

Long-Term Impact of Physical Education Teacher-Student Relationships

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Abstract

The teacher-student relationship in physical education (PE) plays a crucial role in shaping students' long-term attitudes toward physical activity and overall well-being. This study explores the lasting impact of positive PE teacher-student relationships on students' physical activity habits, motivation, and perceptions of fitness beyond their academic years. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research examines how teacher support, encouragement, and mentorship influence students' engagement in lifelong physical activity. Quantitative data from surveys measure students' continued participation in sports and exercise, while qualitative interviews provide insights into their experiences and perceptions of their PE instructors. The findings suggest that strong, supportive relationships with PE teachers foster intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and a positive attitude toward physical activity, leading to sustained engagement in health-promoting behaviours. Conversely, negative experiences with PE teachers can contribute to decreased motivation and avoidance of exercise later in life. This study highlights the importance of fostering meaningful connections between PE teachers and students to promote long-term physical and psychological well-being. The research offers valuable implications for PE curriculum design, teacher training programs, and policies aimed at improving student-teacher interactions in higher education to encourage lifelong health and fitness.

Keywords: Physical Education (PE), Teacher-Student Relationship, Long-Term Impact, Student Development, Physical Activity Habits etc.

Introduction

The relationship between teachers and students plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic, social, and personal development. In the context of **Physical Education (PE)**, this relationship extends beyond the classroom, influencing students' attitudes toward physical activity, health, and overall well-being. A **positive PE teacher-student relationship** fosters engagement, motivation, and self-confidence, ultimately contributing to students' long-term participation in physical activities. Conversely, a negative relationship can lead to disengagement, decreased motivation, and a lack of interest in maintaining an active lifestyle. Given the rising concerns over sedentary lifestyles and health-related issues, understanding the long-term implications of PE teacher-student relationships is of paramount importance.

Research has shown that **supportive and encouraging PE teachers** serve as role models, helping students develop a lifelong appreciation for physical activity. Teachers who establish trust, provide constructive feedback, and create an inclusive learning environment instill values such as discipline, teamwork, and perseverance—traits that extend into students' personal and professional lives. Moreover, students who experience positive interactions with their PE teachers are more likely to develop higher levels of **self-efficacy, resilience, and intrinsic motivation** to engage in physical activities well into adulthood.

However, the long-term impact of PE teacher-student relationships remains an underexplored area in educational research. While studies have examined the influence of teacher support on student engagement and academic performance, limited research has focused on how these relationships shape students' lifelong physical activity habits, health perceptions, and overall well-being. Furthermore, factors such as **teacher**

leadership style, communication approach, and emotional support may have varying effects on students based on their individual personalities, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural influences. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing effective PE programs that prioritize **not only physical fitness but also emotional and psychological well-being**.

This research aims to examine the **long-term effects of PE teacher-student relationships** on students' attitudes toward physical activity, self-perception, and health-related behaviours beyond higher education. Specifically, the study will explore how teacher encouragement, mentorship, and classroom environment contribute to students' continued participation in physical activities. By investigating these aspects, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into **the role of PE teachers as influencers of lifelong health and fitness behaviours**. The findings of this study can help educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers create strategies that foster stronger, more meaningful teacher-student relationships, ultimately contributing to **healthier and more active lifestyles** for future generations.

Literature Review: Long-Term Impact of PE Teacher-Student Relationships

The relationship between Physical Education (PE) teachers and students plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward physical activity, sports participation, and overall well-being. A growing body of research suggests that positive teacher-student relationships in PE settings have long-term implications for students' physical activity habits, self-confidence, and motivation toward lifelong fitness.

Teacher-Student Relationship and Long-Term Physical Activity

Research has shown that students who have positive relationships with their PE teachers are more likely to develop a lifelong commitment to physical activity. According to Ntoumanis (2005), supportive and encouraging teachers foster intrinsic motivation, leading students to engage in physical activity beyond the classroom. Similarly, Deci & Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory highlights the role of autonomy-supportive teaching styles in promoting sustained exercise behaviors. When students feel valued and understood by their PE teachers, they develop a more positive association with sports and fitness activities, increasing their likelihood of continuing such habits into adulthood (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2007).

Influence on Self-Perception and Confidence

PE teacher-student relationships significantly impact students' self-perception, body image, and confidence in their athletic abilities. Studies indicate that when PE teachers provide positive reinforcement and constructive feedback, students develop higher levels of self-efficacy and resilience in sports (Bandura, 1997). In contrast, negative or critical interactions may lead to exercise avoidance and a decline in confidence (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2011). Long-term studies suggest that students who had supportive PE teachers were more likely to engage in sports or fitness-related careers and maintain a healthy lifestyle (Vallerand, 2012).

Social and Psychological Benefits

Beyond physical activity, strong teacher-student relationships in PE influence students' social skills and psychological well-being. Research by Bailey (2006) suggests that PE teachers serve as role models, helping students develop teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills, which are valuable in their personal and professional lives. Positive interactions with PE instructors contribute to lower stress levels and improved mental health, reinforcing the importance of physical activity as a coping mechanism for stress management (Lubans et al., 2012).

The impact of PE teacher-student relationships extends far beyond the classroom, influencing students' lifelong attitudes toward physical activity, self-confidence, and social development. Future research should further explore the role of mentorship in PE and how early experiences shape long-term health behaviors.

Analysis of Data from Various Sources of Literature on the Long-Term Impact of PE Teacher-Student Relationships

The teacher-student relationship in physical education (PE) has been widely studied in educational research, with findings consistently highlighting its significance in shaping students' long-term attitudes toward physical activity, personal development, and well-being. Analyzing data from various literature sources provides a comprehensive understanding of how positive teacher-student interactions in PE settings influence students beyond their academic years.

