

Activity preferences of Gen Z in rural communities: key insights for improving the Philippine PATH-Fit program

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the activity preferences of Generation Z (Gen Z) students in rural communities to enhance the implementation of the Philippine physical activity towards health and fitness (PATH-Fit) program. Utilizing a qualitative-ethnographic approach, insights were obtained from 20 selected Gen Z students through expert-validated open-ended questions. The findings highlighted seven key preferences: lessen the lectures, holistic activities, sports and physical activities, comfort, accessibility, and convenience, community and outdoor activities, activities to deviate from technology, and activities that do not add stress. The study revealed that Gen Z students in rural areas prefer PATH-Fit activities that are engaging, diverse, and supportive of their overall well-being. They favor fewer lectures to allow for more interactive learning experiences that integrate social, mental, and emotional aspects alongside physical activities. Additionally, they seek activities that are comfortable, accessible, and convenient, valuing easy access and minimal hassle. Community engagement and outdoor experiences are also crucial to them, as are opportunities to disconnect from technology and avoid stress. These preferences emphasize the need for a well-rounded and adaptable approach to physical education (PE) that aligns with Gen Z students' diverse needs and well-being in rural communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world health organization (WHO) has set physical activity targets, and 27% of adults and 81% of youth do not meet them, indicating a severe inactivity crisis worldwide [1]. It is advised that people engage in 150-300 minutes of moderate-intense aerobic exercise, 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intense aerobic exercise, or a mix of the two per week, according to Piercy *et al.* [2]. According to the WHO [3], the Philippines is alarmingly the second most physically inactive country globally, with an astounding 92% of its youth not engaging in physical activity. This poses a severe risk to public health.

By giving students, the fundamental knowledge and abilities to embrace and encourage a physically active lifestyle, physical education (PE) adopts a proactive approach to resolving this global crisis [4]. With its well-structured curriculum and practical experiences, PE helps young people develop lifelong habits of

physical activity. This improves public health outcomes by mitigating the detrimental effects of a sedentary lifestyle [5].

Born between 1995 and the beginning of the 2010s, Generation Z (Gen Z) has profoundly altered educational frameworks, cultural landscapes, and social norms concerning generational dynamics [6]. The first generation born in the twenty-first century is Gen Z. They are used to a world where globalization, technological advancement, and easy access to information have all had a significant impact [7]. To tailor educational programs to this generation's unique needs and activity preferences, Cilliers [8] stressed how crucial it is for educators, policymakers, and researchers to understand the values and characteristics of this demographic.

American researchers have found that what sets Gen Z apart from previous generations is their own set of values. This is a result of their upbringing when digital technology predominated, as seen by the widespread use of social media, smartphones, and instant connectivity [9]. Their innate ability to use technology has affected their communication and need for instant access to knowledge, engaging learning opportunities, and a global perspective [10]. Gen Z's pragmatic and resilient nature is due to its exposure to unstable economies, shifting geopolitical landscapes, and a quickly changing labor market [11]. A strong desire for authenticity, equity, and the inclusion of all individuals typifies this generation. According to Mohr and Mohr [12], their values reflect their strong belief in social activism, diversity, equity, and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, the younger generation's reliance on digital technology may cause a decline in youth sedentary habits and physical activity. Due to their dependence on in-person, instructor-led activities, traditional PE programs face challenges [13]. Traditional PE methods emphasizing sports, outdoor activities, and group exercises are likely more prevalent in rural areas with limited technology and internet connectivity. However, to effectively bridge the gap between the inclination of Gen Z towards digital platforms and the traditional PE methods in rural areas, creative solutions incorporating technology-driven learning experiences like gamification, mobile applications, and online resources must be put into practice. These approaches consider rural areas' unique cultural and environmental characteristics while promoting youth physical activity and overall well-being. The physical activity towards health and fitness (PATH-Fit) program can create an inclusive, dynamic learning environment that considers the distinctive traits of Gen Z. This program seeks to cultivate a lifelong commitment to physical fitness and wellness and empower students to adopt active and healthy lifestyles.

