

The Management Mechanism of Sportsmanship and Discipline in Youth Competitions in Gansu Province

Fawei Li, Rong Lu

Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics, Lanzhou 730000, Gansu, China

Copyright: © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: This paper uses statistical analysis and expert interviews to investigate the current state of sportsmanship and discipline in youth competitions during the 15th Gansu Provincial Games. It analyzes and summarizes the awareness of relevant personnel regarding the issues of sportsmanship and discipline in youth competitions in Gansu Province, explores existing problems in the sportsmanship and discipline of these competitions, and analyzes the factors influencing them. Based on these findings, the paper proposes strategies for constructing and developing a supervisory management mechanism for sportsmanship and discipline in youth competitions in Gansu Province. The goal is to promote the integrity of youth sports competitions in Gansu and serve the cultivation of outstanding youth sports reserve talents in the province.

Keywords: Gansu Province; Youth; Sportsmanship and Discipline; Management Mechanism

Online publication: September 26, 2025

1. Introduction

Sports competitions, as an important component of youth education, hold value far beyond the pursuit of championships and achievements. Their deeper significance lies in shaping sound character, fostering team spirit, and transmitting positive social values. In this process, sportsmanship and discipline serve as the cornerstone to ensure fair, just, and healthy competition and are core indicators for assessing the quality of youth sports development and integrity in a region^[1]. Youth sports in Gansu Province play a crucial role in the sustainable development of regional sports. The purity of its competition environment directly impacts the effectiveness of cultivating excellent sports reserve talents and the physical and mental health of young athletes.

However, issues related to sportsmanship and discipline in youth sports competitions represent a global challenge. From an international perspective, issues such as age and identity falsification, unfair refereeing, violence on the field, and unethical “game tactics” in the pursuit of victory are frequently observed^[2,3]. These issues severely undermine the spirit of sportsmanship and have a profound negative impact on young athletes, who are in a critical period for developing their values. Studies show that many youth have a superficial understanding of the concept of “fair competition,” often viewing it only as a set of rules on the field, without internalizing it as a universal behavioral guideline for daily life^[4]. This situation highlights the urgency of strengthening ethical and moral education in youth sports.

To build an effective management mechanism, it is crucial to deeply understand the theoretical connotations of “fair

competition” and its influencing factors. Historically, the concept of fair competition originated from the “gentleman amateurism” in 19th-century British public schools and was an important part of its moral code^[5]. As sports have evolved with professionalization and commercialization, their meaning has continued to expand, developing into a complex, multidimensional scope from simple rule compliance to the pursuit of social fairness, such as opposing discrimination, ensuring procedural justice, and exploring social psychological motivations^[3].

The factors influencing sportsmanship and discipline in youth sports are complex and span across individual, environmental, and systemic levels. On the shown that a “self-oriented” motivation, focused on proving one’s ability and surpassing others, is significantly associated with lower fair competition attitudes and higher acceptance of cheating^[6,7]. On the environmental level, coaches and teachers play an irreplaceable role. They are not only technical guides but also important role models and norm setters. Studies have found that if coaches tolerate or even encourage foul play and “small tricks,” it can significantly weaken athletes’ belief in fair competition^[8]. Moreover, the “motivational climate” created by coaches, whether it emphasizes effort and progress or solely focuses on winning, also profoundly affects athletes’ moral judgments and behavior choices^[9]. On the systemic level, competition system design, the strength of supervision, and even commercial interests may commercialization of college basketball leagues in the United States, referees’ decisions may unconsciously be influenced by the pressure to maintain the suspense of the game to attract viewers^[10]. A case study of the “fair play program” in youth ice hockey shows that even with well-designed systems, if there is a lack of sustained publicity and mandatory enforcement, the effectiveness of the program is significantly diminished^[11].

In terms of interventions and practices, international experience provides valuable references. Systematic educational interventions have been proven effective. For example, integrating sports education models or personal and social responsibility models into sports teaching can significantly improve youth performance in respecting rules, referees, and opponents^[12]. Successful intervention programs typically have characteristics of theoretical guidance, systematic design, and long-term persistence, and they can produce sustained positive effects^[9].

Currently, there is a study that aims to focus on the real context of Gansu Province. Through an on-site investigation of the youth competitions at the 15th National Games, it systematically analyzes the current situation, problems, and underlying influencing factors of competition ethics. Based on this analysis, the study seeks to construct a scientific and operable supervision and management mechanism for competition ethics, to provide theoretical foundations and practical solutions to promote the healthy and sustainable development of youth sports in Gansu Province.

