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CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING LIFE SKILLS FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: TRENDS AND AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH IN CYCLING PROGRAM

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Abstract

During the pandemic, worldwide, physical activities have become less and limited due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Maintaining physical health among children through physical activities is important. Researchers in health and sport sectors began to consider sports such as cycling as an option to increase physical activities in children. Besides health benefits, this study argues that by integrating life skills in sports programs such as cycling, youth development can be better shaped into a more positive behavior and better prepared to become a responsible adult. However, the integration of life skills in cycling programs to promote positive youth development (PYD) seems to be overlooked; let alone the challenges. To understand how life skills and PYD can be integrated in cycling programs, it is important to explore the challenges that has been discussed in the literature. This study aims to explore and understand the trends of research in the current literature about life skills and positive youth development in relation to sport education/programs, especially the challenges and in the context of cycling program. This study used systematic literature review approach and collected the data from Web of Science database which were published between 2013-2022. Inclusion and exclusion criteria such as publication year, document type, and research areas are used in this study. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis and thematic analysis. The findings show the current trends in the life skills and PYD literature in terms of publication year, publication titles, country of study, methodology, and research areas. Only ten articles intentionally discussed the challenges in integrating life skills and PYD in sports program. Moreover, this study provides the foundation of knowledge and the agenda for future research to conduct a more diverse and comprehensive study in the area of life skills, PYD, and sports programs, especially in relation to cycling programs.

Keywords:

Life skills, Positive youth development, Challenges, Cycling programs, Systematic literature review



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Introduction

In this section, the author should be able to provide background on topics or issues related to the research according to the development of the current situation and conditions. Explain why researcherstake this topic and why researchers think of this as an essential topic. Reveal previous research relatedto research and gaps in these studies. In recent years, physical activities among children have experienced a tremendous shift. During the pandemic, worldwide, physical activities have become lessand limited due to the Covid-19 restrictions (Dunton, Do, and Wang 2020). As a result, children experienced indirect impact from the Covid-19 pandemic as they are forced to limit their activities outside, like playing at the outdoor playground or coming to school. In addition, with the current speedof technological innovation and adoption in the society, smartphones and online games whichincreases screen time among children cause a serious threat to children’s health due to decreasing physical activities (Xiang, Zhang, and Kuwahara 2020; Dunton, Do, and Wang 2020). These indirectimpacts should not be overlooked to prevent damage in the adulthood (Ashikkali, Carroll, and Johnsson 2020). In consequence, these phenomena have gained the concern of scholars in sport education and health sectors.

Due to the importance to maintain physical health among children through physical activities,scholars in health sectors begun to consider sports such as cycling as an option to increase physical activities in children (Trapp et al. 2011; Gotschi, Garrad, and Giles-Corti 2016). Cycling, in particular,offer many health benefits i.e., increasing life expectancy, sleeping quality, quality of life and cognitive function as well as reducing the risks of cardiovascular disease, depression, stroke, metabolic syndrome and breast cancer (Gotschi, Garrad, and Giles-Corti 2016). This means that cycling activitiespromotes a healthy lifestyle. However, cycling might provide more than health benefits. For example,youth cycling program can be adjusted so that children and young adults are not only mastering cyclingtechniques, but also acquire other skills that can be useful in other context in life.

Currently, life skills have been an emerging topic in sport education research (Hambali et al. 2022). Life skills are defined as characteristics and skills that an individual learn in sport and internalize them as personal assets i.e., psychosocial skills & knowledge, goal setting, hard work ethicwhich can be used in non-sport settings (Gould and Carson 2008; Ronkeinen et al. 2021). Life skills approach in sports is often discussed in relation to positive youth development (PYD) (Ronkeinen et al. 2021). The eight keys of life skills include team-work, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, communication, social skills, leadership, and problem-solving (Ronkainen et el. 2021). By integrating life skills in sports programs, children could learn values and skills which are useful for their adulthood and a solution to social problems (Hambali et al. 2022). This study argues that by integrating life skills in sports programs such as cycling program, youth development can be better shaped into a more positive behavior and better prepared them to become a responsible adult.

Recent studies have discussed life skills in sports to promote PYD in the context of



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soccer (Iqbal, Ma'mun and Nuryadi 2019), pencak silat (Cahyani 2020) and physical activities programs (Anira et al. 2021). However, the integration of life skills in cycling programs to promote PYD seems to be overlooked; let alone the challenges. To understand how life skills and PYD can be integrated in cycling programs, it is important to explore the challenges that has been discussed in the literature. Thus, this study aims to explore and understand the trends of research in the current literature about life skills and positive youth development in relation to sport education/programs, especially the challenges and in the context of cycling program.

