

Secondary School Students' Perceptions Toward Physical Education In Central Fiji

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Abstract

Physical Education is a type of learning that focuses on physical exercises that result in weariness. The purpose of this study is to look at secondary school students' perceptions on physical education in Central/Eastern schools, in Fiji. Quantitative descriptive research was conducted utilizing a survey approach. The research sample population included 348 students, 203 of whom were females and 145 of whom were males. SPSS was used to do statistical studies on the data. The study's findings indicated that male students had a more positive impression on the components of Physical Education than female students. There was a significant difference in athletes and non-athletes in all the components of student's perception towards physical education. When comparing different ethnic groups using ANOVA the Fijian of Indian descent, iTaukei and other race there was a significant difference in the perception of the students when comparing the component, the Importance of PE. All other components did not differ significantly.

Keywords: Athletes, Mental wellbeing, NCDs, Nonathletes, Perceptions, Physical Education, Quality of life, and SDG3.

Introduction

Researchers in Physical Education (PE) stated that identifying and understanding the characteristics related with children's engagement in physical activity is crucial to promoting current and lifetime participation in physical activity (Chung and Phillips, 2002). Among the numerous elements influencing children's engagement in physical exercise is their attitude (Howard (2011).

Positive and negative approaches to a situation or item are examples of attitudes. Positive and negative attitudes can be ordered in varying degrees. Positive attitudes mean to think

positively about a situation, and negative attitudes mean to think negatively about a situation. Individuals fail to display their knowledge and abilities on a topic about which they have unfavourable feelings. It is usually simpler for individuals to demonstrate their knowledge and talents in situations when they have positive attitudes. As a result, attitudes should not be overlooked and should be positively enhanced during the educational process in order to modify and improve a person's habits in the course when necessary. Individuals do not develop attitudes; rather, attitudes are produced, (Prasanna, et al. ,2020)

Children with more favourable views about physical exercise are more likely to participate in physical activities outside of school (Jurisin, Malcic & Kostovic, 2017) and have greater levels of physical activities ((Kocaman, 2022)) than those with less positive attitudes. According to Solmon's (2003) review of the research on children's attitudes towards Physical Education/activity (ATPEA), two important elements influencing children's attitudes are their characteristics and societal influences. Children's traits include their age, gender, and athletic aptitudes.

Health status information in Fiji indicates a rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including diabetes, overweight, obesity and metabolic syndrome. An analysis of factors associated with this increase indicates a change in people's daily habits especially when they are growing older and moving towards an inactive lifestyle. Physical activity is described by the World Health Organization (2020) as any bodily movement that involves energy expenditure and is generated by skeletal muscles. Physical activity encompasses all forms of movement, whether it is done for fun, to get to and from places, or as part of one's job. Physical activity, both moderate and vigorous, is beneficial to one's health (Hands, Beth 2016). Physical activity has been shown to aid in the prevention and management of non-communicable conditions such as cardiac diseases, stroke, diabetes, and a variety of cancers. It also aids in the prevention of hypertension, the maintenance of a healthy body weight, and the enhancement of mental wellbeing, quality of life, and well-being. The goals of this research are consistent with those of sustainable development Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing).

One's attitude and perception towards physical education will determine his/her eagerness towards living a healthy and an active lifestyle. According to (Hands B, 2016), males are said to be more physically active than females regardless of their age and as a result, those inactive females are at risk of poor health

outcomes. A positive attitude and perception of students towards physical activities are the main elements of a successful physical education curriculum. Taking part in Physical Activities does not only keep a person fit, but it is also a mood lifter. According to Hardman, (2001) doing regular exercise decreases the risk of depression, anxiety, stress and anger as it becomes part and parcel of one's life. It is a good feeling after a physical workout as more people think they feel better. The problem is that parents encourage their children to pay more interests in academic based subjects without realizing the benefits of Physical Education and how it is related to other subjects. If Physical Education is well implemented in schools, Fiji will be producing more patriotic, healthy lifestyle and productive Fijians who will contribute to national development in spite of the profession they choose.