Nonetheless, there have been significant challenges in the Philippines' tertiary educational institutions when implementing PE [14]. The obstacles include issues with curriculum implementation, inadequate teacher preparation, and a general lack of interest in the topic, frequently seen as having more significant political than cultural significance. Cariaga [15] claims that the historical context suggests that tertiary PE has been influenced by factors other than pedagogical considerations. The academic conversation about these issues emphasizes the importance of a holistic improvement strategy. In this context, Abbasov and Mavlyanov [16] emphasize the critical role that resource augmentation plays in enhancing the overall quality and efficacy of PE. Examples of such resource augmentation include investing in developing the human workforce and improving school facilities. Similar issues have been noted in Malaysia, where PE courses are usually assigned low priority and are not given enough credit. The Philippines is not the only country facing these problems. Brazilian public school PE teachers deal with several issues, such as low pay, subpar facilities, and a lack of supplies [17].

To address these pressing issues, all higher education institutions (HEIs) are required by the Philippine commission on higher education (CHED) to implement the new PATH-Fit tertiary PE program, as stipulated by CHED memorandum order (CMO) 39, series of 2021. PATH-Fit is a proactive response to pressing issues, such as the need for standardized teaching methods, because it is specifically made to provide an extensive and consistent curriculum. The framework places a high priority on overall development, basic life skills, and physical fitness. Additionally, by implementing cutting-edge tactics that can raise the standard and effectiveness of PE in higher education, the program complies with current educational requirements [18].

PATH-Fit's primary goal is to transform and improve PE in Philippine higher education by going beyond traditional frameworks. This will be accomplished by implementing an all-encompassing program that combines critical life skills and physical fitness to address enduring challenges [19]. The curriculum's goal of providing students with a comprehensive educational experience that prioritizes physical well-being, collaboration, effective communication, and overall development is expounded upon in CHED CMO 39 (s. 2021). PATH-Fit strives to improve the quality and effectiveness of higher education in PE by utilizing innovative techniques and adjusting to modern classroom demands. This guarantees that graduates have the skills and information required for their well-being and active participation in society.

Several scholarly investigations have delved into the complex landscape of Gen Z, scrutinizing their conduct across diverse sectors and educational environments. When Bhore and Pandita [20] compared Gen Z

with Gen Y, they discovered that social media significantly impacted Gen Z career decisions. Ajmain [21] drew attention to how technology has affected Gen Z capacity for social communication and stressed the significance of implementing efficient communication techniques. To ascertain the needs, preferences, and learning styles of Gen Z healthcare students, Shorey *et al.* [22] reviewed the literature. They underlined the importance of incorporating self-care techniques and technology into these students' education. According to Arkhipova *et al.* [23], students in Gen Z have a positive attitude regarding technology in the classroom, indicating that a responsible use of technology can improve their academic performance. Giunta [24] brought attention to the higher standards of trust and reliance on social media that Gen Z college students have. This emphasizes how crucial it is for teachers to recognize and accommodate their unique characteristics and preferences.

Further studies in the Philippines on tertiary PE have focused on assessing the efficacy of existing curricula [25], instructional strategies [26], and the overall educational experience. According to Escomes *et al.* [27], the studies looked at curriculum design, teacher practices, student engagement, and the impact of technology on PE. The importance of program curriculum adaptability and rigorous quality evaluation has been emphasized by Panganiban [28]. Graciano [29] has ascertained the inclinations and viewpoints of pupils concerning PE, stressing the need to match it with their requirements. Furthermore, Lobo *et al.* [30] emphasized the significance of student activity preferences, indicating the need for creative approaches to improve the learning environment.

Even with the abundance of research and writing on Gen Z and tertiary PE, much remains unknown about the activity preferences this generation of students prefers to engage in, particularly in the Philippines' rural areas. To fill this gap, this study looked at the factors affecting students' preferences for activities in rural settings. This research adds to the larger body of knowledge by offering insightful information about instructional strategies and student participation. This study aimed to investigate the activity preferences of Gen Z to pinpoint areas within the curriculum and pedagogical approaches that could be improved. Making education more engaging, relevant, and fulfilling was the aim. The findings of this study can be applied to the creation of student-centered programs, tailored instruction, and culturally sensitive methods that address the unique needs of rural Gen Z students.

