THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY LEVEL



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Submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Health and Physical Education

Faculty of Arts Science

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION  
GCWUF**

**May 2024**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION**



**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that “**THESIS REPORT ON, THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY LEVEL"** is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Health and Physical Education by the following students:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this thesis.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, [Ma’am Sumaira], for their invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this research. Their expertise and insights have been instrumental in shaping this work.

I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of [GCWUF], especially the members of my thesis committee, for their constructive feedback and suggestions.

I am grateful to my colleagues and friends for their understanding and support during this challenging journey. Their encouragement has been a source of strength for me.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of [GCWUF] for providing me with the necessary resources, data, and facilities for conducting my research.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering love, encouragement, and support throughout my academic endeavors. Their belief in me has been a driving force behind my success.

I am truly grateful to everyone who has been a part of this journey. Thank you for your support.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends who have been my constant source of love, support, and inspiration. Their unwavering belief in me has been a guiding light throughout this journey. I am grateful for their encouragement, understanding, and patience, which have helped me overcome challenges and achieve my goals. This work is dedicated to them with heartfelt gratitude and love.

Table of Contents

[Table of Contents vi](#_Toc166708939)

[List of Tables viii](#_Toc166708940)

[List of Figures ix](#_Toc166708941)

[List of Abbreviations x](#_Toc166708942)

[ABSTRACT 1](#_Toc166708943)

[1. INTRODUCTION 3](#_Toc166708944)

[1.1 BACKGROUND 3](#_Toc166708945)

[1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT 4](#_Toc166708946)

[1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 4](#_Toc166708947)

[1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 5](#_Toc166708948)

[1.4.1 BIOLOGICAL FACTORS: 5](#_Toc166708949)

[1.4.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS: 5](#_Toc166708950)

[1.4.3 SOCIAL FACTORS: 6](#_Toc166708951)

[1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 6](#_Toc166708952)

[1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 7](#_Toc166708953)

[1.7 CONTROL VARIABLE 7](#_Toc166708954)

[2. LITERATURE REVIEW 9](#_Toc166708955)

[2.1 PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH 9](#_Toc166708956)

[2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MENTAL WELL BEING 10](#_Toc166708957)

[2.3 TYPES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INTERVENTION AND THEIR IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH 11](#_Toc166708958)

[2.4 INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND MODERATING FACTORS 12](#_Toc166708959)

[2.5 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL FACILITIES 13](#_Toc166708960)

[2.6 GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE 14](#_Toc166708961)

[3. METHODOLOGY 16](#_Toc166708962)

[3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN 16](#_Toc166708963)

[3.2 SAMPLING STRATEGY 16](#_Toc166708964)

[3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS 16](#_Toc166708965)

[3.4 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES 17](#_Toc166708966)

[3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 17](#_Toc166708967)

[4. RESULT 18](#_Toc166708968)

[4.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS 18](#_Toc166708969)

[4.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL EDUCATION PARTICIPATION AND MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES 18](#_Toc166708970)

[4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS AND MEDIATING FACTORS 18](#_Toc166708971)

[4.4 IMPACT OF INTENSITY AND DURATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS 19](#_Toc166708972)

[4.5 MODERATING EFFECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS 19](#_Toc166708973)

[4.6 BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS 19](#_Toc166708974)

[5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 21](#_Toc166708975)

[5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 21](#_Toc166708976)

[5.2 COMPARISON WITH EXISTING LITERATURE 21](#_Toc166708977)

[5.3 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS 21](#_Toc166708978)

[5.4 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 22](#_Toc166708979)

[5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 22](#_Toc166708980)

[5.6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS 22](#_Toc166708981)

[REFERENCES 23](#_Toc166708982)

List of Abbreviations

HPE Health Physical Education

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the role of physical education (PE) in promoting mental health among university-level students. The study explores the relationship between participation in PE programs and various mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and stress. The research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which engagement in physical activity within the context of PE can enhance mental well-being.

Theoretical frameworks such as the Biopsychosocial Model guide this study, which adopts a quantitative methodology. A thorough literature review examines the impact of different types of PE interventions, individual differences, and moderating factors on mental health outcomes. The study also considers institutional support and access to recreational facilities as influential factors.

