

Cultivating a Culture of Physical Activity Among Physical Education Student Teachers at Kibbutzim College: Longitudinal Research Findings

Background- Research indicates the diverse contribution of physical activity to various biological systems in the human body and to the individual's subjective well-being. However, approximately 70% of the population reports not engaging in physical activity (Heller, 1994).

Objectives - The current research aimed to examine whether the "educator generation," namely future physical education teachers, are aware of the importance of physical activity. More specifically, do student teachers engage in physical activity? If so, to what extent? What is the impact of a practical and theoretical physical fitness course at the college on students' attitudes regarding physical activity-related topics and on improving their physical abilities?

Research Procedure - An intervention program was developed consisting of a theoretical course and a practical course dealing with topics related to physical education in general and physical fitness in particular. The intervention program, including one theoretical lesson and one practical lesson, was implemented for one semester with a frequency of once per week. To examine the courses' effects, attitude questionnaires and a battery of physical fitness tests were developed (strength, flexibility, cardiorespiratory endurance, posture, weight, body fat percentage, and body mass). Additionally, during the research, a unique computer program was developed allowing for a physical fitness profile based on the fitness tests performed by the student during the research. Students were tested every three months; four times in total throughout the year. The research examined the long-term effects of the course on attitudes and physical activity among student teachers (n=165) studying physical education at Kibbutzim College.

Main Research Findings revealed that student teachers of both genders tend to gain weight and body fat percentage during their training. However, improvement was found in both genders in the strength component. Among males only, a change was found in the posture component. Additionally, questionnaire findings showed that the program positively affected motivation and awareness of physical activity among student teachers. Students increased their awareness of the connection between physical activity and physical and mental health.

Practical Research Conclusions - Following the research and in light of its findings, it was decided to open a new and unique course at the college called "Self-Learning" with the following objectives:

- a) To educate for taking responsibility for personal physical ability
- b) Taking responsibility for improving personal fitness needs and sports skills
- c) Practical experience in various sports activities
- d) To impart knowledge and understanding of the importance and contribution of physical activity during leisure time

It would be interesting to further research the effects of theoretical lessons on students. These lessons should focus on explanations (theoretical models) regarding the connection between physical activity and various related aspects such as: health, self-image, and sense of well-being, hoping that these lessons will increase students' awareness, approach, and motivation. It seems that in the long term, these are the variables that will cause teachers to stay fit. Therefore, more knowledge about the effects of such variables could help develop more effective programs, hence there is room for collaboration between colleges on this subject. It is hoped that such programs, in one format or another, will help deal with the developing "sitting culture" and fulfill the physical education goals declared by the Ministry of Education.

Bibliography:

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