Furthermore, I believe that Physical Education classes should be taught properly in schools as this will determine the interest of students taking part in the practical classes (Berki & Tarjányi, 2022). Students take interest in Physical Education classes if they are given the chance to play the sports that they love. Moreover, the increase in the number of periods for PE classes will also encourage students to participate for a longer period as teachers will get more time to teach new skills where students will learn and participate with a lot more interest (Anderson, L,2000)

Physical Education in the curriculum also develops the confidence of students in secondary schools as they take part in a range of physical activities which become part of their lives, that is, inside and outside of school (Chen, 2022). Schools around the nation are introducing curriculum that advocates about NCD's (Martin, B. 2013) The introduction of several subjects in school helps achieve the aims and focus on the issue but most importantly Physical Education classes in the school's curriculum have managed to 'break the ice' in these terms. Active participation in the

subject in schools is an indication that both teachers have worked hard to ensure that precautions are taken to alleviate this problem.

Finally, I believe that this research will help me know about the student's perceptions and attitudes towards Physical Education in Secondary Schools in Fiji. PE can contribute a lot to the students' lives and bring in positive influences on health-related issues and other positive impacts in their daily lives.

Literature Review

Physical education plays an essential role in the holistic development of a child. It also contributes significantly towards building one's character as well. Perception is an exceptionally vital cognitive characteristic of a human being which makes it possible to be familiar with what's happening around us. With lack of precise perceptions, individuals won't be able to understand the facts that always surround them. It is apparent that children who are less skilled are hesitant to participate in sporting activities and even their home environment is not contributing to consistent involvement in Physical activities (Trudeau and Shephard, 2021). However, lest they cultivate a genuine appreciation and pleasure for physical activities, it is unlikely that they will attain it elsewhere. Bernstein (2011) stated that the School-based Physical Education (PE) curriculum continues to remain debatable. Advocates intended for such motives are sound - conscious. Opponents linger to have concerns. Conversely, how the students reason it out depends on their understanding and appreciation for such programs. It has both positive and negative effects on children.

According to (Prusak, 2014), students find this program enjoyable and a good time for developing new friendships and mingling with similar age groups. The participants found PE very interesting because of the inclusion of new and exciting activities which they had never tried earlier. Gaining knowledge about these activities encouraged them to practice it during

class breaks and afternoon school breaks. It was anticipated that inclusion of additional activities will make it more fascinating. Students with positive feedbacks also indicated that their trainers played an important role in arousing interests and effectively teaching the subject.

Concerning gender differences, females who stated positive outcomes strongly felt that they were in par with their male colleagues. A lot of times, these can be the real causes of obstacles. Disputes were raised regarding gender power since females' sight males as stronger and superseding (Koca, 2004). To overcome the issue, most girls tried intermingling with boys while others stated that they tried to get the attention of boys by performing well in the program. Learners also made evaluations in PE centralizing on the aptitudes and corporal characteristics.

Studies have established that those who seem to perceive negativity regarding their ability to participate actively in PE programs can feel emotionally harmful impacts. Students who feel incompetent about the PE programs cultivate negative attitudes towards themselves and their teachers (Papastergiou, M., 2010).

Additionally, Researchers have found that the significant elements linked to disputing negative opinions and conclusions are to some extent related to teacher reliability, in a way detrimental shared judgements could be avoided and how to encourage students to partake enthusiastically in physical activity programs. According to Tannehill (1994), pupils regarded teachers positively when they display themselves as professional PE instructors with total involvement in the activities. A strong research literature stresses the significance of whether students describe attainment as how well a task is grasped rather than how well other students have performed the tasks in comparison to their colleagues.

Comparatively, the perception of P.E depends on both internal and external factors which

include physiology, attention, interests, needs, experiences, and moods. The main goal suggested by Timo, (2016), is that Physical Education improves mental development. The ability to acquire knowledge and to interpret it precisely, develops attitudes and personal values.

