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When space, time, and support fall short: the realities of physical education teaching in the Philippines

Cuando el espacio, el tiempo y el apoyo son insuficientes: las realidades de la enseñanza de la educación física en Filipinas

Ruben L. Tagare, Jr.

College of Human Kinetics, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato, Philippines

Center for Human Kinetics and Wellness Studies, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato, Philippines

*Correspondence Author: Ruben L. Tagare, Jr., tagareruben@usm.edu.ph

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Abstract
This study aimed to explore the challenges faced by physical education (PE) teachers in implementing quality instruction in the Philippine context, focusing on student-related, teacher-related, environmental, and institutional factors. Utilizing a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach, the study gathered in-depth insights from thirty-five PE teachers selected through purposive sampling to ensure participants had relevant experience and contextual understanding of the research problem. Data were collected using validated open-ended interview questions, allowing participants to freely express their experiences and perceptions. Thematic analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's framework to identify recurring themes and sub-themes, ensuring systematic extraction of core ideas from the participants' responses. Findings revealed that the main challenges include limited facilities and equipment, large class sizes, time constraints, insufficient professional development opportunities, low student motivation, behavioral issues, and minimal support from parents and school administration. These challenges highlight the complex interplay of factors that influence the quality of PE instruction and demonstrate the need for teacher adaptability, creativity, and resilience in overcoming systemic and contextual barriers. The study further suggests that the success of PE programs is contingent upon not only teacher effort but also the alignment of institutional support, stakeholder engagement, and equitable access to resources. Overall, this research underscores the critical importance of addressing these multi-dimensional challenges to enhance instructional quality, promote holistic student development, and reinforce the value of PE within the broader educational framework. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the realities of PE teaching in the Philippines and provide insights that may inform policy, professional development, and future research in the field of PE and teacher education.

Keywords: classroom management; educational resources; professional development; student engagement; teacher challenges

Resumen
Este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar los desafíos que enfrentan los profesores de Educación Física (EF) al implementar una enseñanza de calidad en el contexto filipino, con énfasis en factores relacionados con los estudiantes, los docentes, el entorno y las instituciones. Se utilizó un diseño de investigación cualitativa con enfoque descriptivo, lo que permitió recopilar información detallada sobre las experiencias de los participantes. La muestra estuvo conformada por treinta y cinco docentes de EF, seleccionados mediante muestreo intencionado, asegurando que contaran con experiencia relevante y conocimiento contextual sobre los retos de la enseñanza. Los datos se obtuvieron mediante entrevistas abiertas y validadas, lo que facilitó que los participantes compartieran libremente sus percepciones, vivencias y estrategias de afrontamiento. El análisis temático se llevó a cabo siguiendo el marco de Colaizzi, identificando temas y subtemas recurrentes y extrayendo sistemáticamente las ideas centrales de las respuestas. Los hallazgos señalaron que los principales desafíos incluyen la falta de instalaciones y equipos adecuados, grandes tamaños de clase, limitaciones de tiempo, oportunidades de desarrollo profesional insuficientes, baja motivación de los estudiantes, problemas de comportamiento y escaso apoyo de los padres y de la administración escolar. Esto evidencia la compleja interacción de factores que inciden en la calidad de la enseñanza y

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resalta la necesidad de que los docentes sean creativos, resilientes y adaptables ante las barreras contextuales y sistémicas. El estudio también muestra que el éxito de los programas de EF depende no solo del esfuerzo del docente, sino también de la alineación institucional, la participación de las partes interesadas y el acceso equitativo a los recursos. En conclusión, esta investigación destaca la importancia de abordar estos desafíos multidimensionales para mejorar la calidad educativa, fomentar el desarrollo integral de los estudiantes y reforzar la relevancia de la Educación Física. Los resultados aportan una comprensión más profunda de la práctica docente en Filipinas y ofrecen información valiosa para orientar políticas, el desarrollo profesional y las investigaciones futuras en EF.

