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Research on Armed Training Exercises for the Physical Development of Students of the 49th Cohort, Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam

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Abstract

Developing physical fitness for students majoring in National Defence and Security Education (NDSE) is a crucial requirement for enhancing their ability to perform specific military tasks. However, domestic research mainly focuses on developing individual physical attributes or techniques and has not yet developed a system of armed training exercises oriented towards functional training that meets current training requirements. This study aims to select a system of armed forces exercises to develop physical fitness for students of the 49th cohort, Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. The study utilizes methods including literature review, expert interviews, medical examinations, pedagogical evaluations, pedagogical experiments, and statistical mathematics. Based on a synthesis of domestic and international research, 46 exercises were initially developed and evaluated by 31 experts, lecturers, and professionals. The results showed that 20 exercises were selected with a consensus rate of 70% or higher, ensuring the synchronized development of speed, strength, endurance, motor coordination, and the ability to perform specific military tasks. The novelty of the research lies in building a system of exercises oriented towards functional training, integrating physical exercises with exercises simulating military tasks and extracurricular activities into a unified program. The selected exercise system is scientifically sound, feasible, and suitable for teaching National Defence and Security Education at Vietnamese universities.

Keyword: National Defence and Security Education, Armed forces exercises, Physical development, Functional training, Students of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam

1. Introduction

Physical development through planned exercise is an important means of improving people's health, work capacity, and ability to perform professional tasks. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), regular physical exercise helps improve cardiovascular and respiratory function, muscle strength, endurance, and mobility, while reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases. This view is also affirmed by Riebe, D. *et al.* (2018) ^[12], who argue that training programs are highly effective only when exercises are selected to suit the goals, physiological characteristics, and activity requirements of each target group. Therefore, selecting a scientifically based

exercise system is considered a decisive factor in the effectiveness of physical development.

In modern training science, the trend in training program design has shifted from developing individual physical attributes to developing motor skills linked to task-specific requirements (task-specific physical training). According to French, D., & Ronda, L. T. (Eds.). (2021) ^[3], functional exercises and loaded exercises can simultaneously develop strength, endurance, motor coordination, and occupational task performance. Similarly, Bompa and Buzzichelli (2019) argue that training effectiveness depends not only on the volume and intensity of exercise but also on the degree of similarity between the exercise and the actual motor

requirements of the trainee. Therefore, selecting exercises according to occupational characteristics is becoming a dominant trend in sports science and training science.

For students majoring in National Defence and Security Education (NDSE), the training process not only equips them with theoretical knowledge but also requires them to regularly perform specific physical activities such as drill and formation exercises, armed running, carrying equipment, overcoming obstacles, battlefield maneuvers, grenade throwing, and tactical exercises. These activities demand the simultaneous coordination of strength, speed, endurance, balance, and movement coordination under load conditions. Therefore, physical development exercises for NDSE students should aim to enhance specialized motor skills, directly meeting the requirements of their studies and careers, rather than simply improving general physical fitness.

In the field of military training, many countries have shifted from traditional physical training models to the Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) model, aiming for the holistic development of soldiers' physical, mental, nutritional, recovery, and mission performance capabilities. Field Manual FM 7-22: Holistic Health and Fitness (U.S. Army, 2020) identifies load-bearing exercises, armed running, heavy lifting, multidirectional movement, and functional exercises as core components for enhancing military mission performance. Furthermore, Payne (2020)^[10] emphasizes that H2F represents a shift from a purely physical training mindset to the holistic development of performance readiness. The guidelines of Plummer *et al.* (2022)^[11] also recommend that exercise selection be aligned with the mission characteristics of each unit to improve training effectiveness and reduce injury risk (Payne, J. M., 2020)^[10]. Recently, Whitehurst *et al.* (2026)^[16] showed that units applying the H2F model achieved significantly higher performance in functional fitness, mission completion ability, and reduced injury rates compared to traditional training programs (Whitehurst, R. *et al.*, 2026)^[16]. Subsequently, Foulis *et al.* (2025)^[4], based on a prospective cohort study of 2,988 US Army Basic Combat Training trainees, developed a model identifying 27 modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors associated with musculoskeletal injuries during training. The research results recommend the application of multi-level risk assessment combined with multi-factor intervention programs before and during high-intensity training to reduce injury risk and improve training effectiveness (Foulis *et al.*, 2025)^[4]. These results show that the development of specialized training programs, selected on a scientific basis and tailored to the characteristics of the target group, is an important trend in modern military training. Furthermore, Sterczala, A. J. *et al.* (2023)^[13] suggest that combat simulation training programs significantly improve functional strength and muscle endurance and reduce injury risk compared to traditional fitness programs (Sterczala, A. J. *et al.*, 2023)^[13]. Studies on military trainees by Cannon *et al.* (2024)^[1], Vantarakis *et al.* (2022), and Jalowska and Prokopczyk (2022) also show that the use of combined functional exercises with load significantly increases performance on military fitness tests and the ability to complete tasks in a military fitness training environment (Cannon *et al.*, 2024; Vantarakis *et al.*, 2022; Jalowska and Prokopczyk, 2022)^[1].

