

## An Exploration On Gender Disparities Among University Students In Physical Education Participation And Achievement.



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### Abstract

Gender inequalities in physical education partaking continue to be an important concern, with girls encountering several obstacles to equal participation. The main aim of this study was to explore gender disparities among university students in Physical Education participation and achievement, and offer suggestion-based commendations for constructing a more inclusive and unbiased atmosphere in physical education. Qualitative approach was used to in-depth data; interviews were used to gain a wide-ranging understanding of the causes of gender disparities. The study's population included teachers and university student who were purposively sampled based on experience and subject level of expertise. Data was analysed thematically, using coding techniques to categorize repetitive themes associated to gender roles, participation obstacles, and possible resolutions for encouraging inclusivity in Physical Education. Past background discloses the long-standing landscape of gender disparities in sports and physical education, with societal perceptions and cultural standards supporting prejudice and stereotypes that exclude girls' participation. Socioeconomic impacts, lack of women role models, and changes in family support further worsen the involvement gap. The harsh result of these differences goes past the classroom, affecting student physical health, mental well-being, and future career chances in sports related fields. To tackle these disparities, this study suggests employing inclusive curriculum for all, encouraging female leadership and management, boosting public and parental participation, and using media to challenge prejudice and stereotypes. By implementing a multidimensional method that combines policy alterations, public engagement, and targeted involvements, we can work towards joining the gender disparities in physical education and nurturing a more unbiased and inclusive atmosphere for all students.

**Keywords:** Exploration, gender, disparities, university, students, physical education, participation, achievement.

### Introduction

One of people's utmost challenges is to fight sedentary lifestyles in order to stop the increase of cardiovascular diseases and complications related with physical sedentariness (World Health Organization, 2019); subsequently physical idleness is reported to be the fourth foremost risk factor causing death globally (Bull et al, 2020). Numerous carried research has linked little or non-existent intensities of physical activity with a bigger risk of rising diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, hypertension, colon or breast cancer, as well as mental health related illnesses (Gonzalez-Cutre et al, 2010).

The report from the World Health Organisation (WHO) pinpoints inadequate levels of physical activity for grownups as less than 150 minutes of moderate-amount physical activity weekly, or probably lesser than 75 minutes of vigorous-vital physical activity weekly, or comparable (Maldari et al, 2021). Moreover, earlier studies carried out

around the world have recounted gender disparities for physical education (PE) with lesser involvement seen in female students (Vella et al, 2014). Socio-ecological aspects at the personal level (for instance fitness, body mass, male choices for activities that require more power, or perceived capability), family

level (such as sexual category roles, living environments, parental sustenance or household structure), public level (such as public sport), school level (such as chances for students to be really active during school vacations), and environmental level (such as weather or geographical location) are all believed to contribute to this gender disparity gap (Telford et al, 2016).

Physical education (PE) is very significant for helping students grow intellectually, spiritually, physically, socially, and emotionally. Nonetheless, there are still immense disparities on how girls and boys get involved. These disparities are derived from numerous aspects like societal customs, prejudices,

and school performs that make it tougher for everyone to partake in the same way. For instance, traditional notions frequently link physical skills and sports benefits to boys, causing girls to feel left out or not motivated in taking part in physical education (Iannotti and Wang 2013). Therefore, it is critical to tackle these problems to encourage inclusivity and equivalent opportunities for all students, and to increase inclusive health and self-worth. Gender differences in physical education (PE) mean that different genders do not get the same participation, treatment, and chances in school physical activities. These differences show up in numerous ways, such as inadequate access to resources, prejudice about athletic skills, and wide-ranging levels of support from educators. For instance, current studies show that social standards and traditional beliefs frequently make it tougher for females to participate in sports, which has limitations their involvement in PE programs (Carson et al, 2015). Furthermore, these disparities are worsened by issues such as socioeconomic position and health problems, stressing the multifaceted nature of disparity in this area (Hatakeyama et al, 2022). Therefore, to comprehend these gender disparities, it is significant to investigate both universal systems and individual experiences, which can aid create actual strategies to reassure equal involvement in physical education for both genders (Wang et al, 2013).

