

THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

by:

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Physical education (PE) teachers perform an important role in promoting not solely physical fitness but also mental health among junior high school students. As mentioned, Teraoka and Kirk (2021) explored at teachers' approaches in Scottish secondary schools, with an emphasis on affective pedagogies and student-teacher discussions regarding the importance of physical education in mental health. Students use numerous coping mechanisms in PE, which vary depending on environmental expectations, stressors, assessment processes, resource choices, and perceived control, necessitating an awareness of contextual variables for student success (Åsebø & Løvoll, 2021). They dramatically improve students' mental health by including exercise, collaboration, and sportsmanship into their lessons.

Furthermore, Fernández-García et al. (2024) studied that physical activity dramatically lowers disruptive emotions, encouraging a healthy lifestyle and mitigating the effects of anxiety, despair, and stress on general well-being. In the same way, Li and Liang (2024) confirmed the favorable impact of the teaching of dance on lowering anxiety and depression symptoms, increasing self-esteem and perceptions of oneself, and developing emotional control abilities. For many students, PE lessons provide a reprieve from the intellectual intensity of subjects such as Math, Science, and English, allowing them to relax and reset their thoughts.

Additionally, physical activity has been proved to improve health, academic achievement, and general quality of life (Cerda et al., 2021). Through skill development and goal-setting in various sports and physical activities, students experience a sense of

achievement. Whether it's learning how to dribble a basketball, improving their running speed, or mastering a dance routine, these small victories contribute to a positive self-image. PE teachers encourage students to embrace progress over perfection, teaching them resilience and self-acceptance.

Another important contribution of PE teachers is fostering social interaction and teamwork. Many mental health struggles stem from feelings of isolation or social anxiety. By organizing team-based activities, such as volleyball, relay races, and cooperative games, PE teachers create an inclusive environment where students learn communication, cooperation, and empathy. These experiences help students build friendships and strengthen their support systems within the school community.

Beyond structured sports, Agar et al. (2024) believed that physical activity is an important part of a person's life since it improves their mental health. While physical activity can relieve stress, there has been little study on its relationship with psychological well-being. Many schools in the Philippines are beginning to recognize the importance of holistic health education, and PE classes now sometimes incorporate yoga, stretching, or guided meditation. These activities help students manage emotions, develop focus, and cultivate a sense of inner peace.

Furthermore, PE teachers serve as mentors and role models for students, offering guidance beyond physical fitness. They recognize signs of stress, anxiety, or emotional distress and often provide encouragement or refer students to guidance counselors when needed. Their presence as supportive educators reassures students that they are not alone in their struggles.

The efforts of PE teachers in promoting mental health extend beyond the gym or the school grounds. Equally important as mentioned by Al-Luhaibi (2021) that extracurricular activities are essential for developing an excellent student because they foster a balanced society capable of accepting responsibility for themselves and

community. By instilling the value of an active lifestyle, they encourage students to continue engaging in physical activities even outside the classroom. This long-term habit benefits not only their physical fitness but also their emotional well-being, reducing the risk of mental health issues in the future. Physical activity in sports has a substantial influence on psychological well-being by enhancing emotional management, resilience, mental agility, and addressing psychological conditions, particularly when paired with mindfulness techniques for enhanced mood and social skills (Martín-Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Finally, teachers of physical education in the Philippines play an important role in developing junior high school students' physical and mental health. Their capacity to combine physical exercise, emotional support, social growth, and mindfulness provides them with valuable contributions to students' overall well-being. As schools promote mental health, PE teachers play an even more important role in developing a healthier and happier generation of Filipino students.

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