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Current Situation of Students' Needs for Learning Pickleball at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: Pickleball is a rapidly growing sport that is attracting young people's attention for its appeal, accessibility, and suitability for a wide range of participants. This study surveys and analyzes the current demand for learning pickleball among students at Tra Vinh University. The study utilizes scientific research methods such as document synthesis and analysis, interviews, pedagogical observation, and statistical mathematics to address the research objectives. The survey subjects are 650 students from Tra Vinh University, Vietnam (250 male and 400 female students). The research results show that Pickleball has received great interest from students at Tra Vinh University, with the main motivations for practicing being a love for the sport, improved health, and the attractiveness of the training content. The majority of students expressed interest in and support for incorporating Pickleball into the physical education program as an elective subject. The research results provide a scientific basis for developing and implementing Pickleball as an elective subject to improve the quality of physical education at Tra Vinh University.

KEYWORDS: Needs, Pickleball, Students, Tra Vinh University, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, physical education in higher education institutions has received increasing attention to improve health, develop physical fitness, build motor skills, and foster a positive lifestyle among students. According to UNESCO (2015) [1], physical education and sports are fundamental human rights, playing an important role in the comprehensive physical, mental, and social development of learners. Similarly, the World Health Organization (2020) [2] emphasizes that maintaining regular physical activity is one of the effective solutions to prevent non-communicable diseases, improve quality of life, and improve public health. In the context of current reforms in higher education, physical education not only aims to improve health but also contributes to the development of self-care skills, the cultivation of lifelong exercise habits, and the enhancement of human resource quality.

Along with the trend of international integration, the diversification of physical education program content towards increasing elective sports, suitable to the interests and needs of learners, has become a popular trend in many countries around the world (Keating, X. D. et al., 2021) [3]. According to Bao N. and Ha G. [4], the Physical Education program in Vietnamese universities is currently organized according to the open credit model, allowing students to accumulate at least 03 credits through choosing to study many different sports throughout the course. In fact, many higher education institutions, such as National Economics University, Thuyloi University, and Hoa Sen University, have gradually introduced new sports into teaching, including Pickleball [4].

Pickleball is a sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis. It was created in the United States in 1965 and is now one of the fastest-growing sports in the world. According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (A'Naja, M. N. et. al, 2024) [5], the number of people participating in Pickleball in the United States has been steadily increasing for many years at a faster growth rate than all other newly developed sports. Research by Stroesser, K., et al. (2024) [6] shows that Pickleball is a moderately intense, accessible sport that contributes to improving cardiovascular health and motor coordination, while also creating a social environment and reducing psychological stress for participants. Studies by Chen, Q. et al. (2021) [7], Buzzelli, A. A., & Draper, J. A. (2019) [8] also confirm that Pickleball has the potential to attract a large number of participants in various age groups, especially teenagers and college students, due to its high entertainment value, simple rules, and low training costs.

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In Vietnam, pickleball has begun to develop strongly in recent years and is gradually being incorporated into mass sports activities as well as higher education environments. Research by Nguyen Ngoc Binh and Duong To Quynh (2025) [9] shows that Pickleball has great appeal to students, with 97% of surveyed students agreeing to include this subject in the physical education program, mainly in the form of an elective. This shows that Pickleball has the potential to become a new teaching content, contributing to diversifying the physical education program in universities.