This study added to the continuing conversation about equitable and inclusive education by providing insightful information about rural Gen Z students' unique needs. It served as a starting point for discussions about adapting teaching strategies to suit different student demographics, fostering a sense of community, and encouraging continued physical activity. Scholars will be inspired to build on this foundation by looking into more efficient approaches, creative methods, and culturally aware strategies to advance the field of PE research by pointing out gaps in the body of existing literature and offering a methodology to study Gen Z's preferences in the context of tertiary PE.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research design

A qualitative research design, particularly the ethnographic approach, was used in this study. According to Creswell and Báez [31], qualitative research is an approach that carefully examines non-numerical data to understand human phenomena' complexities fully. A qualitative research method called ethnographic research involves immersing the researcher in the natural environment of a particular social group or culture to fully understand and examine its subtleties [32]. Ethnographic research uses participant interviews and immersion to understand the patterns of daily life, behaviors, beliefs, and customs within the community under study. According to Murphy *et al.* [33], this method entails extensive and in-depth on-site research, which helps the researcher to gain an internal perspective, establish a close bond with participants, and uncover insights that would not be apparent using other research techniques. By analyzing the social interactions and symbolic meaning ingrained in the experiences of the people being studied, ethnographic research seeks to understand culture fully.

This study used this design because it is very appropriate for understanding the preferred activities of the community and allowed the researcher to paint a complete picture of the kinds of students living in rural areas. This study aimed to enhance the PATH-Fit program's delivery and implementation. Through ethnography, the local environment was thoroughly understood, guaranteeing that the program would meet Gen Z's unique needs, cultural norms, and educational objectives living in rural areas.

2.2. Sampling method (locale, population, and technique)

Purposive sampling was used to select 20 Gen Z participants, who served as the study's primary data source. According to Campbell *et al.* [34], purposeful sampling is a technique used to choose study participants based on particular traits, experiences, or viewpoints that are highly pertinent to the

investigation. This sampling strategy is frequently used in studies that seek to gain a thorough understanding from people with unique or specialized knowledge, ensuring that the chosen participants can significantly contribute to the research topic. Participants must meet specific requirements to be considered for the study. These include being a Gen Z member (born between 1995 and 2010), living in a rural area, and actively enrolled in PATH-Fit courses.

The selected sample size for the study of Gen Z students in the Philippines' Cotabato Province was thought to be sufficient to capture the range of features of this group. Getting detailed information from every participant is the primary goal of qualitative research instead of trying to achieve a broad representation. The selection criteria allowed for some degree of variability within the parameters but were specific enough to identify people with similar activity preferences. The 20 participants in the sample may seem small, but it is sufficient to capture the diversity of viewpoints, experiences, and backgrounds among Cotabato's rural Gen Z population. This is consistent with the study's goal and qualitative design.

2.3. Research instrument

The primary research instrument employed in this investigation comprised open-ended guide questions primarily designed to delve into the diverse perspectives of Gen Z students. With the help of open-ended questions, participants could honestly and thoroughly assess their preferences for activities, resulting in a more sincere and thorough analysis of their opinions. Experts validated this set of open-ended guide questions to evaluate the questions' appropriateness and content.

Along with the interviews, various materials were used for data collection. To help interpret the participants' responses, verbal cues, facial expressions, and contextual information were recorded using a camera and voice recorder. The participants' experiences and surroundings were fully represented by these multimedia tools, improving the quality of the qualitative data.

2.4. Data analysis

The Colaizzi method [35] was used to analyze and interpret the data for this study. This method involved a thorough data reduction, categorization, and abstraction process to derive meaningful insights from the participants' experiences. The Colaizzi method consists of several steps, such as transcribing data or interviews and recognizing significant quotes and expressions related to the research questions. The following processes involve deriving meanings and themes from these claims, grouping these themes into groups, and, in the end, creating a detailed description of the topic under investigation.

