

Perception of Preservice Teachers towards Physical Education Curriculum in University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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Abstract

This study was carried out to determine students' perception of the Physical Education Curriculum at the University of Education Winneba (UEW), Ghana. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to conduct the study. A census sampling technique was used to select level 400 students of the 2022/23 batch from the Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Sports (HPERS), UEW, Ghana. The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire titled "Physical Education Students Perception Questionnaire (PESPQ)". The instrument was designed to consist of two sections, i.e., A and B. Section A elicited demographic data of respondents, while section B was designed in line with the key variables of the study using a modified Likert's attitudinal 4-point scale. A panel of three experts in the HPERS Department validated the instrument in terms of content, construction and validity before administration. To establish the instrument's reliability, ten copies of validated PESPQ were administered to the 2021/2022 cohort in the HPERS in the department using the test-retest reliability technique, with a r-value of 0.89. A total of 248 copies of the PESPQ were administered to select respondents through their level academic counsellor for high percentage returns. Out of 248 questionnaires administered, only 200 copies of PESPQ were properly filled and processed, using version 23 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The chi-square (X^2) statistical tool was used to draw inferences at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that the perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum did not significantly differ by sex, or by designation. It was further observed that first aid and sports injuries ranked highest on respondents' perception scale for the ten topmost Physical

Education course contents.

Keywords

Perception, Physical Education, Curriculum, Students

1. Introduction

Physical Education (PE) is an integral component of educational curricula world-wide, intended to foster physical fitness, cognitive skills, and emotional well-being among students. A well-designed PE curriculum contributes significantly to students' overall development, promoting lifelong healthy habits and equipping learners with essential life skills (Bailey et al., 2009). In tertiary institutions, particularly in universities that focus on teacher education, PE curricula play a dual role in enhancing students' physical literacy and preparing them to effectively teach PE in schools (Hardman & Marshall, 2005).

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana, as a leading institution for teacher training in Ghana, offers a PE curriculum tailored to meet national educational goals and address global trends in health and fitness. This PE curriculum enabled the University of Education Winneba (UEW) to produce teachers with 21st-century skills to meet the needs of learners. It highlights ICT, eLearning, and Virtual Teaching to enhance digital skills, climate change and eco-friendly teaching for sustainability. It specialises in cross-cultural studies, courses focusing on health (first aid, mental health, and common diseases), and academic STEM education focussing on innovation and research. All these blends contribute to employability ensuring graduates are prepared for a changing, interconnected world of entrepreneurs and internships.

Within the University, the Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Sports (HPERS), developed a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) physical education curriculum which underscores a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical competencies. However, understanding students' perceptions of these curricular offerings is critical for ensuring that the programme meets their needs and aligns with their professional aspirations (Kirk, 2010).

Research underscores the importance of student feedback in shaping effective educational programmes. Students' perceptions influence their engagement, motivation, and total success within a specified curriculum (Chen, 2010). In the context of PE, these perceptions are often shaped by various factors, including the relevance of course content, instructional methods, and alignment with career goals. Additionally, demographic factors such as sex and academic level can play a role in shaping how students perceive the curriculum (Hardman & Marshall, 2014). Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of PE curricula in Ghana faces challenges such as limited resources, societal misconceptions about the value of physical education, and the evolving demands of the job market (Amusa et al.,

2013). Within this context, evaluating the perceptions of students in institutions like UEW is crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement in the curriculum. Insights gained from such evaluations can inform curriculum revisions, ensuring the programme remains responsive to student needs and professional standards. This would also help the HPERS department step up the quality training of PE teachers for effective dispensation of the PE curriculum for senior high schools in Ghana.

Physical Education (PE) is integral to fostering lifelong physical activity, mental well-being, and the acquisition of vital life skills. Research highlights that students' perceptions of curriculum significantly impact their engagement, learning outcomes, and professional readiness, making it essential to understand these perceptions for effective curriculum development (Gao et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023).

At the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), the PE curriculum aims to prepare future educators to address evolving educational and professional challenges, especially those relating to teaching PE in Senior High Schools in Ghana. However, disparities in perceptions shaped by factors such as course content and teaching strategies can lead to disengagement or mismatches between the curriculum and students' career aspirations. Studies emphasise the importance of aligning curriculum components like first aid and injury management with students' needs while addressing gaps in lesser-emphasised areas (Adamu et al., 2023).

