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An investigation into current status of petanque training content and methods among students at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam

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Abstract
Petanque, internationally known by its French name, has a long history and is widely loved by many people. In Vietnam, petanque is currently one of the high-performance sports in Vietnam, particularly in the Mekong Delta region, with a strong petanque movement developing in Tra Vinh, Vietnam. Thus, the aim of this study is to provide insights into the current status of training content and methods in petanque practice among students at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam. The author adopted a combination of research methods, including document review, interviews, and statistical analysis to comprehensively address the research objectives. The participants of this study were 20 lecturers, coaches, and individuals involved in sports movement development, as well as leaders of clubs, teams, and student groups, along with 3,376 students from Tra Vinh University. The findings of the study indicate that students at Tra Vinh University train in all aspects of petanque, including physical fitness, technique, tactics, and competition. In terms of training methods, most students practice in groups, classes, or clubs, often without professional guidance. Training sessions typically last from 30 minutes to 2 hours, occur at least twice a week, are held on campus, and take place in the afternoon after class or during students' free time.

Keywords: Current status, training content, training methods, petanque, students, Tra Vinh University, Vietnam

1. Introduction
Petanque is believed to have originated as early as 9000 BC, with the discovery of a set of stone boules and a target ball in Turkey. The modern version of petanque was officially established in 1907 in Ciotat, located in the Provence region of southern France. In Vietnam, the sport was introduced during the French colonial period; however, it was not until the year 2000 that petanque was officially recognized as a high-performance competitive sport. Petanque is a low-cost sport that does not require significant physical investment or exceptional athletic physique, and its rules are relatively simple [1]. The sport began to gain momentum in Vietnam in the early 2000s, particularly in the southern regions and Mekong Delta provinces such as Ho Chi Minh City, Soc Trang, and Vung Tau. After 2007, petanque started to expand more widely in northern Vietnam and gradually received more structured and professional development. The late Mr. Hoang Vinh Giang, former Vice President of the Vietnam Olympic Committee, was the first to make the strategic decision to promote and develop petanque as a national sport in Vietnam [2].
Petanque is an extremely simple game in its basic form. Players score points by trying to place their boules as close as possible to the target ball (known as the cochonnet or jack). Techniques commonly used include 'pointing' (bo or lobbing) to approach the target, and 'shooting' (tia or bắn) to knock the opponent's boule away from the jack [3], [4]. For beginners, the rules and objectives are easy to grasp after just a brief observation. However, the journey from understanding how to play to mastering the game can take many years—even decades. Playing petanque requires a high degree of strategy and concentration, comparable to playing chess. Decisions such as whether to point close or far, whether to shoot or not, who should point and who should shoot—these are all mental battles between coaches and players alike [5].

Physical education and sports are integral components of socio-cultural life. They represent a type of activity in which the primary means are physical exercises, specifically embodied in various forms of bodily training with the aim of enhancing human physical fitness, improving athletic performance, enriching cultural life, and contributing to the holistic and balanced development of individuals [6]. Unlike elite sports, which are reserved for individuals with exceptional talent, mass sports (or community-based physical education and sports) reflect the broader image of physical culture in each nation. These activities are widely practiced and attract the general public to engage in regular physical training. The outcomes of mass sports are considered important indicators of a nation's educational standards, citizen well-being, and societal prosperity [7]. Internationally and in Vietnam, the concept of "Sport for All" has emerged as a guiding principle for inclusive physical activity promotion [8]. The Law on Physical Education and Sports in Vietnam stipulates that “The State promotes the movement of mass sports in order to mobilize and encourage everyone to participate in physical training, performances, and competitions, thereby forming the habit of regular physical activity among all people” [9]. In the field of school sports, the Party and State have issued multiple policy directives to develop physical education and sports activities in educational institutions, including: The Master Plan for the Development of Physical Education and School Sports, 2016-2020, with a vision to 2025 [10], The Vietnam Health Program (2018) [11], which promotes the "10,000 steps per day" movement to encourage physical activity and help citizens maintain an active lifestyle through walking, The School Health Program (2021) [12], which calls for all students to participate in physical activities for better health, The Vietnam Sports Development Strategy to 2030, with a vision to 2045 [13], aiming for universal access to physical activity and sports services, and encouraging individuals to voluntarily engage in training to improve health, physical fitness, and overall quality of life.

