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Development of an Integrated Life Skills-Based Football Program to Promote Fair Play among Youth Players Aged 14–17

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Abstract This study aimed to: (1) develop a model construct of integrated life skills to enhance fair play in football; (2) evaluate the validity of the integrated life skills model; (3) assess the practicality of the model's user guide; and (4) examine the effectiveness of the model in promoting fair play among youth football players. This research employed a Research and Development (R&D) design using the 4D model—Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The validation process involved seven expert validators, while feasibility was assessed by seven coaches from five football academies. The practicality test was conducted by six coaches from three academies. For the effectiveness test, a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group was used, involving 38 players aged 14–17 from two football academies. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, observations, and documentation. Aiken's V was used for content validity analysis, descriptive statistics were applied to analyze feasibility and practicality, and an independent sample t-test was conducted to assess effectiveness. The study successfully developed an integrated life skills-based football training model to foster fair play. The feasibility test yielded an average score of 4.53 in the initial trial and 4.75 in the subsequent trial. The practicality test produced an average score of 4.90. The effectiveness test resulted in a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.004 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant effect of the model on improving fair play among youth football players. Beyond its statistical contribution, the model provides practical guidance for coaches in embedding life skills into training sessions, supports football academies in cultivating ethical behavior among players, and offers policymakers a framework for integrating fair play education into national youth development and coach licensing programs.

Keywords Model Development, Life Skills, Football, Fair Play, Youth Sports

1. Introduction

Sport is widely recognized as an effective platform for personal and social development, fostering persistence, collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making [1], [2], [3]. Beyond technical skills, sport functions as a cultural phenomenon that shapes values, norms, and identity, supported by social environments such as family and peers [4], [5], [6], [7]. Consequently, promoting sustainable sports strategies is vital in advancing human capacity and national development [8], [9].

Among all sports, football holds the strongest global and cultural presence, offering both athletic and psychosocial benefits, including teamwork, discipline, and resilience [10], [11], [12].

In Indonesia, however, the rapid growth of football schools (SSBs) has not translated into improved national achievements or ethical conduct. Incidents in youth competitions such as the Elite Pro Academy and Soeratin Cup—ranging from aggressive play to age fraud—illustrate deficits in fair play and integrity [13], [14]. These issues underscore the urgent need for systematic approaches to embed moral values such as respect, honesty, and responsibility in football training.

Life skills education provides a promising vehicle for addressing this challenge [15]. Defined as transferable behavioral, cognitive, and emotional competencies [16], life skills include teamwork, goal setting, communication, emotional regulation, and leadership [17], [18], [19]. Previous research shows that intentionally designed sport programs can foster these competencies [20], [21], yet in Indonesia, structured integration of life skills into football training remains limited. Coaches acknowledge their importance but lack practical models to apply them consistently [22], [23].

This study responds to that gap by developing an integrated life skills training model explicitly designed to enhance fair play among Indonesian youth players aged 14–17. This age range is not only critical for character formation and neuroplastic growth [24], but is also prioritized in the Indonesian Football Curriculum (Filanesia) as a foundation stage for long-term athlete development [25]. The model is grounded in the Life Skills Scale for Sport (LSSS) [26], which has been validated internationally but not yet operationalized in Indonesia to directly target fair play dimensions such as responsibility, respect, friendliness, and honesty.

By situating LSSS within the context of Indonesian youth football, this research offers a novel contribution: a systematically validated, feasible, and effective training framework that integrates life skills into everyday practice. Theoretically, it advances sport-based character education research by linking life skills with fair play. Practically, it provides football schools and coaches with concrete strategies to cultivate athletes who embody sportsmanship and accountability both on and off the field.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design

This study employed a research and development (R&D) approach aimed at producing and validating an educational product: an integrated life skills training model in football to enhance fair play among youth athletes. The development process adopted the Four-D (4D) model proposed by Thiagarajan et al. [27], which consists of four stages: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. This model is widely used in educational research for systematically creating effective and practical learning tools.