In Vietnam, research related to national Defence education mainly focuses on developing criteria for physical assessment or studying exercises aimed at developing individual qualities such as endurance in armed running or

strength for grenade throwing techniques. Some recent studies by Cao Manh Cuong and Pham Thuy Yen (2025), Nguyen Huy Bao Hoang and Nguyen Thanh Hung (2025) have initially demonstrated the effectiveness of specialized exercises for each technical content (Cao Manh Cuong and Pham Thuy Yen, 2025; Nguyen Huy Bao Hoang and Nguyen Thanh Hung, 2025). However, these studies mainly focus on individual motor skills and have not yet developed a comprehensive system of armed combat exercises to simultaneously develop physical components that meet the training characteristics of students majoring in National Defence and Security Education. At the same time, the application of the principles of modern military functional training to the conditions of National Defence and Security Education training in Vietnam remains very limited.

Teaching practice at the Department of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, shows that students of the 49th cohort regularly participate in practical exercises requiring continuous movement while carrying weapons and loads, and performing various consecutive military techniques. However, the physical capabilities of the students are not uniform; a portion of the students still have limitations in physical endurance, functional strength, and coordination when performing armed exercises. This directly affects the quality of practice, the ability to acquire technical skills, and the effectiveness of training. Therefore, selecting and applying a system of armed forces exercises that suits the characteristics of students and the teaching conditions of the school is a requirement of significant theoretical, practical, and scientific importance.

Based on the above, the research "Research on armed training exercises for the physical development of students of the 49th cohort, Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam." was conducted to select a system of armed forces exercises that are scientifically sound, feasible, and suitable for the training characteristics of students majoring in National Defence Education, while also evaluating the effectiveness of the exercise system in developing physical fitness and improving the ability to meet the physical requirements of the training program.

2. Research Materials and Methods

Methods

Literature review method: Used to collect, analyze, and synthesize scientific documents, monographs, legal texts, and research works both domestically and internationally related to physical development, sports training science, military physical training, and functional exercises in military training. The results of the literature synthesis serve as a scientific basis for determining the principles of selection, building a system of armed exercises, and designing experimental programs suitable for the characteristics of students majoring in National Defence and Security Education.

Expert Interview Method: This method is used to consult with experts, lecturers in National Defence and Security Education, physical education lecturers, coaches, and experienced military officers to select a system of armed exercises suitable for the physical development goals of students. The interviews focus on the necessity, scientific validity, safety, and feasibility of each exercise, as well as its suitability to the training characteristics of students in the 49th cohort of the Faculty of National Defence Education.

Statistical methods: Used to process and analyze data collected during the research. The collected data was processed with the support of SPSS 22.0 software.

Participants

- + Interview subjects: 31 experts, professionals, and physical education instructors.
- + Survey subjects: 30 students from the 49th cohort of the Department of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

3. Results

To study armed physical training exercises for students of the 49th cohort, the Department of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, researched three aspects:

- The basis and principles for selecting armed physical training exercises for students of the 49th cohort, Department of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.
- Synthesizing armed physical training exercises for students from research works by domestic and foreign authors.
- Interviewing experts, professionals, and lecturers.

3.1. Basis and principles for selecting armed training exercises to develop physical fitness for students of the 49th cohort, Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

The selection of the armed forces training system was based on the goal of developing physical fitness for students of the 49th cohort, Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, meeting the specific movement requirements of the National Defence and Security Education (NDSE) course. Students aged 18–22 are in a favorable period for developing strength, speed, endurance, and motor coordination through systematic training (Harre, 1996; Nguyen T, 1998; Nguyen, T., & Pham, D. T., 2002; Riebe *et al.*, 2018) ^[12].

According to Circular No. 05/2020/TT-BGDĐT, the National Defence and Security Education program includes drill and formation exercises, infantry combat techniques, grenade throwing, armed running, and other military activities (Ministry of Education and Training, 2020). Simultaneously, the US Army's Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) model emphasizes the comprehensive development of physical fitness and mission performance capabilities through functional exercises linked to military professional requirements (Payne, 2020; Plummer *et al.*, 2022; U.S. Army, 2020) ^[10, 11]. Therefore, the armed training system needs to be selected to comprehensively develop physical fitness while simultaneously enhancing the ability to perform the specific movement tasks of the subject.