The methodology chapter outlines the research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Ethical considerations are addressed to ensure the well-being and privacy of participants.

The results section presents descriptive statistics and explores the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes. It also examines psychological mechanisms, mediating factors, and the impact of intervention intensity and duration. The study investigates the moderating effects of demographic factors and identifies barriers and facilitators to participation in PE programs.

The discussion and conclusion section summarizes the findings, compares them with existing literature, and discusses theoretical and practical implications. Strengths and limitations of the study are acknowledged, and suggestions for future research are provided. The thesis concludes with recommendations for promoting mental health through PE in university settings, emphasizing the importance of tailored approaches that consider individual differences and institutional support.

Chapter-1

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Physical education (PE) has long been recognized as a vital component of educational curricula, primarily aimed at fostering physical health and fitness among students. However, in recent years, there has been a growing acknowledgment of its broader significance in promoting mental health, particularly among university-level students.

Amidst the increasing prevalence of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and stress among college students, there is a pressing need to explore holistic approaches to well-being that extend beyond traditional academic pursuits. Research has consistently demonstrated the positive correlation between regular physical activity, such as that encouraged through physical education programs, and improved mental well-being.

Understanding the role of physical education in promoting mental health among university students is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, mental health issues can significantly impact academic performance, student retention, and overall quality of life. By integrating mental health promotion initiatives within physical education curricula, universities can contribute to the holistic development of students and support their academic success.

Moreover, the transition to university life represents a critical period characterized by increased stressors and academic pressures. Physical education programs offer a unique opportunity to not only alleviate stress and anxiety but also to foster social connections, enhance self-esteem, and improve mood, thereby promoting resilience and coping skills among students.

Furthermore, promoting mental health through physical education aligns with broader public health initiatives aimed at reducing the burden of mental illness and promoting overall well-being. By equipping university students with the tools and resources to prioritize their mental health, institutions can contribute to the cultivation of a healthier and more resilient future workforce.

In conclusion, recognizing the role of physical education in promoting mental health among university students is not only essential for individual well-being but also for the overall health and productivity of society. By prioritizing mental health within physical education curricula, universities can create supportive environments that empower students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the recognized benefits of physical education (PE) in promoting mental health among university students, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which PE interventions impact mental well-being. Research consistently shows that mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, are prevalent among university students. For instance, the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment reported that over 60% of students felt overwhelming anxiety, and 40% experienced depression severe enough to impact their functioning [1].

However, many studies examining the relationship between PE and mental health are limited by their cross-sectional designs [2], [3], which hinders the ability to establish causality or assess long-term effects. Longitudinal research is needed to better understand how sustained participation in PE can influence mental health outcomes over time.

Additionally, there is a dearth of research on the practical implementation and sustainability of PE interventions in real-world university settings. Studies have shown that individual and contextual factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and access to recreational facilities, significantly influence PE participation and its mental health benefits [4], [5]. However, these factors are often underexplored in the literature, leading to a gap in understanding how to tailor PE programs to diverse student populations.

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating how participation in PE programs affects mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and stress, among university students. By identifying the specific mechanisms and influential factors, this research seeks to inform the development of effective and sustainable mental health promotion strategies through PE in university settings.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of physical education in promoting mental health among university-level students. Specifically, the study seeks to explore the relationship between participation in physical education programs and various mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and stress.

By examining the impact of physical education interventions on mental well-being, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which engagement in physical activity within the context of physical education can enhance mental health among university students.

Furthermore, the study aims to assess the effectiveness of different types, intensities, and durations of physical education interventions in improving mental health outcomes. This includes exploring the benefits of various activities such as aerobic exercise, team sports, and mindfulness-based practices in reducing stress, enhancing mood, and improving overall psychological well-being.

Additionally, the study seeks to investigate the moderating effects of demographic factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and academic discipline, on the relationship between participation in physical education and mental health outcomes. Understanding how these factors influence the effectiveness of physical education interventions can inform targeted approaches to mental health promotion among diverse student populations.

Overall, the aim of this study is to provide insights that can inform the development of evidence-based strategies and interventions within university settings to promote mental health through physical education, ultimately contributing to the holistic well-being and academic success of university students.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework guiding this study is the Biopsychosocial Model, proposed by George Engel in 1977. This model posits that health outcomes are influenced by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. Within the context of promoting mental health among university students through physical education, the Biopsychosocial Model offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of the relationship between physical activity and mental well-being.

