

The Impact of PE Teachers' Attitudes on High School Students' Motivation and Lesson Engagement

Warhel Asim Mohammed¹, Choman Kamil Amin² Bahzad Ahmed Salih³, Halakt M. Saleh⁴

^{1,3,4} College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Duhok, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

² College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of PE teachers on enhancing PE lessons and motivation among high school students. The research aims to understand how teachers' attitudes and methodologies impact student engagement in physical education (PE). The study involved 30 male physical education teachers, all graduates of the College of Physical Education, each with over five years of experience. The informants showed their voluntary participation by giving consent either by email or verbally. Using a semi-structured interview method, data were collected and analysed through a constructive grounded theory approach, focusing on coding and thematic development. Our results indicate that teachers' individual attitudes significantly affect student motivation and participation in physical education classes. Key themes identified include the role of teacher demeanour, the importance of social engagement, and the impact of integrating physical education with other subjects. Positive teacher-student interactions and a supportive environment were found to enhance students' enjoyment and creativity during PE sessions. Discussion and conclusion, it is clearly that, the effective PE instruction, supported by adequate resources and facilities, aligns with the educational goals of the Ministry of Education, Kurdistan region of Iraq. Implementing these findings can help shape policies and practices that prioritize physical education as a vital component of student well-being and development.

KEY WORDS: PE Teachers, Motivation, Teachers' Attitudes, High School students, Lesson Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to offer nuanced insights into the perspectives of educators concerning their roles in PE instruction, concurrently striving to enhance students' motivation throughout their scholastic sojourn.

Previous studies have determined that the emphasis on enhancing physical activity among adolescents results in the provision of high-quality physical education (PE) within educational institutions.

These institutions play a pivotal role in fostering students' participation in PE. Nevertheless, obstacles persist in the effective implementation of PE within schools (Cruickshank et al., 2024; Jastrow et al., 2022; Sutherland et al., 2021).

Regular engagement in physical activities throughout the day brings about advantages for both children and adolescents. Furthermore, schools offer an optimal setting for promoting physical activity due to the substantial amount of time students spend in this environment (Cooper, et al., 2016).

The influence of PE quality within school settings yields positive effects on diverse facets of students' lifestyles, encompassing physical requirements, sociocultural elements, as well as cognitive and emotional well-being. PE provides purposeful, well-structured, and consistent physical engagement (Bailey, 2006; Le Masurier & Corbin, 2006; Fairclough & Stratton, 2005; Flohr & Todd, 2003). Bailey (2006) underscores that PE furnishes students with systematic approaches for learning and honing essential proficiencies necessary for participation in physical activities. Furthermore, PE augments students' comprehension of their physical capacities and contributes to their competence in areas like aesthetic evaluation and interpersonal communication.

Educational institutions afford students of all age groups the prospect to partake in health-enhancing

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Corresponding author's e-mail: warhel.asim@uod.ac

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endeavors through PE programs. PE stands apart in its capacity to facilitate the cultivation of students' motivation, erudition, and aptitude essential for engaging in activities that foster optimal physical well-being (Kohl and Cook, 2013). As articulated by Brubaker (2011), PE confers a multitude of advantages upon both individual students and the broader society. When executed with scientific precision within an environment conducive to learning, the PE syllabus wields the potential to yield sundry favorable societal outcomes. It is noteworthy that the American Heart Association (AHA, 2010) underscores the recommendation for the amalgamation of physical activity and a healthful diet as pivotal factors contributing to an elongated and healthier lifespan among juveniles. These elements similarly assume a critical role in mitigating diverse health afflictions (Brubaker, 2011).

The corpus of prior research extensively chronicles the health-related advantages derived from PE. In accordance with Harmadn (2008), emphasis is placed upon the European Parliament Resolution on the Role of Sport in Education (2007/2086NI), issued in November 2007, which succinctly encapsulates the essence of PE. The prologue of the resolution duly acknowledges PE as the singular scholastic discipline directed towards preparing children for a salubrious lifestyle, centering upon their holistic physical and psychological maturation. Moreover, PE serves as an avenue for inculcating fundamental sociocultural principles, encompassing notions of impartiality, self-regulation, mutual support, collective synergy, forbearance, and equitable conduct (Harmadn, 2008).

