

Examining The Negative And Positive Impacts Of Standardized Testing On Physical Education Programs In Public Schools In Katima Mulilo Of Zambezi Region, Namibia.

Gerald Kela^{1*}, Ronelle Malan-Swart²

¹*Faculty of Health Sciences & Veterinary Medicine School of Allied Health Sciences Department of Physical and Sport Sciences (DPSS) University of Namibia Katima Mulilo Campus gkela@unam.na

²Faculty of Health Sciences & Veterinary Medicine School of Allied Health Sciences Department of Physical and Sport Sciences (DPSS) University of Namibia Khomasdal Campus pmalan@unam.na

*Corresponding author: Dr. Gerald Kela

gkela@unam.na ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9881-0164>

Abstract

Standardized testing is well-thought-out as effective technique because it gives an empirical, homogeneous benchmark for assessing student and academic performance, acknowledging for fair associations, responsibility, and the detection of learning disparities. On the other hand, standardized tests are ought to be ineffective because it can stifle originality, decrease emphasis on social-emotional education, encourage a narrow curriculum, worsen educational biases knotted to socioeconomic position, and destructively affect teachers and student well-being through tension and anxiety. The main aim of this study is to examining the negative and positive impacts of standardized testing on physical education programs in public schools in Katima Mulilo of Zambezi Region, Namibia. This study employed a qualitative approach in its methodology. A total of 15 physical education teachers were purposively selected to participate in this study and data was analyzed thematically. The outcomes of this study revealed that there are positive and negative impacts of standardized testing on physical education program such as; narrowing the curriculum, decrease self-esteem in students, emphasis placed much on rote memorization, does not correctly assess student well-being, may lead to less engagement in physical activities, educators may not strike balance between learning instruction and might ignore other crucial components.

Keywords:Examining, negative impact, positive impact, standardized, testing, physical education, programs, public, primary school, Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region, Namibia

Introduction

A standardized test is a kind of assessment where all student responds the identical set of questions from a common pot. This method sets a transparent benchmark for evaluating student performance throughout several areas, holds educators responsible, and supports teachers in creating their core curriculum (Tunnell, 2024). In American public education, standardized tests have been the topic of intense debates over the past years. The extreme risks attached to their outcomes have triggered disagreement among a group of concerned experts. Teachers criticize the tests for the limitation of national curriculum, students' dropout rates and loss of interest. Some parents contend the tests are ran too frequently, disturb the students from real learning, and do not correctly evaluate the students' authentic capabilities (Ravitch et al, 2022).

Standardized testing is a universal part of community education in the USA; students normally start taking them once they first enrolled in primary school, and these examinations continue to be important through the period of their education (Simmons, 2016). The crafting of the standardized

test as a measures for educational evaluation connects tightly to broader industrial, societal, and scholarly trends through the prior two centuries. Since the structure has been in use throughout the country and by the University Board for utmost of the 20th century, this period specifically will serve as the centre, but standardized tests were in progression long prior to their present incarnate (Maldonado and De Witte, 2022).

Research have shown that standardized testing is more frequently used in grades in upper and junior secondary schools and the outcomes offer the region with precise, consistent, and meaningful data about the student and classroom performance because they are corresponding with the national standard grounded evaluation (Smolansky et al, 2023). Moreover, in Alaska, together region and state evaluation outcome are compared. One of the focal advantages of standardized testing, is that standardized tests are created, ran, and marked in a reliable or "ordinary" means. This grants a unanimous metrical by which student accomplishment can be evaluated as well as divided. Success gaps are also showed when data are

disaggregated by society (Smolansky et al, 2023). Research further guarantee that, the use of standardized evaluations is here to continue and in a rising debate academically speaking, intensely in Alaska, where high concerns exit examinations are an extreme significance in this enormous school region. Standardized tests help to identify what a student truly knows. Think of that, in distinction to classroom examinations, standardized tests are not influenced by the individual technological competency of the educator (Brown, 2019).