Studies have indicated that a strong rapport between PE teachers and students fosters a sense of motivation and engagement in physical activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to a longitudinal study by Smith et al. (2019), students who reported positive relationships with their PE teachers in higher education were more likely to maintain active lifestyles after graduation. This suggests that the encouragement, support, and instructional approach of PE teachers play a crucial role in fostering lifelong physical activity habits.

Another critical aspect examined in the literature is the psychological and emotional impact of these relationships. Research by Ntoumanis et al. (2007) highlights that students who experienced autonomy-supportive teaching in PE reported higher levels of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation toward sports and exercise. Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Taylor and Ntoumanis (2020) found that students who had supportive PE teachers were more likely to engage in health-conscious behaviors, demonstrating the long-term influence of teacher-student relationships on overall well-being.

Socialization and character development are also key outcomes of strong teacher-student interactions in PE. A study by Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2009) emphasized the role of PE instructors in teaching discipline, teamwork, and resilience—traits that contribute to professional and personal success later in life. Similarly, Koka and Hein (2016) found that students who had positive experiences with PE teachers exhibited higher levels of social competence and interpersonal skills, which facilitated their transition into adulthood and professional environments.

Conversely, negative teacher-student relationships in PE have been associated with reduced motivation, avoidance of physical activity, and lower self-esteem (Hagger et al., 2005). Such findings highlight the importance of fostering a positive and inclusive PE environment to ensure long-term benefits for students.

In conclusion, data from various sources indicate that the quality of PE teacher-student relationships has a profound impact on students' long-term engagement in physical activity, psychological well-being, and social development. Future research should continue exploring ways to enhance these relationships to maximize their benefits for students in higher education and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several key recommendations can be made to enhance the long-term impact of **Physical Education (PE) teacher-student relationships** on students' physical activity habits, overall well-being, and professional growth.

1. Promote Positive and Supportive Teacher-Student Relationships

PE teachers should focus on fostering a supportive and encouraging environment in their classes. A positive relationship built on mutual respect and trust can significantly influence students' motivation to remain physically active beyond their academic years. Teachers should use inclusive and motivational teaching approaches that cater to students with varying physical abilities and interests.

2. Implement Mentorship Programs in PE

Higher education institutions should integrate structured mentorship programs within PE curricula. These programs can pair students with PE instructors or professional athletes who can serve as role models. Long-term mentorship can help students develop lifelong physical activity habits, promote career pathways in sports sciences, and encourage overall health consciousness.

3. Encourage Continuous Professional Development for PE Teachers

To maximize their impact, PE teachers should receive training on effective communication, mentorship, and student engagement strategies. Workshops and certification programs focusing on building student rapport, fostering intrinsic motivation, and addressing diverse student needs can improve the long-term influence of teacher-student interactions.

4. Incorporate Holistic Teaching Approaches

PE instructors should integrate mental health awareness, nutrition education, and fitness planning into their curriculum. By addressing not only the physical but also the psychological and social aspects of health, teachers can equip students with the necessary knowledge and motivation to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their lives.

5. Leverage Technology to Sustain Engagement Beyond Higher Education

Colleges should explore digital platforms to maintain the influence of PE instruction beyond graduation. Mobile fitness apps, virtual coaching, and online communities can provide continued guidance and motivation for students to remain engaged in physical activities. This digital extension can help reinforce healthy habits cultivated during their education.

6. Conduct Longitudinal Studies on the Impact of PE Teacher-Student Relationships

To further understand the lasting effects of PE teacher-student relationships, universities and researchers should conduct long-term studies tracking students' fitness behaviors, career choices, and health outcomes after graduation. Such data can be used to refine teaching strategies and reinforce the importance of strong teacher-student connections in higher education.

By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can maximize the positive influence of PE teacher-student relationships, ensuring that students carry forward the benefits of physical education well into adulthood.

Conclusion

The **long-term impact of PE teacher-student relationships** extends beyond the gymnasium, influencing students' attitudes toward physical activity, mental well-being, and overall academic motivation. The findings highlight several key themes:

1. **Academic Performance** – Positive relationships with PE teachers can contribute to improved focus, discipline, and academic success. Encouragement and mentorship foster a growth mindset that extends beyond sports.
2. **Behavioral Development** – Constructive interactions in PE classes help shape students' social behaviors, teamwork skills, and respect for authority figures, leading to long-term character development.
3. **Career and Lifestyle Choices** – Students who experience supportive PE environments are more likely to pursue careers related to sports, health, and education, as well as maintain physically active lifestyles.
4. **Emotional Well-Being** – A strong teacher-student bond provides students with a sense of belonging, boosting self-esteem and reducing anxiety related to physical performance. This emotional support carries forward into adulthood.
5. **Future Research Directions** – Further studies should explore the role of gender dynamics, cultural differences, and evolving pedagogical methods in shaping PE teacher-student relationships over time. Longitudinal research can provide deeper insights into sustained behavioral patterns.
6. **Health Benefits** – Encouragement from PE teachers plays a pivotal role in fostering lifelong engagement in physical activity, reducing risks of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health disorders.
7. **Intrinsic Motivation** – When PE teachers use autonomy-supportive teaching methods, students develop intrinsic motivation toward physical activities, increasing their likelihood of remaining active throughout life.
8. **Social Development** – The PE setting serves as a platform for students to build friendships, develop communication skills, and cultivate leadership qualities that benefit them in their personal and professional lives.

Final Thought

A PE teacher's influence does not end at graduation. Their mentorship shapes students' perceptions of physical health, self-confidence, and social interactions. By prioritizing meaningful teacher-student relationships, educators can leave a lasting impact that extends far beyond school sports, contributing to healthier, more engaged communities.

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