Palabras clave: gestión del aula; recursos educativos; desarrollo profesional; participación estudiantil; desafíos para los docentes

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Introduction

Teaching PE is a dynamic process that integrates movement, skill acquisition, and the promotion of lifelong health and wellness among learners (Donkor & Hormenu, 2021). It requires teachers to blend pedagogical knowledge with practical expertise to create meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Block, 2016). PE instruction also emphasizes the development of social skills, teamwork, and resilience through structured physical activities (Gairns et al., 2015). Beyond motor proficiency, it cultivates positive attitudes toward physical fitness and overall well-being, making it an essential component of holistic education (Almusawi et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, delivering quality PE instruction has long been shaped by systemic, cultural, and resource-related challenges (Gulanes et al., 2024). Many schools struggle with inadequate facilities, outdated equipment, and limited institutional support, all of which hinder the effective implementation of PE curricula (Guo et al., 2023). Teachers also face difficulties managing large class sizes and diverse skill levels, resulting in uneven learning opportunities across students (Pels et al., 2022). Moreover, the traditional prioritization of academic subjects over physical learning contributes to reduced PE engagement and undervaluation of its role in student development (Wee et al., 2021).

The pressing problems confronting PE in the Philippines extend beyond material shortages and touch on broader pedagogical and environmental concerns . Student behavior issues, declining interest in physical activities, and increased screen dependence challenge teachers' ability to sustain active and meaningful participation (Nioda & Tagare, 2024). Limited instructional time—often restricted to one hour per week—further compromises opportunities for skill mastery and continuous engagement (Agaser et al., 2012). External constraints such as extreme weather conditions, cultural restrictions, and variable administrative support also impede consistent program implementation. These accumulated challenges underscore the complexity of ensuring quality PE delivery in public school settings (Mancera et al., 2025).

Recent studies have examined the barriers affecting PE instruction and highlighted issues such as resource scarcity, overcrowded classes, and declining student motivation (Rosita Hernani et al., 2025). Philippine-based research has also emphasized

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the relationship between teacher preparation and instructional quality, noting that insufficient training can significantly affect classroom implementation (Graciano, 2022). Other investigations point to the influence of school leadership and policy constraints on the sustainability of PE programs (Toquero, 2020). While these studies provide valuable insights, they collectively demonstrate the multifaceted nature of PE challenges and the need for deeper contextual understanding (Ybanez, 2022).

Despite existing studies documenting instructional barriers in Physical Education, there remains a critical gap in understanding how teachers actively cope with and navigate these challenges in real-world public school contexts. From a theoretical standpoint, teaching is not merely shaped by constraints but by teachers' adaptive capacities, agency, and meaning-making processes as they respond to structural limitations. Examining coping mechanisms is therefore essential, as it reveals how teachers sustain instructional quality, professional commitment, and student engagement despite persistent obstacles. Without this lens, challenges are framed only as deficits rather than as dynamic conditions that elicit professional responses and pedagogical adaptation.

While studies such as Mancera et al. (2025) and Rosita Hernani et al. (2025) have identified barriers to effective PE instruction, these works primarily focus on isolated factors or policy-level constraints and give limited attention to teachers' lived experiences and coping practices. In contrast, the present study advances the literature by offering a unified analysis of teacher-related, student-related, and environmental challenges as they intersect within daily instructional realities. More importantly, it foregrounds teachers' voices to illuminate not only what hinders quality PE instruction but also how teachers actively respond to these constraints through creativity, adaptability, and professional agency. This dual focus on challenges and coping provides a more holistic understanding of PE teaching that extends beyond problem identification.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the general research question: What common challenges hinder the implementation of quality Physical Education instruction in Philippine public schools, and how do teachers cope with these challenges? The general purpose of the study is to explore and categorize these challenges while simultaneously examining the coping mechanisms employed by PE teachers within constrained educational settings. By capturing the interplay between obstacles and adaptive practices,

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this research contributes novel insights to Physical Education scholarship, teacher education, and curriculum studies. It further provides empirical grounding for institutional reflection and policy discourse, emphasizing that quality PE instruction is sustained not only by resources and structures but also by teachers' resilience and professional agency.