There have been many research works related to the needs, motivations, attitudes, and interests in learning Physical Education of students. Trinh Van Bac [10] has researched the needs and attitudes of students of Hong Duc University towards Physical Education. Dao Cong Chuong [11] focused on researching the conditions to ensure the inclusion of 7-a-side football in the Physical Education program at Hanoi University of Architecture. Nguyen Ton Hoai [12] analyzed the motivations of people in Tuy Hoa city, Phu Yen province to participate in Yoga practice. Nguyen Nhac [13] proposed measures to improve the interest in learning Physical Education for non-specialized students at Thai Nguyen University of Education. In addition, research on the motivation and learning objectives of Pickleball in the Physical Education course of students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics has been mentioned in the study [14], while the factors affecting the learning interest in Physical Education of Hue University students have been clarified in the study [16]. Nguyen Chi Sol [15] also initially researched the motivation and learning goals of students at Tra Vinh University regarding the Pickleball subject.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on the learning needs and motivations for participating in sports activities among students, to date, no comprehensive study has assessed the current state of learning needs for Pickleball among students at Tra Vinh University, while also examining the conditions necessary for organizing the teaching of this subject within the university. Given the strong growth of Pickleball in Vietnam and the increasing emphasis on diversifying physical education programs, researching the current learning needs of students at Tra Vinh University regarding Pickleball has significant scientific and practical importance. The research results will provide a scientific basis for developing and implementing Pickleball teaching content that suits learners' needs, contributing to improving the quality of physical education, promoting sustainable physical development, and meeting the requirements of higher education reform in the current period. Given its importance, we have chosen to research the following topic:

"Current situation of students' needs for learning pickleball at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam".

The research results provide information to serve as a basis for developing solutions to promote the practice of pickleball among students.

**** Research methodology.***

This study used the following research methods:

The method of synthesizing and analyzing documents aims to gather information through sources from research works by domestic and foreign authors related to the pickleball training needs of students. Through the synthesis of research documents, a theoretical basis for the research problem is built, the purpose and objectives are determined, and the research results are discussed.

The research methodology involved conducting surveys to gather opinions from experts, lecturers, and students using questionnaires regarding their level of interest and need for learning the Pickleball subject.

Statistical mathematical methods were used to process and analyze the data collected in the study with the support of SPSS 22.0 software.

- Survey subjects:

Eighteen experts, professionals, and physical education instructors in Tra Vinh province participated in developing the survey questionnaires.

This study surveyed 650 first-year and second-year students at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam, at the time of the 2025-2026 academic year (including 250 male and 400 female students). The students selected for the survey had completed Physical Education 1-2 in the first and second semesters of their first year and would be taking the Pickleball course in the first semester of their second year.

2. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. The current level of interest and awareness among students regarding the subject of Pickleball.

To assess the current level of interest and awareness of the Pickleball game among students at Tra Vinh University, we conducted questionnaire-based interviews with 650 first-year and second-year students at the time of the 2025-2026 academic year. The survey results, presented in Table 1, show that:

Table 1. Current status of student interest and awareness regarding the Pickleball subject.

Intension		**n**	**%**
Regarding the level of awareness (n=650)	Aware	530	81,54
	Unaware	120	18,46
Regarding channels for accessing information (n=530)	Social network	315	59,43
	Friends, relatives.	110	20,75
	In school	80	15,10
	Other information channels	25	4,72

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The data in Table 1 shows:

Regarding awareness level: Out of a total of 650 students interviewed, 530 students were aware of Pickleball (81.54%), while only 120 students were unaware (18.46%). This figure shows that the level of information dissemination about Pickleball among the student community is relatively high, demonstrating that the sport has begun to gain popularity and has attracted some interest. However, the fact that nearly one-fifth of students are still unaware of it reflects that Pickleball has not yet truly become a familiar or widely popular sport in schools like traditional sports (football, volleyball, badminton, martial arts, etc.).

Regarding information access channels: Among students who were aware of Pickleball, social media was the most popular channel, accounting for 59.43%. This reflects the important role of online platforms in disseminating information, especially to young people. Next, 20.75% of students learned about Pickleball through friends or relatives, indicating that social relationships also contribute to spreading information about this new sport. Only 15.10% of students were aware of Pickleball through their school, while other information channels accounted for only 4.72%. The low rate of information access from the school reflects the limitations in introducing and integrating Pickleball into formal or extracurricular educational activities.