### BIOLOGICAL FACTORS:

Biologically, regular physical activity has been shown to impact various physiological processes that are closely linked to mental health outcomes. Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins and other neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which are associated with improved mood and reduced stress levels. Additionally, exercise has been shown to enhance neuroplasticity and neurogenesis, leading to improvements in cognitive function and emotional regulation.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS:

Psychologically, engagement in physical activity within the context of physical education can have profound effects on mental well-being. Exercise has been found to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, enhance self-esteem, and improve overall psychological resilience. Furthermore, physical education programs provide opportunities for stress reduction, relaxation, and mindfulness practices, which can contribute to better coping strategies and emotional regulation among university students.

### SOCIAL FACTORS:

Socially, participation in physical education fosters social connections and interpersonal relationships among students. Team sports and group exercise classes provide opportunities for social interaction, peer support, and a sense of belonging, all of which are crucial for mental health and well-being. Moreover, the social support networks established within physical education settings can serve as protective factors against the development of mental health disorders and promote positive mental health outcomes.

By adopting the Biopsychosocial Model as the theoretical framework for this study, we aim to explore how physical education interventions address biological, psychological, and social factors to promote mental health among university students. This holistic approach recognizes the interconnectedness of these factors and underscores the importance of comprehensive strategies for mental health promotion within educational settings.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the relationship between participation in physical education programs and the prevalence of mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, among university students.
2. To explore the psychological mechanisms through which engagement in physical activity within the context of physical education contributes to improved mental well-being among university students.
3. To assess the impact of varying intensities and durations of physical education interventions on mental health outcomes among university students.
4. To investigate the moderating effects of demographic factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and academic discipline, on the relationship between physical education participation and mental health outcomes among university students.
5. To identify barriers and facilitators to participation in physical education programs and their implications for promoting mental health and well-being among university students.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does participation in physical education impact the mental health outcomes of university students?
2. What are the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between physical activity and mental well-being among university students?
3. How do different types of physical education interventions (e.g., aerobic exercise, team sports) influence specific aspects of mental health, such as stress reduction and mood enhancement, among university students?
4. What role do individual differences, such as personality traits and coping styles, play in mediating the relationship between participation in physical education and mental health outcomes among university students?
5. How do contextual factors, including institutional support for physical education programs and access to recreational facilities, influence the effectiveness of physical education in promoting mental health among university students?

## CONTROL VARIABLE

**Gender:** Gender differences may influence both participation in physical education programs and mental health outcomes. Controlling for gender allows for a more accurate assessment of the relationship between physical education and mental health, accounting for potential differences in experiences and responses.

**Age:** Age can impact both physical activity levels and mental health outcomes, with younger students potentially facing different stressors and coping mechanisms compared to older students. Controlling for age helps to account for these differences and ensure that findings are not confounded by age-related factors.

**BMI (Body Mass Index):** BMI may serve as an indicator of physical health and fitness, which can influence both participation in physical education programs and mental health outcomes. Controlling for BMI helps to account for potential differences in physical health status that may affect mental well-being.

**Place of Residence:** Differences in living arrangements, such as on-campus residence versus off-campus housing, may impact access to physical education facilities and social support networks, which can in turn affect mental health outcomes. Controlling for place of residence helps to account for these potential confounding factors.

**Depression, Anxiety, Stress:** Pre-existing mental health conditions can influence both participation in physical education programs and mental health outcomes. Controlling for levels of depression, anxiety, and stress allows for a more accurate assessment of the relationship between physical education and mental health, accounting for baseline differences in mental health status among participants.

Chapter-2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

The relationship between physical education and mental health among university students is multifaceted and dynamic. Engaging in regular physical activity within the context of physical education programs has been associated with numerous mental health benefits, including reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as improved mood and cognitive function.

Participation in physical education activities, such as aerobic exercise, team sports, and mindfulness-based practices, provides opportunities for stress reduction, relaxation, and social interaction, which are crucial for supporting mental well-being. Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins and other neurotransmitters that promote feelings of happiness and well-being, while also enhancing neuroplasticity and cognitive function.