Remarkably, within the spectrum of pedagogical disciplines, PE emerges as the exclusive purveyor of erudition and proficiencies to juveniles, elucidating the trajectory toward a salubrious manner of living. The salience of PE extends to its pivotal function in advancing multifaceted physical and cognitive progressions, concurrently with the inculcation of cardinal sociocultural virtues. The evolving temporality has accentuated the escalating import of PE in engendering these outcomes. Acknowledgment is imperative regarding PE's indispensable stature as an elemental constituent of the academic syllabus, endowing it with an intrinsic and discrete obligation to grapple with an array of contemporary pedagogical quandaries, frequently in augmented depth in comparison to its scholastic counterparts (Harmadn, 2008).

Beyond the antecedently delineated facets, physical education (PE) instructors undertake a substantive function within educational institutions, propelling the propagation of a wholesome lifestyle encompassing physiological and psychological well-being. As posited by Hind and Palmer (2007), the vocation of PE instruction stands as an exigent pursuit, one that can exact tolls on

instructors at cognitive as well as corporeal levels. This onus emanates from the intricate sphere of influence and the myriad obligations incumbent upon PE educators within the scholastic milieu. Bailey (2001), in emphasizing the import, underscores the imperative for PE educators to apprehend their responsibility in cultivating a favorable "pedagogical milieu" that engenders robust interpersonal vincula between educators and scholars, alongside bolstering their *modus operandi* for instructional dispositions (Bailey, 2001: 40-41).

Enhancing PE lessons and motivation in schools is a multifaceted challenge that requires innovative strategies and effective implementation. One approach that has shown promise is the Sport Education Model (henceforth SEM), which aims to create a more engaging and enjoyable PE experience for students. A systematic review of SEM practices found that this model significantly improves students' attitudes towards physical education by fostering a sense of teamwork, leadership, and personal responsibility. The review highlights that SEM not only enhances students' athletic abilities but also increases their enthusiasm and motivation for sports, contributing to a more positive overall learning environment (Zhang et al., 2024).

Additionally, gamification has emerged as an effective method to enhance student engagement and motivation in PE lessons. Games can make learning more interactive and enjoyable. Research indicates that gamification increases participation, improves learning outcomes, and sustains students' interest over time. Successful implementation of gamification strategies involves aligning game mechanics with learning objectives, providing immediate feedback, and encouraging collaboration among students. These techniques help to create a more dynamic and motivating environment for physical education, ultimately leading to better student engagement and improved educational outcomes (Hellín et al., 2023).

While PE instructors wield substantial influence within educational domains, whether through direct engagement in athletic pursuits or indirect facilitation of student involvement in PE sessions, impediments ensue that can hinder the scholastic experience regarding PE within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). To the researcher's best knowledge, this study is considered the second qualitative exploration that enhances insights into PE educators' perceptions concerning their scholastic roles, subsequent to the study by Amin (2020). The study provides a deeper comprehension of instructors' viewpoints regarding their roles within PE lessons, focusing on elevating student motivation in the scholastic milieu.

2. MATERIALS and METHODS

Procedure

This research received ethical clearance from the ethical committee of the College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences at the University of Duhok. Each participant engaged in a semi-structured interview, a method chosen for its ability to provide both structure and flexibility, allowing participants to discuss their unique educational experiences in depth. The interviews, which lasted between 30 to 40 minutes, were conducted in quiet, private areas within the school premises to ensure comfort and confidentiality. Before the interviews began, participants were given a comprehensive participant information sheet, detailing the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with assurances that all information shared would remain anonymous and confidential.

The interview guide used in this study was self-developed, drawing on relevant literature and expert consultation to ensure it covered key areas of interest while allowing for open-ended responses. To establish the reliability and validity of the interview guide, a pilot study was conducted with a small subset of participants, leading to refinements in the questions and interview approach. Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy, and the researchers took detailed notes throughout each session. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were reviewed for accuracy by cross-referencing with the notes taken during the interviews. This multi-method approach to data collection and verification aimed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

