

Perceived Challenges of First-Year College Students in PATHFIT 1 (Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness) in One Private Higher Education Institution in Lemery, Batangas

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Abstract

This study examined the perceived challenges experienced by first-year college students in PATHFIT 1 at Lemery Colleges in Lemery, Batangas, focusing on student attitude, student practice, teachers' planning, implementation and actions, participation in physical activities, and skill learning. Using a descriptive research design, the study involved 68 first-year college students selected from a total population of 81 through stratified purposive sampling. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed using percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, t-test, and ANOVA. Findings showed that most respondents were female, enrolled in education-related programs, living in their own homes, and moderately active before college. The students experienced challenging levels in student attitude, student practice, participation in physical activities, and skill learning, with major concerns involving limited teamwork, lack of motivation, inadequate practice, insufficient feedback, unclear instruction, limited facilities, and weak connection between theory and practice. Sex and prior physical activity level did not significantly affect perceived challenges, while program enrolled and residential type showed significant differences in selected areas, particularly participation, skill learning, and teachers' planning and implementation. The study concluded that PATHFIT 1 students encounter interconnected motivational, instructional, environmental, and skill-related challenges. It recommended the use of a developed learning module, structured assessment tools, engaging activities, timely feedback, improved facilities, digital learning resources, and teacher professional development. The study supports SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being, and SDG 4, Quality Education, by promoting physical activity, inclusive learning, and student development. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening public health, educational quality, and institutional support for more responsive physical education programs.

Keywords: Student Attitude, Student Practice, Teacher's Planning, Implementation and Practice, Participation in Physical Activity Participation and Skill Learning

1. Introduction

This study examines the perceived challenges experienced by first-year college students in PATHFIT 1 at Lemery Colleges in Lemery, Batangas. It focuses on challenges related to student attitude, student practice, teachers' planning, implementation and actions, participation in physical activity, and skill learning. The study recognizes that first-year students encounter academic, personal, motivational, and physical adjustment concerns that may affect their engagement and performance in physical education. Based on these challenges, the study aims to support the development of a learning module that may improve student participation, motivation, and skill acquisition in PATHFIT 1.

The transition to college provides first-year students with new learning opportunities but also exposes them to adjustment difficulties as they manage academic responsibilities, social relationships, independence, and participation in PATHFIT 1. PATHFIT 1 is designed to promote basic physical activities, lifelong health, wellness, and fitness in accordance with national physical education standards. However, students may experience unfamiliar physical tasks, limited previous physical training, time constraints, home responsibilities, low motivation, and irregular attendance. These conditions may reduce the intended benefits of physical education, including improved stamina, physical competence, and mental alertness.

The literature and discussion in the study emphasize that student participation in physical education is influenced by motivation, peer relationships, classroom climate, teacher support, facilities, practice opportunities, and instructional clarity. Lukman (2023) emphasized that peer relationships and classroom climate influence students' participation in physical education activities. Rabaya (2024) also noted that students' attitudes toward physical fitness are shaped by

emotional, social, and cultural factors that affect confidence and willingness to participate. Student practice also emerged as an important theme because students need structured routines, self-assessment, teacher supervision, and adequate equipment to improve physical skills and fitness. Alakyang (2025) emphasized that student practice contributes to the development of physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects in physical education. Similarly, Escomes et al. (2022) stated that limited equipment and weak supervision reduce the quality of participation in physical activities. Motivation and access to appropriate facilities are also essential, as Escomes et al. (2021) emphasized that motivation and access to proper facilities influence participation in physical activities. In terms of skill learning, Dispo (2025) emphasized that integrating theory and practice in PATHFIT 1 enhances effective skill development.

Globally, physical inactivity among college youth has become a continuing concern, with the World Health Organization warning that many young people do not meet recommended levels of physical activity. Nationally, the Commission on Higher Education introduced PATHFIT as a replacement for traditional sports-based physical education, emphasizing inclusive health-related activities suitable for all students. Locally, Lemery Colleges faces challenges involving student preparedness, facility availability, teacher expertise, time conflicts, motivation, and skill gaps among first-year students. These concerns show the need to examine students' perceived challenges in PATHFIT 1 to strengthen institutional support and improve learning outcomes.

The study does not explicitly state a formal theoretical framework. However, its conceptual basis is drawn from the relationship between student-related factors, teacher-related factors, participation, and skill development in PATHFIT 1. The study assumes that students' demographic profile, previous physical activity level, attitude, practice habits, instructional experiences, and access to learning support may shape how they perceive challenges in physical education. These factors serve as the basis for developing a supplementary PATHFIT learning module intended to address identified difficulties.