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing a descriptive approach to explore the challenges that hinder the implementation of quality PE instruction. Qualitative research seeks to understand meanings, experiences, and perspectives by examining participants' narratives in depth (Królicka et al., 2021). A descriptive qualitative approach aims to present a comprehensive and accurate account of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals, without manipulating variables or imposing predetermined theoretical structures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The use of a qualitative descriptive design is appropriate for this investigation because the research focuses on understanding real-world challenges faced by PE teachers, which are best explored through richly detailed narratives. This design also allows the consolidation of diverse experiences from multiple participants, enabling the identification of common patterns and shared concerns. Moreover, it accommodates naturalistic inquiry, giving participants the freedom to articulate their challenges in ways that reflect their genuine daily teaching realities.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The study involved a total of 35 Physical Education teachers from public elementary and secondary schools who were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are deliberately chosen based on specific characteristics or knowledge relevant to the research topic (Andrade, 2021). This approach was deemed appropriate because the study required teachers who had direct experience teaching Physical Education at the basic education level and could provide meaningful insights into the instructional challenges encountered in school-based PE settings. By selecting participants with firsthand

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familiarity with the phenomenon, the study ensured that the data collected were rich, relevant, and firmly grounded in authentic classroom and school contexts.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in this study was a set of open-ended guide questions designed to elicit detailed narratives from the participants. The instrument was validated by experts in PE and qualitative research to ensure content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. Open-ended questions were necessary because they allowed participants to describe their experiences freely, without being restricted by fixed response categories. This flexibility enabled the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives and uncover insights that may not emerge from structured questioning. The validation process also ensured that the questions were appropriate, unbiased, and capable of generating comprehensive qualitative data.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological framework, a rigorous method for extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, and clustering themes from participants' descriptions (Edward & Welch, 2011). The process involved seven steps: familiarization with the data, extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, organization of meanings into theme clusters, development of an exhaustive description, identification of the fundamental structure, and validation of the results with participants. This analytical approach was most appropriate because it allowed for systematic interpretation of participants' lived experiences while preserving the authenticity of their narratives. Furthermore, Colaizzi's method ensured that the thematic results remained grounded in the participants' actual words, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

Results

Table 1 presents the themes and core ideas that encapsulate the various challenges encountered by teachers in delivering quality PE instruction. The themes were derived from the participants' narratives and organized according to recurring patterns observed across their responses. This thematic structure highlights the multifaceted nature of

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instructional barriers, offering a clearer understanding of the student-related, teacher-related, and environmental factors affecting PE implementation.

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas on the Challenges of Teachers in Teaching PE

Themes	Core Ideas
Resource and Facility Limitations	- Insufficient equipment (balls, nets, bats, etc.) hinders demonstration and skill practice. - Limited or inadequate facilities (courts, gyms, fields) restrict student movement. - Funding constraints prevent acquisition or maintenance of equipment and facilities.
Large Class Sizes	- Difficulty in managing 40–50+ students reduces teaching efficiency. - Limited individualized attention for each student. - Safety concerns increase during activities with many students.
Time Constraints	- Short or infrequent PE sessions limit skill practice. - Academic prioritization reduces PE class time. - Inconsistent routines make it hard to develop progressive learning.
Student-Related Factors	- Low motivation and interest in physical activities. - Behavioral issues disrupt class flow and reduce teaching time. - Health or cultural/religious restrictions limit participation.
Teacher-Related Factors	- Insufficient professional training or development opportunities. - Knowledge gaps in specific areas (e.g., folkdance, music). - Emotional and mental strain from adapting lessons in challenging conditions.
Environmental Factors	- Unpredictable weather (rain, extreme heat) prevents outdoor activities. - Lack of adaptable indoor spaces limits continuity of lessons. - Scheduling conflicts with other school activities reduce PE time.
Parental and School Support	- Limited parental engagement in PE activities. - Minimal administrative support affects resources and guidance. - Lack of advocacy reduces prioritization and funding for PE programs.

