

The Role of Fitness and Physical Activity in Promoting Optimal Health and Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

For university students, physical activity (PA) is essential to encouraging an active lifestyle and good health. By examining the main ways that regular physical activity and fitness contribute to optimal health and wellness, the paper looked at the impact of these factors, particularly in the field of illness prevention and control. Students were able to maintain their lack of physical activity because they were raised without the fundamental human right to unrestricted mobility and sports engagement. The goal of this study was to increase awareness of the physical education system, which has been found to be in decline, and to investigate what is currently known about its function in all facets of human development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Using an interdisciplinary framework based on pedagogical theory, historical history, and empirical data, this study investigates the effectiveness of physical education at the university level. A qualitative analysis of the literature reveals fundamental themes within university physical education systems. This approach also tackles challenges such as limited integration with academic curricula and diminishing institutional support. Recommendations seek to enhance the importance of physical education in universities as a fundamental aspect of holistic education. A key component of attaining sustainability is the Quality Physical Education (QPE) program. One of the most important elements in promoting Physical activity in pupils is motivation. However, unless quality elements are carefully incorporated into physical education (PE) programs, motivation alone might not result in inclusion. The purpose of this study was also to answer one research question. Offering top-notch physical education programs at universities will increase the incentive for Physical Activity participation.

Keywords: Physical Activity, Quality Physical Education, Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

Physical education is a fundamental aspect of the College Students' curriculum. Students who participate in physical education classes may also exhibit improved classroom behaviour. Participating in physical education programs can improve the learning environment for all children since it reduces the likelihood of disruptive conduct. All student may see an improvement in their academic performance as a result. In addition, physical education classes give students the chance to learn about different sports and activities, which can promote leadership, teamwork, and communication. All of these are valuable life skills that they can use in other contexts, like the business or classroom. For instance, participating in team sports can help students strengthen their communication and cooperation abilities, which can then be used in group projects in the classroom. Furthermore, general health can benefit from physical

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education. Frequent exercise has been associated with a lower incidence of obesity, stronger bones and muscles, and better cardiovascular health. Students can concentrate better and do better academically when they are in good health. All things considered, physical education needs to be seen as a crucial part of the college curriculum for students. In addition to helping students succeed academically, physical education can enhance their general health and well-being by encouraging physical activity, lowering stress, enhancing cognitive function, and helping them acquire critical life skills [1,2]. Physical education's (PE) importance. It has traditionally received less attention in institutions of higher learning than its crucial role in elementary and secondary education. Colleges are well-positioned to respond to the growing global public health concerns affecting young adults, such as chronic diseases, mental health disorders, and sedentary lifestyles, by encouraging long-lasting good habits [3,4]. Even with all of this promise, physical education at the university level is not always taught the same way. It is sometimes seen as an optional or extracurricular activity instead of an important part of the academic experience [5,6]. Colleges and universities should work on making physical education services more useful, making it easier for services to connect with each other, creating a place where students can learn and practice physical education classes, and other things that will help physical education and professional education work together better [7,8]. This study builds the paradigm of talent cultivation of integration of physical education, completely develops the nurturing function of physical education, and examines the practical importance and conundrum of "integration of physical education" in the field of physical education teaching.

Impact of Physical Education on College Students' Academic Performance

Additionally, there is evidence that physical education can improve college students' academic performance. Academic achievement can be impacted by physical education in the following ways:

- Improved academic performance may result from students who take part in physical education classes forming better academic habits, such as establishing and pursuing goals.
- Improved behaviour: Research indicates that pupils who take part in physical education sessions are less likely to act out in class. All kids may benefit from a better learning environment and increased academic achievement as a result.
- Improved social skills: Students can engage with their peers outside of the classroom in physical education sessions. Students may benefit from this by improving their social skills, which may lead to improved teamwork and communication in the classroom.
- Higher self-esteem: Playing sports and taking part in physical education classes can help students feel more accomplished and have a higher sense of self, which can lead to a more positive attitude towards academic work and better academic performance. Regular physical activity has also been linked to increased time on task, which means that students are better able to focus and stay engaged in their academic work for longer periods of time.
- Enhanced brain function: Regular physical activity has been shown to increase the growth of new brain cells, which can improve brain function and cognitive ability, which can subsequently lead to better academic performance.
- Better cardiovascular health, stronger bones and muscles, and a lower chance of obesity are just a few benefits of regular physical activity for general health. Students may be more focused and achieve better academic results when they are in good health.
- Better problem-solving abilities: In physical education classes, students frequently have to collaborate to find solutions to challenges, including figuring out how to finish a difficult obstacle course. Students may benefit from this by improving their problem-solving abilities, which they can use in their academic work.
- Better sleep: Studies have shown that regular exercise improves the quality of sleep, which can benefit academic achievement. Students are better able to focus and remember material when they get enough sleep.
- Better time management: Because physical education sessions frequently follow a set schedule, students may benefit from improved time management techniques. Better academic achievement can result from this, which can also affect other aspects of their lives, such as their academic work.