2.2. Participants

The participants in this research were purposefully selected to align with the study's objective of developing an integrated life skills training model in football to enhance fair play among players aged 14–17. This age range was chosen because it represents a critical stage in both psychosocial and athletic development. From a national perspective, the Indonesian Football Federation (PSSI) through the Filanesia curriculum identifies 14–17 years as the “golden age” for youth football development, emphasizing the cultivation of discipline, technical mastery, and ethical values as the foundation for higher competitive levels. Furthermore, the Elite Pro Academy (EPA)—Indonesia’s official youth competition structure—also focuses on the U-16 and U-18 categories, underscoring the strategic importance of this age group for preparing athletes who will progress to professional leagues and the national team. By situating the intervention at this developmental stage, the study directly addresses a nationally recognized gap in embedding life skills and fair play education into the football talent pathway.

Participants consisted of expert validators, including sport psychology experts and football training material specialists, as well as practitioners such as football coaches from local soccer schools (SSBs). This diverse group of participants ensured that the validation, practicality testing, and implementation processes were grounded in both theoretical and field-based expertise. Players from soccer schools were also involved in the effectiveness testing to assess improvements in fair play behavior before and after the intervention.

Two football academies were purposively selected for the quasi-experimental design. Academy A (n = 19) was assigned to the experimental group, receiving the integrated life skills-based football program, while Academy B (n = 19) served as the control group and continued with their regular football training sessions. This separation ensured that only the experimental group was exposed to the intervention, thereby establishing a valid comparison between groups.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed multiple techniques to ensure comprehensive, valid, and reliable results. These included interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to identify training needs and explore issues related to the application of life skills in football training programs, particularly from the perspective of coaches. Observations were used to assess player behavior related to fair play before and after the implementation of the developed model. Structured questionnaires were used to gather expert opinions on the validity of the training model and to evaluate the model's practicality based on coach responses. Additionally, photographic documentation was collected during implementation as supplementary evidence. Instruments included expert validation questionnaires that covered content, construct, and format, as well as practitioner response questionnaires that focused on the usability and clarity of the model. A fair play assessment tool adapted from Gibbons et al. [28], Butler [29], and Dimyati [10] was used to evaluate changes in player behavior based on dimensions such as responsibility, respect, friendliness, and honesty.

The Fair Play Assessment Instrument presented in Table 1 consists of 33 items that were compiled into a single questionnaire. These items were adapted from Gibbons et al. [28], Butler [29], and Dimyati [10] and measured four key dimensions: responsibility, respect, friendliness, and honesty. In addition to the questionnaire, supplementary qualitative data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation to enrich the understanding of participant behavior during training sessions. However, only the questionnaire data were subjected to statistical analysis, while the qualitative data were used for triangulation and descriptive interpretation.

Table 1. Fair Play Assessment Instrument Blueprint

Sub-Variable	Indicator	Item Numbers	Scale Used
Responsibility	Plays with spirit, discipline, admits mistakes	1–7	1 = Never → 5 = Always
Respect	Respects opponents, teammates, referees, ethical behavior	8–17	1 = Never → 5 = Always
Friendliness	Controls emotions, avoids harm, shows care, humility	18–27	1 = Never → 5 = Always
Honesty	Does not fake injury, obeys rules, respects referee decisions	28–33	1 = Never → 5 = Always

2.4. Statistical Analysis

The data analysis process utilized both qualitative and quantitative descriptive techniques. Quantitative analysis included content validity testing using Aiken's V coefficient to measure the alignment between items and constructs based on expert judgment. Practicality and feasibility assessments were conducted using descriptive statistics, converting questionnaire scores into qualitative categories (Very Practical, Practical, Fair, Less Practical, Not Practical) based on interval conversion criteria. Effectiveness testing employed an independent samples t-test to evaluate significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores on fair play indicators. Prior to hypothesis testing, data were examined for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and for homogeneity using Levene's test. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS for Windows to ensure accuracy and reliability.