Discussion

Resource and Facility Limitations. The participants consistently described resource and facility shortages as one of the most pervasive barriers affecting their ability to deliver quality PE instruction. This means that the absence of adequate sports equipment, instructional materials, and appropriate activity spaces restricts teachers from

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fully implementing standards-based lessons and skill-based learning experiences. This implies that PE instruction becomes largely constrained, reducing opportunities for students to meaningfully engage in physical activities and develop essential competencies. According to the research participants, such limitations disrupt instructional flow and hinder teachers' capacity to demonstrate skills effectively. To wit:

> *"It is very difficult to teach without proper equipment and facilities because we cannot apply the skills we are trained to teach" – P3*

> *"Some activities cannot be introduced because our school has no appropriate area or equipment for the sport" – P11.*

These findings are reinforced by studies showing that insufficient equipment and poor facility conditions significantly hinder the effective delivery of PE programs, especially in developing educational systems (Mwaanga & Chifita, 2025). Earlier research similarly found that instructional quality declines when teachers lack access to essential sports materials, as these limitations affect students' engagement, safety, and skill acquisition (Quibral et al., 2024). Furthermore, scholars emphasize that facility inadequacies create structural barriers that compromise curriculum implementation and reduce the diversity of activities teachers can offer (Sabado et al., 2025).

Large Class Sizes. Participants described large class sizes as a major challenge that directly affects the quality of PE instruction. This means that teaching overly populated classes limits teachers' ability to provide individualized guidance, ensure safety, and monitor students' performance effectively. This implies that instructional delivery becomes less efficient, with teachers struggling to maintain class management and deliver skill-based activities that require close supervision. According to the research participants, managing large groups often results in reduced learning time and difficulty sustaining students' engagement. According to the research participants:

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"Large class sizes make it hard to give attention to every student, especially during activities" – P7

"Because we have so many students, it becomes difficult to supervise and ensure their safety" – P14.

These findings align with prior studies showing that overcrowded PE classes hinder teachers' capacity to implement structured and meaningful physical activities (Kilue & Muhamad, 2017). Scholars underscore that large classes reduce opportunities for individualized feedback, affecting students' skill development and learning outcomes (Margario et al., 2022). Additionally, earlier research emphasizes that oversized classes place a heavy burden on classroom management, leading to lower instructional quality and decreased student engagement (Tegero, 2022).

Time Constraints. Participants emphasized that limited instructional time is a significant barrier to delivering effective PE lessons. This means that teachers are unable to cover essential competencies, facilitate skill development, and reinforce learning within the short time allotted for PE. This implies that instructional depth is compromised, with teachers resorting to rushed lessons that hinder students' mastery of fundamental skills and concepts. According to the research participants, insufficient time also disrupts the flow of activities, making it difficult to conduct proper warm-ups, demonstrations, and assessments. Based on them:

"It is very challenging to teach PE when we only meet once a week for one hour" – P18

"The limited time affects how well we can explain, demonstrate, and practice the lessons" – P23.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies highlighting that inadequate time allocation is one of the most persistent obstacles in PE instruction (Poblador et al., 2022). Research shows that restricted class periods significantly reduce opportunities for structured practice, skill refinement, and meaningful physical engagement (Sumbilon et al., 2024). Moreover, scholars argue that insufficient time prevents teachers from implementing varied activities, conducting assessments, and maintaining lesson

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continuity—ultimately impacting students' learning and motivation in PE (Quennerstedt, 2019).

Student-Related Factors. Participants described several student-related challenges that hinder effective PE instruction, particularly issues concerning behavior, motivation, and prior exposure to physical activities. This means that classroom management becomes more demanding when students display disengagement, low interest, or disruptive behaviors during PE sessions. This implies that teachers must allocate a significant portion of class time to addressing discipline issues rather than facilitating learning, which weakens the overall instructional quality. According to the research participants, many students are also unfamiliar with basic sports skills or concepts, creating hesitation and fear when participating in activities. To wit:

> *"Students today often lack interest and do not immediately listen even after multiple reminders" – P27*

> *"Some students hesitate because they are not exposed to sports at a young age, so they are afraid to participate" – P14.*

These observations are supported by existing research showing that student behavior and motivation strongly influence the success of PE instruction (Heinz, 2015). Studies emphasize that disinterest in physical activity is growing among learners who are increasingly inclined toward digital entertainment, resulting in reduced participation and engagement during PE classes (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of early exposure to sports and structured physical activities contributes to students' low confidence, apprehension, and skill gaps, making it difficult for teachers to implement lessons smoothly (Kharb et al., 2013).