Despite advancements in PE research, few studies at UEW systematically explore students' views, leaving a gap in actionable data for refining the curriculum. This study addresses that gap, investigating Level 400 students' perceptions to provide insights for enhancing relevance, instructional strategies, and alignment with professional demands.

2. Purpose of the Study

This study examined the perceptions of preservice teachers toward the Physical Education Curriculum in the Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Sports (HPERS) at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) about the Physical Education curriculum.

3. Hypotheses

- 1) Perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum will not significantly differ by sex.
- 2) Perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum will not significantly differ by designation.
- 3) There is no significant difference in students' perception towards Physical Education course contents.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Research Design

A descriptive research design was employed to conduct this study, ensuring a

comprehensive analysis of students' perceptions of the Physical Education course contents. This design was chosen because it allows for the detailed collection and description of data regarding current conditions, opinions, and perceptions (Cresswell, 2014). A self-developed questionnaire, designed to align with the study objectives, was utilised as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was structured to gather comprehensive information from undergraduate students in the HPERS Department. The data collected were systematically collated, analysed, and interpreted to draw meaningful inferences about the students' perceptions.

4.2. Population and Sampling Procedure

The study targeted all 400-level students graduating in the 2022/2023 academic year from the HPERS Department at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana. The population is made up of 248 students, comprising 195 male and 53 female students between 20 and 45 years of age.

A census sampling technique was adopted to achieve inclusivity and accuracy due to the small size of the study population. Out of the study population, 200 participants, comprising 151 males and 49 females, accurately completed the questionnaires. The adoption of census sampling is particularly justified in this context due to the manageable size of the target population, allowing for detailed analysis and interpretation of responses. Furthermore, including the entire population ensures a higher sampling rate for a complete representation of the study population without introducing sampling bias (Kumar, 2019). This approach also aligns with best practices in educational research, where the objective is to capture the full scope of perspectives within a defined group (Bryman, 2016).

4.3. Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire titled "Physical Education Students Perception Questionnaire (PESPQ)". The instrument was designed to consist of two sections, i.e., A and B. Section A elicited demographic data of respondents, while section B was designed in line with the key variables of the study using a modified Likert's attitudinal 4-point scale. A panel of three experts in the HPERS Department validated the instrument in terms of content, construction and validity. To establish the instrument's reliability, the researchers administered 10 copies of validated PESPQ to 10 PE students of the 2021/2022 cohort in the HPERS Department using the test-retest reliability technique. Data obtained were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) with the test-retest reliability coefficient ($r = 0.89$), which confirms the consistency and dependability of the collected data.

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

A total of 248 copies of validated PESPQ were administered to respondents over four weeks. The academic counsellor for level 400 and research assistants aided

data collection. The counsellor and research assistant were given 248 copies of PESPQ to be administered to respondents using the spot-check technique to ensure their ethical compliance and data quality. This strategy, however, yielded 200 copies of PESPQ that were properly filled and returned. This amounted to 81% of the return rate. The data collected was collated, analysed, and interpreted Babbie (2020).

4.5. Data Analysis Procedure

Data collected from the valid 200 questionnaires were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The specific steps and methods employed included: for the descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages were used to summarise demographic data such as sex and designation. Means and standard deviations were calculated to describe the central tendency and variability of students' perceptions toward Physical Education course contents which was used to rank the first courses for hypothesis four.

The inferential statistics were also used to test hypotheses one, two, and three. The first hypothesis, which stated that the perception of students towards the PE curriculum would not significantly differ by sex, was tested using the Chi-square test at a 0.05 level of significance. The second hypothesis, which posited that the perception of students towards the PE curriculum would not significantly differ by designation, was also tested using the Chi-square test at a 0.05 level of significance. The third hypothesis, which suggested that there is no significant difference in students' perception towards the PE course contents, was tested using the Chi-square test at a 0.05 level of significance.

All analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 23. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was applied in all the tests to assess the significance of the findings.

5. Results

The Chi-square test was conducted to analyse the relationship between categorical variables, with the assumption that the data consisted of independent observations, categorical variables, adequate sample size, and sufficient expected frequencies in each cell of the contingency table. After passing the test, the obtained data was subjected to analysis. The chi-square test was appropriate for the study due to the ability to analyse categorical data and identify associations without requiring assumptions about data distribution.

The results in **Table 1** indicate the demographic distribution of respondents in the study. It could be observed that 75.5% of the total respondents were male, being the majority, while the remaining 24.5% of them, being the minority group, were females. Concerning the designation of respondents, 62.5% of the total respondents were athletes, while the remaining 37.5% of them were non-athletes. This implies that most of the respondents who participated in the study were university athletes. Furthermore, the distribution of age group showed that no respondents were below 20 years, 51% of them were 20 - 30 years old, while the

remaining 49% were of ages above 30 years.