3. Results

A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the integrated life skills training model in enhancing fair play among football players aged 14–17. The analysis compared pretest and posttest scores between the experimental and control groups, as summarized in **Table 2.** The experimental group demonstrated a substantial increase of 10.84 points in the posttest scores compared to the pretest, whereas the control group exhibited a smaller gain of 6.27 points. These results suggest that the intervention had a more pronounced effect on the experimental group.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Group	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental	Pretest	130.63	15.32
	Posttest	141.47	13.60
Control	Pretest	124.68	15.27
	Posttest	130.95	15.04

To ensure the appropriateness of further parametric testing, a Shapiro-Wilk test was performed to assess the normality of the data distribution **(Table 3).** All p-values were greater than 0.05, indicating that the data for both pretest and posttest scores in both groups were normally distributed.

Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

Group	Test	Statistic	df	p-value
Experimental	Pretest	0.954	19	0.455
	Posttest	0.908	19	0.069
Control	Pretest	0.951	19	0.418
	Posttest	0.915	19	0.090

Additionally, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was conducted to evaluate the homogeneity of variance **(Table 4).** The results confirmed that the assumption of equal variances was met, as all p-values exceeded 0.05.

Table 4. Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variance

Variable	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	p-value
Pretest	0.320	1	36	0.575
Posttest	0.061	1	36	0.806

An independent samples t-test was then carried out to determine whether the observed differences in posttest scores between the two groups were statistically significant **(Table 5)**. The analysis revealed a significant difference (p = 0.004), with the experimental group exhibiting a notably greater improvement in fair play scores than the control group. The confidence interval further substantiated the presence of a meaningful effect, thereby confirming the effectiveness of the integrated life skills training model.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-Test: Experimental vs Control Group

Group Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	p-value	95% CI (Lower–Upper)
Experimental vs Control	15.42	3.075	36	0.004	5.25 – 25.58

Figure 1 shows the comparison of pretest and posttest mean scores between the experimental and control groups, demonstrating a more substantial improvement in the experimental group. The experimental group's mean fair play score increased from 130.63 at pretest to 141.47 at posttest, whereas the control group's mean rose only from 124.68 to 130.95. This visual representation supports the results of the independent samples t-test, which confirmed a statistically significant difference between the groups (p = 0.004).

To gain deeper insights into the distribution of fair play scores, both pretest and posttest results were categorized into four performance levels: low, moderate, high, and very high. The frequency and percentage of participants within each category are summarized in Tables 5 and 6. As shown in **Table 6**, before the intervention, only 21.1% of participants were classified in the "very high" fair play category, while the majority fell within the moderate to high categories. Additionally, 10.5% of participants scored below 70, indicating a low level of fair play behavior.