Teacher-Related Factors. Participants identified teacher-related factors as significant challenges in delivering quality PE instruction, particularly in areas of professional knowledge, skills, and preparedness. This means that teachers' ability to effectively demonstrate, explain, and manage lessons is impacted when they lack

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sufficient training or mastery of content. This implies that instructional quality may suffer, as teachers must compensate for gaps in expertise while simultaneously ensuring student engagement and safety. According to the research participants, continuous self-learning and professional development are often necessary to keep up with curriculum demands and new teaching strategies. Based on the research participants:

"I have to study further and learn new concepts because some topics are unfamiliar, and I need to be prepared for the students" – P6

"Sometimes I seek help from colleagues or download videos to demonstrate activities I cannot perform myself" – P21.

These findings are corroborated by studies indicating that teachers' knowledge, skills, and professional development are critical determinants of PE effectiveness (Kaliba & Ambrožová, 2021). Research highlights that insufficient training reduces teachers' confidence, limits their ability to adapt lessons, and affects the overall learning experience of students (Aldrup et al., 2022). Moreover, scholars argue that ongoing professional support, mentoring, and access to teaching resources are essential for enhancing instructional quality, particularly in challenging school environments (Jin et al., 2025a).

Environmental Factors. Participants highlighted environmental factors as major barriers that affect the delivery of quality PE instruction, including inadequate facilities, unpredictable weather, and limited institutional support. This means that external conditions often constrain teachers' ability to conduct planned activities, adapt lessons, and maintain a consistent PE program. This implies that even well-prepared teachers face challenges beyond their control, which can disrupt learning continuity and diminish students' engagement and skill development. According to the research participants, outdoor activities are frequently affected by weather conditions, while schools often lack proper gymnasiums or courts for various sports. According to them:

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"Sometimes we cannot conduct outdoor classes because of rain or extreme heat, which affects the lesson plan" – P12

"Our school lacks the proper courts and facilities, so we have to adjust activities accordingly" – P3.

These findings align with prior research emphasizing that environmental constraints significantly impact PE instruction and curriculum implementation (Jin et al., 2025b). Studies indicate that inadequate infrastructure, limited school resources, and unpredictable weather create barriers to student participation and learning outcomes (Gorospe, 2022). Furthermore, scholars note that the absence of institutional support and proper facilities forces teachers to constantly adapt lessons, which can reduce instructional effectiveness and limit the variety of activities offered (Chen & Qin, 2024).

Parental and School Support. Participants emphasized that limited support from both parents and school administration poses a significant challenge to implementing quality PE instruction. This means that teachers often have to navigate resource shortages, large classes, and student motivation issues without adequate backing or engagement from key stakeholders. This implies that the success of PE programs depends not only on teacher effort but also on active involvement and support from parents and school authorities, which directly affects student participation and program sustainability. According to the research participants, lack of parental engagement and minimal school prioritization often result in insufficient equipment, inadequate facilities, and limited time for PE sessions. To wit:

"Not all parents participate in school activities, which makes it hard to get their support for PE programs" – P30

"Sometimes the school administration does not prioritize PE, so we lack resources and support" – P17.

These findings are consistent with existing literature indicating that parental involvement and administrative support are critical for successful PE implementation

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(Ahmed et al., 2024). Studies show that schools with active leadership and engaged parents provide better resources, safer environments, and stronger motivation for both teachers and students (Nilson & Goodson, 2021). Moreover, research underscores that insufficient support from these stakeholders can exacerbate other challenges, such as limited facilities, large class sizes, and low student interest, ultimately affecting the overall quality of PE (CG, 2024).