2. Investigation and analysis of issues in the competition ethics of youth sports in Gansu province

Based on expert interviews and a review of relevant literature, a survey questionnaire on the competition ethics of youth sports in Gansu Province was designed. The survey was conducted with 10 experts, 10 relevant administrators, and 100 athletes. Using the Likert scale, participants were asked to score the problems according to their importance. During the statistical analysis, values of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 were assigned based on the level of importance, and the average score was then calculated. Problems with higher average scores indicate greater importance, while those with lower scores suggest less importance.

According to **Table 1**, the top three issues identified by experts regarding the current problems in the competition ethics of youth sports in Gansu Province, based on their average scores, are: inadequate evaluation and supervision (3.2 points), a single approach to disciplinary punishment (2.9 points), and inconsistent management awareness (2.9 points).

Table 1. Statistical analysis of key issues in sports ethics and discipline management as identified by experts ($n = 10$)

Key issues	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Less important (2)	Not important (1)	Mean score	Ranking
Unclear Responsibilities of Management Institutions	1	2	2	2	3	2.6	8
Poor Information Communication	1	3	2	1	3	2.8	4
Insufficient Management Intensity	1	2	3	1	3	2.7	6
Inconsistent Management Awareness	1	3	2	2	2	2.9	2
Poor Internal and External Coordination	1	2	3	2	2	2.8	4
Frequent Disciplinary Violations	1	1	4	2	2	2.7	6
Single-Channel Promotion Methods	1	1	3	2	3	2.5	10
Low Level of Attention	1	2	2	2	3	2.6	8
Lax Evaluation and Supervision	2	2	3	2	1	3.2	1
Single-Form Disciplinary Penalties	2	1	3	2	2	2.9	2

According to **Table 2**, the top three issues identified by relevant administrators based on their average scores are: inconsistent management awareness (3.2 points), frequent disciplinary violations (3.1 points), and poor internal and external coordination (3.0 points). From **Tables 1 and 2**, it can be observed that both leaders/experts and relevant administrators agree on the issue of inconsistent management awareness, which has been recognized as a common problem. This indicates that, in future competitions, there is a need to strengthen management requirements and further enhance the sense of responsibility among the management, thereby fostering a positive atmosphere to improve competition ethics.

Table 2. Statistical analysis of key issues in sports ethics and discipline management as identified by relevant management personnel ($n = 10$)

Key issues	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Less important (2)	Not important (1)	Mean score	Ranking
Unclear Responsibilities of Management Institutions	1	2	2	2	3	2.6	10
Poor Information Communication	1	3	2	2	2	2.9	4
Insufficient Management Intensity	1	1	4	2	2	2.7	8
Inconsistent Management Awareness	2	2	3	2	1	3.2	1
Poor Internal and External Coordination	2	1	3	3	1	3.0	3
Frequent Disciplinary Violations	2	1	4	2	1	3.1	2
Single-Channel Promotion Methods	1	3	2	2	2	2.9	4
Low Level of Attention	1	3	2	1	3	2.8	6
Lax Evaluation and Supervision	1	1	4	2	2	2.7	8
Single-Form Disciplinary Penalties	1	3	2	1	3	2.8	6

To objectively identify the problems in the management of competition ethics, the responses of relevant administrators and leaders/experts (those selecting “important” and “relatively important”) were combined to calculate the total number of people and their proportions (see **Table 3**). The statistics show that 8 people (40%) selected inconsistent management awareness, 8 people (40%) selected poor information communication, 7 people (35%) selected single publicity methods, 7 people (35%) selected inadequate evaluation and supervision, 6 people (30%) selected unclear responsibilities of competition management institutions, 6 people (30%) selected frequent disciplinary violations, 6 people (30%) selected low level of emphasis, and 5 people (25%) selected insufficient management strength and poor internal and external coordination.

In summary, the main problems in the management of competition ethics in youth sports in Gansu Province are inconsistent management awareness, poor information communication, single publicity methods, and inadequate evaluation and supervision. These issues require careful consideration and the development of appropriate future improvement strategies.

According to **Table 3**, the top three issues identified by athletes regarding the management of competition ethics are: insufficient competition publicity, selected by 37 people (37%), a single approach to disciplinary handling, selected by 35 people (35%), and inadequate rigor in the work of supervisors, selected by 34 people (34%). In response to these issues, we need to boldly innovate and reform, strengthen cooperation with various short video platforms and self-media, and increase publicity efforts. Additionally, reforming the approach to disciplinary handling and enhancing the professional training of relevant staff will better improve competition ethics.