The details of the results are presented below.

Table 1. Demographic distribution of respondents.

Sex	F	%
Male	151	75.5
Female	49	24.5
Total	200	100
Designation		
Athlete	125	62.5
Non-athlete	75	37.5
Total	200	100
Age		
Below 20 years	0	0.00
20 - 30 years	102	51.00
Above 30 years	98	49.00
Total	200	100

Test of hypothesis one

Hypothesis one, which stated that the perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum would not significantly differ by sex, was tested using the Chi-square statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. From the results of hypothesis 1 in **Table 2**, it could be observed that a non-significant Chi-square value ($X^2 = 3.677$; $P > 0.05$) was obtained at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, hypothesis one as stated is hereby retained and this implies that the perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum did not significantly differ by sex. The percentage distribution in the table above solidifies the findings as 86.7% of male and 85.7% of female respondents expressed positive perceptions towards the Physical Education curriculum.

Retaining hypothesis, one is justified, as the Chi-square value ($X^2 = 3.677$) has no significant difference in student perceptions of the Physical Education curriculum by sex. This conclusion is reinforced by the percentage distribution, which shows that 86.7% of male and 85.7% of female respondents had a positive perception of the curriculum and that sex does not play a huge role in how students perceive the curriculum.

The result is presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Difference in perception of students towards Physical Education curriculum by sex.

Sex	Respondents Perception				Total	X ² -value	Sig
	Highly Negative	Negative	Positive	Highly Positive			
Males	Count	4	16	81	50	3.677	0.298
	Expected	6.0	14.3	81.5	49.1		
	%	2.6%	10.6%	53.6%	33.1%		

Continued

	Count	4	3	27	15	49
Females	Expected	2.0	4.7	26.5	15.9	49.0
	%	8.2%	6.1%	55.1%	30.6%	100.0%
	Count	8	19	108	65	200
Total	Expected	8.0	19.0	108.0	65.0	200.0
	%	4.0%	9.5%	54.0%	32.5%	100.0%

Test of hypothesis two

Hypothesis two, which stated that the perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum would not significantly differ by designation, was tested using the Chi-square statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

From the results of hypothesis two, it could be observed that a non-significant Chi-square value ($X^2 = 1.820$; $P > 0.05$) was obtained at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, hypothesis two as stated is hereby retained and this implies that the perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum did not significantly differ by designation. The percentage distribution in **Table 3** cements the findings as 84% and 90.6% of athletes and non-athletes, respectively, who participated as respondents in the study expressed positive perceptions towards the Physical Education curriculum.

Hypothesis two is justified because the chi-square value ($X^2 = 1.820$; $P > 0.05$) indicates no significant difference between students' perception of the Physical Education curriculum by designation. Not only is this conclusion supported by the percentage distribution (84% of athletes and 90.6% of non-athletes having positive perception), but the designation has little effect on students providing a positive or negative perception of the curriculum.

The result is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Difference in perception of students towards physical education curriculum by designation.

Designation	Respondents Perception				Total	X ² -value	Sig
		Highly Negative	Negative	Positive	Highly Positive		
	Count	6	14	65	40	125	
Athletes	Expected	5.0	11.9	67.5	40.6	125.0	
	%	4.8%	11.2%	52.0%	32.0%	100.0%	
	Count	2	5	43	25	75	
Non-athletes	Expected	3.0	7.1	40.5	24.4	75.0	1.820
	%	2.7%	6.7%	57.3%	33.3%	100.0%	0.611
	Count	8	19	108	65	200	
Total	Expected	8.0	19.0	108.0	65.0	200.0	
	%	4.0%	9.5%	54.0%	32.5%	100.0%	

Test of hypothesis three

Hypothesis three, which stated that there is no significant difference in students' perceptions of Physical Education course contents, was tested using the Chi-square statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in the table below.