Significance for Educational Policy and Practice

The challenges identified in teaching PE have profound implications for the educational system, particularly in shaping the quality of learning experiences and student outcomes. Resource and facility limitations, for instance, highlight systemic inequities in the provision of essential educational infrastructure. When schools lack proper courts, sports equipment, or indoor spaces, teachers are forced to improvise lessons, which may reduce the diversity and effectiveness of activities offered. This limitation affects students' ability to develop fundamental motor skills, teamwork, and physical literacy, which are core objectives of PE curricula (Francesco et al., 2019). Consequently, the disparity in resource availability can perpetuate inequities in student learning opportunities across different schools and regions.

Time constraints and large class sizes further compound these challenges, affecting instructional quality and teacher-student interaction. Limited PE periods restrict the scope for practice, assessment, and reinforcement of key competencies, while overcrowded classes make individualized guidance difficult. This can lead to reduced student engagement, lower motivation, and inadequate skill acquisition, undermining the holistic development goals of PE (Chew & Cerbin, 2021). Moreover, teachers' professional preparedness becomes critically linked to how effectively they can manage these constraints. When educators are under-supported or inadequately trained, the cumulative effect of time pressures and student behavioral challenges can compromise lesson delivery, classroom management, and overall learning outcomes (Brown et al., 2021).

Finally, insufficient parental and school support underscores the interconnectedness of stakeholders in educational success. Without active involvement

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from parents and administrative prioritization, PE programs may continue to face underfunding, inadequate scheduling, and low recognition within the broader academic framework. This lack of support has broader implications for policy and curriculum planning, signaling the need for systemic approaches that integrate stakeholder engagement as a key component of PE success . Critically, these challenges reveal that the effectiveness of PE instruction is not solely contingent on teacher effort; it is a product of complex interactions among resources, institutional structures, and community involvement, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies that address these multi-layered factors in education.

The coping mechanisms employed by Physical Education teachers reveal their capacity to navigate structural and contextual constraints while sustaining instructional quality. Teachers' reliance on creativity, improvisation, and adaptability underscores how professional agency becomes essential when formal resources, time, and institutional support are limited. This suggests that coping in PE teaching is not merely reactive but represents an active process of instructional problem-solving grounded in experience and commitment to student learning. The use of self-directed professional learning and peer collaboration further reflects how teachers compensate for gaps in formal training and support systems. Collectively, these strategies highlight that teachers' adaptive practices play a critical role in maintaining meaningful Physical Education experiences, even in environments where optimal teaching conditions are absent.

Conclusion

This study underscores that the quality of Physical Education instruction is shaped by the dynamic interaction of student-related, teacher-related, and environmental factors, indicating that effective teaching extends beyond lesson execution alone. These findings carry important implications for education, as they highlight the need for institutional policies that prioritize adequate instructional support, sustained professional development, and context-sensitive curriculum implementation. Strengthening school-level planning, improving access to facilities and instructional resources, and fostering collaborative support systems can help create learning environments where teachers are better equipped to respond to diverse classroom demands. In this sense, the study

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reinforces the view that meaningful PE learning outcomes emerge when instructional practices are supported by coherent and responsive educational structures.

Moreover, the study points to the necessity of rethinking how Physical Education is positioned within the broader educational framework. Educational stakeholders are encouraged to adopt integrated strategies that align teacher preparation, student engagement, and environmental conditions to enhance instructional quality and learner development. For future research, there is a need to examine teachers' coping strategies and adaptive practices more deeply, particularly how these mechanisms influence instructional effectiveness and student outcomes across different educational levels and contexts. Longitudinal and mixed-methods studies may further illuminate how sustained institutional support and professional learning shape resilience and innovation among PE teachers. Ultimately, advancing PE requires not only addressing present challenges but also generating evidence that informs continuous improvement, equity, and sustainability in educational practice.

Limitations

This study is limited by its qualitative design, which focuses on in-depth insights from a specific group of participants and may not fully represent the experiences of all PE teachers in the Philippines. The use of purposive sampling restricts generalizability, as participants were selected based on specific criteria and may share similar contextual experiences. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported interviews may introduce subjective biases, as responses reflect personal perceptions and experiences. Lastly, environmental and institutional factors unique to the participants' schools may not reflect conditions in other regions, limiting the broader applicability of the findings.

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