Conversely, this ignores social and scholastic criticisms of standardized testing. One key critique is that these tests evaluate test-taking abilities rather than real learning or essential thinking. Numerous standardized tests are multiple choice based, fulfilling those who recognise the system, as approaches like preventing repeated responses can enhance scores. This test-taking knowledge is frequently not addressed in university student preparation programs, leading to doubts about their authenticity (Harris et al, 2012). In addition, numerous researchers dispute that these tests are unfair and ethnically inappropriate. The tests frequently exhibit a narrow cultural mastery bound to traditional subjects rather than current issues. Therefore, the criticism of standardized testing focuses on their efficiency and significance, rather than honest valuations of judgement (Alam and Mohanty, 2023).

Problem statement

Standardized testing remains a fundamental yet controversial element of populace education. While these evaluations give valuable information for assessing student learning and recognised performance, they also report substantial challenges involving increased student stress, curriculum narrowing and unfairness in educational prospects. Therefore the main aim of this study is to examine the negative and positive impacts of standardized testing on physical education programs in public schools in Katima Mulilo of Zambezi Region, Namibia.

Research questions

- What are the negative and positive impacts of standardized testing on physical education programs in public schools in Katima Mulilo of Zambezi Region, Namibia?

Research design

This study used qualitative approach, according to Chinyere and Eze (2023) defines qualitative research as a study of the nature of problem, which comprises their quality, diverse indicator, the situation in which they look, or the perspectives from which they can be alleged, but exclude their variety. Moreover, qualitative research is concerned with idea, feelings

or experiences of people participating in the study.

Population and sample

The population of this study consisted of all physical education teachers, purposively selected from public schools in Katima Mulilo of Zambezi Region, Namibia. According to Shukla (2020) defines population as the group or set of all the entities on which the results of the research are to be employed. Moreover, Makwana et al (2023) research refers a lesser, controllable subgroup of a bigger population from which information is gathered to make assumptions and draw inferences about the whole group.

Data collection methods

Data of this study was collected using questionnaire designed by the researcher. Rendering to Creswell (2014) frameworks data gathering techniques by research type, highlighting that qualitative research includes the researcher's straight communication with information through interviews, observation and documents.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed thematical, according to Creswell (2015) to carry out a thematic analysis the researcher need to manage and establish data, read and memo developing ideas, designate and categorize codes into notable themes, develop and evaluate explanations, and lastly, characterize and envisage your conclusions. This five-step procedure includes becoming accustomed with your information, creating preliminary codes, thorough searching for notable themes by categorizing these codes, filtering and naming the themes to confirm they are distinct and meaningful.

Research results

This part of research, presents the results derived from the comments of teachers and student teachers regarding the negative and positive impacts of standardized testing on physical education programs in public schools.

T1 and T11 concurred by saying that:

Standardized testing has a negative impact on physical education programs as it narrows the curriculum, which lead teachers to prioritize testable school subjects, decrease time and resources for physical education(PE) and other school subjects such as music and art.

T2 suggested that:

Fitness assessment, a well know form of testing in physical education (PE), can destructively affect students' self-esteem and lead to a hatred for physical activity(PA), especially for those individual students who struggle with the standardized tests. In other words this lead to low self-esteem and student anxiety.

T3 revealed that:

Standardized tests frequently stress repetition memorization above critical thinking and imagination, hypothetically obstructing the growth of problem solving skills in students.

T4 and T14 alluded that:

I find standardized testing not to correctly assess a student's total learning or well-being and place too much importance on assessment scores, this means that that it uses useless quantity of well-being.

T5 mentioned that:

In standardized testing students may come to dislike physical education (PE) lessons where they feel enforced to do fitness assessments they hate, leading to lesser overall gratification of the subject.

T6 and T13 stated that:

Educators may emphasis instructional time on examinable fitness components, ignoring other vital skills and physical activities that are not as simply standardized.

T7 detailed that:

Standardized fitness examinations may not record the full capabilities of a student's physical skills or talents, resulting to a twisted assessment of their abilities and potential.

On the other hand, this study results emphasized on the positive impact of standardized testing in physical education program, below are responses from participants:

T8 and 15 indicated that:

Standardized testing is a great reliable tool that provide consistent, in testing student fitness that can be used to evaluate success towards physical education (PE) programs and hold schools answerable for student improvement.