Domestic studies have consistently shown that selecting appropriate exercises contributes to improving physical fitness and the effectiveness of performing military training exercises (Cao & Pham, 2025; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025; Vu N. M., 2024). Globally, numerous studies have demonstrated that strength training programs combining endurance, functional exercises, and military mission simulations significantly improve mission performance and military fitness (Cannon *et al.*, 2024; Sterczala *et al.*, 2023; Vantarakis *et al.*, 2022; Whitehurst *et al.*, 2026) ^[16, 1, 13].

Furthermore, Foulis *et al.* (2025) ^[4] showed that developing training programs based on learner characteristics and injury risk factors contributes to improved training effectiveness and reduced injury risk during military training.

Based on that, the armed training system is selected according to the following principles: (1) suitable for the physical development goals and movement requirements of the National Defence and Security Education course; (2) ensuring scientific accuracy, systematic approach, and suitability to the physiological characteristics of students; (3) developing strength, speed, endurance, and motor coordination simultaneously; (4) ensuring the specificity of armed training exercises according to functional training orientation; (5) suitable for the physical facilities, teaching time, and ensuring safety; (6) capable of effective application in teaching and training at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (Harre, 1996; Payne, 2020; Riebe *et al.*, 2018; U.S. Army, 2020) ^[10, 12].

3.2. A compilation of armed forces training exercises to develop physical fitness for students, based on research by authors both domestically and internationally.

The compilation of armed training exercises was carried out through the analysis of domestic and international research on military physical training and National Defence and Security Education. These studies all affirm that training programs should combine the development of strength, endurance, speed, motor coordination, and the ability to perform military tasks through functional exercises and mission simulations (Cannon *et al.*, 2024; Payne, 2020; Sterczala *et al.*, 2023; U.S. Army, 2020) ^[10, 1, 13].

In Vietnam, studies by Vu Ngoc Minh (2024), Cao and Pham (2025), Nguyen and Nguyen (2025), and Tran Quoc Khanh (2026) have developed and applied exercises to serve the National Defence and Security Education course, focusing on armed running, grenade throwing, drill, and infantry combat techniques, contributing to improving physical fitness and the effectiveness of performing military practice content.

Globally, Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) training programs focus on the holistic development of physical fitness and task performance capabilities through strength, endurance, carrying, pulling, pushing, obstacle course, and military mission simulation exercises (Payne, 2020; Plummer *et al.*, 2022; U.S. Army, 2020) ^[10, 11]. Simultaneously, studies recommend selecting exercises that are appropriate to the learner's characteristics and mission requirements to enhance training effectiveness and minimize injury (Foulis *et al.*, 2025; Whitehurst *et al.*, 2026) ^[4, 16].

Based on that, the study proceeded to identify, select, and synthesize 46 specific exercises suitable for the physical development goals of students in the Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

3.3. Interviewing experts, professionals, and lecturers.

To ensure feasibility, the study involved interviewing a group of teachers and lecturers who have been and are currently teaching National Defence Education in Long An province, Ho Chi Minh City, and other locations. The interviewees consisted of 58.1% university graduates and 41.9% postgraduate graduates, totaling 31 experts. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of interviews on the use of armed forces exercises for physical development for students of the 49th cohort of the National Defence Education Department, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