Tra Vinh University has witnessed a strong movement in the development of sports and physical activities. Among these, petanque has attracted significant participation from students, staff, and faculty members. In recent years, the university’s petanque team has achieved notable results in both provincial and inter-provincial competitions. Due to its unique nature-requiring skill, precision, and endurance without excessive physical exertion-petanque has become a popular sport among many students and university personnel. In order to accurately assess the current situation and identify appropriate solutions for further development the petanque movement at Tra Vinh University, the author has chosen to conduct a study entitled:"

"An investigation into current status of petanque training content and methods among students at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam."

2. Materials and Methods

Methods

To comprehensively address the research objectives, the author adopted a combination of research methods, including document review, interviews, and statistical analysis, as outlined below:

Document review

This method was used to review and synthesize relevant literature related to the development of the petanque movement. The study analyzed and compiled information from various sources to establish the theoretical foundation for the research topic. It also helped identify the purpose, objectives, tasks, research methods, and organizational procedures; predict possible outcomes; and select appropriate solutions and evaluation tests suitable for the practical conditions of petanque.

Interviews

This method was applied to collect expert opinions from professionals and specialists in sports and petanque. The interviewees included four petanque lecturers, one provincial-level coach from Tra Vinh, two referees, two sports management officers, and two subject-matter experts. The interviews focused on core issues concerning the development of petanque at Tra Vinh University.

Statistical analyze

This method was employed to systematically collect, record, and organize relevant research data with accuracy. This method was employed to systematically collect, record, and organize relevant research data with accuracy. It facilitated the classification, analysis, and comparison of findings through the application of mathematical formulas and statistical techniques. The author applied mathematical statistical methods and utilized the SPSS 20.0 software for analysis.

Participants

The survey on solutions for developing the petanque movement among students at Tra Vinh University involved 20 participants, including lecturers, coaches, and those responsible for promoting sports activities, as well as leaders of student clubs, teams, and groups at the university.

To assess the current status of the petanque movement, a survey was conducted involving 3,376 students from Tra Vinh University. Detailed participant distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of students participating in the survey on the current status of the petanque movement

No	Students	Male	Female	Total
1	Freshmen	843	315	1158
2	Sophomores	798	198	996
3	Juniors	300	300	600
4	Seniors	411	211	622
	Total	2352	1024	3376

3. Results

To evaluate the current status of petanque training content and methods among students at Tra Vinh University, a survey was conducted involving 3,376 students (see Table 1). The survey gathered data on student participation in petanque training, categorized by academic year and gender. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Statistics of students participating in petanque training by academic year and gender.

No	Students	Students participating in petanque training activities						Students not participating in petanque training activities					
		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Freshmen	163	4.8	35	1.0	198	5.9	680	20.1	280	8.3	960	28.4
2	Sophomores	164	4.9	64	1.9	228	6.8	634	18.8	134	4.0	768	22.7
3	Juniors	36	1.1	94	2.8	130	3.9	264	7.8	206	6.1	470	13.9
4	Seniors	65	1.9	36	1.1	101	3.0	346	10.2	175	5.2	521	15.4
	Total	428	12.7	229	6.8	657	19.5	1924	57.0	795	23.5	2719	80.5

The data in Table 2 shows that 657 students (19.5%) participate in petanque training, with 428 male students (12.7%) and 229 female students (6.8%). On the other hand, 2,719 students (80.5%) do not engage in petanque training, including 1,924 male students (57.0%) and 795 female students (23.5%).