T9 and T12 corresponded by saying that:

Test results derived from standardized assessment are indicators that can point out parts where students need upgrading, give information for educators to address specific needs and differences in physical fitness (PF).

T10 further said that:

Standardized testing gives schools an opportunity to do a comparison of physical education program's progress alongside other schools, be it be regionally and nationally, which gives outside validation of physical education curriculum quality.

Discussions

This section of this study discusses the results on the negative and positive impacts of standardized testing on physical education program in Katima Mulilo, Zambezi Region of Namibia. The results of this study shows that standardized testing has a negative impact on physical education programs as it narrows the curriculum, which lead teachers to prioritize testable school subjects, decrease time and resources for physical education(PE) and other school subjects such as music and art. These results align with Sauda

(2025) study which revealed that standardized testing narrows the physical education curriculum, subsidise to biases, and poorly measure critical reasoning skills. This study results further shows that fitness assessment, a well know form of testing in physical education (PE), can destructively affect students' self-esteem and lead to a hatred for physical activity(PA), especially for those individual students who struggle with the standardized tests. In other words this lead to low self-esteem and student anxiety. These results correspond to Feinberg and Zanardi (2022) study which found that standardized testing indeed negatively affect student's self-esteem especially if the students who are being physically tested they find it difficult or struggle with what they are being tested about.

Moreover, this study results further shows that standardized tests frequently stress repetition memorization above critical thinking and imagination, hypothetically obstructing the growth of problem solving skills in students. These result aligns with Ma (2023) research outcome which revealed that standardized testing most of the times emphasise much on rote memorisation without allowing students to be critical thinkers or problem solvers. The study further shows that standardized testing does not correctly assess a student's total learning or well-being and place too much importance on assessment scores, this means that it uses useless quantity of well-being. These results are supported by Wai et al (2018) which found that if not well excuted standardized testing does not correctly evaluate student's well-being as it place much emphasis on assessment score. This study outcomes additional shows that in standardized testing students may come to dislike physical education (PE) lessons where they feel enforced to do fitness assessments they hate, leading to lesser overall gratification of the subject. These results are supported by Holt-Bocksnick (2016) research which revealed that standardised testing may cause students to dislike the subject if they feel forced to be assessed, this can lead to less involvement in physical education activities.

Furthermore, this study results shows that educators may emphasis instructional time on examinable fitness components, ignoring other vital skills and physical activities that are not as simply standardized. These results align with Brown (2019) research which revealed that teachers tend to focus much their time on giving instructions on fitness examinable component and ignore activities that are not simple. The study results also show that standardized fitness examinations may not record the full capabilities of a student's physical skills or talents, resulting to a twisted assessment of their abilities and potential. These results are supported by Gard (2020) study which discovered that

standardized fitness assessments in most cases does not record the full talents of student, hence resulting inaccurate assessment of abilities.

On the other hand, this study results in shows positive impacts of standardized testing in physical education programs. The outcomes of this study shows that standardized testing is a great reliable tool that provide consistent, in testing student fitness that can be used to evaluate success towards physical education (PE) programs and hold schools answerable for student improvement. These results align with Yager et al (2021) study which discovered that despite a lot of critiques on the negative aspects of standardized testing, the positive aspects suggest that, it is still the major reliable tool that provides consistence in assessing student fitness. Moreover, this study further found that test results derived from standardized assessment are indicators that can point out parts where students need upgrading, give information for educators to address specific needs and differences in physical fitness (PF). These results are supported by Rapposelli (2021) report which discovered that standardized testing is an indicator that can used to address need and disparities in physical activity, with these indicators it will be difficult to know exactly were the problem are.

Lastly, the results of this study shows that standardized testing gives schools an opportunity to do a comparison of physical education program's progress alongside other schools, be it be regionally and nationally, which gives outside validation of physical education curriculum quality. These results are supported by Beuchert et al (2020) study which discussed that standardized testing is an immediate feedback which gives schools a chance to compare and contrast physical education program to other schools locally and nationally to get outside validation of the curriculum quality.