The survey results show that Pickleball has a relatively high level of awareness among students, mainly due to its spread through social media. However, this popularity is only at the level of "knowing about it," and may not necessarily be accompanied by actual participation in training. In particular, the fact that only 15.10% of surveyed students were aware of Pickleball through school channels indicates that the school has not yet shown sufficient interest in introducing Pickleball to its students. Therefore, there is an urgent need to enhance the role of educational institutions in promoting and incorporating this sport into physical education programs or extracurricular activities for students.

2.2. Current status of students' motivation and need to practice Pickleball

To assess the current motivation and training needs for Pickleball among Tra Vinh University students, we conducted interviews with 650 first-year and second-year students during the 2025-2026 academic year. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Student motivations and training needs in Pickleball (n=650)

	Intension		**n**	**%**
1	Motivation for learning Pickleball (n=650)	Like Pickleball	621	95.69
		Make new friends	530	81.54
		Improve health and achieve a balanced physique	592	91.08
		Participate in performances and competitions.	429	66
		Family tradition	152	23.38
		Pickleball is a sport with engaging and exciting training content.	587	90.31
		To follow the current social "hot trend"	432	66.46
2	Demand for participation in Pickleball training (n=650)	Interested	632	97.23
		Hesitant	17	2.62
		Not interested	0	0
3	Opinions supporting the inclusion of Pickleball in the curriculum (n=650)	Highly agree	534	82.15
		Agree	105	16.15
		No comment	15	2.31
		Disagree	0	0
4	Forms of implementing the Pickleball subject in schools (n=650)	Official subject	185	28.46
		Elective subjects	442	68
		Extracurricular activities	19	2.92

Table 3: Results of registration for Physical Education course 2, academic year 2025-2026.

	Subjects	**Classes**	**Quantity of students**	**Note**
1	Football	29	1015	
2	Badminton	23	805	
3	Chess	7	245	
4	Taekwondo	12	420	
5	Pickleball	10	430	Newly opened in second semester

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The results in Tables 2 and 3 show that many aspects of psychology, physical training needs, and social trends influence students' choices. Regarding personal motivation, most students stated that the reason for participating in training was their love for Pickleball (95.69%) and improving their health and achieving a balanced physique (91.08%). These are the two most important motivations, showing that the choice of Pickleball stems not only from curiosity or trend but also from a need for sustainable health and physical training.

From a social perspective: As many as 530 choices (81.54%) view pickleball as an opportunity to make friends, demonstrating that this sport plays a significant role in creating an environment for social interaction and connection. Meanwhile, 432 respondents chose to exercise to follow social trends ("hot trends") (accounting for 66.46%), demonstrating the strong impact of media and trends on young people. Additionally, 152 respondents (accounting for 23.38%) stated that their reason for participating was family tradition, reflecting a more limited but still significant influence in forming exercise habits.

Regarding academic and experiential factors: 587 respondents (90.31%) indicated that Pickleball has engaging and attractive training content, showing that the pedagogical value and specialized characteristics of the subject are key factors driving student participation. Meanwhile, 429 choices (66%) indicated a desire to participate in performances or competitions, reflecting a need for self-expression, affirmation of abilities, and recognition through competitive activities.

The survey results show that students' motivations for participating in Pickleball training are diverse, with the most prominent being enjoyment, a need to improve health, and a sense of the attractiveness of the training content. These are fundamental factors that give Pickleball strong potential for development in the university education environment. However, it should also be noted that some students participate primarily due to social trends or fads. This can lead to a lack of sustainability in the training process if it is not transformed into a long-term passion and habit.

Regarding the desire to participate in Pickleball training: The results show that most students want to participate in Pickleball training, with 635 students (97.69%) responding "interested" and only 17 students (2.62%) expressing undecided interest. Notably, no students chose "not interested." This confirms the attractiveness and strong development potential of Pickleball within the student community and reflects the readiness to embrace this new sport.