It is expected that the study could provide the current research trends in the three domains of research: life skills, PYD, and sport education/programs. In addition, the challenges in the implementation of the approach and in the context of cycling program were also studied. This study also offers research agenda for the future study to integrate life skills approach to promote PYD in developing and running a cycling program. In the next sections, the methodology used in this article, including the research strategy, data collection, data processing, and data analysis are explained. It is followed by the results and discussions about the findings of the study. Last, the conclusion is presented as well as the limitations and recommendations for future studies.

Methods

In order to achieve the aims of this study, a systematic literature review was conducted. This study used systematic review approach to capture the existing knowledge in the current literature (Gunawan, Van Riel, and Essers 2020). It provides new knowledge and improves narrative reviews. This study used articles from 2013 to 2022 which are available in the Web of Science database. As suggested by Gunawan, Van Riel, and Essers (2020), Web of Science database was chosen to look for the articles because it allows strict inclusion rules. Other studies mainly used Sage, Taylor & Francis, Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Elsevier database (Hambali et al. 2022; Wardani 2021). A systematic literature review offers scholars a clear theoretical foundation of a study, satisfies internal validity requirements, and improves transparency and structure of the study (Gunawan, Van Riel, and Essers 2020).

Data Collection and Processing

First, the articles were searched using keywords such as “life skills”, “positive youth development” and “sports program”. To allow different combinations of keywords and maximize the search, Boolean operators such AND/OR were added to the keywords. Second, the articles found from keyword search were narrowed down using filters such as publication year, document type, and research areas. Last, the results were refined using additional keywords such as “challenges” or “cycling”. The article selection is presented in Figure 1 below.

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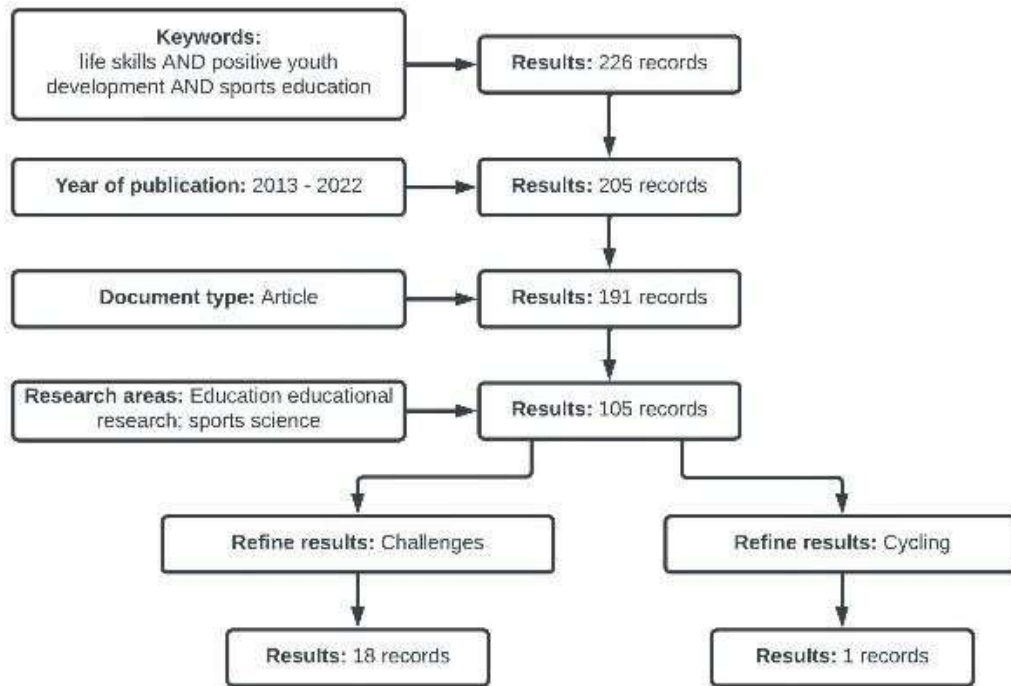


Fig 1. Article selection

Data Analysis

Using the combination of the three keywords (see Fig. 1), namely “life skills”, “positive youth development”, and “sports program”, 226 articles were found. From this number, the search was filtered using publication year (2013-2022) and 205 articles were found. Next, the articles were selected based on the document type (article). This study focuses only in the articles published in academic journals to ensure the reliability of the articles due to the peer-review process. Using this filter, 191 articles were found. Another filter was used such as the research areas (education educational research and sports science) and 105 articles were found. Finally, this study focused the search on articles that discussed the challenges in integrating life skills to promote positive youth development and only 18 articles were found. Even surprising, if the search was narrowed down by using “cycling” as the additional keyword, there is only one article available. The finding shows that articles that discussed the challenges and in particular, related to cycling program are still scarce.