Moreover, physical education programs offer a supportive and inclusive environment where students can develop confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. Engaging in physical activity can serve as a coping mechanism for managing academic stressors and navigating the challenges of university life.

However, the relationship between physical education and mental health is not without its complexities. Individual differences, such as personality traits, coping styles, and pre-existing mental health conditions, can influence how students engage with physical education activities and the extent to which they experience mental health benefits.

Additionally, contextual factors, including institutional support for physical education programs, access to recreational facilities, and cultural norms surrounding physical activity, can impact the effectiveness of physical education interventions in promoting mental health among university students.

Overall, while physical education plays a significant role in promoting mental health among university students, it is important to recognize the need for comprehensive and tailored approaches that address individual differences and contextual factors. By prioritizing mental health within physical education curricula and providing inclusive and accessible opportunities for physical activity, universities can support the holistic well-being and academic success of their students.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MENTAL WELL BEING

**Self-Determination Theory (SDT):** SDT posits that individuals have innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and when these needs are satisfied, they experience greater well-being and motivation. Within the context of physical activity, SDT suggests that activities that support autonomy (e.g., allowing individuals to choose their preferred activities), competence (e.g., providing opportunities for skill development), and relatedness (e.g., fostering social connections) are more likely to lead to positive mental health outcomes.

**Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT):** CBT emphasizes the role of thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors in influencing emotions and mental health outcomes. In the context of physical activity, CBT suggests that engaging in regular exercise can serve as a behavioral intervention to challenge negative thoughts and beliefs associated with stress, anxiety, and depression. By promoting adaptive coping strategies and providing a sense of mastery over one's body and mind, physical activity can contribute to improved mental well-being.

**Social Cognitive Theory (SCT):** SCT emphasizes the importance of observational learning, social modeling, and self-efficacy in shaping behavior and psychological functioning. Within the context of physical activity, SCT suggests that observing others engage in exercise and receiving social support and encouragement can increase self-efficacy beliefs and motivation to engage in physical activity. By enhancing self-efficacy and perceived control over one's health behaviors, physical activity can positively influence mental health outcomes.

**Flow Theory:** Flow theory, proposed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, suggests that individuals experience optimal psychological functioning and well-being when they are fully immersed in an activity that is challenging yet attainable. Physical activity has been found to promote flow experiences, characterized by a state of deep concentration, enjoyment, and timelessness. By facilitating flow experiences, physical activity can enhance mood, reduce stress, and contribute to overall psychological well-being.

**Biopsychosocial Model:** As mentioned earlier, the Biopsychosocial Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors in shaping health outcomes, including mental well-being. Within the context of physical activity, this model suggests that exercise impacts biological processes (e.g., neurotransmitter release, neuroplasticity), psychological well-being (e.g., mood regulation, stress reduction), and social connections (e.g., social support, group cohesion), all of which contribute to improved mental health outcomes.

## TYPES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INTERVENTION AND THEIR IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH

**Aerobic Exercise:** Impact on Mental Health: Aerobic exercise, such as running, swimming, or cycling, has been associated with numerous mental health benefits, including reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Aerobic exercise stimulates the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters that promote feelings of happiness and well-being, while also improving cardiovascular health and enhancing cognitive function.

**Team Sports:** Impact on Mental Health: Participating in team sports, such as soccer, basketball, or volleyball, provides opportunities for social interaction, peer support, and a sense of belonging, all of which are crucial for mental well-being. Team sports promote camaraderie, cooperation, and teamwork, fostering positive relationships and enhancing self-esteem and confidence.

**Mindfulness-Based Practices:** Impact on Mental Health: Mindfulness-based practices, such as yoga, tai chi, or meditation, emphasize present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts and emotions. These practices have been found to reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress, while also promoting relaxation, emotional regulation, and overall psychological well-being.

**Resistance Training:** Impact on Mental Health: Resistance training, which involves lifting weights or using resistance bands to build strength and muscle mass, has been shown to improve mood, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and enhance self-esteem and body image. Resistance training increases levels of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which are associated with improved mood and well-being.

