

Educational Mechanism and Practical Path of “Strengthening Mind with Sports” Holiday Exercise Check-in Activity under the Background of Three-Aspect Education—Taking Beijing International Studies University as an Example

Ruiqi Zhang^{1,2}

¹School of Tourism Sciences, Beijing International Studies University, Beijing 100024, China

²Sports Counselor Studio, Beijing International Studies University, Beijing 100024, China

Copyright: © 2026 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: Holidays represent a “gap period” for college students’ physical exercise. Guiding students to maintain regular exercise routines after leaving campus collective life remains a challenge in university sports education, as well as a critical issue requiring breakthroughs in ideological and political education under the “Three-Aspect Education” framework in the new era. This study examines the “Physical Fitness for Mental Strength” holiday exercise check-in program (Version 1.0) at Beijing International Studies University, systematically analyzing the collaborative organizational structure involving “college administration & student affairs office & sports counselor studios”, along with core design elements such as dual verification mechanisms (video and screenshot checks) and tiered goal incentive systems. Research findings indicate that online community supervision, progressive goal design, and real-time outcome feedback significantly enhanced exercise adherence while demonstrating psychological educational effects of “Physical Fitness for Mental Strength” in alleviating holiday loneliness and boosting self-efficacy. Based on process tracking and outcome evaluation, the study further explores the professional support role of sports counselor studios during program implementation. From the perspective of “Three-Aspect Education”, it proposes development pathways connecting this model with university “one-stop” student community sports studios. Practical validation through the transition from “Five-Education Integration” to “Five-Education Synergy” approaches aim to provide replicable references for university sports education initiatives.

Keywords: Three-aspect education; Strengthening mind through sports; Five-education integration; Holiday exercise check-in; Sports counselor studio

Online publication: March 26, 2026

1. Introduction

Sports serve as a vital component of education, embodying the unique mission of “cultivating wisdom through physical activity and nurturing character through sports”. In recent years, the Chinese government has placed heightened emphasis

on youth physical health. As the primary arena for talent development, universities have increasingly recognized the comprehensive educational value of sports under the “Five-Education Integration” policy framework. However, current school sports programs predominantly focus on semester-based physical education courses and campus competitions, while providing inadequate guidance and supervision for extended periods like winter and summer vacations. The challenge of effectively motivating students to maintain regular exercise during these “unregulated periods” and ensuring continuous sports education remains a critical issue that university student affairs and sports pedagogy research must address.

This study takes the “Physical Fitness for Mental Strength” holiday exercise check-in program 1.0 at Beijing International Studies University as a case study. Through comprehensive process tracking and effectiveness analysis, it summarizes the operational mechanisms and practical experiences, explores how holiday sports education models can be integrated into university ideological and political work systems, and aims to provide valuable insights for comprehensive sports reform in higher education institutions in the new era.

2. Research background

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China promoted “Healthy China” as a national strategy. In 2025, the Ministry of Education and four other departments issued the “Opinions on Implementing the Student Physical Fitness Enhancement Plan”, proposing to “deepen sports evaluation reform, improve the physical health monitoring system, and strengthen precise intervention for student physical fitness with the goal of encouraging students to participate in physical exercise and improving their physical health” and requiring universities to implement the special action plan for enhancing college students’ physical fitness on a “one university, one policy” basis ^[1].

Vacation periods represent a unique phase for college students to disengage from campus collective management and return to family and social life. Existing studies have demonstrated that during winter and summer breaks, the average daily physical activity level of college students significantly decreases compared to semester averages, accompanied by a marked increase in sedentary time and varying degrees of decline in multiple indicators of physical health. This phenomenon has been summarized by the academic community as the “holiday physical decline effect” ^[2].

The “Three-All Education Approach” represents an innovative practice for universities in the new era to fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering moral character and nurturing talents ^[3]. In physical education, this philosophy requires integrating ideological and political education throughout the entire teaching process, establishing a comprehensive education system featuring full participation, continuous integration, and multi-dimensional collaboration. This approach achieves deep integration between sports and moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and labor education. The holiday exercise tracking program, as an innovative extracurricular activity, effectively extends the temporal and spatial boundaries of sports-based education. It ensures uninterrupted educational continuity across all stages, facilitates coordinated utilization of on-campus and off-campus resources, and promotes active involvement from counselors, physical education teachers, and student leaders. Fundamentally, this initiative transcends mere exercise organization, it addresses how to incorporate sports into university-wide education frameworks and realize the value of “strengthening minds through physical activity”.

3. Case design

Beijing International Studies University’s “Strengthening Mind Through Sports” Holiday Fitness Challenge Program 1.0 was designed by the School of Tourism Sciences, co-hosted by the University Party Committee’s Student Affairs Office and the Sports Counselor Studio, operating under a tripartite collaboration model involving the college, student affairs office, and sports counselor studio. The program engaged all university students, with 483 participants registering and nearly 70% completing the fitness challenge.