3. PARTICIPANT

The informants showed their voluntary participation by giving consent either by email or verbally. The informants showed their voluntary participation by giving consent either by email or verbally. The participants included PE teachers with over five years of experience, all of whom were graduates of the College of Physical Education. The study was restricted to male participants due to the majority of male PE teachers volunteering to participate, and the limited availability of free time for female PE teachers. The study involved 30 PE teachers with an average age of approximately 30 years, and no participants were excluded from the study.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis in this study utilized a constructive grounded theory approach, emphasizing the organization and explanation of data to identify patterns, themes, and categories (Charmaz, 2006; Cohen et al.,

2011). The process began with initial coding, including word-by-word and line-by-line coding, to interpret participants' meanings. This was followed by focused coding to synthesize larger data segments, and axial coding to develop categories based on properties and dimensions (Strauss & Glaser, 1967). Memo writing and theoretical sampling further supported the development of theories (Weed, 2017). Data analysis was iterative, involving steps such as transcription and translation of interviews, multiple readings, coding, and categorization. NVivo software was used to manage the data, ensuring a systematic analysis to produce conceptual thematic descriptions rather than explanatory theories (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). The final stages involved comparing categories to identify overarching themes, providing insights into the study's research questions.

5. RESULTS

Three themes were identified from the interviews conducted with physical education teachers, each comprising several subthemes.

Theme 1: Economic considerations in developing PE lessons

Through data analysis, significant facets of economic factors and their influence on physical education lessons in schools became evident, drawing from the teachers' personal experiences.

a- Sport facilities in schools

Numerous respondents underscored the inadequacy of proper sports infrastructure as a primary obstacle to the advancement of physical education within educational institutions. Inadequate or subpar sports facilities impede instructors from proficiently overseeing their curriculum or conducting lessons consistently throughout the academic term. Participant (ID 10) emphasized that "At our school, we have only one playground made of concrete, which negatively affects the players' performance and raises concerns about injuries. Additionally, we use it for four different games, which adversely affects the students' motivation".

Another interviewee emphasized that the lack of suitable sports infrastructure poses difficulties in motivating student engagement in physical education sessions and arranging athletic events both within the academic term and during summer breaks. "Due to the poor quality of our infrastructure, organizing tournaments within the school has become impossible. Moreover, it has significantly impacted the students' enthusiasm to participate in PE class" (ID 9). It was noted that the issue of sports facilities was a prevailing concern among a significant proportion of educators. The absence of sufficient sports grounds and amenities impedes the

delivery of successful physical education lessons. It has been mentioned by another teacher "How can we expect students to pay attention in PE classes when the school lacks the necessary equipment and resources? The main reason for the stagnation and underdevelopment of PE in schools is the lack of proper infrastructure" (ID 1).

b- Providing funds for school sports championships

Another vital aspect that came to light is the provision of financial backing for educational institutions. It became apparent that financial support plays a pivotal role in enhancing physical education within schools and fostering student involvement in physical pursuits. This has been confirmed by interviewee (ID 15) "Organizing tournaments at school poses a significant challenge due to the financial resources required, which the school lacks." The country's overarching financial turmoil has had a direct impact on the allocation of funds to schools, a sentiment echoed by multiple participants. In the same context, another interviewee stated that "I believe the financial crisis has impacted the school's material budget, hindering our ability to enhance sports-related expertise and acquire necessary tools for organized physical activities" (ID 20).

Theme 2: Teachers' individual attitudes

The demeanour of teachers surfaced as one of the most pivotal facets in the pedagogical journey, bearing the capacity to exert a favourable influence on the results of physical education lessons. The contributions and individual experiences of the participants underscore that physical education instructors assume a substantial role in bestowing both theoretical insights and hands-on skills to students.

a- Cultivating motivation to encourage student participation in physical activities

As per the information gleaned, elevating motivation directly correlates with heightened participation levels in PE sessions. Numerous respondents attested that a teacher's impact on orchestrating an effective class can be considerable. Participant (ID 12) has stated that...

I firmly believe that teachers play a fundamental role in boosting student motivation. This can be achieved by supporting students and convincing them that PE is not only beneficial for their physical well-being but also enhances their mental abilities. This will ultimately lead to increased student participation in PE class.

