

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE BPED STUDENTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT:

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of female students enrolled in the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) program at a state university in the Philippines. It aimed to understand the challenges they experience in physical education (PE) settings, their coping mechanisms, and the support systems that influence their participation. Using a phenomenological approach, the study involved all ten first-year female BPED students from two sections who met the criteria for the study. The researchers employed total population sampling and conducted audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns across the data. The students reported a variety of challenges, including physical issues such as health problems and menstrual discomfort; emotional struggles like fear of judgment and low self-confidence; mental stress caused by anxiety and family pressure; and social barriers such as limited support and discomfort in mixed-gender settings. Despite these obstacles, students relied on coping strategies including goal setting, emotional regulation, peer support, and self-motivation. They also benefited significantly from support systems involving family, friends, and teachers. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of fostering inclusive and emotionally supportive environments to encourage active participation and resilience among female students in PE. The study advocates policies and practices that address gender-sensitive concerns, promote emotional well-being, and enhance the holistic development of BPED students.

Keywords: Female Students, Physical Education, Coping Strategies, Support Systems, Challenges, BPED, Qualitative Study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical Education (PE) is crucial for a person's overall growth since it promotes their physical, social, emotional, and mental well-being via age-appropriate physical activities (CHED Memorandum Order No. 75, 2017; Andin, 2019). Similarly, Martin et al. (2017) reported that PE enhances physical health and fitness; develops social skills for social adaptation; fosters emotional expression and regulation; and enhances mental knowledge of movement, rules, and approaches. Fair play, self-esteem, motor skills, and an active lifestyle are all promoted by PE (Aras, 2023; Heper, 2022; Acak, 2020). With the goal of equipping graduates with disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical skills, and reflective practices to meet the psychomotor, cognitive, and emotional needs of learners, all while fostering inclusion and professionalism, the senior Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) students seek to achieve this. UNESCO (2015) defines PE as a curriculum element that encourages lifelong physical activity, which has an impact on academic achievement. In this context, female students' attitudes have a significant

impact on motivation and engagement (Keskin et al., 2019; Marttinen et al., 2019; Rikard & Banville, 2020; Hunuk, 2019; Sproule & Wang, 2019; Figley, 2021). In the Philippines, female BPED students encounter gender-related obstacles like stereotyping and underestimation, but they exhibit resiliency, especially when COVID-19 caused modifications to online PE (Belleza et al., 2023; Lanticse, 2024). Research on their lived experiences is limited, despite their dual responsibilities as pupils and prospective teachers. In order to promote more inclusive and supportive PE environments, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of female BPED students at State University, with an emphasis on their issues, perspectives, and coping mechanisms.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study explored the lived experiences of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) female students in Physical Education settings through a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological study design is a qualitative research methodology that sought to understand the subjective experiences and meanings of individuals. The researchers focused on the personal experiences of BPED female students to gather detailed descriptions of their feelings and what they experienced. The total population sampling technique was employed because the target group was small and clearly defined, allowing inclusion of every eligible individual. The setting provided a rich environment to explore the lived experiences of female BPED students in Physical Education settings.

Participants

The participants of the study were all ten first-year female BPED students enrolled at a state university in the Philippines during A.Y. 2024–2025. They were from two sections and had shared experiences in their PE classes as part of their curriculum. Total population sampling was used because the group was small and clearly defined, allowing all eligible individuals to be included and ensuring no relevant perspective was left out. Data collection continued until saturation was reached, when no new themes or insights emerged, making the findings comprehensive and representative of the population.

Research Locale

The study took place at a state university in the Philippines recognized for this process comprehensive BPED program.

Research Instrument

This study used semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument to investigate the lived experiences of female Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) students. The decision to use in-depth interviews was made with the goal of gathering deep and detailed insights into participants' personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings. A qualitative technique was adopted because it allowed participants to express themselves in their own words and produced rich, personal narratives that quantitative methods could not. The semi-structured interview method was used to maintain flexibility, allowing the researcher to get deeper into particular aspects of the participants' experiences as they came up throughout the interview. For the development of the interview guide, open-ended questions were chosen to allow for deep conversations while covering crucial aspects related to the research objectives.