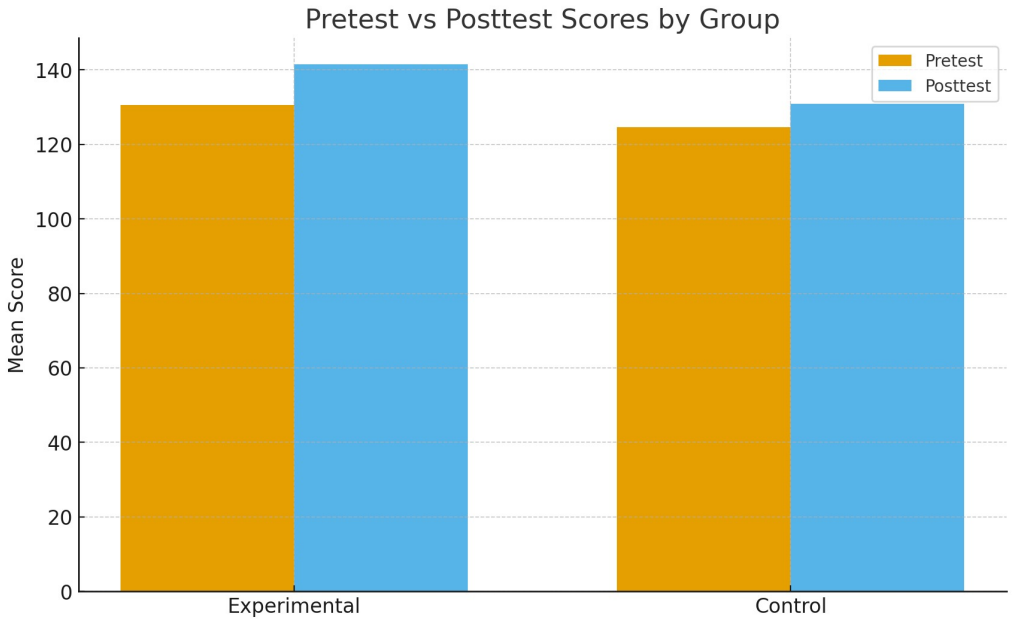

Figure 1. Pretest vs. Posttest Mean Scores

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Pretest Fair Play Scores

No	Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Low	<70	2	10.5
2	Moderate	70–74	6	31.6
3	High	75–79	7	36.8
4	Very High	≥80	4	21.1
	Total		**19**	**100.0**

Following the intervention, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of participants classified as having "very high" fair play behavior, rising to 63.2%, with no participants remaining in the "low" category **(Table 7).** This marked shift in the distribution of scores indicates a significant improvement in fair play behavior attributed to the integrated life skills training model.

Table 7. Frequency Distribution of Posttest Fair Play Scores

No	Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Low	<70	0	0.0
2	Moderate	70–74	2	10.5
3	High	75–79	5	26.3
4	Very High	≥80	12	63.2
	Total		**19**	**100.0**

To further evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, fair play behavior was analyzed across four core sub-dimensions: Responsibility, Respect, Friendliness, and Honesty. Each sub-dimension was assessed using multiple items on a Likert scale. Descriptive statistics for these sub-dimensions are presented in **Table 8.** The analysis revealed positive gains across all four areas, with the greatest improvement observed in the Responsibility domain (+5.16), followed by notable increases in Respect and Friendliness. These findings underscore the comprehensive and multidimensional impact of the integrated life skills training model on enhancing fair play behavior among adolescent football players.

Table 8. Pretest and Posttest Scores by Fair Play Sub-Dimensions

Dimension	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Difference
Responsibility	32.10	37.26	+5.16
Respect	31.58	36.00	+4.42
Friendliness	30.37	34.79	+4.42
Honesty	30.58	34.63	+4.05

Figure 2 reveals a notable shift following the intervention. Prior to the program, the majority of participants fell into the moderate and high categories, with only 21.1% classified as "very high" and 10.5% in the "low" category. After the intervention, the proportion of participants in the "very high" category rose sharply to 63.2%, while no participants remained in the "low" category. This distribution underscores the effectiveness of the integrated life skills training model in substantially elevating fair play behaviors among youth football players.

Figure 3 highlights consistent improvements across all four domains. The largest gain was observed in Responsibility (+5.16), followed by notable increases in Respect (+4.42), Friendliness (+4.42), and Honesty (+4.05). These findings indicate that the intervention not only enhanced overall fair play scores but also strengthened multiple underlying components of ethical behavior, providing evidence of the model's multidimensional impact.