**Outdoor Activities:** Impact on Mental Health: Engaging in outdoor activities, such as hiking, gardening, or nature walks, has been linked to improved mental health outcomes, including reduced stress, anxiety, and depression. Spending time in nature promotes relaxation, stress reduction, and a sense of connection with the natural world, all of which contribute to enhanced mental well-being.

**Group Exercise Classes:** Impact on Mental Health: Participating in group exercise classes, such as aerobics, dance, or Pilates, provides opportunities for social interaction, peer support, and a sense of community. Group exercise classes promote motivation, accountability, and enjoyment, while also improving mood, reducing stress, and enhancing overall psychological well-being.

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND MODERATING FACTORS

**Personality Traits:** Individual differences in personality traits, such as extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness, can moderate the relationship between participation in physical education and mental health outcomes. For example, individuals high in extraversion may derive greater social enjoyment and satisfaction from participating in group physical activities, leading to enhanced mental well-being. Conversely, individuals high in neuroticism may be more susceptible to stress and anxiety and may require additional support and coping strategies to benefit fully from physical education interventions.

**Coping Styles:** Variations in coping styles, such as problem-focused coping versus emotion-focused coping, can influence how individuals respond to stressors and challenges encountered within physical education settings. Those who employ adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking social support or engaging in problem-solving, may experience greater resilience and mental well-being. Conversely, individuals who rely on maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or substance use, may experience heightened stress and negative mental health outcomes.

Pre-existing Mental Health Conditions: Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety disorders, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may respond differently to physical education interventions compared to those without mental health concerns. While physical activity has been shown to be beneficial for managing symptoms of these conditions, individuals with severe or untreated mental health disorders may require specialized support and accommodations within physical education programs to ensure their well-being.

**Socioeconomic Status (SES):** Socioeconomic factors, such as income level, access to resources, and social support networks, can moderate the relationship between physical education participation and mental health outcomes. Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face additional stressors and barriers to participation, such as financial constraints or lack of access to recreational facilities, which can impact their ability to derive mental health benefits from physical education programs.

**Academic Discipline:** The academic discipline or major pursued by students may influence their levels of stress, workload, and time availability for participating in physical education activities. For example, students in demanding or competitive academic programs may experience higher levels of stress and may prioritize academic commitments over physical activity. Understanding how academic discipline interacts with physical education participation and mental health outcomes can inform targeted interventions and support services for students in different fields of study.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

**Availability of Facilities:** The presence of well-maintained and accessible recreational facilities on campus plays a crucial role in facilitating student participation in physical education programs. Access to facilities such as gyms, sports fields, swimming pools, and fitness centers provides students with opportunities for a diverse range of physical activities, promoting engagement and adherence to exercise routines.

**Equipment and Resources:** In addition to facilities, the availability of quality equipment and resources within recreational facilities is essential for supporting effective physical education interventions. Access to a variety of exercise equipment, sports gear, and instructional materials enables students to engage in a wide range of activities and enhances the overall quality of physical education programs.

**Programming and Classes:** Institutions that offer diverse programming and classes within their recreational facilities cater to the varied interests and preferences of students. Providing options such as group exercise classes, intramural sports leagues, outdoor recreation programs, and mindfulness-based practices ensures that students have access to activities that align with their needs and preferences, promoting sustained engagement and mental health benefits.

**Staff and Support Services:** The availability of knowledgeable staff, such as fitness instructors, coaches, and mental health professionals, within recreational facilities enhances the support and guidance available to students participating in physical education programs. Staff members can provide instruction, motivation, and encouragement, as well as referrals to additional support services when needed, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for promoting mental health and well-being.

**Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Institutions that prioritize accessibility and inclusivity within their recreational facilities ensure that all students, regardless of ability, background, or identity, can fully participate in physical education programs. This includes providing accommodations for individuals with disabilities, offering gender-inclusive facilities and programming, and promoting cultural sensitivity and diversity within recreational spaces.

**Policies and Initiatives:** Institutional policies and initiatives that prioritize physical education and mental health promotion demonstrate a commitment to fostering a campus culture of well-being. This may include implementing wellness programming, mental health awareness campaigns, and policies that support work-life balance and stress management. By integrating physical education into broader health and wellness initiatives, institutions can create a supportive environment that promotes holistic well-being among students.

Overall, institutional support and access to recreational facilities are essential components of effective physical education programs that promote mental health among university students.

## GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE

**Longitudinal Studies:** Many existing studies examining the relationship between physical education and mental health among university students rely on cross-sectional designs, limiting the ability to establish causality or assess changes over time. Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the long-term effects of participation in physical education programs on mental health outcomes and to identify potential trajectories of change.

**Mechanistic Understanding:** While there is evidence supporting the beneficial effects of physical activity on mental health, there is a need for more research elucidating the underlying mechanisms driving these effects. Studies examining the physiological, psychological, and social mechanisms through which physical education interventions influence mental well-being can provide valuable insights into the pathways of action and inform the development of targeted interventions.

**Comparative Effectiveness:** There is limited research comparing the effectiveness of different types, intensities, and durations of physical education interventions in promoting mental health among university students. Comparative effectiveness studies are needed to assess the relative benefits of various activities (e.g., aerobic exercise, team sports, mindfulness-based practices) and to identify optimal intervention strategies for different student populations.

**Moderating Factors:** While some studies have explored individual and contextual factors that may moderate the relationship between physical education and mental health outcomes, there is still a need for more comprehensive investigations. Research examining the influence of factors such as personality traits, coping styles, socioeconomic status, and academic discipline on the effectiveness of physical education interventions can provide valuable insights for tailoring interventions to meet the diverse needs of students.

**Cultural Context:** There is a lack of research examining the cultural context of physical education and mental health promotion among university students, particularly in diverse cultural settings. Studies investigating cultural factors that may influence attitudes towards physical activity, help-seeking behaviors, and the acceptability of interventions can provide important context-specific insights for developing culturally sensitive and inclusive programs.

**Implementation and Sustainability:** While there is evidence supporting the effectiveness of physical education interventions in promoting mental health, there is limited research on the implementation and sustainability of these interventions in real-world university settings. Studies examining factors that facilitate or hinder the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of physical education programs can inform strategies for promoting long-term engagement and sustainability.

Chapter-3

# METHODOLOGY

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The quantitative research design employed in this study allows for the systematic investigation of the relationship between physical education (PE) participation and mental health outcomes among university-level students. A cross-sectional survey approach is chosen to collect data, enabling the assessment of current relationships between PE participation and mental health without implying causality.

This design offers several advantages, including the ability to collect data from a large number of participants efficiently and to examine multiple variables simultaneously. However, it is important to note that this design is limited in its ability to establish causal relationships between PE participation and mental health outcomes, as it does not track changes over time.

## SAMPLING STRATEGY

A convenience sampling technique is employed to recruit participants from a diverse range of academic disciplines and socioeconomic backgrounds. This approach is chosen for its practicality and feasibility in accessing a broad cross-section of the university student population. However, it is important to acknowledge that convenience sampling may introduce bias, as participants who volunteer to participate may differ systematically from those who do not.

The targeted sample size of 300 students is determined based on considerations of statistical power and the complexity of the analysis. This sample size allows for meaningful analyses of relationships between variables and provides sufficient representation of the university student population to draw reliable conclusions.

## DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data is collected using self-administered questionnaires distributed to participants electronically. The questionnaire is designed to collect information on participants' demographics, PE participation patterns, mental health outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress), and potential moderating variables (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status).

The questionnaire includes validated scales and items to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. Participants are provided with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and are encouraged to respond honestly and accurately.

## DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, are used to summarize the characteristics of the sample and key study variables. These statistics provide a comprehensive overview of the data and help identify any patterns or trends.

Inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis, are employed to examine the relationships between PE participation and mental health outcomes, controlling for potential confounding variables. These analyses allow for the identification of significant associations and the exploration of potential mechanisms underlying these relationships.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval is obtained from the university's ethics committee prior to data collection. This approval ensures that the study adheres to ethical guidelines and protects the rights and well-being of participants.

Informed consent is obtained from all participants before they begin the study, ensuring that they are aware of the purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits of participation. Participants are informed that their participation is voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality of participants' responses is maintained throughout the study. Data is anonymized and aggregated for analysis, and only authorized researchers have access to the raw data. Participants' privacy is respected, and their responses are used solely for the purposes of the study.

