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Mental health disparities among educators: A comparative study of physical education and other subject teachers in Mumbai suburban district

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Abstract

This paper investigates the mental health disparities between Physical Education (PE) teachers and teachers of other subjects within the suburban district of Mumbai. The study is motivated by the observed challenges and misconceptions faced by PE teachers, who are often undervalued within the educational hierarchy. Using the Positive Mental Health Scale (PMHI) as the primary instrument, the research evaluates various dimensions of mental health, including emotional well-being, stress, and coping mechanisms among a sample of educators. The findings reveal that PE teachers experience significantly higher levels of stress and lower overall mental health compared to their counterparts teaching other academic subjects.

These disparities are linked to the unique demands of the PE teaching role, the lack of recognition for the subject's importance, and the systemic undervaluation of physical education within schools. The study concludes that addressing these mental health disparities is crucial for the well-being of educators and the overall effectiveness of the educational environment. Recommendations include the development of tailored mental health programs for PE teachers, greater institutional support, and a re-evaluation of the role of physical education in fostering students' holistic development.

Keywords: Mental health, physical education teachers, subject teachers

1. Introduction

In contemporary education, the mental health of teachers is a crucial yet often overlooked aspect that significantly impacts both the learning environment and student outcomes. As educators, teachers are tasked with not only imparting knowledge but also fostering the holistic development of their students. However, while much attention is paid to students' mental health, the well-being of teachers, who are central to the educational process, often remains underexplored. This gap in attention is particularly pronounced among Physical Education (PE) teachers, whose roles are frequently misunderstood and undervalued within the broader academic context. Physical Education teachers, unlike their colleagues in other subject areas, face distinct challenges related to the physical nature of their work, the perception of their discipline as less academically rigorous, and the often limited recognition of the mental demands their profession entails. These factors, combined with the general stressors associated with the teaching profession, suggest that the mental health of PE teachers warrants focused study, especially in comparison to teachers of more traditionally academic subjects.

This paper seeks to address this gap by conducting a comparative study on the mental health of Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers within the Mumbai-Suburban district. The study aims to explore the unique stressors, coping mechanisms, and mental health outcomes among these two groups of educators. By examining the differences and similarities in their experiences, this research will provide insights into the mental health challenges faced by teachers across different disciplines and contribute to the development of strategies to support their well-being.

Understanding the mental health of teachers is not only essential for their personal well-being but also for the overall effectiveness of the educational system. Teachers with good mental health are better equipped to create supportive and productive learning environments, manage classroom dynamics, and engage with students in meaningful ways.

Conversely, poor mental health among teachers can lead to burnout, absenteeism, and reduced teaching quality, all of which have adverse effects on students' academic performance and social development. Given the growing recognition of mental health as a critical component of overall health, this study is both timely and necessary. It will contribute to the broader discourse on teacher well-being by highlighting the specific needs of PE teachers and providing a comparative analysis that could inform policy and practice. In doing so, this research hopes to pave the way for a more holistic approach to teacher support, one that values and addresses the mental health needs of all educators, regardless of their subject area.

1.1. Operational Definitions

1. **Mental Health:** Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing how they think, feel, and behave. It affects how individuals handle stress, relate to others, and make choices throughout life.
2. **Physical Education Teacher:** A physical education teacher is a qualified professional who develops and implements physical activity programs to enhance students' physical fitness, health, and overall well-being. They foster a positive learning environment that promotes healthy lifestyles and develops essential motor skills.
3. **Academic Teachers:** Academic teachers are individuals who specialize in imparting knowledge and skills in a specific subject area. They design and deliver educational programs, guide students' learning, and assess their progress within a formal academic setting, such as a school or university.

2. Objective of the Study

To Compare the adjusted mean score of Mental Health between Physical Education Teachers and Other Subject teachers.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the Selection of subjects, Design of study, Administration of questionnaire and Collection of data, Measurement and Statistical procedure have been described.

4. Design of the Study

To conduct this study under the descriptive type online survey method was used. With the help of standardized questionnaire of mental health by Dr. C.D. Agashe and Dr. R. D. Helode, consisting of 36 questions related to mental health of Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers was circulated to 40 teachers in two equivalent groups from Mumbai district. The researcher received 40 questionnaires duly filled by subjects.

5. Selection of the Subject

The present study has been undertaken with the purpose to collect the information regarding mental health of physical education teachers and other subject teachers of Mumbai district and the present study was Descriptive cum Comparative online survey in nature for collection of data. The Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers from various schools of Mumbai district was selected as subjects. The sample for the present study was 20 physical educationist and 20 subject teachers (N=40) Women selected by using Non-Probability (Convenience) sampling technique.

Table 1: The following questionnaire was selected to compare mental health of Physical Education Teachers and other subject teachers

Variable	Tool Used
Mental Health	Questionnaire PMHI (By Dr. C.D Agashe & Dr. R.D Helode)

The Positive Mental Health Inventory (PMHI), developed by Dr. C.D. Agashe and R.D. Helode, is utilized to assess various dimensions of positive mental health, such as emotional well-being, psychological functioning, social engagement, and life satisfaction.

The researcher uses the PMHI to quantitatively measure the mental health status of physical educationist and subject teachers. It serves as a comprehensive tool for evaluating strengths and resources that contribute to maintaining good mental health. The questionnaire is employed in research studies, clinical assessments, and interventions aimed at promoting mental well-being.