Because it aligns with the exploratory nature of the research, which aims to understand the activity preferences of Gen Z students in rural communities, the Colaizzi method was especially appropriate for this study. The gathered data was methodically and rigorously analyzed, allowing for a thorough understanding of the viewpoints and experiences of the participants. The method's flexibility made it easier for themes to emerge straight from participants' perspectives, an essential feature for capturing the wealth and diversity of insights students in rural Gen Z have to offer.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the preferred activities of Gen Z students in rural communities for PATH-Fit courses, highlighting their inclinations for a more engaging and well-rounded PE experience. The preferences reflect a strong desire for activities that support mental, emotional, and social well-being alongside physical fitness. These insights underscore the value Gen Z places on variety, accessibility, and meaningful engagement in their learning experiences.

Lessen the lectures: this theme shows that Gen Z students in rural communities want to reduce the amount of lecture-based learning. They find lectures time-consuming and less engaging compared to physical activities. Participants prefer fewer lectures to be more actively involved and explore subjects like PE in greater depth. They believe cutting down on lectures would help them experience and learn more effectively through practical engagement and hands-on activities. To wit:

"...it is just that I want to lessen the lectures. Lectures are very time-consuming, and there are also physical activities. I observe that if the settings for the lectures are not proper, I tend not to pay attention because the PPT will be sent later. I want fewer lectures so that there can be real engagement. I want all aspects of myself to be involved..." - Tamz

"...I hope the lectures are lessened because there are lessons in PE that I am curious to experience. Like how to execute them properly. This way, I can also explore new things in PE..." - Bogart

Table 1. Preferred activities of Gen Z students in rural communities for PATH-Fit

Sub-themes	Description	Sample transcript
1. Lessen the lectures	Students prefer fewer lectures to allow for more active and engaging learning experiences.	• “I want fewer lectures so that there can be real engagement.” • “Lectures are very time-consuming, and there are also physical activities.” • “I hope the lectures are lessened because there are lessons in PE that I am curious to experience.”
2. Holistic activities	Students seek activities that address social, mental, and emotional well-being alongside physical health.	• “I want social and mental activities because when talking about PE, it focuses more on physical lifestyle and health.” • “The emotional aspects should also be developed.” • “I hope for activities that do not exhaust us and can refresh us.”
3. Sports and physical activities	Students want diverse and structured sports programs that promote skill development and exploration.	• “I hope that every semester, there will be new sports introduced to help us develop because we might have hidden talents.” • “I hope there is a training program because, without a program, it feels like there is no guide.” • “I want new sports to be taught to us so that I am also aware of other sports and not just focused on the common ones.”
4. Comfort, accessibility, and convenience	Students prefer activities that are easy to access, hassle-free, and comfortable to participate in.	• “We prefer things that make us comfortable.” • “We want things that can be accessed online or on our phones.” • “We do not want to struggle or be hassled; as much as possible, we make things easier and hassle-free.”
5. Community and outdoor activities	Students value opportunities to engage in community-based and outdoor activities that extend learning beyond the classroom.	• “I want us to extend help to the community.” • “I hope in PE 3 and 4, we could go outside and not just stay in school.” • “We can conduct immersions there and do physical activities for the community.”
6. Activities to deviate from technology	Students desire activities that provide a break from constant technology use.	• “PATH-Fit is our escape from other academic tasks like writing, solving problems, and so on.” • “We are Gen Z, but when it comes to education, we want to deviate from technology at some point.” • “We are on our phones 24/7, always lying down, and we have no energy left.”
7. Activities that do not add stress	Students favor activities that are easy to manage and do not add to their stress.	• “We prefer things that make us comfortable.” • “PE should also not add stress.” • “Hopefully, the activities should not be so demanding so that we can better appreciate their importance.”

The desire to lessen lecture-based learning among Gen Z students in rural communities implies a shift towards valuing interactive and hands-on educational experiences over traditional, passive forms of instruction. This shift can affect the design of curricula and instructional methods, potentially leading to changes in how educational content is delivered and experienced. As students seek more active involvement, there may be broader implications for academic engagement, motivation, and the overall effectiveness of learning processes, potentially reshaping the dynamics of classroom environments and student-teacher interactions.