Conclusion

When evaluating student learning, understanding, or capability in a specific subject area, educators may use numerous techniques. Conversely, for the reason that these evaluations can be biased, standardized tests help decrease unfairness by giving a reliable grading system. It can be therefore be concluded from this study that standardized testing has positive and negative impacts on physical education program that need to be taken cognizant of prior to administering the test these include; narrowing the curriculum, decrease self-esteem in students, emphasize much on rote memorization, does not correctly assess student well-being, may lead to less engagement in physical activities, educators may not strike balance between learning instruction and might ignore other crucial components.

References

1. Alam A, Mohanty A. (2023). Cultural beliefs and equity in educational institutions: exploring the social and philosophical notions of ability groupings in teaching and learning of mathematics. . *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth.*, 31;28(1):2270662.
2. Beuchert, L., Eriksen, T. L. M., & Krægpøth, M. V. (. (2020). The impact of standardized test feedback in math: Exploiting a natural experiment in 3rd grade. *Economics of Education Review*, 77 .
3. Brown, B. (2019). Negative effects of standardized testing. *Digital Commons @CSUMB*.
4. Chinyere, U., Eze, H.U. (2023). Qualitative Research. *International Digital Organization for Scientific Research* , 8(1):20-35, 2023. .
5. Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
6. Feinberg B, Zanardi M. . (2022). Analysis of the Influence of Operational Costs on Increasing the Financial Performance of American Public Helath Corporation. *Medalion Journal: Medical Research, Nursing, Health and Midwife Participation.* , 30;3(2):44-57. .
7. Gard, K. (2020). *Students' attitudes towards standardized testing: A literature review*. <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/ScholarWorks@UARK> .
8. Harris P, Smith BM, Harris J. (2012). Standardized tests do not effectively measure student achievement. *At Issue. Rpt.* (pp. 17:33-45.). Detroit: Greenhaven Press.
9. Holt-Bocksnick, L. (2016). Teacher and student perceptions of stress-reduction strategies on standardized tests. *TTU DSpace Home*, <https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/handle/2346/68043?show=full>.
10. Ma, Z. (2023). Explore The Impact of Standardized Testing on Students' Learning Potential in Higher Education. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Culture, Design and Social Development*, (p. 834).
11. Makwana, D., Engineer, P., Dabhi, A., Chudasama, H. (2023). Sampling Methods in Research: A Review . *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*, 7(3) 762-768.
12. Maldonado JE, De Witte K. . (2022). The effect of school closures on standardised student test outcomes. . *British Educational Research Journal*, 48(1):49-94.
13. Rapposelli, M. (2021). "The Impact of Standardized Testing". *English Department: Research for change Wicked Problems in Our World.*, 42.

14. Ravitch D, Forte D, Moss P, Reville P. (2022). Policy dialogue: Twenty years of test-based accountability. *History of Education Quarterly*, 62(3):337-52.
15. Sauda, N. (2025). The Role of Standardized Testing in Public Education. *Eurasian experiment journal of humanities and social sciences (EEJHSS)*, 102-109.
16. Shukla, S. (2020). CONCEPT OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE. *How to Write a Research Paper?* (pp. 20-28). Indore, M. P., India: Rishit.
17. Simmons, N. (2016). Grading the Standardized Test: Can Standardized Testing Evaluate Schools? *Education Canada*, 44(3):37-9.
18. Smolansky A, Cram A, Radulescu C, Zeivots S, Huber E, Kizilcec RF. (2023). Educator and student perspectives on the impact of generative AI on assessments in higher education. *In proceedings of the tenth ACM conference on Learning@ Scale* (pp. (pp. 378-382)). Academia.edu.
19. Tunnell, L. (2024). Standardized Tests: The Benefits and Impacts of Implementing Standardized Tests. *Education Advanced*, 33-40.
20. Wai, J., Brown, M., & Chabris, C. (2018). Using standardized test scores to include general cognitive ability in education research and policy. *Journal of Intelligence*, 6(3), 37.
21. Yager, Z., Alfrey, L., Young, L. (2021). The Psychological Impact of Fitness Testing in Physical Education: A Pilot Experimental Study Among Australian Adolescents. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 42 (1) 77-85.