The results of hypothesis three show that a non-significant Chi-square value ($X^2 = 5.288$; $P > 0.05$) was obtained at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, hypothesis three as stated is hereby retained and this implies that no significant difference was recorded in students' perception towards Physical Education course contents. A review of the means and ranking of the top ten courses in the Physical Education Curriculum attested to the result obtained above. First Aid and Sports Injuries with a mean of 3.7250 was unanimously ranked 1st by the respondents. Ranking 2nd and 3rd on respondents' perception scale were Human Anatomy and Physiology and Teaching Soccer, with means of 3.5900 and 3.5700 respectively. Both On-Campus Teaching Practice and Off-Campus Teaching Practice, with a mean of 3.5350 each, ranked 4th, while Teaching Track Events (mean = 3.5200), High School Teaching Methods & Instruction (mean = 3.5100), Curriculum Studies in PE (3.3900), Nutrition and Health (mean = 3.3700) and Foundations of PE and Sports were ranked 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th respectively on respondents' perception scale for the topmost 10-course contents in the curriculum.

The chi-square value ($X^2 = 5.288$; $P > 0.05$), and thus, the results justify retaining hypothesis three, because the results do not suggest any significant difference in perceptions of PE course contents by the respondents. This conclusion is further supported by the rankings and means of the top ten courses, with the perceived value of each course, showing the same pattern in the responses. This consistency in course rankings revealed that the respondents did not perceive the different course contents in any way. Refer to **Table 4** for further details.

Table 4. Difference in students' perception towards physical education course contents.

SD	Selected Course Contents	Mean	SD	Rank	X ² -value	Sig
1	Teaching Track Events	3.5200	0.74321	6 th	5.288	0.948
2	Teaching Soccer	3.5700	0.70540	3 rd		
3	Foundations of PE and Sports	3.2850	0.79178	10 th		
4	Curriculum Studies in PE	3.3900	0.77518	8 th		
5	High School Teaching Methods & Instruction	3.5100	0.72285	7 th		
6	Human Anatomy and Physiology	3.5900	0.63555	2 nd		
7	Nutrition and Health	3.3700	0.77206	9 th		
8	First Aid and Sports Injuries	3.7250	0.52032	1 st		
9	On-Campus Teaching Practice	3.5350	0.71507	4 th		
10	Off-Campus Teaching Practice	3.5350	0.71507	4 th		

6. Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study revealed that students' perception of the Physical Education curriculum did not significantly differ by sex, with the majority of both male (86.7%) and female (85.7%) respondents expressing positive perceptions towards the PE curriculum. This finding agrees with the findings from the study of [Omar-Fauzee et al. \(2009\)](#), which investigated college students' perception of physical education classes during their high school days. The results showed that no significant differences in means were found between the male and female students. Supporting the finding above is the study of [Ghofrani and Golsanamlou \(2012\)](#), which investigated students' perception of Physical Education courses and their relationship with their participation in sports activities. It was discovered through the study that most students had positive perceptions and favourable attitudes toward Physical Education lessons. However, in all variables, boys adopted more favourable attitudes than girls and spent more of their leisure time in sports activities than girls, while younger students adopted more favourable attitudes than older ones. The study of [Leuciuc \(2018\)](#) involving 166 undergraduate and master students (age 22.83 ± 5.80) from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, whose distribution includes: undergraduate male—61, undergraduate female—58; master male—28, master female—19, further authenticates this study. The results for ANOVA analysis between genders indicated significant differences between males and females in all three analysed situations (undergraduate, master, and overall), but the analysis made inside gender (undergraduate, master) did not show any statistical difference.

Secondly, the study also found out that the perception of students towards the Physical Education curriculum did not significantly differ by designation. The percentage distribution cements the findings as both athletes (84%) and non-athletes (90.6%) showed positive perceptions of the Physical Education curriculum. This study's finding aligns with observations made by other scholars concerning the significance attributed by undergraduates to competitiveness and the correlation identified between competitive sports and their attitudes toward physical education in schools. Many believe that athletic experience positively influences perceptions toward Physical Education lessons ([Harvey & O'Donovan, 2013](#)). The findings of [Ghofrani and Golsanamlou \(2012\)](#) show that most students had positive perceptions and favourable attitudes towards Physical Education lessons, which underlies the indifference in perceptions of athletes and non-athletes towards the Physical Education curriculum. Indeed, these findings resonate with the societal perception of the subject, which is particularly evident in perceptions related to effort and competitiveness. In recent years, researchers have also found out that the majority of undergraduate students in the physical education degree program have expressed satisfaction with the subject both in primary and secondary education ([Eirín-Nemiña et al., 2024](#)).