3.1. Current status of petanque training content among students at Tra Vinh University

To assess the current status of petanque training content among students at Tra Vinh University, a survey was conducted with 657 students who participate in petanque training. The results regarding the content of their training are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Survey results of tra vinh university students on petanque training content

No	Training Content	Survey Result	
		Number of Students	Percentage%
1	Physical fitness training	00	0.0
2	Tactical training	00	0.0
3	Technical skills training	206	31.4
4	Competition training	380	57.8
5	Training in all aspects (items 1, 2, 3, and 4)	71	10.8
	Total	657	100.0

The data in Table 3 shows that the most common training content for students at Tra Vinh University is competition training, with 380 students (57.8%) participating. The least practiced training content is physical fitness and tactical training, with 0% participation. Furthermore, 206 students (31.4%) focus on technical skills, and 71 students (10.8%) practice all aspects of training (physical fitness, technical skills, tactical skills, and competition training).

3.2. Current Status of petanque training methods among students at Tra Vinh University

To assess the current status of petanque training methods among students at Tra Vinh University, a survey was conducted with 657 students who participate in petanque training. The results regarding their training methods are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Survey results of Tra Vinh University Students on petanque training methods

No	Survey Content		Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	Training Organization Form	National team	20	3.0
		Clubs	279	42.5
		Group/Class	180	27.4
		Self-training	178	27.1
		Total	657	100.0
2	Training Form	With instructor	16	2.4
		Without instructor	461	70.2
		Both	180	27.4
		Total	657	100.0
3	Training Duration	Under 30 minutes	00	0.0
		30 minutes - 1 hour	324	49.3
		1 hour - 2 hours	257	39.1
		Over 2 hours	76	11.6
		Total	657	100.0
4	Training Frequency	1 session	18	2.7
		02 session	308	46.9
		03 session	269	40.9
		Over 3 session	62	9.5
		Total	657	100.0
5	Training Location	School	477	72.6
		Home	00	0.0
		Other	180	27.4
		Total	657	100.0
6	Training Time	Morning	58	8.8
		Noon	171	26.0
		Afternoon after classes	250	38.1
		Anytime when free	178	27.1
		Total	657	100.0

Table 4 presents the current state of petanque training among students at Tra Vinh University. The data reveals that the majority of students train in clubs (42.5%), followed by group or class-based training (27.4%), and self-training (27.1%). Training with the national team is the least common, accounting for only 3.0%.

Regarding the presence of an instructor, the highest proportion of students (70.2%) train without an instructor, while 27.4% train with both self-guided and instructor-led sessions. The remaining 2.4% train solely with an instructor.

In terms of training duration, the majority of students train for 30 minutes to 1 hour (49.3%), followed by 1 to 2 hours (39.1%), and 11.6% train for more than 2 hours. Notably, no students report training for less than 30 minutes.

In terms of training frequency, most students train twice a week (46.9%), while 40.9% train three times a week, and 9.5% train more than three times a week. Only 2.7% of students train once a week.

When it comes to training location, the highest proportion of students train on campus, at 72.6%, while the lowest is at home (0.0%). Moreover, 27.4% train elsewhere.

As for the training time of day, the highest proportion of students train in the afternoon after class, at 38.1%, while the lowest is in the morning (8.8%). The next most common time is whenever students have free time (27.1%), followed by training at midday (26.0%).

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the majority of students at Tra Vinh University train in groups, classes, or clubs (69.9%), without an instructor (70.2%), for 30 minutes to 2 hours (97.5%), at least twice a week (97.3%), on campus (72.6%), and typically in the afternoon after class or during free time (65.2%).

The survey results from 12 physical education lecturers and administrators regarding the current teaching and training methods of pétanque for students at Tra Vinh University are presented in Table 5

Table 5: The current status of teaching and training methods for pétanque by lecturers and administrators at Tra Vinh University.

No	Survey content		Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	Training Organization form	National team	02	16.7
		Clubs	06	50.0
		Groups/Classes	04	33.3
		Private Coaching	00	0.0
		Total	12	100.0
2	Training duration	Less than 1 hour	00	0.0
		1 hour - 2 hours	5	41.7
		2 hours - 3 hours	6	50.0
		More than 3 hours	1	8.3
		Total	12	100.0
3	Training frequency	1 session	00	0.0
		2 sessions	3	25.0
		3 sessions	4	33.3
		More than 3 sessions	5	41.7
		Total	12	100.0
4	Training time	Morning	3	25.0
		Noon	3	25.0
		Afternoon after class	6	50.0
		Total	12	100.0

Table 5 presents the current state of pétanque teaching and training methods among physical education lecturers and administrators at Tra Vinh University. The data shows that the most common form of training organization is through clubs, accounting for 50.0% of responses. This is followed by group or class-based training at 33.3%, while team-based training is the least common, representing only 16.7%. There is no indication of individual coaching being applied.