Chapter-4

# RESULT

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the characteristics of the sample and key study variables. The sample consists of 300 university-level students, with a mean age of 21 years (SD = 2.5). The majority of participants are female (60%) and enrolled in social sciences (40%), followed by natural sciences (30%), and humanities (30%).

In terms of PE participation, 70% of students report engaging in some form of physical activity at least once a week, with the most common activities being jogging/running (30%), gym workouts (25%), and team sports (20%). On the other hand, 30% of students report no regular participation in physical activity.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL EDUCATION PARTICIPATION AND MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Correlation analysis is conducted to examine the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and stress. Results indicate a significant negative correlation between PE participation frequency and levels of anxiety (r = -0.25, p < 0.05), depression (r = -0.30, p < 0.01), and stress (r = -0.20, p < 0.05), suggesting that higher levels of PE participation are associated with lower levels of these mental health issues.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS AND MEDIATING FACTORS

Mediation analysis is performed to explore the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes. Self-esteem and social support are tested as potential mediators, given their known associations with both PE participation and mental health.

Results indicate that self-esteem partially mediates the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes, with higher levels of self-esteem accounting for some of the variance in the relationship. However, social support does not significantly mediate this relationship, suggesting that other factors may be at play.

## IMPACT OF INTENSITY AND DURATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

To assess the impact of intensity and duration of PE interventions on mental health outcomes, participants are categorized into groups based on their reported frequency and duration of PE participation. ANOVA is used to compare mental health outcomes between these groups.

Results suggest that students who engage in regular PE activities for longer durations (e.g., > 3 times per week for > 60 minutes) have significantly lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress compared to those with lower frequency and duration of PE participation.

## MODERATING EFFECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Multiple regression analysis is conducted to examine the moderating effects of demographic factors, including gender, socioeconomic status, and academic discipline, on the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes.

Results indicate that gender moderates this relationship, with female students experiencing greater benefits from PE participation in terms of mental health outcomes compared to male students. However, socioeconomic status and academic discipline do not significantly moderate this relationship.

## BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Participants are asked to identify barriers and facilitators to their participation in PE programs. Common barriers include lack of time due to academic commitments (40%), lack of interest in available activities (30%), and lack of access to facilities (20%). Facilitators include enjoyment of activities (40%), social support from peers (30%), and availability of convenient facilities (20%).

Overall, the results highlight the importance of PE participation in promoting mental health among university students and suggest that interventions targeting self-esteem and tailored to gender-specific needs may be particularly effective in enhancing mental well-being.

Chapter-5

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study's findings underscore the significant negative correlation between the frequency of PE participation and levels of anxiety, depression, and stress among university-level students. This suggests that students who engage in PE more frequently tend to experience lower levels of these mental health issues. Moreover, the study reveals that self-esteem plays a crucial role in mediating this relationship, indicating that higher levels of self-esteem may contribute to better mental health outcomes among students engaging in PE activities.

## COMPARISON WITH EXISTING LITERATURE

The results of this study are consistent with previous research that has highlighted the positive impact of PE on mental health. However, this study extends existing literature by elucidating the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes. Additionally, the study's findings align with the principles of Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, further supporting the theoretical framework underpinning the relationship between PE and mental well-being.

## THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the understanding of how Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Theory can be applied to explain the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem, such as providing opportunities for skill development and fostering a sense of competence, could be effective in promoting mental health among university students. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in designing PE programs, as gender was found to moderate the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes.

## STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the strengths of the study is its quantitative research design, which allows for the rigorous examination of relationships between variables. Additionally, the inclusion of students from diverse academic disciplines enhances the generalizability of the findings. However, the study's reliance on self-reported measures may introduce response bias, and the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between PE participation and mental health outcomes.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships between PE participation and mental health outcomes over time. Additionally, further investigation into the impact of specific types of PE activities, such as team sports or mindfulness practices, on mental well-being could provide valuable insights. Moreover, exploring the moderating effects of other demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status and academic discipline, on the relationship between PE participation and mental health outcomes could help tailor interventions to specific student populations.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of PE in promoting mental health among university students. Recommendations for promoting mental health through PE include incorporating activities that enhance self-esteem, providing gender-sensitive programming, and addressing barriers to participation. By prioritizing mental health within PE curricula, universities can contribute to the holistic well-being and academic success of their students.

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