Table 3. Statistical analysis of key issues in sports ethics and discipline management as identified by athletes ($n = 100$)

Key issues	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Lax Work of Supervisory Personnel	34	34	3
Insufficient Competition Promotion	37	37	1
Single-Form Disciplinary Measures	35	35	2
Inadequate Logistical Support	32	32	4
Disorganized Management	30	30	5
Slow Updates of Sports Ethics and Discipline Information	29	29	6
Others	27	27	7

3. Analysis of the factors influencing the management of competition ethics in youth sports in Gansu province

Based on expert interviews and a review of relevant literature, a survey questionnaire on the factors influencing the competition ethics in youth sports in Gansu Province was designed. The survey was conducted among 10 experts and 10 relevant administrators, using the Likert scale. They were asked to score the issues based on their importance according to the current state of competition ethics. For statistical purposes, values of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 were assigned based on the level of importance, and then the average score was calculated. Issues with higher average scores indicate that they are more important, while lower scores suggest less significance.

According to **Table 4**, experts believe that the main factors affecting the competition ethics in youth sports in Gansu Province are: management system construction (3.4 points), the alienation of competitive sports (3.3 points), and the intensity of supervision and enforcement (3.3 points). According to **Table 5**, relevant administrators believe the main factors are: a sound management system (3.3 points), the intensity of supervision and enforcement (3.2 points), and the evaluation and assessment methods (3.1 points).

A comparison of the results reveals that both groups of respondents highly value the impact of management systems and evaluation systems on competition ethics. Effective management can help avoid undesirable phenomena, and a good evaluation system can better inspire athletes' enthusiasm, allowing them to fully realize their potential.

Table 4. Statistical analysis of key factors influencing sports ethics and discipline as identified by experts ($n = 10$)

Key issues	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Less important (2)	Not important (1)	Mean score	Ranking
Management System Development	2	3	3	1	1	3.4	1
Logistical Support Strength	1	1	3	3	2	2.6	7
Supervision and Enforcement Intensity	2	2	4	1	1	3.3	3
Assessment and Evaluation Methods	2	2	3	2	1	3.2	4
Alienation of Competitive Sports	2	2	4	1	1	3.3	2
Effectiveness of Promotion and Education	1	1	4	3	1	2.8	6
Social Climate	1	2	5	1	1	3.1	5

Table 5. Statistical analysis of key factors influencing sports ethics and discipline as identified by relevant management personnel ($n = 10$)

Key issues	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Less important (2)	Not important (1)	Mean score	Ranking
Management System Development	2	2	4	1	1	3.3	1
Logistical Support Strength	1	2	3	3	1	2.9	6
Supervision and Enforcement Intensity	2	1	5	1	1	3.2	2
Assessment and Evaluation Methods	1	2	5	1	1	3.1	3
Alienation of Competitive Sports	1	2	4	2	1	3.0	4
Effectiveness of Promotion and Education	1	2	4	2	1	3.0	4
Social Climate	1	2	3	3	1	2.9	6

4. Development strategies for the management of competition ethics in youth sports in Gansu province

According to **Table 6**, experts believe the top three strategies are: strengthening the reform of the management system (3.9 points), strengthening supervision and management (3.8 points), and training a high-quality referee team (3.7 points). According to **Table 7**, relevant administrators believe the top three strategies are: comprehensively improving sports integrity construction (3.8 points), strengthening the reform of the management system (3.7 points), and training a high-quality referee team (3.6 points). A comparison reveals that both groups of respondents agree that strengthening the reform of the management system and training a high-quality referee team should be prioritized.

Table 6. Statistical analysis of expert evaluations of development strategies for sports ethics and discipline ($n = 10$)

Key issues	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Less important (2)	Not important (1)	Mean score	Ranking
Strengthen Management System Reform	3	3	2	1	1	3.9	1
Comprehensively Enhance Integrity Building	1	4	3	1	1	3.6	5
Develop a High-Quality Referee Team	2	3	3	1	1	3.7	3
Improve the Sports Competition Evaluation System	1	4	3	1	1	3.6	4
Enhance Supervision and Management	3	2	3	1	1	3.8	2

Table 7. Statistical analysis of evaluations by relevant management personnel on development strategies for sports ethics and discipline ($n = 10$)