The study responds to the need to better understand the specific challenges encountered by first-year college students in PATHFIT 1 at Lemery Colleges. Although PATHFIT aims to promote health, wellness, and inclusive physical activity, students may still experience difficulties in motivation, participation, confidence, practice, instructional support, facilities, and skill learning. The study also examines whether perceived challenges differ according to sex, program enrolled, residential type, and level of physical activity prior to college. The rationale for the study is to generate evidence that can guide teachers and administrators in improving PATHFIT 1 instruction and developing a learning module that responds to students' actual needs.

The study aligns with SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being because PATHFIT 1 promotes physical activity, fitness, wellness, and healthier lifestyles among college students. By identifying barriers to participation and skill learning, the study supports efforts to improve student engagement in health-promoting physical activities. The study also aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on improving learning experiences, instructional support, student participation, and skill development in physical education. The proposed PATHFIT learning module may help make physical education more inclusive, responsive, and supportive for first-year college students.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by providing evidence that may help improve PATHFIT 1 instruction, learning activities, assessment practices, and student support mechanisms. It also contributes to public health sustainability by promoting continued participation in physical activity among college students, especially those who experience low motivation, limited fitness background, or difficulty mastering physical skills. Furthermore, the study supports institutional sustainability by helping Lemery Colleges identify areas for improvement in facilities, instructional delivery, teacher support, and student engagement. Its findings may guide administrators, teachers, students, and future researchers in strengthening physical education programs that are more inclusive, supportive, and aligned with student needs.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design because it was appropriate for identifying and describing the current experiences, perceptions, and difficulties of first-year college students enrolled in PATHFIT 1. This design allowed the researchers to gather factual information about students' perceived challenges without manipulating any variables.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Lemery Colleges in Lemery, Batangas. This institution served as the specific research setting for examining the challenges encountered by first-year college students taking PATHFIT 1.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were first-year college students enrolled in PATHFIT 1 at Lemery Colleges. They were selected because they were directly experiencing the physical education course and could provide relevant information about challenges related to attitude, practice, teacher-related factors, participation in physical activity, and skill learning.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The respondents came from the total population of 81 first-year college students based on the school registrar's record. From this population, 68 students were selected through stratified purposive sampling to ensure proportional representation across courses. This sampling procedure helped obtain a manageable and diverse group of respondents who could provide relevant and reliable data for the study.

2.5 Research Instrument

The main research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire designed to gather data on the perceived challenges of first-year college students in PATHFIT 1. The first part collected profile information, including sex, program enrolled, type of residence, and level of physical activity before college. The second part measured perceived challenges in terms of student attitude, student practice, teachers' planning, implementation and actions, participation in physical activity, and skill learning. The questionnaire was developed through a review of related studies and sources and was checked and improved with the assistance of the adviser and two validators to ensure clarity and relevance. Its reliability was tested through pilot testing, and a 4-point Likert scale was used to measure responses.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers first reviewed related articles and journals, secured permission from the school administration, and obtained student consent before distributing the questionnaire face-to-face. After the questionnaires were collected, the responses were checked, encoded, and prepared for statistical analysis. Confidentiality of the respondents' information was maintained throughout the process.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The gathered data were analyzed using statistical tools appropriate to the objectives of the study. Percentage was used to describe the respondents' profile, while weighted mean was used to determine the average responses for each indicator. Standard deviation was used to show the variation of responses from the mean. Cronbach's alpha was applied to test the reliability of the questionnaire. T-test and ANOVA were used to determine whether significant differences existed in students' perceived challenges when grouped according to selected profile variables.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical research practices by securing informed consent from the respondents before data collection. The identities of the respondents were kept private, and their responses were handled honestly and carefully to maintain confidentiality and preserve the integrity of the research process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

3.1.1 Sex, Program Enrolled, Residential Type, and Physical Activity Level

The results showed that most respondents were female, comprising 72.1 percent, while male respondents accounted for 27.9 percent. In terms of program enrolled, the largest group came from Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, followed by Bachelor of Physical Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Studies, and Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Mathematics. For residential type, most students lived in their own houses, while only a small number stayed in boarding houses, dormitories, apartments, or relatives' houses. Regarding physical activity before college, most respondents described themselves as moderately active, followed by active, while a smaller portion reported being sedentary. These findings indicate that the study involved mostly female first-year students from education-related programs, with generally stable living arrangements and moderate prior exposure to physical activities. The varied academic programs provided different perspectives on PATHFIT 1 experiences, while the dominance of students living in their own homes suggests that most respondents had relatively stable residential conditions that may support attendance and participation. The generally moderate physical activity background also suggests that many students had some prior exposure to physical activities before entering college.