Further, Wassinger *et al.* [36] said that reducing lectures in PE classes is beneficial because it allows students to engage more in physical activities, which are the core of PE. Active participation in sports, exercises, and hands-on activities helps students develop physical skills, improve fitness, and experience the benefits of teamwork and cooperation [37]. Practical engagement in PE fosters a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, enhancing students' motivation and enjoyment while providing real-world applications of concepts taught, making the learning experience more effective and impactful.

Holistic activities: this theme highlights that Gen Z students in rural communities want activities that address various aspects of well-being, not just physical health. They are activity preferences in activities that include social, mental, and emotional components, such as mind games, stress management, and emotional wellness exercises. Participants feel that incorporating various activities, including relaxing and meditative, can help manage stress, refresh overall health, and cater to different activity preferences beyond physical exercise alone. Based on the research participants:

“...I want social and mental activities because when talking about PE, it focuses on physical lifestyle and health. Sometimes, the social aspects of students today are neglected, such as mental activities, mind games, and how to overcome their problems by doing activities that can help. Based on experience, there are many stressed students, so hopefully, through PE, they can express or learn how to deal with the stress they experience...” - Yan

“...because when we were taught in PATH-Fit, we were about developing all aspects of holistic wellness. So, it shouldn't just be the physical aspect that is developed. So, I think what I can

suggest as activities to be incorporated are mind-setting activities because students today, as Gen Z, don't all prefer exercises..." - Datu Ham

This denotes that incorporating holistic activities into education can enhance students' well-being by addressing social, mental, and emotional needs. Such an approach may improve stress management and personal growth, contributing to a more rounded development. However, including diverse activities could create challenges in aligning with traditional educational frameworks and resource allocation, potentially impacting how effectively these activities can be integrated and sustained.

Furthermore, incorporating holistic activities in PE is essential because it addresses students' diverse needs, promoting physical fitness and mental, emotional, and social well-being [38]. Holistic activities, such as mindfulness exercises, stress management techniques, and team-building games, help students develop well-rounded skills and coping mechanisms [39]. These activities can enhance students' stress management, improve emotional regulation, foster positive social interactions, and support overall mental health.

Sports training and physical activities. This theme shows that Gen Z students in rural communities want more variety and structure in sports and physical activities. They want to try new sports each semester to uncover and develop hidden talents. Participants prefer having structured training programs with specific goals to target muscle development and improve skills. They are eager to learn about unfamiliar and diverse sports, including indigenous and international options. Additionally, students value physical activities, sports, dance, and exercises to relieve stress and tension from their academic lives. According to them:

"...so, I hope that new sports will be introduced every semester to help us develop because we might have hidden talents. I'm not sporty, but I want to learn more about different sports..."
- Kitchie

"...for me, I hope there is a training program because, without a program, it feels like there's no guide. There's no target for which muscles to improve. These should be the activities that develop these muscles. Then, my weaknesses, like I'm not a dancer, so I need to improve so that it will be easier for me next time..." - Namikazee

This indicates that a focus on diverse sports training and physical activities can enrich students' experiences by allowing them to explore various talents and activity preferences. Offering structured programs and introducing new sports can foster skills development and potentially enhance students' engagement with PE. However, this approach may require careful planning and resources to ensure that training programs are effectively implemented and accessible to all students.

Moreover, despite being part of a generation often characterized by digital engagement, Gen Z students prefer participating in sports and physical activities because these activities offer tangible benefits that digital interactions cannot. Sports and physical activities provide real-life social interaction, teamwork, and camaraderie opportunities, which help build meaningful relationships and a sense of community [40]. They also offer a break from screen time, reducing digital fatigue and promoting physical health [41]. These activities provide a sense of achievement, personal growth, and stress relief, contributing to the overall well-being and balanced lifestyle that many Gen Z students seek [42].