Key issues	Very important (5)	Important (4)	Moderate (3)	Less important (2)	Not important (1)	Mean score	Ranking
Strengthen Management System Reform	3	2	2	2	1	3.7	2
Comprehensively Enhance Integrity Building	3	2	3	1	1	3.8	1
Develop a High-Quality Referee Team	3	2	2	1	2	3.6	3
Improve the Sports Competition Evaluation System	3	1	3	1	2	3.5	4
Enhance Supervision and Management	3	1	3	1	2	3.5	4

4.1. Comprehensive strengthening of sports credit construction

Currently, for issues related to sportsmanship and competition discipline in youth competitions in Gansu Province, punishments mainly include suspensions, bans, notifications, or disqualification from participation. For illegal behaviors such as match-fixing and gambling, criminal penalties are imposed. However, the evaluation of sports credit and the construction of penalties for dishonesty are relatively underdeveloped. Therefore, there is an urgent need to implement sports credit construction. At present, Gansu Province lacks specialized sports integrity institutions, and there is almost no related credit punishment system when sportsmanship and competition discipline issues arise among different participants. We can establish a youth competition sports credit management platform, dividing participants into different credit systems based on their roles, such as athletes, referees, coaches, and related staff, then target and collect relevant information to build a sports credit database. For those who seriously violate sportsmanship and competition discipline, joint actions should be taken with other relevant social departments. For areas that lack a sports credit evaluation system, we can establish a sports credit information record system. This will allow coordination between sports credit management agencies in the province and other related departments, improving the credit of the entire sports industry and further optimizing the sportsmanship and competition discipline environment in Gansu Province's youth sports competitions.

4.2. Strengthening the reform of the management system and mechanism

System and mechanism reform is a long-term process that faces many challenges, especially in the field of sports competitions. To create a good atmosphere for sportsmanship and competition discipline, significant effort is required. We must continually strengthen public education to enhance societal awareness of the importance of sportsmanship and competition discipline in youth sports competitions, so that young people can actively maintain good sportsmanship, adhere to sports ethics, and compete honestly. We must also continually strengthen the management system innovation to ensure the long-term, stable, and efficient development of sportsmanship and competition discipline work. Strengthening institutional innovation requires the liberation of thought, establishing relevant policies and legal systems for sportsmanship and competition discipline, and ensuring that there are laws to follow. We should be bold in innovating management ideas and content. For all violations of sports ethics and competition discipline, every incident should be dealt with, violations should be investigated, and reasonable penalties imposed. This will allow the management mechanism to play a role in promoting the creation of a good sportsmanship and competition discipline atmosphere in youth competitions.

4.3. Strengthening sports competition supervision and management

By strengthening the construction of work style and improving the supervision mechanism, we can create a good atmosphere for youth sportsmanship and competition discipline in the province. Currently, large-scale sports competitions in the province have established qualification and supervision committees and other supervisory bodies, composed of authoritative sports figures, relevant personnel from the provincial education department, and officials from provincial-level sports administrative departments, to oversee the overall operation of sports competitions. This has achieved some results, but many problems remain. We need to further strengthen the construction of the sports competition industry supervision and management system, and may also appropriately introduce external supervisory personnel, including the public, social figures, and various media. This will facilitate cooperation between internal and external supervisors, strengthening the role of sportsmanship and competition discipline development in sports competitions. When hiring external personnel, relevant factors should be fully considered to select a representative personnel structure. If problems are found during the supervision of sports competitions, reasonable suggestions should be actively proposed, and rights should be exercised correctly. Positive suggestions should be made to help with the development of sportsmanship and competition discipline.

4.4. Building a high-quality referee team

Currently, the overall level of referees in Gansu Province is average and there are many issues. In particular, training for mid- and low-level referees should be strengthened. Most of them are physical education teachers from various schools and work as “part-time” referees, so they generally lack refereeing experience and have lower officiating levels, which affects their advancement to some extent. As sports competitions increase in Gansu Province and the number of athletes grows, a large number of referees are needed to officiate, which plays an important role in promoting sportsmanship and competition discipline in youth sports competitions. Therefore, in future referee work, the training of mid- and low-level referees should be strengthened, further improving the overall level of referees in Gansu Province and laying a solid foundation for creating a good sportsmanship and competition discipline environment.