These questions encouraged participants to openly discuss their experiences, ensuring that the interview was participant-centered. Audio recording was chosen as a data collection method to ensure the accuracy of the participants' responses and facilitate transcription. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were analyzed to identify emerging themes and patterns, which provided important insights into the lived experiences of BPED female students. This strategy helped to ensure that the data collected was both comprehensive and relevant to the research goals.

Data Collection Method

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to explore the lived experiences of female BPED students. This method aligned with the phenomenological approach, focusing on capturing the participants' own words to reflect their personal experiences. Each interview was scheduled at a convenient time for the participant and was audio-recorded with informed consent to ensure accurate documentation. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, and participants were asked to review their transcripts for accuracy, allowing validation and clarification of their shared experiences.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed multiple times to identify key statements and emerging themes. Codes were organized into categories, leading to the identification of main themes.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers asked permission to conduct interview with female BPED students through consent form. All ethical guidelines were followed to protect the rights, privacy, and emotional well-being of the participants. The researchers recognized that the participants' stories might be personal and confidential, so special care was taken in handling their information. In line with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), all personal data were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Participants were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Primary challenges of Female BPED student in PE settings.

Participating in physical activities caused challenges for female BPED students, affecting their physical, mental, emotional and social well-being. Menstruation and health problems made it physically difficult for them to join. Emotionally, they had low confidence and were dissatisfied with their body, particularly in PE classes with boys they felt shy or embarrassed. Mentally, when they anxiety attack or felt stressed, they cannot think properly which made it hard for them to focus and stay motivated in PE. Socially, it was more difficult for them to participate in physical activities due to gender stereotypes and lack of support from their family, friends and teachers. These challenges showed that for female BPED students to feel comfortable and included in physical activities, they needed more attention, support and a safe environment.

Theme 1. Physical

The theme "Physical" referred to the body-related challenges like health problems that kept female BPED students from taking a part in physical activities. Based on their own experiences, menstruation was one of the main problems they faced during physical activities. While they were menstruating, they felt pain and discomfort, which made it difficult for them to join. This meant that health issues like menstruation made it harder for female BPED students to take part in physical activities.

"I have health problems that stop me from doing some physical activities" (P1)

"Based on my own experience as a female, one of the main challenges that i face is our menstruation" (P2)

"When I'm not feeling well, I can't perform properly in PE classes. (P3)

The statements showed that menstruation and other health problems prevented female BPED students from joining physical activities. This was supported by Chigbu et al. (2019), who found that symptoms like pain & fatigue during menstruation can stop teenage girls from taking part in physical activities. Chronic health conditions can limit physical activity participation among individuals with health problems. Van der Ploeg et al., (2020).

Theme 2. Emotional

“Emotional” it’s about the feelings and emotional experiences that female BPED student went through when taking part in physical activities. The responses showed that emotions such as fear of being judged, low confidence and anxiety had an impact on their participation and performance. The respondents stated.

“Fear of being judged because every time i always feel scared to join because i think others might judge me the way i perform” (P3)

“I have lack of self-confidence so i choose to stay quiet instead of joining the activity” (P10)

“I don’t like participating in front of others because I feel like they’re watching and criticizing me. I get really anxious and prefer to just sit out.” (P6)

It showed that fear of being judged and low confidence that made it difficult for female BPED students to join in physical activities. These findings are supported by Sun and Meng (2025) doing physical activities can help reduce social anxiety by building confidence and allowing students to express their feelings better. Wang et al. (2025) also discovered that regular physical activity can make students more emotionally strong, which helps lower their anxiety. This means that although emotional difficulties can make things harder, getting active can also help as way to overcome them.

Theme 3. Mental

The theme “Mental” referred to the cognitive and psychological barriers that female BPED students faced while participating in physical activities. The respondents said that stress, anxiety and personal problems made it hard for them to focus and taking part in physical activities. The respondents stated.

“When my anxiety attacks i cannot think properly and it stress me out to engage in physical activities.” (P5)

“If we have a family problem it can be a barrier for me that’s why i can’t join and focus on our PE class” (P9)

“When I feel anxious, it becomes really hard for me to focus or participate in our PE class.” (P8)

These findings align with the Cognitive Theory (Sweller, 2019), which describes that when too much stress and anxiety increase mental load, limiting students’ capacity for taking information and staying focus during physical activities. And according to Smith and Brown (2021) discovered that external stressors, such as family problems, can affect students’ focus and involvement in PE classes. This supports respondents’ belief that personal issues can become a barrier to participation.