Comfort, accessibility, and convenience: this theme highlights that Gen Z students in rural communities prefer activities that are easy, accessible, and convenient. They choose more straightforward activities to avoid difficulty and hassle. Participants want tools and resources that are readily available, including those that can be accessed online or via mobile devices. They aim to minimize effort and ensure that their experience is as comfortable and straightforward as possible, avoiding activities that are difficult or require hard-to-find resources. Based on them:

"Maybe we prefer things that make us comfortable. If there are activities, we choose the easy ones instead of the difficult ones because we want convenience. Of course, we want accessibility. We prefer activities where the tools are accessible, and we don't like activities where the tools aren't accessible. We want things that can be accessed online or on our phones. Wherever it is easiest, that's where we'll go. We don't want to struggle or be hassled; as much as possible, we make things easier and hassle-free..." - Snow

This suggests prioritizing comfort, accessibility, and convenience in educational activities can significantly affect students' engagement and participation. Students are more likely to engage consistently and effectively when activities are designed to be easy to access and involve minimal hassle. However, focusing on convenience may also limit the variety and complexity of activities offered, potentially affecting the breadth of student experiences.

Additionally, Gen Z prefers comfort, accessibility, and convenience in academic pursuits because these factors align with their fast-paced, technology-driven lifestyle [43]. They are accustomed to instant access to information and resources through digital platforms, making them favor learning environments that are flexible, user-friendly, and adaptable to their needs [44]. Smith *et al.* [45] expressed that academic convenience allows them to balance multiple responsibilities, such as part-time jobs or extracurricular activities, without overwhelming stress. Accessible and comfortable learning conditions enhance their engagement and productivity, as they can focus better when their basic needs are met and barriers to learning are minimized [46].

Community and outdoor activities: this theme reveal that Gen Z students in rural communities want more opportunities for community-based and outdoor activities. They are activity preferences in extending help to their communities through events like fitness sessions and Zumba. Participants also wish for experiences outside the school, such as walking in natural settings like camps and rivers. They value activities involving community interaction and outdoor environments, seeking ways to learn and contribute through these experiences. As they said:

“...also, community activities. I want us to extend help to the community. We can conduct immersions there and do physical activities for the community. So, at the end of PE, we will have experience in the community teaching fitness and leading Zumba...” – Nica

“...for me, I hope in PE 3 and 4, we could go outside and not just stay in school. For example, we could walk in camps and rivers. When we were in grade 12, we were supposed to go camping, but our principal didn't allow it because there were many of us and only one teacher. So, safety was very risky...” – Arden

This entails incorporating community and outdoor activities into educational programs to strengthen students' connections with their local environment and foster a sense of community involvement. Engaging in activities outside school and contributing to community events can enhance students' practical experiences and social interactions. However, organizing such activities may present logistical challenges, including ensuring safety and managing resources, which can impact the feasibility and effectiveness of these programs.

Also, conducting community-based and outdoor activities offers numerous benefits to students by fostering a sense of connection and engagement with their environment and community [47]. These activities encourage physical fitness, outdoor exploration, and practical learning experiences that go beyond the classroom. They help students develop social skills, teamwork, and a sense of responsibility by interacting with diverse groups and contributing to community initiatives [48]. Outdoor activities can reduce stress, improve mental health, and enhance overall well-being by providing a refreshing change from indoor and digital environments. These experiences also nurture a sense of environmental stewardship and appreciation for nature [49].

Activities to deviate from technology: this theme shows that Gen Z students in rural communities want activities that offer a break from technology. They see PATH-Fit as a chance to escape from academic tasks and constant technology use, such as phones and TikTok. Participants are looking for activities that involve physical movement and provide a respite from continuous exposure to technology, as they feel exhausted from being on their devices all the time. They seek activities that help them balance their tech-heavy lives with more engaging and active experiences. Based on their responses:

“...PATH-Fit is our escape from other academic tasks like writing, solving problems, and so on. PATH-Fit focuses more on engaging us in the movement since we're often exposed to technology and doing nothing, like using our phones or TikTok during PE. We are Gen Z, but when it comes to education, we want to deviate from technology at some point because we're probably so sick of it. We're on our phones 24/7, always lying down, and have no energy left...” – Bebe

This conveys that offering activities to provide a break from technology can significantly impact students' engagement and overall well-being. By incorporating more physical and interactive activities, students might experience reduced screen time and increased physical activity levels. This shift could lead to improved focus and reduced fatigue associated with prolonged technology use.