Regarding attitudes towards incorporating Pickleball into the curriculum: When asked about including Pickleball in the curriculum, the majority of students expressed positive attitudes: 534 students highly agree with it (82.15%), 105 students agree with it (16.15%), only 15 students (2.31%) had no opinion, and there were no cases of opposition. This indicates a high feasibility of officially incorporating Pickleball as part of the school's physical education program.

Regarding the implementation of the course: In terms of organizational options, 442 students (68%) believe that Pickleball should be an elective course, 185 students (28.46%) wish for it to become an official course, while only 2.92% suggest organizing it as an extracurricular activity. Thus, the general trend among students is to want to approach Pickleball flexibly, suitable to their personal interests and needs (through an elective course), but a significant percentage still want the course to be officially included in the training program.

Thus, the survey results confirm that Pickleball has great appeal to students, as evidenced by both the demand for training and the high level of agreement on including the subject in the curriculum. However, many students want Pickleball to be an elective rather than a compulsory subject, reflecting the need for flexible choices and to avoid academic pressure. This suggests that when implementing it, the school should start by including Pickleball in the group of elective physical education subjects, then expand its scope and gradually study the feasibility of developing it into an official subject.

DICUSSION

The level of interest and awareness among students regarding the subject of Pickleball.

The survey results show that 81.54% of students are aware of Pickleball, while only 18.46% are unfamiliar with it. This indicates that Pickleball has begun to gain significant traction within the student community and aligns with the development trends of this sport in Vietnam and worldwide. Pickleball is currently one of the fastest-growing sports in the United States, with the number of participants increasing steadily in recent years. Research by Wray, Weidong, Z., et al. (2026) [17] also confirms the strong growth of Pickleball not only among middle-aged people but also spreading to teenagers and students due to its simple rules, accessibility, and low training costs.

The current research results are similar to the research of Nguyen Ngoc Binh and Duong To Quynh (2025) [9], when the authors noted that most students are interested in and have a positive perception of Pickleball, and at the same time, up to 97% of the surveyed students support the inclusion of this subject in the physical education program. This reflects that Pickleball is gradually becoming a new sport with great appeal to young people.

In terms of information access channels, social media is the main source of information about Pickleball for students (59.43%), followed by friends and relatives (20.75%), while the rate of information access from schools only reached 15.10%. This result shows the prominent role of digital media in spreading new sports trends among young people today. The research results are also consistent with the findings of Chen, Q. et al. (2021) [7], when the authors argued that social media and the player community have a significant influence on the awareness, motivation to participate, and level of commitment of players to Pickleball.

Although awareness of Pickleball is relatively high, access to information from schools remains limited. This suggests that Pickleball is primarily disseminated through informal media channels rather than through educational or extracurricular activities within schools. This result partly reflects the reality that pickleball is still a new sport, not yet widely implemented in higher education institutions. Therefore, strengthening the role of schools in communication, organizing clubs, and gradually incorporating pickleball into physical education programs will contribute to raising awareness and creating opportunities for students to access it.

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Motivation and training needs of students in the sport of Pickleball

The research results show that students' motivations for participating in Pickleball training are quite diverse, with the most prominent being a love for the subject (95.69%), improving health and maintaining a balanced physique (91.08%), and a high appreciation for the attractiveness of the training content (90.31%). This indicates that students' choice of Pickleball is not only driven by trends but also linked to health care needs and personal interest.

This result is similar to the study of Nguyen Ton Hoai (2021) [12], in which the motivation to improve health was identified as the most important factor motivating people to participate in Yoga. Similarly, the study of Pajares, B. et al. (2022) [18] also indicated that Pickleball brings many benefits to cardiovascular health, motor coordination, and mental health, thereby increasing the motivation to participate in long-term training. According to WHO (2020) [2], regular physical activity is an important factor contributing to the prevention of non-communicable diseases and improving the quality of life, which further shows that Pickleball is a suitable sport for students.