Theme 4. Social

The theme “Social” focused on the social barriers that female BPED students faced when joining physical activities. The answer showed that social challenges such as lack of family support and societal expectations had a significant impact on their performance and participation. The respondents stated.

“Lack of support from my family which can discourage or limit my involvement in physical activity” (P2)

“It’s difficult for me to communicate and participate in physical activities especially to boys because of my gender.” (P7) “Gender barriers limit my participation.” (P8)

This supports the same idea as Sallis et al., (2023) who stated that social support from family and friends is important in how young people engage in physical activities. Chalabaev et al., (2023) discovered that societal stereotypes particularly the belief that some sports are only for males, and this can make it difficult for female BPED students to feel welcomed or safe in PE.

2. Coping Strategies and Mechanisms

Coping methods were how people dealt with stress and difficult situations in their lives. These methods helped people manage their feelings and challenging problems by using different approaches, such as working on solving the problem or learning to control their emotions. Understanding how people coped was important because it could improve their mental health and overall well-being.

Theme 1. Goal Oriented Mindset and Persistence.

This theme highlighted the resilient and goal-oriented mindsets that female BPED students as they pursued their personal goals through physical activity. They also emphasized the value of persistence. The respondents stated.

“Do your best to achieve your goal” (P1)

“Thinking of my goal, and I'm doing all the best to finish what i started” (P2) “Keep doing it until the fear is overcome, and trying until you get it right” (P3)

These statements aligned with Dweck's (2023) theory of the growth mindset, which emphasized that abilities could be developed through continuous effort and hard work. In a similar study, recent research in physical education found that perseverance, a key part of grit, and important in the positive link between physical activity and academic confidence among university students. (Zeng et al., 2023). Additionally, Calo et al. (2024) and Martin & Santos (2019) both reported that educational programs designed to boost grit and resilience significantly increased student motivation and decreased stress, showing how developing persistence was important in education. Female BPED students' effort and commitment were essential for overcoming fear and achieving success.

Theme 2. Social Connection and Support System

This theme represented not only the presence of people, but also how such relationships promoted personal progress and self-confidence. For female BPED students it involved the idea that confidence and positivism often came from those around them. This showed not only the existence of people but also how these connections fostered their personal development and self-esteem.

“Being positive in life is because of spending time with my friends, which makes the challenges I face lighter” (P4)

“Support system like someone who believes in me and my capabilities” (P5)

“Telling myself that i can do it because others can, and I am woman with purpose the motivation words from others” (P6)

This finding was supported by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which claimed that verbal encouragement and observation of others could increase self-efficacy and influenced how people behaved. (Bandura, 2019). It was also similar studies showing that having supportive friends helped adolescents continue exercise programs by making them feel more capable (Li et al., 2023). Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory emphasized that feeling connected and supported by others was an essential human need that contributed to internal motivation, skills, and personal development (Deci & Ryan, 2020). The female BPED students showed how positive and supportive connections helped them gain confidence and resilience.

Theme 3. Awareness and Emotional Regulation

This theme focuses on the importance of understanding oneself including one's strengths, weaknesses, limits and opportunities for growth, and these are the key parts of developing emotional intelligence, confidence, and good relationships. Both answers of female BPED students said that true growth came not from seeking others

approval or competing with people, but from having a clear understanding of who you are and being committed to your own development.

"Knowing my limits helps me respond better when problems occur and having self- confidence." (P7)

"Developing self-confidence focusing on personal progress rather than comparison." (P8)

"Building self-confidence by understanding my limits helps me face challenges better." (P9)

This statement aligned to Smith (2019) said that emotional intelligence started when a person understood their own emotions, behavior and limits. It was also similar studies that a growth mindset helped students focus on learning and self-improvement, instead of comparing themselves to others, this builds self-confidence. (Lee 2015). These theories showed that self-awareness and personal growth were more important than seeking approval or competing with others. Just like female BPEd students shared in their answers.

Theme 4. Personal Enjoyment and Stress Relievers

This theme highlighted how people handled stress and took care of their well-being through simple, fun, and personal activities. It showed the value of enjoying small things, like favorite foods, and using physical activity to express their emotions and care for themselves not just to stay fit, but also to support their mental health and happiness.

