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# The Influence of College PE Courses on Students' Mental Health: An Empirical Study Taking Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology as an Example

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**Abstract:** By studying the physical education curriculum and students' mental health status of Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, this paper discusses the influence of college physical education curriculum on students' mental health. It is found that the physical education course plays a significant role in relieving students' psychological pressure, improving self-confidence and promoting social skills. At the same time, the diversity of courses, the professional quality of teachers, the improvement of facilities and resources, the participation of students and the combination of psychological counseling are the important factors affecting these effects. Based on the results, this paper suggests that universities should pay attention to the setting and optimization of physical education courses so as to promote the development of students' mental health.

**Keywords:** College physical education course; Mental health; Empirical research

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## 1. Introduction

In the modern education system, the mental health problem of the students is increasingly concerned. With the intensification of social competition and the increase of academic pressure, the mental health problems among college students have become more and more prominent. Psychological problems such as anxiety, depression and stress not only affect students' academic performance and quality of life, but may also have a profound impact on their future career development. As an important part of cultivating students' comprehensive quality, physical education in colleges and universities has its influence on students' mental health and attracted more attention in academic circles. Physical education course is not only an important part of the college education system, but also an important guarantee for the students' physical and mental health development. However, there are still some deficiencies in the current research on the impact of college physical education courses on students' mental health. In particular, there are relatively few studies in this special group of vocational and technical colleges. Students in vocational and technical colleges are different from students in comprehensive universities in terms of curriculum, learning pressure and employment pressure, and their mental health problems have certain particularity. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to explore the specific influence of college physical education courses on the mental health of students in vocational and technical colleges.

## 2. Review of the literature

In recent years, physical activity research on mental health has increased. Sports can relieve stress, improve self-esteem, improve mood, is an important non-drug treatment means. The mechanisms include promoting cerebral endorphin secretion and improving pleasure and well-being. Sports can relieve the symptoms of depression in adolescents and adults, and can also enhance self-esteem and self-confidence. However, there are few studies on the impact of college physical education courses on the mental health of vocational and technical college students. Students in vocational and technical colleges are different from students of comprehensive universities in terms of curriculum, study pressure and employment pressure, and have different mental health needs. Research points out that physical education courses can improve students' mental health level, such as self-esteem, anxiety level and emotional regulation ability. Diversified physical education courses meet the needs of different students, and team sports programs can better promote students' social interaction and teamwork consciousness. However, there are challenges in the implementation, such as curriculum diversity and adaptability, students' participation enthusiasm, and comprehensive intervention of psychological counseling. Research and intervention strategies for Polytechnic students need to be more specific.

### **3. The impact of physical education courses on mental health**

#### **3.1 Relieve psychological stress**

Physical education courses help students to release the pressure in their study and life through various sports programs. During the process of exercise, physical activities can promote the secretion of endorphins, thus bringing a sense of pleasure and satisfaction, and help students relieve stress. As a natural "happiness hormone", endorphin can significantly improve the emotional state of students and reduce the occurrence of anxiety and depression. Moreover, physical activities provide an opportunity to temporarily escape from academic stress, enabling students to face the challenges of study and life with a more relaxed attitude. In the process of exercise, students can temporarily forget their academic troubles and focus on the exercise itself, so as to obtain psychological relaxation and pleasure.

#### **3.2 Improve your self-confidence**

Participating in sports activities can help students build up self-confidence. Through their performance in the physical education course, students are able to see their own progress and achievements, thus enhancing their self-identity and self-esteem. Especially in team sports, students can experience the joy of success and the support of the team through cooperation and competition, and further enhance their self-confidence. Various permanent competitions and challenges in the physical education courses enable students to gain a sense of achievement and improve their self-confidence in the process of constantly surpassing themselves. Even when failing, students can find the motivation and direction to move forward through the encouragement of the team and their own reflection.

#### **3.3 Promote social skills**

Physical education courses provide rich social opportunities. In team sports, students need to work with their teammates to achieve their goals together, which helps to foster their sense of teamwork and communication skills. By communicating and interacting with students from different backgrounds, students' social circle can be expanded and their social skills can be improved. Communication and cooperation in team sports not only enhance students' team spirit, but also develop their ability to resolve conflicts and handle interpersonal relationships. This social experience also has an important impact on students in their future career, and can help them better adapt to the workplace environment and build effective interpersonal networks.

#### **3.4 Improve the emotional state**

Physical activity can also significantly improve students' emotional state. In the process of exercise, the physical activities can release the pressure and tension in the body, so that the students' mood becomes more pleasant and relaxed. Studies have shown that regular physical exercise can effectively reduce depression and anxiety symptoms and improve individual well-being and life satisfaction. Especially in outdoor sports, students can be exposed to nature, breathe fresh air and further promote mental health.

### **4. PE curriculum plays a key role in promoting the development of students' mental health**

#### **4.1 Enrichment and diversification of physical education course content**

The richness and diversity of physical education curriculum content are the key elements to shape students' mental health. A curriculum with a wide range of sports programs can adapt to the needs of students with different interests, physical conditions and sports skills, thus effectively stimulating their enthusiasm for participation. For example, in addition to traditional sports such as running, high jump and basketball, the introduction of diversified sports activities such as yoga, Taijiquan and modern dance can attract a wider range of students and improve their mental health level.

#### **4.2 Teachers' professional ability and accomplishment**

Teachers' professional ability and accomplishment play a decisive role in the implementation of physical education curriculum. An experienced and professional physical education teacher with professional knowledge can design a scientific and reasonable teaching plan, and can accurately guide students to do physical exercise, which not only helps to improve students' physical health, but also can promote their mental health to a greater extent. In addition, the positive encouragement and support given by teachers can also enhance students' confidence and the motivation to participate in sports activities.

#### **4.3 Completeness of sports facilities and resources**

Complete sports facilities and resources are the cornerstone of the smooth progress of physical education courses. Only by providing enough venues, equipment and resources can we create a good exercise environment for students to stimulate their enthusiasm for sports. At the same time, educational institutions shall be responsible for the regular maintenance and renewal of sports facilities to ensure that students carry out sports activities in a safe environment.

#### 4.4 Degree of students' participation in physical education courses

The participation degree of students in physical education curriculum directly affects the effect of physical education curriculum on mental health. Students who actively participate in sports activities are usually better able to experience the physical and mental benefits of sports. In order to improve students' enthusiasm for participation, the school can organize various forms of sports activities and competitions to stimulate students' interest and create a positive sports culture atmosphere. In this way, students can not only exercise in physical activities and improve their physical quality, but also cultivate team spirit, enhance self-confidence and improve their mental health level by participating in sports activities.

### 5. Conclusion and recommendations

This study conducted an in-depth empirical analysis on Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, and the results strongly verified the positive impact of physical education courses on students' mental health. To be specific, physical education courses can not only effectively relieve students' psychological pressure, but also significantly enhance students' self-confidence, promote the development of their social skills, further improve their emotional state, and improve students' concentration and cognitive function.

In order to further strengthen the positive role of physical education course for students' mental health, and improve the students' mental health level, we put forward the following Suggestions to colleges and universities should take more comprehensive and comprehensive measures, not only in the design and implementation of physical education curriculum innovation, combined with mental health education, psychological counseling resources, form a synergistic effect, promote the all-round development of students. In this way, we can not only better cope with the challenges of students' mental health, but also can lay a more solid foundation for the growth of students.

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