Students enjoy fun filled and thrilling experiences linked with physical activities whereby they get the opportunity to challenge themselves to learn difficult skills which bring satisfaction and confidence in them. Looking at one of the external factors, it is assumed that social skills amongst students and others is developed as well. In addition, if a student desired to live a healthy and active life, it is the responsibility of the administration, parents and stakeholders to see it happening (Lindqvist et al., 2014).

Moreover, students find PE programs as enjoyable, considering its benefits in future while some perceive it as stress reliever and an opportune time to meet existing and new colleagues which also gives them much confidence. Active participation by students in such programs will enable them to focus better on other schoolwork, helps in problem solving and will transform them to be better students. It is said that valuable skills through participating in Physical Education programs such as: benefits of staying physically active, setting of goals to retain fitness intensity, learning

necessary skills to play a sport, competition to succeed and to show respect to self, teammates and opponents can be acquired (Yang, 2022).

To conclude, positive perceptions and attitudes of students in secondary school towards Physical Activities are the most important components in the process of evaluating success in the Physical Education curriculum. Amidst other factors, student's attitude is said to be the key element to influencing their interests in Physical activities.

Methods

Study design, participants, and sampling

The research was a descriptive study conducted in central Secondary Schools in Fiji, with students aged 18 and up who voluntarily participated. This study was part of a larger project that had received ethical approval from the Fijian Ministry of Education (RA31/20). All participants provided informed consent and the study followed established ethical guidelines. Participants will be kept anonymous in accordance with ethical research confidentiality guidelines. After obtaining permission from the Heads of Schools, the researchers distributed the questionnaire to the participants by visiting schools throughout Fiji. The questionnaire was completed and returned on the same day by the participants. The demographic representation of the sample population is given below.

Table 1 -Demographic representation of sample population

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Male	203	58.2
Female	145	41.5
Fijian of Indian descent	252	72.2
I-taukei	85	24.4
Others	11	3.2
Athlete	247	70.8
Non-athlete	101	28.9

Study instruments

The survey questionnaire had four sections with a total of 36 questions. The first section of the questionnaire included demographic questions, e.g., gender, ethnicity, nature of the physical activity, etc. The second section was designed to assess the acquired knowledge on physical activity in terms of their feelings, followed by questions on the importance of Physical Education as a subject in secondary schools and finally the questionnaire had questions on the scientific benefits of participating in Physical Activities in terms of a healthy lifestyle.

The questionnaire used for this research was adapted from the work of Omar Fauzee, Mohd Sofian, and Jamalis (2016). Subject matter experts (SMEs) evaluated the survey's face and content validity, and numerous versions of the survey were made before the survey tool was finalized. A pilot study was done for the validation of the questions with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.8 set as the benchmark for each question to be accepted. The information was gathered mostly through a paper-based survey. After receiving consent from the School Principals and the Class Teachers, survey copies were given to students during class sessions after prior consent was taken from the participants,

Data analysis

Data analysis of Participants' responses were first pre-processed on an excel sheet and then exported to IBM SPSS version 27.0 (IBM Corp. Armonk, NY, USA) for statistical analysis. Incomplete responses and those with invalid data entries were excluded. Mean and Standard

Deviation was used to represent continuous variables. Counts and proportions were used to express categorical variables. Confidence intervals of proportion were calculated and values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. The test was done to see the significant difference between males and females, ANOVA was used to test the other variables.

Ethical aspects

The Committee on Human Research Subjects (CHRS# 3-22,), Ministry of Education Fiji, approved the conduct of this study. This study protocol, participant information sheet (PIS), informed consent form, and survey questionnaires were all evaluated and approved by the ethical committee. At the outset of the survey, all research participants were asked to sign an informed consent form to affirm their desire to participate by answering an agree/disagree question. The consent form provided thorough information about the study's purpose and importance so that participants may make an informed decision about whether to join or withdraw at any moment if they so desired.