"I balance enjoying treats and running to relieve stress happily." (P8)

"Eating my favorite foods like ice cream and fries, and when i am stresses, I do run" (P9)

"Just enjoy what physical activity has to offer." (P10)

This theme showed that people handled stress by doing simple and personal activities that helped their body and feelings. Wansink et.al (2019) found that eating comfort food helped people feel calm and less stressed. And this supported Lee et., al (2025) found that enjoying exercise helped people feel happy and keep doing it. In short, these answers showed that small fun things and enjoyable exercise helped people feel better and stay mentally healthy.

3. Support System are Most Effective in Physical Activities

Support systems referred to the people who provided help, guidance and encouragement y. In this study support systems helped female Bped students to overcome the challenges they experienced in physical education settings. This support came from their family, friends and teachers.

Theme 1. Family and Friends

The theme "Family and Friends" showed that support from family and friends played an important role in helping female BPEd students to feel safe, confident, and willing to keep participating in physical activity. Because when they felt supported by their loved ones, they felt less afraid and more encouraged to do their best in physical activities.

"I feel strong when i have support from my family and friends" (P1)

"Support from loved ones gives me strength to stay active." (P3)

"Being with my family and friends i have confidence to do some physical activity because they support me" (P4)

The female BPEd students showed that when their family and friends support them, they feel safe and confident that's why they are willing to join in physical. Activities. These findings related by Wolbring et.al (2024), said that close social support had a strong positive effect on young people to do physical activities. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2022) and Martin et al. (2016) asserted that family and friends helped students exercise more by boosting their self-confidence in their abilities. It's very important for female BPEd students that they have support from others to feel them that they belong.

Theme 2. Teacher's Recognition and Guidance

The theme "Teachers Recognition and Guidance" highlighted how teacher support can make students feel more motivated. Female BPEd students felt happy when their teacher acknowledges their strength and weaknesses. This made them perform better and participate more in activities, and it also helps them feel more confident. The respondent stated.

"When my teachers know my strength and awareness and weaknesses in physical activities, I can perform better."
(P8)

"Their motivational words can help me to actively participate in physical activities" (P9)

"Encouragement and understanding from teachers help improve my performance" (P10)

It showed that when the teachers noticed their strengths and weaknesses and gave them helpful advice, it made them feel more motivated and better to join in physical activities when the teachers supported and believed them. This is connected to Self-Determination Theory, which said that students feel more motivated when teachers give them choices and help them feel capable (Trigueros et al., 2019; Zimmermann et al., 2021; Leisterer and Paschold 2022; Santos et al. 2021). It was later found that when PE teachers supported students in a positive way, it made students feel happier and more involved in class.

4. Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the findings on the three research questions regarding the lived experiences of female BPED students in physical education settings are based on their challenges, coping strategies, and the support systems that helped them. The conclusions are stated below:

1. The challenges that female BPEd students faced when participating in physical activities were grouped into four main themes: (1) physical challenges, (2) emotional challenges, (3) mental challenges, and (4) social challenges. The findings showed that students often struggled with physical pain, emotional stress, mental pressure, and social expectations. These challenges made it difficult for them to fully participate in and enjoy physical activities. The study recommended that PE teachers recognize all of these problems and provide a learning environment that was safe, inclusive, and encouraging for all female students.
2. The coping strategies and mechanisms used by female BPEd students to overcome challenges were identified in four themes: (1) goal-oriented mindset and persistence, (2) social connection and support system, (3) awareness and emotional regulation, and (4) personal enjoyment and stress relievers. The findings revealed that students who stayed focused on their goals, relied on other people, handled their emotions, and found enjoyment in physical activities were better able to deal with difficulties. These findings suggested that PE programs should allow students to build strong connections with their peers and develop self-awareness, as this would help them stay involved in physical activity.
3. The support systems that helped motivate and encourage female students to participate in physical activities came into two main themes: (1) family and friends, and (2) teacher recognition and guidance. The study discovered that encouragement from family and peers, as well as kind and fair guidance from teachers, improved students' confidence and motivation. The findings showed that when students received acknowledgment and emotional support, they were more likely to continue engaging and improving over time.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The researchers declare that there are no identifiable financial, personal, academic, or professional conflicts of interest that may have affected the conduct, results, or interpretation of this work. This study was only done for academic purposes. It wasn't paid for or backed by anyone, any group, or any institution that would benefit from the results.

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