Result

In this section, the data that has been processed were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The descriptive analysis consists of the findings of publication year (see Fig. 2), research areas (see Fig. 3), country of study (see Fig. 4), and publication

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title (Fig. 5). These descriptive analyses were conducted to understand the trends among the articles.

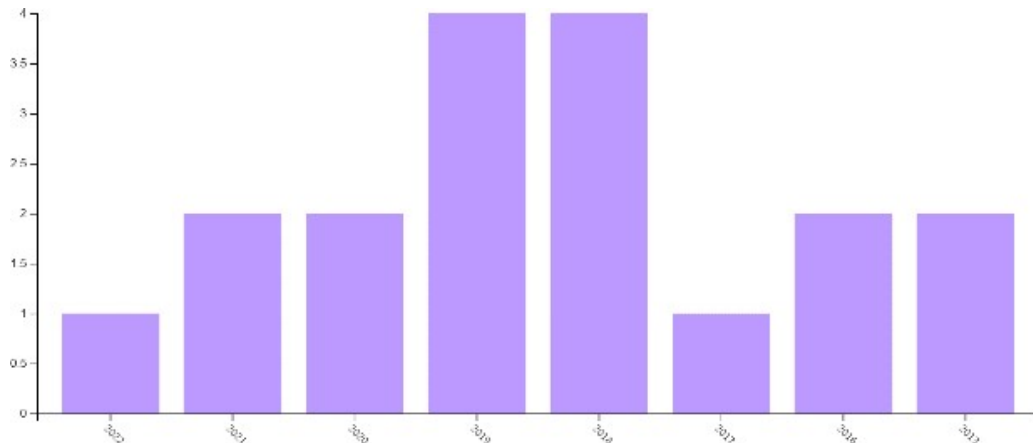


Fig 2. Publication Year

From Fig. 2 above, it is known that the articles were mostly published in 2018 and 2019 (4 articles each), followed by articles published in 2013, 2016, 2020, and 2021 (2 articles each) and in 2017 and 2022 (1 article each). No article was published between 2014 – 2015. This seems to indicate that the topics were popular between 2018-2019.

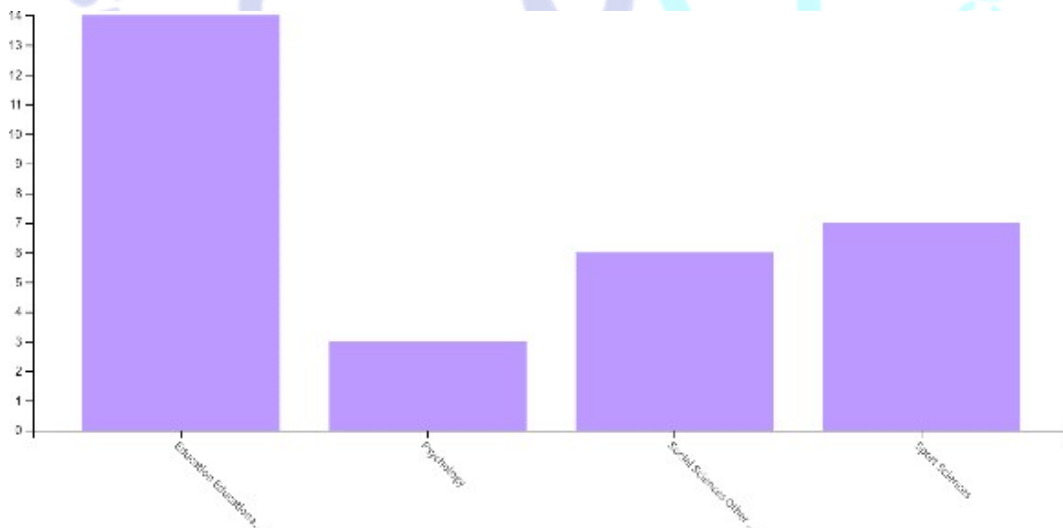


Fig. 3. Research areas

This figure shows that most of the articles (14 articles) were dominantly related to educational research which is consistent with one of the keywords ("sports

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education/programs”). Other areas in the study are related to sports science (seven articles), social science (six articles), and Psychology (three articles). It also seems that the articles are related to more than one areas of study as the number of articles adds up to more than 18 articles. It means that the articles are in relevant research areas.