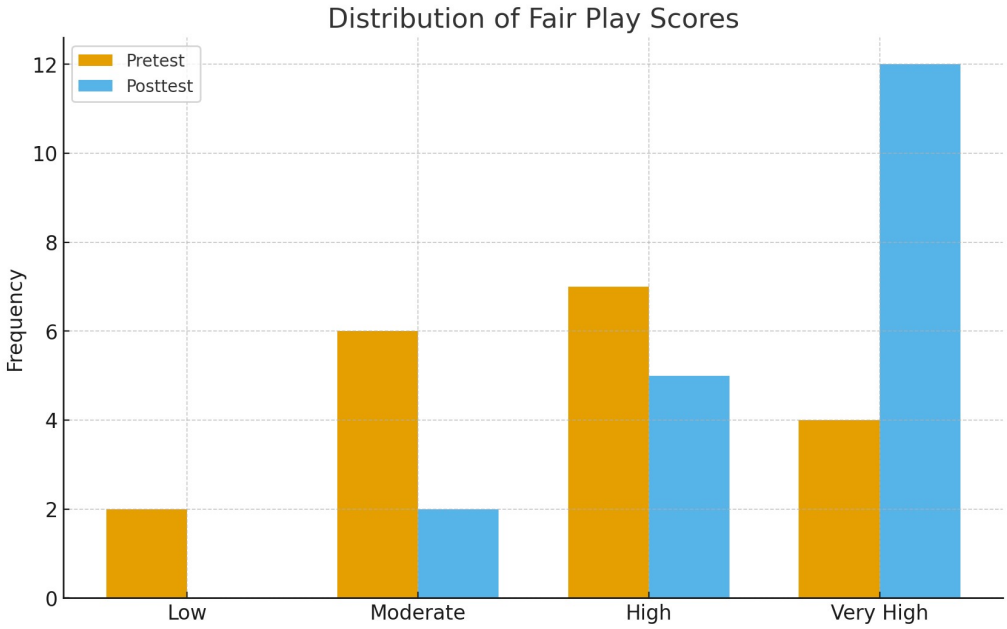

Figure 2. Distribution of Fair Play Categories

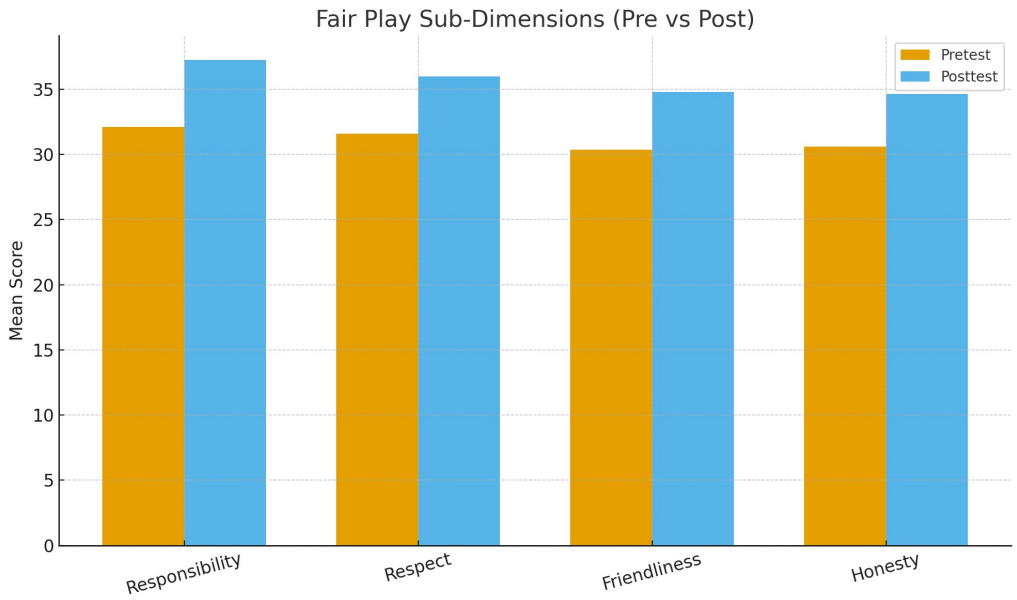

Figure 3. Fair Play Sub-Dimensions

4. Discussion

The primary objective of this research was to develop and validate an integrated life skills training manual in football aimed at enhancing fair play behavior among youth players aged 14–17. The manual was designed as a pedagogical tool for coaches, incorporating theoretical foundations and practical strategies to support the development of psychosocial competencies that promote ethical conduct during football participation.