### Problem statement

Closing the existing gap on how girls and boys partake in physical education is vital for creating a favorable learning atmosphere that support every student wellbeing and welfare. By categorizing and dealing with the hindrances that cause these disparities, educators can use explicit approaches that aligns with suggestions found in the pool of recommendations, which outlines the necessity for resources and equal access in physical education (World Health Organization, 2019). Therefore, this study aims at exploring gender disparities among university students in Physical Education participation and achievement.

### Research questions

- What are the causes of gender disparities among university students in Physical Education participation and achievement?

### Research design

This current study employed a qualitative research approach to get a comprehensive depth of factors causing gender differences in physical education as a school subject.

### Population and sample

The population of this study consisted of physical education teachers and students, who were selected purposively based on the experience and level of expertise they possess in relation to the study phenomenon.

### Data collection methods

Interviews were conducted with physical education teachers and student teachers to gain in-depth insights on the phenomenon. These conducted interviews allowed the researcher to gather data in relation to cultural, social, institutional and academic barriers that contribute to gender disparities in physical education.

### Data analysis

The qualitative collected data was analyzed thematically, using coding procedures to categorize repetitive themes associated to gender roles, participation obstacles, and possible resolutions for encouraging inclusivity in Physical Education. The blend of these procedures offers a complete view of the problem and assists the expansion of targeted plans to decrease gender disparities in physical education (PE).

### Research results

This section of this study shows qualitative results from participants to which the responded to the main question; what are the causes of gender disparities among students in physical education participation and achievement?

P1 said that:

*The cause of gender disparities among university students in physical education participation and achievement is restrictive social norms for instance physical education is for boys only.*

P2 further suggested that:

*Traditional societal beliefs hinder the equilibrium participation in physical education as frequently it is portrayed that the subject is more suitable for boys, thus which leads to a societal devaluing of girls involvement in Physical Education as a school subject.*

P3 further revealed that;

*Peer pressure and prejudice also plays a major role, for instance peer influence can discourage both sexes from partaking in Physical Education not by tradition associated with their gender, with girls facing pressure to follow traditional gender standards and boys facing teasing for partaking in activities seen as womanly.*

P4 and P16 suggested that:

*The ministry of education is biased towards physical education as a subject, henceforth the subject is regarded as non-examinable with a core status. This system biases in education cause a wide gender disparity among boys and girls.*

P5 explained that:

*A lot of girls lack female role models to inspire, motivate and encourage them. I have never seen a serious physical education teacher in my entire life; the subject is more male dominated. Role models serve a foundation and pave path for all of those who are enthusiastic to follow in that pathway.*

P6 discovered that:

*Unequal accessibility to resources also causes a wider gap of gender disparities in physical education. Equality gives all access to participate at the same time.*

Whilst P7 and P15 corresponded that:

*Lack of equal opportunity for girls widens up the gender gap, for instance boys are given more attention in comparison to girls. If opportunities are given equality the difference gap could be decreased.*

P8 and P14 harmonized by saying that:

*Teaching practice and the curriculum is not inclusive in some of its objectives and competencies as it lack inclusiveness.*

P9 further said that:

*The curriculum does not consider physiological aspects such as body weight, gender. These aspect they can discourage girls as well. Boys are biological stronger than girls, meaning they cannot do some of the activities with the same strength exertion.*

P10 said that:

*Student-teacher interaction can also be a driving aspect of, for instance if a teacher lack knowledge of inclusivity in their class instruction, this can cause a huge gap in the learning atmosphere.*

P11 and P13 concurred that:

*Girls can face an enormous pressure associated to body image, which can destructively sway their motivation and commitment in physical education as a subject.*

P12 concluded by saying that:

*Motivation should be constantly and frequently done, for instance girls often perform better and feel more engaged when physical education activities are not so competitive and only focus on effort over skill rather than just competition.*