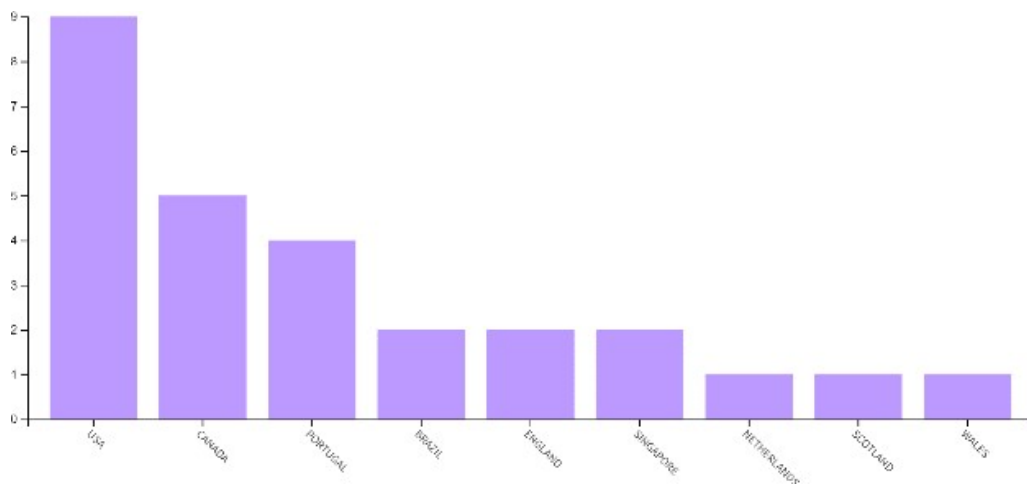


Figure 4. Country of study

In terms of the country of study, nine articles used USA as the context, followed by Canada (five articles), Portugal (four articles), Brazil, England, and Singapore (two articles each), and Netherlands, Scotland, and Wales (one article each). This finding shows that the context of study were dominated by Western countries while Asian, let alone Southeast Asian countries as the context are still overlooked.

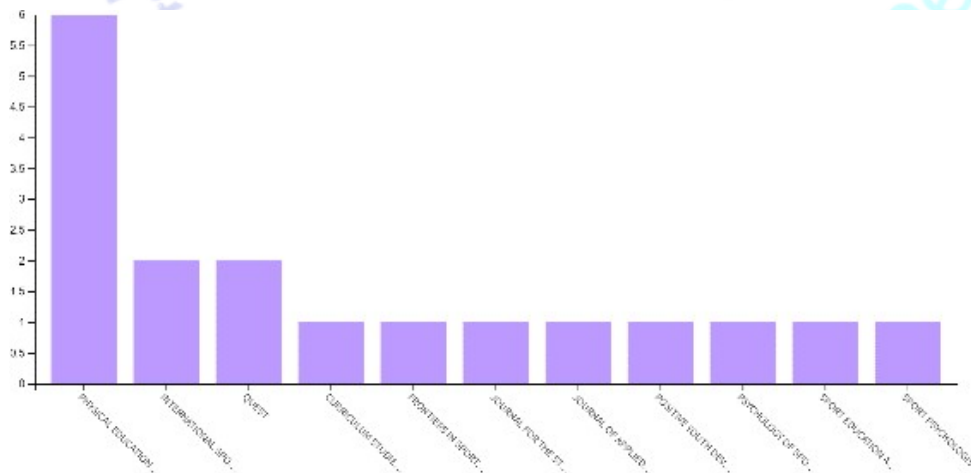


Fig. 5. Publication titles



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Finally, in terms of publication titles, the 18 articles are mostly published in Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy journal (six articles), International Sport Coaching Journal (two articles), Quest journal (two articles), and the rest (one article each) were published in the journals such as: Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education, Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, Positive Youth Development through Sport, Psychology of Sport and Exercise, Sport Education and Society, and Sport Psychologist. This finding shows that the articles were mostly accepted by sport education and sport psychological journals.