Consequently, this implies that students today prefer activities in PE to deviate from technology because these activities provide a necessary break from the constant digital engagement that defines their daily lives [50]. Engaging in physical activities allows them to disconnect from screens, reduce digital fatigue, and engage in real-world interactions [51]. Physical activities promote physical health, improve mood, and reduce stress levels, offering a refreshing contrast to the often sedentary and mentally taxing

nature of prolonged technology use. This balance between digital and physical experiences helps students maintain overall well-being and encourages a more active, healthy lifestyle [52].

Activities that do not add stress: this theme highlights that Gen Z students in rural communities prefer activities that do not increase their stress levels. They choose more straightforward, more accessible activities and avoid those requiring complex or hard-to-find tools. Participants want convenient activities that do not add to their academic stress. They hope PE activities will be manageable and not overly demanding, allowing them to appreciate the activities' value and support their overall well-being without adding extra pressure. To wit:

"Maybe we prefer things that make us comfortable. If there are activities, we choose the easy ones instead of the difficult ones because we want convenience. Of course, we want accessibility. We prefer activities where the tools are accessible, and we don't like activities where the tools aren't accessible. We want things that can be accessed online or on our phones. Wherever it is easiest, that's where we'll go. We don't want to struggle or be hassled; as much as possible, we make things easier and hassle-free..." - Snow

"...PE should also not add stress. It shouldn't demand too much time to pass the subject because it can hinder achieving our holistic well-being. Deadlines, standards, and take-home activities are very demanding. So hopefully, the activities should not be so demanding so that we can better appreciate their importance and develop other aspects of ourselves as Gen Zs..." - Datu Ham

This denotes that designing activities to minimize stress can improve students' overall experience and engagement in educational programs. When activities are less demanding and more accessible, students may experience lower stress levels and a greater sense of well-being. This focus on reducing stress can also affect how students perceive the value and importance of these activities, potentially leading to higher participation rates and more positive outcomes.

Further, students today prefer activities in PE that do not add additional stress because they are already managing significant pressures from academic responsibilities, extracurricular commitments, and social expectations. Stress-free PE activities provide a much-needed respite, allowing students to focus on physical fitness and enjoyment without the burden of performance anxiety or complicated requirements [53]. These activities help students relax, unwind, and rejuvenate, promoting mental well-being and preventing burnout [54]. By engaging in enjoyable and manageable physical activities, students can maintain a healthier balance between their academic and personal lives, improving overall well-being [55].

4. CONCLUSION

Gen Z students in rural communities prefer PATH-Fit activities that are engaging, diverse, and supportive of their well-being. They desire fewer lectures to allow for more interactive and holistic learning experiences, incorporating social, mental, and emotional components alongside physical activities. Students also seek comfort, accessibility, and convenience in their activities, favoring easy and hassle-free access. They value community and outdoor activities that extend learning beyond the classroom and provide opportunities to connect with their environment. They also want activities that offer a break from constant technology use and do not increase their stress levels. These preferences highlight their need for a balanced and multifaceted approach to PE that caters to their varied activity preferences and well-being.

Future directions should explore tailored PATH-Fit programs that integrate Gen Z's preferences for holistic, accessible, and community-centered activities, especially in rural settings. Further research could investigate how these preferred activities impact long-term student engagement and overall well-being, providing data-driven insights to enhance PE curricula. Additionally, examining similar preferences across diverse regions may reveal broader trends, helping refine PATH-Fit for various contexts and student needs.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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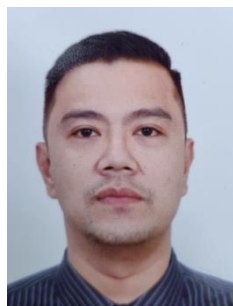
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