The development process employed the Four-D (4D) model introduced by Thiagarajan [27], comprising four systematic phases: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The resulting product—a coaching guide—was validated through expert reviews, pilot implementation, and a comprehensive field trial.

4.1. Product Validity and Feasibility

Validation by seven expert reviewers yielded strong content validity, with an Aiken's V coefficient ≥ 0.743 for all items. This indicates a high level of agreement among experts that the manual meets academic and practical standards for football coaching. These findings are consistent with the literature emphasizing the importance of structured life skills education in sports to develop athletes' social and cognitive competencies [19], [20].

Initial feasibility testing conducted over eight training sessions with three coaches across three football schools showed a high mean rating of 4.53, categorized as "very feasible" based on Sukarjo's criteria. Following revisions based on feedback, the large-scale feasibility test (quantitative testing) achieved an even higher average score of 4.75. Additionally, the practicality test involving six coaches across three schools returned a mean score of 4.90, further confirming that the model is both implementable and well-received by practitioners. Coaches particularly appreciated the manual's clarity and structure, with one noting that "the guide provides step-by-step instructions that make it easier to connect football drills with character values." Similarly, players reported that the sessions felt "different from usual training" because they were "asked to think not only about skills but also about how to respect teammates."

These results affirm that the product is not only theoretically sound but also adaptable to real-world training settings, particularly when supported by competent coaching staff. As noted by Camir é et al. [20], coaches play a pivotal role in fostering environments conducive to moral and character development in sports. The successful application of the life skills model hinges significantly on the coach's capacity to guide athletes with intentional pedagogical practices.

4.2. Effectiveness of the Training Model

Effectiveness testing demonstrated statistically significant improvements in fair play behavior following implementation of the life skills model across 14 training sessions. An independent samples t-test revealed a mean difference of 15.42 points between the experimental and control groups ($t = 3.075$, $p = 0.004$), with a 95% confidence interval of 5.25 to 25.59. These findings validate the model's impact in fostering fair play behaviors in a competitive youth sports environment.

This outcome aligns with findings by Danish et al. [19] and Gledhill [30], who emphasized that structured interventions over 12 or more sessions can meaningfully enhance athletes' psychosocial outcomes. Life skills programs, when intentionally integrated into training

curricula, have been shown to improve dimensions such as teamwork, emotional regulation, and decision-making.

In this study, the training guide provided a structured framework for coaches to explicitly embed life skills in football sessions using the Filanesia curriculum. The eight core life skills integrated into the model included teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, interpersonal communication, social skills, leadership, and problem solving. Each skill was linked to specific football drills such as Build Up, Scoring, and Prevent Goal, ensuring contextual relevance and practical transferability.

These results reinforce Cronin and Allen's [26] theoretical model of life skills development through sport, which stresses the deliberate teaching of interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies. Furthermore, the positive changes observed in fair play behaviors suggest that life skills training does not occur automatically through sport participation alone but requires structured intervention [31].

The positive gains observed across responsibility, respect, friendliness, and honesty dimensions align with the theoretical domains outlined in the LSSS framework. For instance, improvements in responsibility and respect are closely related to teamwork and leadership skills, while increases in friendliness and honesty reflect enhanced communication and emotional regulation competencies. This demonstrates that the integration of LSSS-based life skills training not only strengthens players' fair play behavior but also fosters broader psychosocial development, confirming that sport-based interventions require deliberate and structured pedagogical design rather than relying on incidental learning.

The greater improvement observed in the Responsibility dimension may be attributed to the emphasis placed on structured drills and role assignments during the intervention, such as team-based build-up exercises that required players to adhere to tactical instructions and assume accountability for collective outcomes. Coaches also highlighted responsibility as a core ethical principle during reflection sessions, which may have reinforced its salience for players. In contrast, sub-dimensions such as Respect and Honesty, while improved, may be more strongly influenced by broader cultural and competitive contexts, including prevailing norms in Indonesian youth football that tolerate gamesmanship or aggressive play. Previous studies have similarly found that responsibility-related behaviors often show earlier and more pronounced changes when life skills are intentionally embedded in sport training, as they are directly observable and coach-mediated. These findings suggest that cultural norms, coach emphasis, and drill design may serve as moderating factors that explain variation across the life skill sub-dimensions.