Table 1. Result of thematic analysis

No.	Authors	Publication Year	Methods	Life skills	PYD	Challenges	Additional Variables	Context
1	Santos, F; Newman, TJ; Aytur, S; Farias, C	2022	Conceptual	v	v	v	Physical Literacy	
2	Forneris, T; Whitley, MA; Barker, B	2013	Qualitative	v	v	v	TPSR; Strategies	
3	Harwood, CG; Knight, CJ; Thrower, SN; Berrow, SR	2019	Conceptual	v	v		Parental Involvement; Psychosocial Outcomes	
4	Gaion, P; Milistedt, M; Santos, F; Contreira, A; Arantes, L; Caruzzo, N	2020	Conceptual		v	v		Coach Education
5	Camire, M; Trudel, P; Bernard, D	2013	Qualitative	v	v	v	Strengths	Ice Hockey
6	Huysmans, Z; Clement, D; Hilliard, R; Hansell, A	2018	Qualitative	v		v	Strategies	South Africa
7	Huysmans, Z; Whitley, MA; Clement, D; Gonzalez, M; Sheehy, TL	2021	Qualitative	v	v	v	Strategies	Cultural & community
8	Cronin, LD; Allen, J; Mulvenna, C; Russell, P	2018	Quantitative	v			Teaching climate; Psychological well-being	Physical Education
9	Jacobs, JM; Wright, PM	2018	Qualitative	v	v			
10	Forneris, T; Bean, C; Halsall, T	2016						
11	Blanton, JE; Pierce, S; Ault, KJ	2021	Conceptual			v		Education-based sports
12	Palheta, CE; Ciampolini, V; Nunes, ELG; Santos, F; Milistedt, M	2021	Qualitative		v		Psychosocial outcomes	
13	Super, S; Verkooijen, K; Koelen, M	2018	Qualitative	v			Salutogenic approach	
14	Martinen, R; Johnston, K; Phillips, S; Fredrick, RN; Meza, B	2019	Qualitative		v	v		Basketball in Urban Community
15	Pavao, I; Santos, F; Wright, PM; Goncalves, F	2019	Qualitative				TPSR	Preschool
16	Richards, KAR; Jacobs, JM; Ivy, VN; Lawson, MA	2020	Qualitative		v		TPSR	Poverty; Preservice teachers
17	Koh, KT; Camire, M; Regina, SHL; Soon, WS	2017	Qualitative	v	v	v		PE in Singapore
18	Koh, KT; Ong, SW; Camire, M	2016	Qualitative		v	v	Strengths; Strategies	PE in Singapore

Table 1 above indicates that the majority of the articles were using qualitative methods (12 articles), conceptual approach (four articles), and quantitative method (one article). It means that the topics is still rarely discussed, a rather new discourse, and need further attention from the sports education researchers. Moreover, on average, most of these research used other variables



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besides life skills, PYD, and challenges. More detail explanations on the thematic analysis is presented in the next section

Discussion

Examining from the findings above, it is understood that research that integrate the concept of life skills and PYD in sports education domain is very limited, especially those which focused only on the challenges of the implementation. These findings support the previous researchers who stated that discussion about life skills in sports education have been emerged in the past decades, however, its implementation in relation to PYD still needs further investigations (Ronkainen et al. 2021).

This study learned that the current literature discussed the implementation of life skills and PYD in relation to the challenges faced by the coaches or teachers in structuring and delivering physical education or program (Santos et al. 2022; Forneris, Whitley, and Barker 2013; Camire, Trudel, and Benard 2013; Huymans et al. 2021; Koh, Ong, and Camire 2016). There are also other researchers that studied life skills and PYD with other variables such as physical literacy (Santos et al. 2022), TPSR (Forneris, Whitley, and Barker 2013; Pavao et al. 2019; Richards et al. 2020), parental involvement (Harwood et al. 2019), strengths (Camire, Trudel, and Benard 2013; Koh, Ong, and Camire 2016), teaching climate and psychological well-being (Cronin et al. 2018), psychosocial outcomes (Harwood et al. 2019; Palheta et al. 2021), salutogenic approach (Super, Verkooijen, and Koelen 2018), and strategies (Forneris, Whitley, and Barker 2013; Huymans et al. 2018; Huymans et al. 2021; Koh, Ong, and Camire 2016).