A fruitful PE session holds the potential to notably enhance students' creativity and foster a positive emotional state, as mentioned clearly by interviewee (ID 8) "I can confirm that PE class positively impacts students' mood during their time at school. Additionally, I believe that regular participation in PE fosters greater creativity compared to non-active peers."

b- Teacher interaction with students

Social engagement, and entertaining elements bring enthusiasm and delight to PE classes as well as building rapport in diverse school settings. This is has been stated by participant (ID 17)...

It is evident that fun, happiness, and joy are common traits among PE teachers. Additionally, PE teachers maintain a special connection with all students, both during educational sessions and inter-school championships, which undoubtedly piques students' interest in participating in PE class.

A significant proportion of PE instructors are deeply engaged, maintain consistent attendance, and take into account students' queries, rendering them exemplary role models for the student body. As (ID 5) clarified that "I am delighted that we can establish close and trustworthy relationships with students, as this encourages them to enjoy PE."

c- Transferring PE lessons to other subjects

Giving priority to other subjects over PE lessons has been a convention in schools and this has been well reported by interviewees in this study. Participant (ID 7) stated that "In fact, making PE class subservient to other subjects has become a school tradition when necessary. Unfortunately, the school supports this idea and ignores its consequences." Similarly, (ID 16) specified that "I believe PE class's help students feel relaxed, refreshed, and mentally active, which allows them to perform better in other subjects." In addition, (ID 22) also pay attention to this theme particularly and state that "Undoubtedly, the development of PE classes will be hindered if the lessons are given to other subjects, adversely affecting both the school and the students. Unfortunately, this practice is widespread in schools, indicating a preference for other subjects over PE".

Theme 3: PE Curriculum and school administrations

a- Unified curriculum in schools

As per the data, elementary schools lack a dedicated curriculum, while secondary and high schools possess one, albeit its enforcement is non-obligatory. This circumstance has adverse ramifications on both teacher and student motivation. Furthermore, students' diminished enthusiasm for sports might be linked to the non-mandatory status of PE grades for Ministerial examinations. In regard to the above theme teachers reported that "the PE curriculum is not enforced for students to pass; rather, it is regarded as a recreational subject. Additionally, students cannot benefit from PE classes in terms of improving their Ministerial exam scores. I believe this is a significant issue in our schools" (ID 5). Incorporated within the PE syllabus are diverse games, the execution of which can pose challenges in the

absence of suitable student facilities. A PE teacher indicated that "as a PE teacher, I firmly believe that implementing the curriculum without proper facilities in schools is not feasible, and this hinders the development of PE." (ID 10). Teachers also underscored the indispensability of both the curriculum and facilities for the effective delivery of PE sessions. Nevertheless, the constrained resources and facilities at the disposal of PE instructors notably curtail their capacities. Another interviewee (ID 9) mentioned that...

I cannot plan PE classes as I would prefer, as it is essential to know the available facilities at school first before making any decisions. With only a small basketball court, I am unable to include activities like track and field, football, or other sports that require more space.

b- School administrators

School managers play a seminal role in the configuration of PE lessons. This impact emanates from their administrative and fiscal authority, coupled with their aptitude to inspire teachers and assign an elevated status to sports within the curriculum. Participant (ID 3) reported that "based on my experiences with four different school managers, I can confidently say that they play a significant role in the development of PE in the school, especially when the school manager personally enjoys sports and encourages their promotion". School administrators play an active role in fostering student engagement within PE classes. Another interviewee stated that "I am delighted that the school administrator motivates students to actively participate in PE class, and the school recognizes students' achievements in sports with meaningful rewards" (ID 27). Nevertheless, a significant portion of respondents indicated that school administrators often give precedence to other subjects, such as mathematics and science, ahead of PE. This approach has an adverse effect on the advancement of physical education. In this context, participant (ID 4) indicated that "in my opinion, school administrators do not give adequate attention to PE compared to other subjects, mainly because they perceive PE as a non-essential subject for Ministerial exams, and they view it solely for recreational purposes."

DISCUSSION

The current work aimed at exploring teachers' perspectives on PE instruction and enhancement of students' motivation. The interviews with PE teachers indicate that one major obstacle to the development of PE in schools is the absence of suitable sport facilities. The efficient planning and execution of fruitful physical education lessons is impeded by inadequate or substandard sport facilities which consequently affects the motivation of students and teachers to participate in

physical activities. PE programs become narrowly focused and fall short of giving students a thorough and engaging education when schools lack the necessary infrastructure. The present discovery aligns with prior studies that have emphasized the significance of sports facilities in endorsing superior physical education and stimulating students' engagement (Cooper et al. 2016 Cook and Kohl 2013).