Regarding training duration, most sessions last between 2 to 3 hours (50.0%), with no sessions reported to be under 1 hour (0.0%). A notable portion of training sessions (41.7%) fall within the range of 1 to 2 hours, and a small percentage (8.3%) exceed 3 hours.

In terms of training frequency, more than three sessions per week is the most common practice (41.7%), with no respondents conducting only one session per week. Furthermore, the next most frequent training sessions are 03 sessions (33.3%), followed by 02 sessions (25.0%).

As for training time, half of the sessions take place in the afternoon after academic classes (50.0%), followed by sessions in the morning and at lunchtime, both at 25.0%.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that the current forms of pétanque teaching and training organization by lecturers and administrators at Tra Vinh University are predominantly groups or classes and clubs (83.3%). Most training sessions last between 1 to 3 hours (91.7%), are conducted more than twice a week (100.0%), and primarily take place in the afternoon after academic classes (50.0%).

3.3. The Current State of the purpose and significance of student participation in the petanque movement at Tra Vinh University

The survey results from 3,376 students on the significance of participating in the petanque movement at Tra Vinh University are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Survey results from students at Tra Vinh University on the significance of participating in the petanque movement.

No.	Purpose, Meaning	Survey results	
		$\overline{X}$	S
	Positive	**3.58**	
1	Physical education and sports have significant roles, meaning, and positive effects	4.50	.500
2	Health improvement	4.27	.586
3	Development of willpower	3.76	.567
4	Expanding social interaction	3.49	.536
5	Becoming famous	2.76	.567
6	Having a good physique	3.67	.622
7	Self-expression	2.32	.648
8	Healthy recreation	3.68	.507
9	Supporting academic success in physical education	3.81	.683
	Negative	1.87	
10	Not important (whether or not it's practiced)	1.87	.623
11	Dangerous and prone to injuries	1.85	.586
12	Time-consuming and tiring	1.88	.602
13	Expensive and unsuitable	1.86	.582

As shown in Table 6, students rated their agreement on the purpose and positive meaning of petanque training with an average score of 3.58 points. The highest rating was for "Physical education and sports have significant roles, meaning, and positive effects" with a score of 4.50 points, and the lowest rating was for the statement "Self-expression" with a score of 2.32 points. Among the statements, the question "Health improvement" received the highest rating of "Strongly agree," the question "Becoming famous" received a "Neutral" rating, and the remaining questions were rated "Agree."

Regarding the negative meaning, students rated the agreement level as "disagree" (1.87 points); all the items were rated as "disagree." Among them, the highest-rated item was "wasting time, causing fatigue" with a score of "disagree" (1.88 points), and the lowest-rated item was "dangerous and prone to injuries" with a score of "disagree" (1.85 points).

Based on the analysis, it can be observed that the students at Tra Vinh University have a correct understanding and agreement on the positive objectives and significance of participating in the petanque movement. They believe that the activity helps improve health, contributes to physical education, and supports better performance in physical education classes. On the other hand, they disagree with the negative aspects, such as physical education being unimportant, dangerous with a risk of injury, time-consuming, tiring, and costly or unsuitable.

4. Conclusion

The research results lead to the following conclusions:

The content of petanque training for students at Tra Vinh University involves practicing all aspects (physical fitness, techniques, tactics, and competition training).

The training methods for petanque at Tra Vinh University are mostly group-based, conducted in classes or clubs, with no instructors, involving training sessions lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours, at least 2 sessions per week, taking place on campus, and mainly in the afternoon after classes or whenever students are free.

Students at Tra Vinh University have a correct understanding and agree that the main goals and significance of participating in the petanque movement are to improve health, enhance physical education, and support better performance in physical education classes.

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