The campaign is conducted through the WeChat mini-program “Xiaodakka” over a 21-day period, featuring a 14-day baseline goal and a 21-day progressive goal. Daily check-ins require simultaneous submission of a personal exercise video (≥ 15 seconds) and a screenshot from the exercise app (displaying date and duration, with each session lasting ≥ 30 minutes), both of which must match. The campaign utilizes an online WeChat community to regularly release exercise reminders and tutorials. Rewards include honorary titles, sports equipment, and recognition of second-classroom credits, forming a positive incentive loop.

4. Analysis of activity outcomes and mechanisms

4.1. Adhering to promoting: Synergistic management of goal stratification and community supervision

From the perspective of activity completion outcomes, the underlying motivational mechanisms can be analyzed through two key aspects: First, the tiered goal design: The 21-day program is structured into two progressive phases, “14-day foundation” and “21-day advanced” significantly lowering participants’ psychological barriers. The 14-day milestone proves achievable and tangible for most students, while the accumulated exercise habits and sense of accomplishment after completing this phase build confidence for tackling the 21-day challenge. This incremental approach aligns with the behavioral change theory’s principle of “easy-to-start tasks followed by gradual intensification”. Second, the community supervision effect: Regular progress updates in WeChat groups create a non-coercive social comparison dynamic. Public progress tracking combined with administrator likes generates mild peer pressure, fulfilling students’ social recognition needs and self-expression motivations. This weak-community-based incentive mechanism maintains a relaxed atmosphere while effectively fostering participants’ sense of “not wanting to fall behind”. Scholars have noted that exercise check-ins achieve time efficiency through “converting fragmented efforts into structured routines”, transitioning from internet dependency to behavioral monitoring, which facilitates the development of healthy exercise habits among college students^[4].

4.2. Psychological benefits: Health advantages of “strengthening the mind through physical exercise”

In informal feedback after the event, multiple students shared positive experiences such as “I now exercise diligently every day for video shoots and no longer lie around all the time during holidays” and “Seeing others sticking to their routines in the group made me want to keep up”. From a mental health perspective, moderate-intensity regular exercise has been proven by multiple studies to effectively reduce anxiety levels, improve emotional states, and enhance psychological resilience^[5]. Through 21 consecutive days of consistent physical activity during this program, students not only alleviated physical fatigue but also achieved significant improvements in self-efficacy. Additionally, online community interactions provided sustained emotional connections during spatial isolation, effectively mitigating common holiday challenges like social loneliness and life monotony. This validates the core principle of “strengthening the mind through physical activity”: Exercise not only impacts bodily functions but also nourishes mental health through the sense of control derived from regular routines and the belongingness fostered by group interactions, ultimately achieving balanced physical and mental development.

4.3. Integrated education: Practical validation of the “five-education approach”

From the perspective of sports ethics, the “video & screenshot” dual verification mechanism subtly reinforces students’ sense of honesty and integrity, as self-discipline and perseverance are fundamental components of moral education. Regarding physical intelligence enhancement, aerobic exercise has been widely proven to improve cognitive functions, while regular physical activity boosts academic efficiency during holidays. In terms of physical fitness and aesthetics, some students achieve body shape improvement and confidence gains through yoga and body-shaping training. From the labor promotion angle, consistent exercise promotes early sleep-wake cycles, fostering a well-structured daily routine.

This interplay of multifaceted effects vividly illustrates how the “Five-Education Integration” policy is implemented

in specific physical education activities. The synergistic development between school sports and the Five-Education framework shares profound cultural commonalities, underscoring sports' foundational role in moral education at higher institutions. Systematic design should be employed to promote deeper integration of physical education with moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and labor education ^[6].

5. Summary of experience

5.1. Professional support: Role transition of sports counselor workshops

During this initiative, the Sports Counselor Studio proved to be a substantive entity rather than a nominal structure, actively participating in critical processes including sports program repository development, quality check sampling of attendance records, and sports safety education with scientific guidance. This practice demonstrates that the Sports Counselor Studio serves as a pivotal bridge connecting professional sports resources with students' daily exercise needs. Notably, within the "Three-Aspect Holistic Education" framework, the Sports Counselor Studio combines the ideological-political education functions of counselor teams with the professional guidance capabilities of physical education teachers, enabling "remote mentorship" and "subtle yet profound educational influence" during unconventional periods like holidays. Compared to traditional counselor approaches in ideological education, the Sports Counselor Studio employs sports as a starting point, embedding value guidance into physical practice, thereby achieving organic integration of "physical development" and "educational objectives".

5.2. Model construction: Implementation strategies for continuous educational continuity during holidays

The core value of this initiative lies in providing a practical operational framework for universities to establish a "continuous" holiday sports education model. Specifically, this model comprises three key components: First, institutional safeguards. Integrating holiday check-ins into the second classroom credit system, transforming physical exercise from a voluntary activity into a structured arrangement that strengthens participation commitment. Second, platform support. Leveraging WeChat mini-programs and community tools to enable low-cost, high-coverage online organization, overcoming spatial limitations during holidays. Third, professional involvement. Sports counselor studios offering ongoing scientific guidance and exercise resources to ensure activity quality and safety. These three elements work synergistically to create a replicable and scalable holiday sports education methodology.