Besides health factors, 81.54% of students believe that Pickleball facilitates making friends and expanding social relationships. This result is consistent with the research of Chen, Q. et al. (2021) [7], where the authors found that the need for social interaction, community connection, and satisfaction in recreational activities are important motivators for Pickleball players to maintain practice. This shows that Pickleball not only has physical value but also contributes to the development of social skills and strengthens cohesion within the student community.

Notably, 66.46% of students said they participated in Pickleball practice due to the influence of social trends. This rate reflects the strong impact of media and social networking platforms on young people's sports choice behavior. However, if the motivation to participate mainly comes from trend factors, the ability to maintain long-term practice may not be sustainable. This observation is also shared by Weidong, Z. et al. (2026) [17], who mentioned that the rapid growth of Pickleball among young people is significantly influenced by media effects and the trendiness of this sport.

The survey results show that 97.23% of students want to participate in Pickleball training, and no students showed any lack of interest. This result is similar to the research of Nguyen Chi Sol (2025) [15], when the author found that most students at Tra Vinh University have positive motivation and attitude towards learning Pickleball. At the same time, the research of Nguyen Ngoc Binh and Duong To Quynh (2025) [9] also recorded that 97% of students agreed to include Pickleball in the physical education program. Thus, Pickleball is receiving positive attention and acceptance from students, thereby showing the potential for development of this sport in the university environment.

The research results also show that 98.30% of students agree or strongly agree with the inclusion of Pickleball in the curriculum. This is a very high percentage, reflecting the learners' consensus on diversifying the content of physical education. This result is consistent with the trend of innovating the physical education curriculum towards increasing elective subjects mentioned in the research of Bao and Ha (2025) [4], as well as the view of UNESCO (2015) [1] on building a flexible physical education curriculum that meets the needs and characteristics of learners.

Regarding the course implementation format, the majority of students (68%) wanted Pickleball to be organized as an elective course, while only 28.46% wanted the course to become a mandatory official course. This result reflects the need for flexible choices among students, in line with the current trend of credit-based training. The research results are similar to the research of Dao Cong Chuong (2023) [11], where the author suggested that the implementation of new sports should be done in the form of electives to meet the needs, preferences, and characteristics of each group of learners.

Furthermore, registration data for the Physical Education course in the 2025-2026 academic year shows that although Pickleball was only introduced in the second semester with 10 classes, it attracted 430 student registrations, higher than Chess (245 students) and comparable to Taekwondo (420 students). This result reflects the appeal and potential for development of Pickleball in the university environment. Although the number of registrations is still lower than that of football and badminton, this is a noteworthy result for a new subject that has been implemented for a short time. This shows that with investment in facilities, teaching staff, and appropriate extracurricular activities, Pickleball has the potential to become one of the sports chosen by many students in the future.

Overall, the research results show that Pickleball receives significant interest from students at Tra Vinh University, evidenced by high awareness levels, diverse motivations for training, strong desire to participate, and almost unanimous agreement on including the subject in the physical education curriculum. These results are not only consistent with domestic research but also align with the global trend of Pickleball development. This provides an important scientific basis for the university to consider implementing Pickleball as an elective subject, gradually improving the program, investing in facilities, and developing the training movement to enhance the quality of physical education for students in the context of current higher education reforms.

3. CONCLUSION

The research results show that Pickleball has a relatively high level of awareness among students at Tra Vinh University, with social media being the primary channel for accessing information. Students have diverse motivations for practicing, notably a love for the sport, a need to improve their health, and the attractiveness of the training content. Simultaneously, the demand for participating in Pickleball training is very high, and most students support the inclusion of this sport in the physical education curriculum, mainly as an elective course.

The research results confirm that Pickleball has the potential to develop in a university environment and provide a scientific basis for building and implementing appropriate teaching content to contribute to improving the quality of physical education at Tra Vinh University.

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