4.3. Final Product Refinement

The final product—the integrated life skills training manual—was refined based on iterative feedback from subject matter experts and field practitioners. For example, early drafts of the manual emphasized technical football drills without sufficient reflection activities. Based on reviewers' suggestions, structured debrief questions were added at the end of each session to prompt players to connect on-field experiences with life skills such as teamwork, respect, and emotional control. Similarly, coaches recommended simplifying instructional language and providing concrete examples of how to embed values like honesty and responsibility into routine drills.

As a result of these revisions, the manual now includes step-by-step session plans beginning with orientation, followed by core football activities (e.g., Build Up, Scoring, Prevent Goal) explicitly linked to targeted life skills, and concluding with guided reflection. Coaches noted that this format made implementation "more systematic and less abstract," while players reported that training felt "more meaningful because we learned about respect and honesty while practicing football."

The training guide, validated through multiple iterations, was demonstrated to be both practical and effective. Its implementation led to enhanced player engagement, better emotional control, improved teamwork, and heightened respect for rules and opponents. These outcomes collectively contribute to the broader objective of cultivating a sporting culture grounded in ethical conduct and fair competition.

4.4. Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, the intervention was limited to youth football players aged 14–17 in school-based football programs, which may restrict the generalizability of findings. Future research could adapt and test the model across different age groups, competitive levels, and female players to broaden applicability. Second, environmental factors such as weather conditions, pitch quality, and training facilities were not fully controlled, which may have influenced the outcomes of the intervention. Third, although the model was integrated into the Filanesia curriculum, its application within formal school-based physical education settings remains unexplored and warrants further investigation.

Additionally, cultural aspects of football in Indonesia—such as the intense rivalries between clubs, competitive pressures, and the tendency toward aggressive playing styles—may also shape how fair play behaviors are expressed and internalized. These cultural dynamics were not explicitly examined in this study but could significantly influence the implementation and sustainability of life skills interventions. Future research should therefore consider cross-cultural comparisons or context-specific adaptations to ensure that life skills training models are culturally responsive and sensitive to the social norms of the sporting environment.

5. Conclusions

This study successfully developed and validated an integrated life skills training model tailored for football players aged 14–17 to enhance fair play behavior. Grounded in experiential learning principles and aligned with the Filanesia curriculum, the model incorporated life skills into the structure of football training sessions, beginning with orientation, followed by football-specific drills, and concluding with reflection and feedback.

The validation process yielded strong results, with Aiken's V coefficient reaching 0.743, indicating a high level of content validity. The feasibility tests with seven coaches from five football schools produced mean scores of 4.53 in the initial phase and 4.75 in the quantitative phase, confirming the model's practical relevance and usability. The practicality test further strengthened these findings with a mean score of 4.90, underscoring its applicability in real coaching environments.

Statistical analysis using the Independent Samples t-Test revealed a significant difference in fair play scores between the experimental and control groups ($p = 0.004$), confirming the model's effectiveness. These results affirm that structured, integrated life skills training embedded within football can significantly improve fair play behavior among adolescent players.

The final product—a validated life skills coaching manual—has been disseminated to 11 football coaches in Banda Aceh and implemented in the training programs of several football schools. Looking ahead, this model holds strong potential for broader application. Future integration into national coach licensing programs, grassroots development initiatives, and long-term athlete development frameworks could further institutionalize life skills education in football. By embedding this model into formal coaching and youth development pathways, football can serve not only as a platform for athletic excellence but also as a vehicle for fostering ethical conduct, character building, and social responsibility among young athletes.

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