- Enhanced academic engagement: It's possible that students who take part in physical education sessions are more focused on their studies. Better academic performance and a stronger sense of academic accomplishment may result from this.
- Enhanced creativity: Research has demonstrated that physical activity enhances creativity, which can help students perform better academically in fields like writing, music, and art.

Links between Physical Education and Interdisciplinary Fields

The field of physical education is becoming more widely acknowledged as one that touches on a number of academic fields, such as public health, psychology, pedagogy, nutrition, and environmental studies. PE's significance in holistic education is strengthened by its interdisciplinary nature. Students' ability to make decisions, manage their time, and resolve conflicts is improved when physical education is combined with life skills instruction. Through activity-based learning modules, collaborations between topic instructors and PE teachers can aid in the reinforcement of academic concepts. For instance, science classes might incorporate science by looking at heart rate and energy expenditure, while math classes can incorporate science by having students measure distances or maintain a score. These interdisciplinary approaches enhance engagement and comprehension by making learning more experiential.

Implementation Difficulties

Several systemic obstacles stand in the way of the successful implementation of physical education programs in schools, even with widespread policy support:

- **Curriculum Planning Marginalization**

Compared to STEM or language courses, physical education is frequently viewed as a secondary topic with little instructional time and inferior academic merit.

- **Insufficient Resources and Infrastructure**

Quality physical education is practically impossible in many educational institutions due to a lack of playgrounds, equipment, and basic sports facilities, especially in rural or underfunded locations.

- **Lack of Skilled Professionals**

The quality of instruction is impacted by a severe shortage of certified physical education teachers. Without the necessary training, general teachers are frequently expected to teach physical education programs.

- **Social Stereotyping and Bias Against Women**

Due to cultural conventions and a dearth of gender-sensitive programming, girls' participation in physical activities is restricted, particularly in conservative or rural settings.

- An excessive focus on competitive sports.
- Physical education programs frequently place more emphasis on athletic achievement than involvement, which excludes students who might not be very good at traditional sports.
- Limited Accessibility for Students with Disabilities. In order to accommodate students with physical or cognitive challenges, the majority of schools lack adapted physical education programs.
- Assessment Gaps. Because physical education is rarely evaluated in a systematic manner, both instructors and students marginalize and take it lightly.
- Prospects for the Future and Suggestions:

The following suggestions need to be given top priority in order to guarantee that physical education develops into a potent instrument for social, emotional, and physical growth:

- Academic Recognition and Curriculum Integration
- Give physical education similar grading weight and academic respect as a core curriculum subject.
- Extensive Training for Teachers

Frequent hiring and certification of physical education instructors, together with training in psychological first aid, gender sensitivity, and inclusivity.

- **Activity Diversification**

To reach a larger student body, expand the physical education curriculum to incorporate yoga, dancing, martial arts, fitness circuits, mindfulness exercises, and indigenous games.

Investment in Infrastructure

Provide extra money, particularly for government and rural schools, for sports equipment, indoor halls, and playgrounds.

Ducational Frameworks for Physical Education (PE)

In recent years, physical education (PE) has come to be seen as an essential part of holistic education. Its integration and progress are supported by a number of national and international educational frameworks:

- **NEP 2020 (India)**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a strong emphasis on the value of play, sports, fitness, and overall well-being as essential elements of education in schools.

It promotes physical literacy from a young age by calling for a "reduced curriculum load" to create space for extracurricular and health-related activities.

- **The Quality PE Guidelines of UNESCO (2021)**

These recommendations support safe, inclusive, and culturally aware physical education. They advocate for context-relevant pedagogy in physical education and stress the importance of equitable access, particularly for girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized groups.

- **WHO's 2018–2030 Global Action Plan on Physical Activity**

Stresses the importance of schools and colleges in promoting physical activity and pushes for laws that provide access to active areas and require regular physical education classes.

Guidelines for the CBSE and NCERT in India

While NCERT offers curricula centered on life skills, emotional health, and physical well-being, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) requires organized physical education classes, yoga, and health education.

Conclusion

This thorough analysis confirms that physical education is a fundamental component of an inclusive and progressive educational system rather than just an elective. It promotes students' physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being and aids in their development into strong, self-assured, and competent adults. PE is becoming a multifaceted development tool through worldwide models, policy initiatives, technology-driven approaches, and mental health interventions.

Physical education needs to be seen from a variety of angles, integrating tradition, creativity, inclusivity, and interdisciplinarity, as India and other countries continue to place a high priority on holistic development. The way forward is to make physical education more widely available, gender-neutral, digitally integrated, and supported by science to provide the next generation with the groundwork for long-term health. The influence of physical education has increased due to the incorporation of inclusive, gender-sensitive, and technology-driven approaches, particularly among marginalized and underprivileged student populations. Physical education is essential for developing compassionate, self-assured, and socially conscious adults, from empowering women to helping students with disabilities foster social cohesiveness and life skills.

All things considered, physical education needs to be seen as a crucial part of the college curriculum. Physical education can improve students' academic performance and general health and well-being by encouraging physical activity, lowering stress, enhancing cognitive function, and helping them develop critical life skills. To make sure that kids benefit from all of physical education's advantages, it is crucial that schools give it top priority in their curricula.

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