## Discussions

This section discusses the study results regarding the gender disparities among university students in physical education participation and achievements in Zambezi Region, Namibia. Thus it was established by this study that they were numerous causes of gender disparities in physical education. The study results shows that one of the causes of gender disparities was restrictive social norms to which the study found that physical education activities were associated with masculinity comparably to femininity, moreover physical education was found to be more suitable for boys in accordance with study respondents. These study results are associated with the study outcomes of Bhowmik (2017) which

revealed that one of the causes of gender disparities in physical education participation was motivated by traditional beliefs that the subject is suitable for boys compared to girls, this notion saw less participation of girls in physical education activities at school level. Furthermore, this study's result outlined that there was education system biases, to which this study found that the ministry of education made the subject non-examinable, less weekly time schedules. The aspect of core status given to physical education contributed to huge disparity between boys and girls as it was a sign of subject less importance. These results are supported by a study carried by Hermassi et al (2023) which revealed that the education system was biased oriented, as it lowered the physical education status to less weekly time allocation, non-examinable status, which showed how less importance in terms of subject engagement by girls compared to boys. Hermassi et al (2023) results further suggests that the unbiased education system is designed in favor of boys comparable to girls.

Moreover, this study results shows that another cause of imbalanced participation physical education was caused by lack of role models to inspire motivate and encourage those who are will to participate in physical education activities. These results correspond with McCarth et al, (2022) which found that role models in physical education serves as an inspiration to those who want to emulate or do the same thing. Likewise, these results are further supported by Williams, (2025) which alluded that the key purpose of physical education role models is to motivate, guide others, deveop positive attitudes, cultivate good mindset, and boost positive values. So scarcity of women role models in sports related activities or physical education can drop girls drive and involvement.

Additionally, this study results further shows that peer pressure is also one of the causes of gender disparities in physical education participation, the study found out that female students influenced each other not to participate in physical education activities as they deem the subject to be of less important compared to other school subject. These study results are associated with William (2022) study which discovered that peer pressure is a driving aspect towards participation imbalance of boys and girls in physical education. This imply that girls or boys tend to discourage and influence their peers not to participate in physical education activities. This study findings further shows that unequal access to physical education resources between boy and girls is also a visible cause of gender disparity in physical education. Boys tend to be prioritised more than girls when it comes to access to physical education resources, this negatively affect

girls participation in PE as a school subject. This study found that there were less opportunities given to girls compared to boys, this aspect hindered girls participation as girls felt discriminated based on their gender. These study outcome suggest that there were lack of balance when giving opportunities in physical education. According to Namibia School Sports Union (2024) found that girls often have less secondary school opportunities to participation in sports and physical education, which at the end of the day limit their access and involvement.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, solving the issue of gender disparities in physical education is significant for creating an inclusive learning environment that inspires all students to take part equally. The close examination to why these disparities occurs, shows that social standards, lack of physical education resources, and fragile teaching support are main obstacles to female students' participation in physical education activities. Moreover, explicit solutions, such as making the curriculum that take cognizant of gender and stressing female sports or physical education role models, can help decrease these gaps. Furthermore, programs dedicated on enhancing consciousness and training for educators are essential to emphasise the importance of equal involvement. In accordance with the World Health Organisation, the commendations point out the necessity for attentive actions that advance physical education probabilities and encourage overall health equality in schools (World Health Organization, 2019). Eventually, constructing a fair atmosphere is not just about admission; it is also a critical step in fostering well-rounded, vested people. It is thus very significant for educators and policy-makers to work on the gender disparities in physical education, especially for understated groups. By placing in place precise strategies that eradicate stereotypes and guarantee nondiscriminatory access to resources, therefore, we can construct welcoming learning environment that inspire all students, predominantly girls, to partake more in physical education activities. Numerous studies show that physical difficulties, such as unwell funded schools and absence of support systems. In addition, identifying that each group faces distinctive problems suggests that we need a cautious method to find resolutions (Bhowmik, 2017). Making decisions should not only drive for improved facilities and capital but should also emphasis on making inclusive programs that help a constructive view of physical education involvement for all students. These practical steps are critical for creating a generation that values and appreciates being physically active and healthy.

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