Test			Interview Results (n=31)					
			Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree	
			Quantity	Ratio	Quantity	Ratio	Quantity	Ratio
Physical fitness	Developing speed	1. Warm up with various forms of running (30 seconds/3 times)	23	74.1	07	22.5	01	3.2
		2. Morning exercises (3 times)	24	77.4	05	16.1	02	12.9
		3. 100m run (3 times)	22	70.9	08	25.8	01	6.4
	Developing strength	4. Unarmed sandpit jumping (1-minute x 3 groups)	17	54.8	11	35.5	03	3.2
		5. Armed Long Jump over Sand Pit (3 times x 3 groups)	22	70.9	07	22.5	02	6.4
		6. Parallel bar push-ups (15 times x 3 groups)	18	58.1	10	32.3	03	9.7
		7. Parallel bar push-ups (20 times x 3 groups)	13	41.9	15	48.4	03	9.7
		8. Pull-ups (10 times x 3 groups)	23	74.1	06	19.3	02	6.5
		9. Pull-ups (15 times x 3 groups)	19	61.3	10	32.3	02	6.5
		10. Parallel bar push-ups (10 times x 3 groups)	24	77.4	05	16.1	02	6.5
		11. Run 50 m x 2 (3 times)	26	83.8	02	6.5	03	9.7
		12. Lift 25 kg weights (30 seconds/3 times)	23	74.1	06	19.3	02	6.5
		13. Perform 3 steps with feet together (30 seconds / 3 times)	25	80.6	02	6.5	04	12.9
	Developing endurance	14. Running a 3000m obstacle course while armed (for men, once)	22	70.9	06	19.3	03	9.7
		15. Armed obstacle course run of 1500m for women (1 time)	22	70.9	06	19.3	03	9.7
		16. Armed obstacle course run (1-time x 3 teams)	23	74.1	05	16.1	03	9.7
		17. Freestyle swimming (50m x 3 teams)	16	51.6	08	25.8	07	22.6
		18. Armed freestyle swimming (20m x 3 teams)	10	32.3	17	54.8	04	12.9
		19. Armed sandpit jumping (30 seconds x 3 teams)	14	45.2	10	32.3	07	22.6
	Developing flexibility	20. Sit-ups on a ladder (10 times x 3 teams)	12	38.7	10	32.3	09	29
		21. Sit-ups on a ladder (15 times x 3 teams)	12	38.7	14	45.2	05	16.1
		22. Exercises on the fitness field (30 seconds/3 times)	22	70.9	06	19.3	03	9.7
		23. Military sports game (1 time)	27	87.1	03	9.7	01	3.2
		24. Move through barbed wire terrain five times while armed	14	45.2	09	29	08	25.8
	Developing dexterity	25. Move through the firewall terrain 5 times	14	45.2	10	32.3	07	22.6
		26. Rope climbing (3 times x 3 teams)	15	48.4	08	25.8	08	25.8
		27. Armed rope climbing (3 times x 3 teams)	15	48.4	08	25.8	08	25.8
		28. Practice shooting at fixed and concealed targets during the day with the CKC rifle (3 times x 3 teams)	11	35.5	10	32.3	10	32.3
		29. Practice shooting at fixed and concealed targets during the day with AK submachine guns (3 times x 3 teams)	15	48.4	10	32.3	06	19.3
		30. Daytime shooting practice with K54 pistols targeting fixed and concealed targets (3 times x 3 teams)	10	25.8	13	41.9	08	25.8
		31. Aerial target shooting exercise (3 times x 3 teams)	13	41.9	15	48.4	03	9.7
		32. Infantry shooting and grenade throwing techniques (3 times x 3 teams)	17	54.8	12	38.7	02	6.5
		33. Obstacle course exercise without weapons (3 times x 3 teams)	23	74.1	05	16.1	03	9.7
		34. Obstacle course with guns (3 times x 3 teams)	24	77.4	06	19.3	01	3.2
		35. Basic postures and movements for battlefield training (3 times x 3 teams)	26	83.8	03	9.6	02	6.5
		36. Basic parrying and bayonet striking techniques (3 times x 3 teams)	10	32.3	13	41.9	08	25.8
		37. Rifle gunstock striking technique (3 times x 3 teams)	10	32.3	14	45.2	07	22.6
Shape, function		38. Organizing competitions, friendly matches, and extracurricular activities in various sports.	23	74.1	05	16.1	03	9.7
		39. Combat scenario exercises (3 times x 3 teams)	17	54.8	12	38.7	02	6.5
		40. Defensive exercises (3 times x 3 teams)	10	32.3	13	41.9	08	25.8
		41. Martial Arts Exercise 2 (3 times x 3 teams)	12	38.7	14	45.2	05	16.1
		42. Martial arts exercises, Lesson 1 (3 times x 3 teams)	16	51.6	12	38.7	03	9.7
		43. Individual drills with weapons (3 times)	22	70.9	05	16.1	04	12.9
		44. Formation practicing with weapons (3 times)	25	80.6	04	12.9	02	6.4
		45. Formation practicing without weapons (3 times x 3 teams)	15	8.4	12	38.7	04	12.9
		46. Attack and Defence exercises in martial arts (3 sets x 3 teams)	15	48.4	13	41.9	03	9.7

Based on the interview results from Table 1, the study selected exercises with a selection rate of $\geq 70\%$ of commonly used exercises. Following this principle, the study compiled 20 physical training exercises for armed forces students of the 49th cohort of the National Defence Education Department at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

Content of the armed forces training exercises for physical development for students of the 49th cohort, Department of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of

Education:

1. Warm up with various forms of running (30 seconds/3 times)

2. 100m run (3 times)
3. Morning exercise - Afternoon exercise (3 times)
4. 50m run x 2 (3 times)
5. Lift 25 kg weights (3 times)
6. Long jump over sand pit (3 times x 3 teams)
7. Jump three steps with feet together (3 times)
8. Pull-ups (10 times x 3 teams)
9. Parallel bar push-ups (10 repetitions x 3 teams)
10. 3000m run for men (1 time)
11. 1500m run for women (1 time)
12. Armed obstacle course (1 time)
13. Exercises on the fitness field (30 seconds/3 times)
14. Military sports game (1 time)
15. Obstacle course exercise without weapons (3 times x 3 teams)
16. Obstacle course with guns (3 times x 3 teams)
17. Basic postures and movements for battlefield training (3 times x 3 teams)
18. Organize competitions, friendly matches, and extracurricular activities (1 times).
19. Formation practicing with weapons (3 times)
20. Formation practicing without weapons (3 times)

Thus, after applying the principles and basis of selection as well as personal experience and in accordance with the actual situation of the School, the project has selected 20 exercises for physical development for students of course 49 of the Faculty of National Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

4. Discussion

The research results show that, from 46 exercises compiled from domestic and international research works, and through interviews with 31 experts, lecturers, and professionals, the study selected 20 exercises with a consensus level of 70% or higher to build a system of armed physical training exercises for students of the 49th cohort, Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. This system of exercises ensures the synchronized development of speed, strength, endurance, motor coordination, and the ability to perform specific military tasks, meeting the requirements of the National Defence and Security Education course.

Compared to domestic studies, the research results inherit traditional exercises such as armed running, obstacle course, drill, shooting, and grenade throwing (Vu, 2024; Cao & Pham, 2025; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025; Tran, 2026). However, the novelty of the study does not stop at selecting individual exercises but integrates basic physical fitness exercises with exercises simulating military tasks in a unified training system, creating a link between overall physical fitness development and the ability to perform military techniques. This approach is consistent with the trend of task-oriented training, rather than simply developing individual physical attributes.

Another new aspect is that the research has added to the training system content such as military sports games, comprehensive field exercises, competitions, friendly matches and extracurricular activities, combined with load-bearing exercises (lifting 25 kg weights), obstacle courses with and without weapons, battlefield movement and armed formation exercises. These are contents that have not been developed into a complete system in previous studies in Vietnam, but are consistent with modern training perspectives, in which learners simultaneously develop physical fitness, motor skills and the ability to adapt to practical situations.

The research findings are also consistent with the development trends of modern military training programs worldwide. The U.S. Army's Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) model emphasizes the integration of strength, endurance, load-carrying, obstacle course, and combat mission performance within a single training program to enhance overall combat capability (U.S. Army, 2020; Payne, 2020; Plummer *et al.*, 2022)^[10, 11]. Cannon *et al.* (2024)^[1] argue that mission-oriented functional training programs significantly improve military mission performance compared to traditional physical fitness development programs. Similarly, Sterczala *et al.* (2023)^[13] and Vantarakis *et al.* (2022) affirm that combining strength, endurance, and mission simulation exercises significantly enhances the load-carrying, tactical movement, and obstacle course capabilities of military trainees.

In particular, recent studies have emphasized the need to individualize training programs according to the characteristics of the target group, physical fitness level, and risk of injury in order to optimize training effectiveness (Foulis *et al.*, 2025; Whitehurst *et al.*, 2026)^[16, 4]. Based on this, the system of 20 exercises in this study was selected not only based on theoretical and practical foundations but also through expert evaluation, ensuring scientific validity, feasibility, and suitability to the teaching conditions of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education.

Thus, the novel contribution of this research is the development of a system of armed physical training exercises oriented towards functional military training, specifically for students majoring in National Defence and Security Education. This system not only inherits traditional exercises but also integrates simulated military missions, military movement games, and extracurricular activities into a unified training process. This is a key difference from previous domestic studies and aligns with the development trends of tactical athlete training and occupational physical training programs currently being applied in the militaries of many countries (Cannon *et al.*, 2024; Foulis *et al.*, 2025; Whitehurst *et al.*, 2026)^[4, 1, 16].

5. Conclusions

This study has identified the scientific basis and principles for selecting armed combat exercises to develop physical fitness for students of the Faculty of National Defence Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. Based on a synthesis of domestic and international research, the study systematized 46 exercises and, through interviews with 31 experts, selected 20 exercises with a consensus rate of 70% or higher for inclusion in the experimental program. The selected exercise system ensures the comprehensive development of speed, strength, endurance, and the ability to perform specific military tasks. A novel aspect of the study is the development of an armed combat exercise system oriented towards functional training, integrating physical fitness development with military tasks, suitable for teaching National Defence and Security Education at Vietnamese universities.

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