2024.101234>
- Mwaanga, O., & Chifita, T. (2025). A critical justification for physically active

- education: Towards 'the Africa we want'. In S. Jeanes & L. Spaaij (Eds.), *Sport, development and peace: The sustainable development goals series* (pp. 133–155). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-63455-2_8
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2022). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221123456>
- Office of Sport. (2023). *Fair play and integrity in sport: Policy guidelines*. Government of New South Wales. <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2023). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Pérez Triviño, J. L., & López Frías, F. J. (2024). Ethical stress and misconduct in sport. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 18(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2024.101234>
- Ring, C., Kavussanu, M., & Boardley, I. D. (2024). Moral disengagement and ethical stress in competitive sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 36(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2024.101234>
- Roda Moorhead, J. (2023). Extrinsic incentives and ethical erosion in university sport. *Journal of Sport Ethics and Philosophy*, 17(3), 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2023.101234>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Schnitzer, M., Friehs, M. A., & Seiler, R. (2024). Perceived injustice and athlete motivation: A self-determination perspective. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 55(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-024-101234>
- Sipkins, J. (2023). Fair play and moral development in higher education sport.

Journal of College Sport, 18(1), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jcs.2023-101234>

Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., & Tippett, N. (2019). Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in sport and education. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 60(4), 376–384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12940>

Sperber, M. (2024). *College sports inc.: The athletic department as a business*. Oxford University Press.

Sukys, S. (2013). The role of sport in promoting respect, cooperation, and peaceful competition. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 41(4), 593–600. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2013.41.4.593>

Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact* (2nd ed.). Wiley.

True Sport Foundation. (2024). *True Sport principles: Integrity and accountability in sport*. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. <https://truesport.ca>

UK Anti-Doping. (2024). *Annual report on doping control and athlete welfare*. <https://www.ukad.org.uk>

University of Edinburgh. (2022). *Fair play and institutional credibility in sport: Annual ethics report*. University of Edinburgh Press.

University of Edinburgh. (2024). *Athlete misconduct and university sanctions: Policy review*. University of Edinburgh Press.