Results

Table 2 Results of t-test for Comparison of components of attitudes towards Physical Education of Secondary School students between different genders considering the Acquired knowledge of Physical Education, Importance of Physical Education in the life of the students, Benefits of Physical Education to the students and the Perception of the students towards Physical Education.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error		f	t	sig
				Mean				
Acquired Knowledge	Male	203	3.5232	0.32882	0.02308	5.33	2.064	0.022
	Female	145	3.4538	0.27914	0.02318			
Importance of PE	Male	203	4.1823	0.38129	0.02676	0.004	-0.399	0.953
	Female	145	4.1989	0.38405	0.03189			
Benefits of PE	Male	203	4.3959	0.45106	0.03166	2.43	-0.285	0.12

	Female	145	4.4095	0.41731	0.03466			
Perception towards PE	Male	203	4.4208	0.49383	0.02062	6.33	2.298	0.000
	Female	145	4.1210	0.30989	0.02573			

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 indicates that the t-value is 2.064 and the p-value of 0.022, which is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted as male and female teachers differ significantly, when comparing the acquired knowledge about Physical Activity in terms of their attitude. Furthermore, when comparing Gender with Importance of PE and Benefits of PE there is no significant difference in the means. However, when comparing the perception of male and female students there is a significant difference in the means.

Table 3 Results of t-test for Comparison of components of attitude towards physical education of secondary school students between athletes and non-athletes considering the Acquired knowledge for Physical Education, Importance of Physical Education in the life of the students, Benefits of Physical education to the students and the Perception of the students towards Physical Education.

Participation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	f	t	sig
Acquired Knowledge	Athlete	247	3.5174	0.32306	0.02056	6.216	2.187	0.0013
	Non-athlete	101	3.4376	0.27087	0.02695			
Importance of PE	Athlete	247	4.2200	0.34625	0.02203	14.262	2.368	0.0000
	Non-athlete	101	4.1139	0.45088	0.04486			
Benefits of PE	Athlete	247	4.4337	0.41316	0.02629	4.623	2.157	0.032
	Non-athlete	101	4.3230	0.48292	0.04805			
Perception towards PE	Athlete	247	4.1555	0.25973	0.01653	16.582	2.821	0.000
	Non-athlete	101	4.0564	0.37388	0.03720			

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 indicates a significant difference in athletes and non-athletes for acquired knowledge of physical education as the p value is 0.001 thus the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. When comparing the results for importance of Physical Education among athletes and non-athletes the f value of 14,62 and the values of 0.00 indicates a difference in the mean which is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is

rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Moreover, there is a significant difference between athletes and non-athletes for benefits of Physical Education and the perception of students towards Physical Education. In conclusion, it can be perceived that athletes have good perceptions of Physical Education than the non-athletes, which has been evident in the components and the overall perception.

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results for students from different ethnic groups for the different perception components towards Physical Education.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Acquired Knowledge	Between Groups	0.126	2	0.063	0.654	0.521
	Within Groups	33.342	345	0.097		
Importance of PE	Between Groups	0.936	2	0.468	3.250	0.040
	Within Groups	49.693	345	0.144		
Benefits of PE	Between Groups	0.200	2	0.100	0.524	0.593
	Within Groups	65.991	345	0.191		
Perception towards PE	Between Groups	0.179	2	0.089	0.993	0.372
	Within Groups	31.098	345	0.090		

The results indicate a significant difference in the ethnic groups for the Importance of Physical Education, however, there is no significant difference between the groups for Acquired Knowledge of Physical Education, the Benefits of Physical Education in schools and the Perception of students towards Physical Education.