In terms of the context of research, mainly the studies focused on physical education (Cronin et al. 2018; Blanton, Pierce, and Ault 2021; Koh et al. 2017; Koh, Ong, and Camire 2016; Pavao et al. 2019). There are also studies that focused on community such as Huymans et al. (2021), Marrtinen et al. (2019), and Richards et al. (2020). In addition, Gaion et al. (2020) focused their discussions on the challenges faced by coaches in structuring and delivering PYD in coach education. In terms of the sports program, the finding indicates that only two studies specifically mention the context i.e., Ice hockey (Camire, Trudel, and Bernard 2013) and basketball (Marrtinen et al. 2019). Country-specific research appears to be quite limited i.e., Singapore (Koh et al. 2017; Koh, Ong, and Camire 2016), Brazil (Gaion et al. 2020; Palheta et al. 2021) and South Africa (Huymans et al. 2018).

Lastly, from the current literature, this study understands that the challenges in the implementation of life skills and PYD in sport education or programs include:

1. Youths' diverse emotional, mental, physical, and social needs (neoliberal values) (Santos et al. 2022; Huymans et al. 2021)
2. Lacking parental involvement due to the lack of parental awareness and facilitating opportunities to support psychosocial development. Additionally, parent-coach relationship also needs improvement (Harwood et al. 2019).



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3. Unintegrated PYD in the sports system and requires a long preparation (Gaion et al. 2020).
4. Program members faced challenges related to travelling, lack of resources, and conflicting goals (Camire, Trudel, and Bernard 2013).
5. Developing cost-effective programs to facilitate good coach-athlete relationship and promote life skills integration in the sports program (Huymans et al. 2019).
6. Conflicting culture and background such as local teaching norms and adult-youth relationship dynamics, as well as management behavior (Koh et al. 2017; Huymans et al. 2021; Richard et al. 2020).
7. In urban participants, violence becomes a barrier to perform a good sports activity (Marttinen et al. 2019).
8. Time constraints (Koh, Ong, and Camire, 2017).

From total 18 relevant articles that were found in this study, only ten articles explicitly mentioned the challenges in their abstracts. The remaining eight articles do not seem to include the challenges as the main focus of the study.

In contrast, the only one study about cycling program which was found during the data collection seems to discuss the benefits of integrating cycling programs with tourism rather than with life skills and positive youth development (Onishchuk, 2014). The researcher suggested a cycling tourism program to improve youth travelling skills and knowledge. Moreover, they argued that tourism plays a significant role in physical culture and sport as it promotes healthy lifestyle, preserving physical work capacity and all-around training (Onishchuk, 2014). Consequently, the study clearly shows that there has been no discussion yet about integrating life skills and PYD in cycling programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study identifies a number of gaps in the current literature that discussed about life skills and PYD in relation to challenges and cycling program. This study provides an agenda for future studies to conduct research based on the findings in this study. First, since life skills and PYD are emerging topics, the future studies should conduct the study in a more diverse context of sports such as in the context of cycling, diving, etc. Second, it is understood that life skills and PYD research in the context of cycling program is still scarce. This study recommends future researchers to explore the implementation, the opportunities, the challenges, as well as providing best practices of life skills integration and PYD in cycling program.

Moreover, it is also acknowledged that the methodology used in the current studies are mainly qualitative approach (such as interviews, observations, FGDs, even conceptual articles). Future studies are recommended to conduct more variety of data collection to provide a wide range of discussions about life skills and PYD in the literature.



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Besides a more diverse sports program, further investigation should also be conducted in the context of (Southeast) Asian countries because sports programs in emerging countries are often overlooked such as in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. In addition, conducting comparison studies between (Southeast) Asian countries and Western countries would widen the repertoire of knowledge about the integration of life skills to promote PYD in sport programs.

Last, to be more specific with the recommendation, future researchers should grow their attention on sports programs that could overcome the negative impact of pandemic particularly on children and young adults such as cycling. As argued in the beginning, cycling promotes more physical activities and a healthy lifestyle.

Thus, this study serves the readers the knowledge gaps in the current literature, especially in the topic of life skills, PYD, and the implementation challenges in sports education or programs. The findings also provide the basis of knowledge in research about life skills integration and PYD in cycling program. Moreover, it also offers a research agenda for future researchers to advance the discussions in the aforementioned research domains to provide a more diverse and comprehensive knowledge about integrating life skills to promote PYD in sport programs.

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