Students' interest and enthusiasm for PE are diminished when schools are unable to host sporting events and other physical activities due to inadequate sport infrastructure. Additionally a lack of facilities puts at risk the efficacy of PE classes by restricting the range of sports and activities that can be taught in the curriculum. It goes without saying that creating an environment that promotes physical activity and elevating the bar for PE in schools overall depend on the construction and upkeep of appropriate sporting facilities. It is evident that giving school sports championships enough funding is crucial for enhancing PE in classroom and encouraging student involvement in physical activities. PE teachers have noticed that a significant determining factor in the organization of school-sponsored sporting events is funding. PE teachers have observed that funding is a major factor in the planning of school-sponsored athletic competitions.

Students' skills are restricted due to lack of financial support for sport events (Hargreaves 2008 Smith and Johnson 2019). Resources for school sports have been further reduced as a result of the country's ongoing financial crisis (Brown 2021). Sufficient funding is necessary for the acquisition of athletic gear upkeep of the facility and other event-associated costs all of which directly affect students' engagement and motivation in PE (Hargrove et al., 2020 & Thompson (2017)). In addition to the scope of school sports championships, participants emphasized that financial assistance has broader implications for the overall development of PE and students' well-being (Miller & Robinson 2018 Thompson & Lee 2020). Therefore, in order to support a vibrant culture of physical activity and advance students' overall development educational authorities and legislators must acknowledge the significance of providing sufficient funding for school sports championships. An essential element of successful PE programs is encouraging students to engage in active participation in physical activities.

Mutual inspiration among students can enhance their motivation. PE contributes to students' mental health, wellbeing, happiness, and creativity. Additionally social interaction between instructors and students is essential for inspiring students in PE and teachers' enthusiasm and approachability play a significant role in fostering an engaging classroom atmosphere. However, because it diminishes the importance of PE and has a detrimental

effect on students' motivation and interest it is imperative that the problem of transferring PE lessons to other subjects be addressed. By acknowledging and capitalizing on the teacher's ability to motivate and excite students for physical activities educational institutions can cultivate a more engaged and active student body embedding in them lifelong habits of physical fitness and well-being. In PE class's social interaction has been found to be a significant motivator for students. Insights from PE teachers highlight how crucial social interaction is in fostering an interesting and dynamic learning environment between teachers and pupils. Positive relationships between teachers and students are more likely to be formed when the teacher is approachable and enthusiastic which boosts motivation and participation in PE activities.

These constructive interactions have a substantial effect on students' general physical and mental wellbeing in addition to raising their level of enjoyment and satisfaction in the classroom. Research indicates that students' motivation and participation in PE are significantly influenced by their relationship with their teachers. Students are more likely to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy and an innate desire to engage in physical activities when they feel valued supported and empowered by their teachers (Standage et al. 20 2021). PE curricula should therefore place a strong emphasis on fostering positive social relationships between teachers and students in order to establish a welcoming environment that encourages students continued engagement in and participation in physical activities. The importance and effectiveness of PE in schools are affected so participants' concerns about PE classes switching to other subjects are noteworthy. Interviews indicate that the value of physical education is diminished when other academic subjects are taught during PE class time. In addition to interfering with the allotted time for promoting physical activity this incident lowers students' interest in and drive for engaging in PE classes.

A number of factors such as the need to give priority to core academic subjects and a lack of awareness of the significance of PE can contribute to the distribution of PE class time among other subjects. There are significant effects on student's physical activity and engagement that can result from integrating PE into a larger curriculum according to research. Therefore, it is imperative that educational institutions and legislators acknowledge the special role that PE plays in fostering students' social cognitive and physical development and set aside time for high-quality PE instruction. Teachers prioritize that the establishment of a cohesive curriculum is essential to the effective growth of PE classes in schools.