4.5. Transforming ideas and improving the sports competition evaluation system

According to **Table 4**, experts believe that the main factors influencing the competition ethics and sportsmanship of youth competitions in Gansu Province are: management system construction (3.4 points), the commercialization of competitive sports (3.3 points), law enforcement and supervision (3.3 points), and evaluation methods (3.2 points). Based on **Table 5**, relevant management personnel believe the main factors influencing the competition ethics and sportsmanship of youth competitions in Gansu Province are: sound management systems (3.3 points), law enforcement and supervision (3.2 points), and evaluation methods (3.1 points). This indicates that evaluation methods are a crucial factor, and the

management has recognized this issue. For a long time, the “gold medal supremacy” mindset has had a deep impact. Although the medal ranking list has been canceled, the phenomenon of comparing the number of medals privately between cities still exists. Some sports officials in certain cities, in pursuit of their own political achievements, focus on the number of gold medals, thus failing to strictly manage coaches and athletes. This has led them to adopt unethical methods to win gold medals, violating the traditional Chinese sports spirit. This has resulted in a negative social impact. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen ideological education, establish the correct values, and not evaluate everything based on medals. A scientific and reasonable sports development evaluation system should be established. Particularly for youth competitions, local sports administrative departments should take it seriously, set an example, and create a good atmosphere for sports ethics and sportsmanship, thereby better cultivating outstanding youth sports talents for our province.

5. Conclusion

This study, through an empirical investigation of youth competitions in Gansu Province, identifies the core issues in the management of sports ethics and discipline as uneven management awareness, poor information communication, and lax evaluation and supervision. The root causes primarily stem from an imperfect management system, weak supervision and enforcement, and an evaluation orientation centered on “gold medal supremacy.” To address these issues, this study proposes a systematic governance plan: the primary task is to establish a sports credit system, using credit-based penalties to increase the cost of violations; the fundamental measure is to deepen reforms in the management system and mechanisms, clarifying responsibilities and achieving legalized, routine management; the key support lies in building a combined internal and external supervision network and strengthening the referee team to ensure competition fairness; ultimately, by establishing a scientific educational and evaluation orientation, the persistent issue of “gold medal supremacy” can be eradicated at its ideological root, thereby systematically purifying the competition environment and laying a solid foundation for the healthy development of youth sports in Gansu Province.

Funding

2023 University Teacher Innovation Fund of the Gansu Provincial Education Department (Project No.: 2023B-096); General Project of the Gansu Provincial Education Science “14th Five-Year Plan” (Project No.: GS[2024]GHB1515)

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Wildner M, 2024, Fair Play in Sports and Society. *Gesundheitswesen*, 86(10): 607–609.
- [2] Verdaguer F, Ramón J, Rotger P, et al., 2017, Does Cheating and Gamesmanship to Be Reconsidered Regarding Fair Play in Grassroots Sports? *Revista de Psicología del Deporte*, 26(3): 28–32.
- [3] Serrano-Durá J, Molina P, Martínez-Baena A, 2021, Systematic Review of Research on Fair Play and Sporting Competition. *Sport, Education and Society*, 26(6): 648–662.
- [4] Ludwiczak M, Bronikowska M, 2022, Fair Play in a Context of Physical Education and Sports Behaviours. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(4): 2452.
- [5] Renson R, 2009, Fair Play: Its Origins and Meanings in Sport and Society. *Kinesiology*, 41(1): 5–18.
- [6] Estrada J, González-Mesa C, Méndez J, 2007, Sports Participation and Fair Play. *Psicothema*, 19(1): 57–64.

- [7] Cabo-Agustín S, Carriedo-Cayón A, de Mesa C, 2022, Fair Play Attitudes During the Practice of Football in Primary School Students. *Journal of Sport and Health Research*, 14(2): 269–280.
- [8] Hoffmann A, 2007, Fair Play or Foul Play – Situational Influences and the Importance of Coaches in Norm Conflicts in Youth Soccer. *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie*, 38(2): 95–104.
- [9] Hassandra M, Goudas M, Hatzigeorgiadis A, et al., 2007, A Fair Play Intervention Program in School Olympic Education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 22(2): 99–114.
- [10] Thu K, Hattman K, Hutchinson V, et al., 2002, Keeping the Game Close: “Fair Play” Among Men’s College Basketball Referees. *Human Organization*, 61(1): 1–8.
- [11] Smith A, Twardowski C, Gaz D, et al., 2014, Hockey Education Program: Fair Play Implementation Issues and a Feasible Solution. *Mechanism of Concussion in Sports*, ASTM International.
- [12] Domínguez B, Nogales J, Robles M, et al., 2021, The Development of Fair Play in Physical Education and School Sports: A Systematic Review. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 10(2): 308–323.

Publisher’s note

Whioce Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.