5.3. Collaborative outlook: Integration with one-stop community sports services

Currently, the Ministry of Education and Beijing Municipality are actively advancing the development of a "one-stop" comprehensive management model for university student communities, fostering deep integration between Party building and higher education development. Within this policy framework, the establishment of sports studios in student communities remains in its early stages. A key challenge lies in effectively integrating sports education resources into students' daily living spaces, a question requiring thorough exploration. Future initiatives could consider aligning online holiday check-ins with academic sports programs, creating a seamless year-round sports education ecosystem that combines virtual and physical activities. This approach would extend the "whole-process" component of the "Three-All Education" model from seasonal breaks to the entire academic year.

6. Research conclusions and recommendations outlook

6.1. Research findings

First, the online exercise check-in model during holidays achieved high student participation with relatively low administrative costs, validating the feasibility of the combined strategy of "online community & stratified objectives &

professional guidance”. This model effectively mitigates the decline in physical fitness among college students during holidays, providing robust support for their physical and mental health development.

Second, this model demonstrates significant efficacy in three dimensions: persistence promotion, mental health enhancement, and comprehensive education. The tiered goal design reduces participation barriers, while the community supervision mechanism stimulates peer motivation effects. The dual verification design of “video & screenshot” ensures the authenticity of check-ins while subtly reinforcing students’ integrity qualities.

Thirdly, the sports counselor studio has played an irreplaceable professional support role in activities, providing specialized assurance for the implementation of sports education in holiday scenarios. Integrating sports education into the “Three-All Education” framework not only expands the carriers and pathways of ideological and political education but also offers new perspectives for the innovation and reform of university sports programs.

Fourth, the organic integration of this model with the construction of “one-stop” student community sports studios is expected to establish a new paradigm of sports education characterized by year-round continuity and online-offline integration, thereby promoting the transformation of university sports programs from a “training-oriented approach” to a “holistic education-oriented approach”.

6.2. Existing shortcomings

Firstly, the quality of exercise is difficult to evaluate precisely. Videos can only determine whether physical activity has occurred but cannot assess exercise intensity or technical compliance. Future implementations could incorporate wearable device data interfaces (e.g., heart rate and calorie expenditure) as supplementary validation criteria. Secondly, some students expressed privacy concerns regarding video uploads. Future research may explore privacy protection mechanisms such as “administrator-only visibility” or “face blurring processing”. Thirdly, current rewards primarily rely on material incentives and recognition. Developing intrinsic motivation for students to maintain long-term exercise habits requires further investigation integrating sports psychology and behavioral intervention theories.

6.3. Policy recommendations

First, it is recommended that universities incorporate holiday sports check-in activities into their regular sports work systems; second, fully leverage the professional advantages of sports counselor studios in sports education, encouraging universities to include the construction of sports counselor studios in the comprehensive reform pilot of “all-round education”, providing policy, financial, and other support; third, actively explore the connection mechanism between online holiday check-ins and “one-stop” student community sports activities during the semester, building a sports education ecosystem that links “online communities with offline communities”; fourth, further brand, series, and scale the “strengthening hearts through sports” series of activities, making them a shining card for universities to implement the “five educations in parallel” educational policy, advance the comprehensive reform of “all-round education” and serve the Healthy China strategy.

7. Epilogue

A strong sports sector makes China strong, and the prosperity of the nation brings about the prosperity of sports. Against the grand backdrop of higher education reform and the construction of a healthy China in the new era, integrating sports education into the overall ideological and political work of universities and promoting the concept of “strengthening hearts through sports” to take root in holiday sports practices is essential for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing well-rounded socialist builders and successors with moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor development. We look forward to more universities making beneficial explorations in this field and jointly writing a splendid chapter of sports education in universities in the new era.

Funding

Beijing Higher Education Institutions Ideological and Political Work Research Project (Project No.: BJSZ2024ZC67)

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Ministry of Education, 2025, Opinions on Implementing the Student Physical Fitness Enhancement Program.
- [2] Wang H, Zhang Y, 2012, Analysis of Changes in Physical Health Levels and Sports Exercise Among College Students During Summer and Winter Breaks. *Sports Culture Review*, 2012(3): 105–107 + 129.
- [3] Ministry of Education, 2017, Implementation Outline for the Quality Improvement Project of Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions.
- [4] Zhou BL, 2020, From Dependence to Solidification: An Analysis of the Check-in Phenomenon Among College Students in the New Era, *Journal of Nanjing Sport University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 19(1): 30–36.
- [5] Zhao X, Sun L, 2022, Impact of Exercise Check-ins on College Students' Physical Exercise Persistence: A Moderating Effect Based on Community Support. *Journal of Sports Science*, 29(4): 120–126.
- [6] Liu H, Zhang Q, Li M, 2021, The Educational Value and Implementation Path of University Physical Education under the Perspective of "Five-Education Integration". *Sports Culture Guide*, 2021(5): 98–103.

Publisher's note

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