Data from PE teachers indicate that offering students a consistent and well-organized learning experience requires a uniform and unified syllabus. When a well-organized syllabus is in place PE teachers can organize and conduct lessons more successfully. Students will be given a comprehensive and fulfilling education to this guarantee. A well-structured syllabus also ensures that all students engage in a variety of physical activities that promote inclusivity and equitable learning opportunities. Pupils learning outcomes and general levels of physical activity can be greatly impacted by a well-designed and executed physical education program according to research.

The development and implementation of a consistent PE syllabus is therefore imperative for educational institutions and decision-makers to support students overall development and enhance top-notch physical education instruction. Insights from the participants demonstrated how crucial school administration is in determining the format of PE classes especially the school manager. The administrative and financial duties of the school manager directly affect the PE lesson by influencing the facilities resources and support available for efficient PE instruction. Additionally, the school managers love of sports and personal interest in them can support and advance physical education in the classroom.

PE teachers can innovate create interesting lessons and plan events that encourage student participation in sports by working in tandem with a proactive and encouraging school manager. However when administrators give preference to other academic subjects over PE less attention and resources are allocated to the latter which could make it more difficult to provide high-quality PE. Consequently, school administrators need to understand how important it is for them to promote PE and also think about how their choices might affect the amount of physical activity and general health of their students.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The results underscore the crucial function that PE teachers fulfill in efficiently imparting physical education and cultivating heightened student enthusiasm in the classroom. According to the study it is critical that educational establishments acknowledge and value the vital roles that physical education teachers play. Students' motivation and engagement in PE classes are directly impacted by their capacity to establish stimulating productive and encouraging pedagogical environments. Thus a framework that is more favorable to effective sports instruction and improved student motivation can be established through the allocation of resources appropriately the promotion of ongoing professional development initiatives and the understanding of the

complex nature of PE teachers roles. Second the study highlights how crucial it is for PE programs to have a well-structured curriculum and make effective use of their facilities. The creation of a comprehensive PE curriculum that not only takes into account the interests and developmental needs of students but also offers a wide variety of activities must be given top priority in schools.

The ability to put these lessons into practice practically depends on the availability of suitable facilities such as sports infrastructure and equipment. The quality of PE instruction can be greatly enhanced by addressing the resource limitations that the participants pointed out which will help to improve the motivational dynamics of the students. Policymakers and school administrators should also consider the study's implications. School administrators need to get involved and promote PE. A comprehensive understanding of physical and psychological welfare as well as the development of vital life skills is reflected in the need to ensure that PE is given equal priority over other academic disciplines. An educational setting that is balanced and acknowledges the significance of both physical and mental development can be achieved by encouraging a collaborative culture among educators and administrators. The importance of PE teachers in developing sports pedagogy and raising student motivation is highlighted by this study. It also provides clear learning objectives. Apart from creating an all-encompassing syllabus and cultivating a classroom atmosphere that prioritizes PE the consequences necessitate the allocation of additional resources increased support networks and increased acknowledgement for PE teachers. By acknowledging these ramifications educational institutions can encourage a more comprehensive and well-rounded learning environment which will eventually aid in students' overall development.

CONCLUSION

This study offers significant new perspectives on the obstacles facing the advancement of physical education in the classroom. The lack of adequate sports facilities is a significant factor that reduces students' motivation to participate in physical activity and makes it more difficult to design and implement successful PE programs. To address this issue investments in the construction and upkeep of suitable athletic facilities are required because they encourage physical activity and elevate the standard for PE in general. Enhancing PE programs and promoting student involvement also depend heavily on funding school athletic championships.

Sufficient funds are required to organize sporting events purchase athletic equipment and cover the costs of required PE. Teachers play a crucial role in encouraging

students to be more motivated and enthusiastic about physical activities which in turn leads to a more engaged and active student body. Allocating time for high-quality PE instruction and emphasizing positive social interactions between teachers and students are both necessary to encourage students long-term participation in physical activities. It is impossible to overstate the significance of a curriculum that is consistent and supportive of the school administration in deciding what should be covered in a PE lesson. An active culture of physical fitness and wellbeing in learning environments can be fostered by comprehending these factors and implementing the appropriate plans to support students' holistic development. These findings will support researchers and policymakers in their efforts to improve PE programs by influencing practical procedures and policies that highlight PE as an essential part of students' education and overall well-being.

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DECLARATION of INTEREST:

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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