Discussion

The outcome of the research highlights that students display enthusiastic approaches regarding Physical Education compared to non-active students. The general knowledge aspect depicts a passion, otherwise approach towards physical activities whereas the scientific foundation element epitomizes a sentimentality in evaluating the technical benefits of exercises. Similar results were found in the study of athletes and non-athletes on the students of Guilin University where the athletes had better perceptions and showed more concern in taking part in physical activities when compared to non-athletes (Saeedi, 2017). Another research revealed no significant differences in secondary school students' opinions towards Physical Education courses based on gender, age, being a licensed athlete, or participating in sports on a regular basis. At the same time, attitudes towards Physical Education courses were higher in male students than female students, students under the age of 11 compared to students of other ages, students with sports licenses compared to students who did not participate in sports and students who participated in sports on a regular basis

compared to students who did not participate in sports on a regular basis (Murathan, 2019). The study's findings revealed that secondary school students' attitudes toward Physical Education and self-efficacy were above the medium level, that there were no differences in attitudes towards Physical Education between male and female students, that male students had higher self-efficacy with regards to Physical Education courses than female students and that students' attitudes toward Physical Education and sports courses and their self-efficacy were above the medium level. There were no statistically significant variations depending on age, gender, grade level, or participants' opinions towards physical education courses (Arıkan, 2020). In terms of being a licensed athlete, it was discovered that pupils who were licensed athletes were happier in Physical Education classes (Kangalgil, 2018)

According to these findings, there was no significant relationship between these two variables and attitudes, self-efficacy, and scale total dimensions in relation to student's age and family profession group variable scores. There were considerable disparities between pupils who played basketball and those who played handball.

The results from the research testified that when students are involved in Physical Education classes, they benefit more than being non active. Accumulating evidence suggest that Physical Education plays a vital role in the overall education system. It offers the prospect for bodily, psychological, and general improvement to encounter the peculiarities of

lifecycle (Prusak 2016). The result shows that for the majority of the students, it is the essential part of their life which comes with lifelong accomplishments and provides happy vibes. Students also suggested that Physical Education classes should be equal to other academic lessons and a healthy lifestyle is important to keep their physical and mental status at the peak. However, a minority of students had their reservations against the benefits of Physical Education classes being offered at school. According to them, they want this class to be removed and see this subject as not worthy. "Succeeding academically during compulsory education is associated with broad and enduring advantages for later educational successes," (Marmot, 2010).

Furthermore, exercise and physical fitness makes one look younger and more vibrant by getting rid of impurities and dirt and opens pores thus, enables the skin to get a dose of oxygen. Workouts get the blood to run faster, which not only boosts the energy levels but also makes the skin glow. According to Commonwealth Health (2017) physical activity helps to de-stress by relieving the tension, anxiety, anger, and mild depression. It also supports the sleep quality, which can be adversely triggered by distress, despair and unease while helping boost one's confidence level. The result also indicates that a healthy lifestyle requires one to participate in physical activities irrespective of their gender and race. It does not interfere with it in anyway.

The research findings indicated that male student's perception average was higher than the females which is quite in line with another research done on a similar topic. Hands (2016) found that male students' opinions towards Physical Education courses were statistically significantly higher than female students. Another research found that Secondary School students' views about Physical Education courses did not change substantially across genders; Nevertheless, there was a significant difference in self-efficacy, (Penedo, 2005). In research by Tobes (2017), it was discovered

that there were substantial disparities in students' attitudes towards age and gender factors, but no significant changes in students' attitudes about family education level and sports branches. There were differences in the findings obtained in previous research and the results obtained in the current study in terms of age, gender, and family education status.

Conclusion

Personal characteristics such as perceptions are impacted by a person's behaviours and interactions with environmental circumstances, according to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). A person's understanding of the consequences of these three components' reciprocal causation might then influence their future behaviours (Bandura, 1997). To boost the possibility of students having a favourable opinion of PA and PE, PE teachers (environmental factor) should emphasize on students having positive and successful experiences with PA (behaviour) in PE (personal factor). Participants in the survey stated that the goal of PE was for them to have fun while learning how to live a healthy lifestyle. They believed that their PE teachers made curricular and teaching decisions, which affected their impressions of PE and PA. It is suggested that teachers analyse how their applied instructional approaches and activity design affect students' feelings. According to the findings, PE should promote kids' good PA experiences and foster individual competencies above social comparison. Combining relevant information with enjoyable and effective PA experiences based on PE standards can promote favourable impressions of PE, PA, and maybe future PA behaviours.

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