In addition, the study revealed obtained at 0.05 level of significance that no significant difference existed in students' perception towards Physical Education

course contents, with First Aid and Sports Injuries unanimously ranked highest by respondents. This was closely followed by Human Anatomy and Physiology, Teaching Soccer in second and third positions. Both On-Campus Teaching Practice and Off-Campus Teaching Practice ranked 4th, while Teaching Track Events, High School Teaching Methods & Instruction, Curriculum Studies in PE, Nutrition, and Health, and Foundations of PE and Sports ranked 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th respectively on respondents' perception scale for the topmost ten-course contents in the curriculum. The top-ranked course, "Sports Injuries and First Aid", was chosen because of its practical relevance and excellent skills in dealing with emergencies in the sports setting. Everyone dealing with athletes or teaching in Physical Education wants to have this hands-on approach because students value this approach and its safety impact.

The finding was similar to the study of [Gorgon, Aristide, Deye, Ferrand, and Alphonse \(2020\)](#), which evaluated the teaching of physical education and sports activities by students in Physical Education, which aligns with the above findings. They discovered that the adaptability of course content to students' needs was rigorous, but satisfying for 81.1% of the students, and the quality of work was balanced for 72.2%. The courses provided favoured sufficient participation for 74.4% of the students, and the mode of assessment of learning was appropriate. As much as 62% of the respondents agreed that the content of the teaching is consistent and complimentary with the other lessons of the training, and 81.1% of them believed that the teaching of the contents seemed complete. Also, good structural and institutional organisation of teaching was satisfactory regarding the schedule and pace of the lessons, 64.4%; hourly volume allocated to the lessons, 71.1%; material conditions, 68.9%. [Fu \(2024\)](#) also supported the findings above, when he discovered through his study that teaching explanation and demonstration, venue equipment, and physical education class schedule had the most significant influence on the quality of physical education courses. The quality of physical education courses in the selected colleges and universities was good, scoring 88.93 points. When the quality of physical education courses is excellent and sound, the confidence level of students' health status corresponding to excellent and sound health is greater than 80%, indicating that physical education courses strongly correlate with students' health. Among the various indicators of courses analysed using big data were teaching explanation and demonstration, venue equipment, and students' health status, which has stronger correlations.

7. Conclusion

Physical education in Ghanaian universities is of great significance to the development of the whole value chain in the nation's education landscape. To realize the goal of Physical Education in the country, it is important to evaluate the value-based judgment of students undergoing training in this academic discipline in our colleges and universities. This study has been able to establish that irrespective of gender and designation, preservice teachers hold physical education in high esteem and lay credence to the important role it plays in our colleges and universities.

To improve the quality of Physical Education teaching and maintain the effective development of the programme in our higher institutions, synchronisation of course is needful. This will not only improve the quality of physical education teaching at the university level but will also increasingly lead to the turning out of quality graduates who are best suited for the secondary school system in Ghana.

8. Recommendations

To address the first research question, universities should aim to be gender inclusive by creating programmes to remove barriers that will allow females to participate in Physical Education. Consequently, an equal number of male and female students can be encouraged through initiatives and supporting systems, specifically gender-neutral sports programmes, gender-inclusive curricula, equal participation in leadership, and scholarship awards to create equal participation.

The second research question addresses how institutions should give tailored support to students in different roles, e.g., class representatives and general students. Such a practice ensures that designations experience equal expansion within the Physical Education curriculum as they work towards inclusion and inclusion of the community in learning. Physical Education curricula at universities must be standardised. This will ensure consistent and relevant course content to produce well-trained graduates. The curriculum should be based on standards and trends relevant to the country yet be evaluated and updated regularly.

Furthermore, modern facilities, equipment, and technology investment will enhance the overall training quality. Additionally, building partnerships with sports organisations can allow students proper hands-on experiences. There should be allocation and awareness campaigns that will help policymakers make Physical Education a priority in funding all over the institution.

9. Implications

The findings of this study are relevant to the development of physical education at Ghanaian universities. It first emphasises the importance of using such inclusive strategies to bridge the gender gaps and, therefore, make Physical Education programmes equalitarian. Secondly, it suggests that creating environments in which students are supported while recognising and attending to students' different roles will increase engagement and motivation. Findings also recommend that institutions harmonise their curriculum so that all students are trained consistently on national educational standards. Finally, the importance of adequate investment in infrastructure, partnerships, and policy support is stressed in supporting the overall quality and impact of Physical Education so that graduates are prepared adequately to contribute to the education and sports sectors in Ghana.

Ethical Concerns

The participants read the purpose of the study, and those who agreed to participate signed the consent form before being given the questionnaire to complete.

Participants' Consent to the Publication

The participants gave their consent to publish the paper.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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