3.2 Perceived Challenges in PATHFIT 1

3.2.1 Student Attitude

The results showed that perceived challenges in student attitude obtained a composite mean of 3.33, interpreted as Challenging. The highest-rated challenges were minimal cooperation or teamwork among classmates and the feeling of being less capable when exercises were modified according to fitness level, both with a weighted mean of 3.47. Discomfort when paired with teachers or classmates of a different gender also received a high mean of 3.46. The lowest-rated item was

inadequate peer recognition, with a weighted mean of 3.00, although it was still interpreted as Challenging. These findings suggest that student attitude in PATHFIT 1 is affected by cooperation, confidence, peer support, gender-related discomfort, motivation, and classroom interaction. Limited teamwork and feelings of inadequacy may reduce students' enjoyment and confidence during physical education activities. These results support the study of Lukman (2023), which emphasized that peer relationships and classroom climate influence students' participation in physical education activities. Similarly, Rabaya (2024) stated that students' attitudes toward physical fitness are influenced by emotional, social, and cultural factors that affect their confidence and willingness to engage in physical activities.

3.2.2 Student Practice

The results showed that student practice received a composite mean of 3.41, interpreted as Challenging. The most serious concern was the lack of structured self-assessment, which obtained a weighted mean of 3.53 and was interpreted as Highly Challenging. Other major concerns included inadequate or unavailable equipment and reduced practice frequency, both with weighted means of 3.47. Irregular practice habits, insufficient exercise guidance, limited access to in-person practice, repetitive routines, inconsistent participation, lack of goal-setting, and limited teacher supervision were also rated as Challenging. These results indicate that students need stronger support in monitoring their progress, practicing regularly, using proper equipment, and receiving guidance during physical activities. The lack of structured self-assessment may make it difficult for students to recognize improvement and maintain motivation. This finding supports Alakyang (2025), which emphasized that student practice contributes to the development of physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects in physical education. The results also agree with Escomes et al. (2022), which stated that limited equipment and weak supervision reduce the quality of participation in physical activities.

3.2.3 Participation in Physical Activities

The results showed that participation in physical activities obtained a composite mean of 3.48, interpreted as Challenging. Low motivation or interest received the highest weighted mean of 3.57 and was interpreted as Highly Challenging. Fatigue or physical discomfort and difficulty maintaining regular exercise routines both received weighted means of 3.56. Other highly challenging concerns included difficulty adapting to increasing activity demands, lack of inclusive opportunities, and limited access to proper facilities. Time management, injuries or health-related concerns, inconsistent participation, and difficulty maintaining aerobic endurance were also rated as Challenging. These findings show that participation in PATHFIT 1 is strongly affected by motivation, physical readiness, consistency, access to facilities, and inclusive opportunities. Students may struggle to participate fully when activities are physically demanding, facilities are limited, or motivation is low. These findings are supported by Escomes et al. (2021), which emphasized that motivation and access to proper facilities influence participation in physical activities. Overall, improving engagement, providing structured exercise activities, and ensuring access to appropriate facilities may help strengthen students' participation and fitness development.

3.2.4 Skill Learning

The results showed that skill learning received a composite mean of 3.48, interpreted as Challenging. The highest-rated challenge was the lack of ongoing evaluation or performance review, with a weighted mean of 3.60 and an interpretation of Highly Challenging. Weak connection between theoretical lessons and practical application followed with a weighted mean of 3.57, while poor communication or unclear instruction received 3.54. Few opportunities for teamwork and group activities and limited use of demonstrations or guided practice both obtained 3.53. Other concerns, including lack of progressive exercises, absence of skill testing, difficulty mastering basic movements, limited digital tools or peer collaboration, and insufficient formative feedback, were also rated as Challenging. These findings indicate that skill learning in PATHFIT 1 depends heavily on evaluation, clear instruction, demonstration, feedback, teamwork, and the connection between theory and practice. When students do not receive regular performance reviews or clear guidance, their confidence and ability to apply learned skills may be reduced. Dispo (2025) emphasized that integrating theory and practice in PATHFIT 1 enhances effective skill development. Thus, strengthening evaluation systems, improving instructional clarity, and increasing guided practice opportunities may support better skill development and physical literacy.

3.3 Differences in Perceived Challenges According to Profile Variables

3.3.1 Differences According to Sex

The results showed no significant differences between male and female students across all identified areas of perceived challenges. Student attitude, student practice, teachers' planning, implementation and actions, participation in physical activities, and skill learning all obtained p-values greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected for all variables. These findings imply that male and female students experienced similar levels of challenges in PATHFIT 1. The difficulties related to attitude, practice, teacher-related factors, participation, and skill learning were not influenced by sex. This suggests that interventions should focus on common student needs rather than sex-based differences.

3.3.2 Differences According to Program Enrolled

The results showed mixed findings when perceived challenges were grouped according to program enrolled. Student attitude, student practice, and teachers' planning, implementation and actions showed no significant differences because

their p-values were greater than 0.05. However, participation in physical activities and skill learning showed significant differences, with p-values of 0.043 and 0.008, respectively. These results suggest that students from different academic programs generally shared similar attitudes, practice-related concerns, and perceptions of teacher-related factors. However, their participation and skill learning varied by program. This may indicate that program-related factors, such as workload, prior exposure to physical education, or connection of the academic program to physical activity, may influence students' engagement and skill development in PATHFIT 1.

3.3.3 Differences According to Residential Type

The results showed that student attitude, student practice, participation in physical activities, and skill learning had no significant differences when grouped according to residential type. However, teachers' planning, implementation and actions showed a significant difference, with a p-value of 0.029. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected only for teacher-related factors. These findings suggest that residential type did not broadly affect most perceived challenges in PATHFIT 1. However, students' living arrangements may influence how they perceive teacher support and instructional delivery. Students who commute or live farther from the institution may experience differences in attendance consistency, access to class activities, or engagement, which may affect their perception of teaching effectiveness.

3.3.4 Differences According to Level of Physical Activity

The results showed no significant differences in perceived challenges when respondents were grouped according to their level of physical activity before college. Student attitude, student practice, teachers' planning, implementation and actions, participation in physical activities, and skill learning all obtained p-values greater than 0.05. These findings indicate that students experienced similar PATHFIT 1 challenges regardless of whether they were active, moderately active, or sedentary before college. Prior physical activity level did not significantly influence how students perceived their difficulties. This suggests that the challenges were more connected to instructional, environmental, and program-related factors than to students' previous fitness background.

3.4 Overall Interpretation of Findings

The overall findings revealed that first-year college students experienced challenging levels across the major areas of PATHFIT 1. The most evident concerns involved low motivation, limited teamwork, lack of structured self-assessment, insufficient equipment, fatigue, limited facilities, unclear instruction, lack of evaluation, and weak connection between theory and practice. These concerns affected students' engagement, participation, confidence, consistency, and skill development. The results also showed that sex and prior physical activity level did not significantly affect perceived challenges, while program enrolled, and residential type produced significant differences in selected areas. This indicates that most challenges were commonly experienced across student groups, but certain academic and residential conditions may influence participation, skill learning, and perceptions of teacher-related support. Overall, the findings support the need for improved teaching strategies, structured assessment tools, adequate facilities, inclusive activities, regular feedback, and supplementary learning materials for PATHFIT 1.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that first-year college students in PATHFIT 1 at Lemery Colleges experienced challenging levels of difficulty in student attitude, student practice, teachers' planning and implementation, participation in physical activities, and skill learning. The major concerns included limited teamwork, lack of motivation, inadequate practice, insufficient feedback, unclear instruction, limited facilities, and weak connection between theory and practice, which affected students' confidence, engagement, participation, and performance. Sex and prior physical activity level did not produce significant differences in perceived challenges, while program enrolled and residential type showed significant differences in selected areas, particularly participation in physical activities, skill learning, and teachers' planning and implementation.

The study recommended that PATHFIT 1 teachers use the developed learning module and provide structured assessment tools, engaging activities, timely feedback, and varied teaching strategies to improve students' motivation, participation, and skill learning. It also recommended that school administrators strengthen support by improving facilities, equipment, digital learning resources, and teacher professional development, while future researchers may conduct similar studies in other institutions with larger populations and examine additional variables such as mental health, academic performance, and learning styles, including the testing of intervention materials such as progress trackers and exercise guides.

The provided conclusion and recommendation section does not present a separate limitations statement. However, based strictly on the recommendation for future studies, the study recognizes the need for broader validation through similar research in other institutions, larger populations, additional variables, and intervention testing to further strengthen findings on student engagement and physical fitness development in PATHFIT 1.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards, with permission secured from the school administration before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from the first-year college student respondents. The confidentiality and privacy of all information were maintained, and the data were used solely for research purposes. The authors declare no conflict of interest and acknowledge the contributions of all individuals who assisted in the completion of the study. Copyright ownership and responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the research remain with the authors.

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