The Positive Mental Health Inventory (PMHI), developed by Dr. C.D. Agashe and R.D. Helode, is utilized to assess various dimensions of positive mental health, such as emotional well-being, psychological functioning, social engagement, and life satisfaction.

6. Administration and Collection of the Data

The purpose of the study was explained to the subjects. Necessary instructions were mentioned on the google form of the questionnaire of Positive Mental Health (PMHI). The test consists of 36 questions related to the Multi-Dimensional Assessment of Positive Mental Health, which covers various dimensions. All the subjects were instructed to respond the questionnaire individually without consulting others. They were given 3 weeks time to answer the questionnaire. All the subjects were told to answer in true or false format. They had to read the questions carefully and choose what they felt with regards to dimensions of mental health as per each question of the questionnaire. Confidentiality of the responses were granted so that the subjects would not hide their real feelings. The questionnaires were sent through online mode to 40 teachers of Mumbai, 20 questionnaires to physical education teachers and rest 20 to Subject teachers of Mumbai, after 3 weeks the responses were closed and the data was collected.

6.1 Statistical Procedure

The data were analysed by the t' test method in order to compare the selected mental health among the two-teacher group i.e physical education teachers and other subject teachers.

6.2 Results and Interpretation

6.2.1 Statistical Procedure used and its Justification

In this chapter analysis of data, collection of data, findings and discussion of findings are presented. Since, there were two groups for this survey study *viz.* Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers the researcher has decided to compare the change in Mean scores of Mental Health of P.E teachers and other subject teachers of Mumbai in order to see the difference in health status regarding the Mental Health, Independent Sample 'T' test was appropriately used for the data analysis.

The Teachers who are employed in various fields of Mumbai city with a least experience of 2 years was selected.

The analysis of the data collected by the researcher from

Physical Education Teacher and subject teacher who are appointed and working in different institutes of Mumbai has been presented in this chapter. Data was collected through administration of standardized Positive Mental Health Inventory (PMHI) questionnaire for obtaining the scores of Mental Health of P.E teachers and Subject teachers.

The data of all the variables was primarily processed for descriptive statistics. Further, with the help of my guide the data was analysed by employing Independent Sample 'T' test. The data is presented, analysed and interpreted in the following manner.

6.2.2 Results on Mental Health

6.2.3 Group Wise Comparison of Mean Scores of Mental Health

The Objective was to compare mean scores of Mental Health of Physical Education teachers and other Subject Teachers. There were two groups of the same Occupation Type, namely, P.E teachers and Subject teacher. The data were analyzed

with the help of t-Test and the results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Group Wise Mean, SD, N, and T-Values of Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers

Teacher	Mean	SD	N	t-value	Remark
Other Teacher	19.8	2.21478	20	0.5	<0.05
Physical Education Teacher	20.05	2.21181	20		

From Table 2, it is evident that the t-value is 0.5 which is significant at 0.05 level with $df = 38$. It shows that the mean scores of Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers differ slightly. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between mean scores of Physical Education teachers and subject teachers is rejected. Further, the mean score of mental health of P.E teachers is 20.05 which is slightly higher than that of Subject Teachers whose mean score of Mental Health is 19.8. It may, therefore, be said that Mental Health of P.E Teachers was found to believe slightly higher than their counter part Other Subject Teachers.

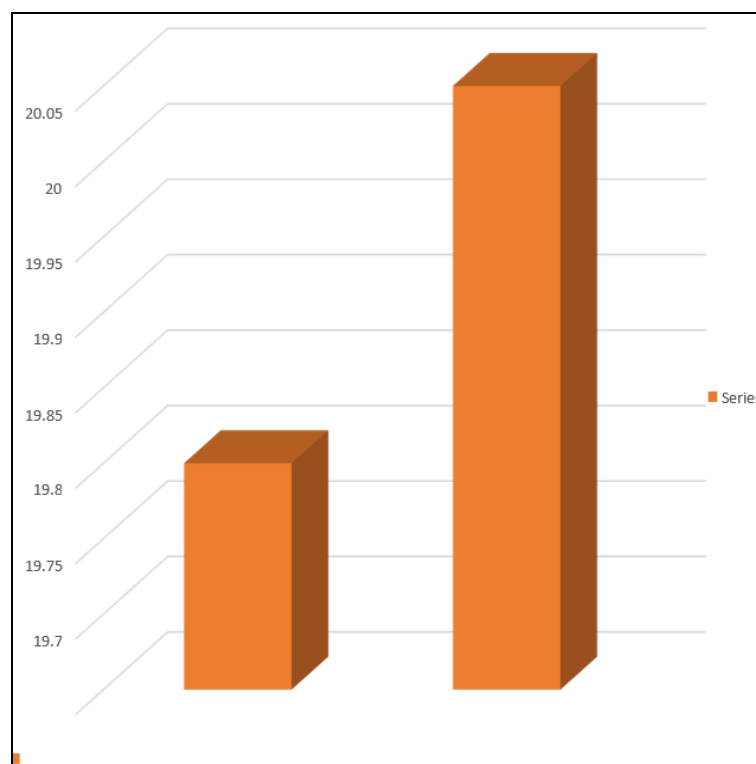


Fig 1: Group Wise Comparison of Mean Scores of Mental Health of Physical education Teachers and Other Subject Teachers

7. Findings

With the above analysis and interpretation of data the following findings may be drawn-

7.1 Findings on Mental Health of both the group

The mean scores of Mental health of Physical Education teachers and other Subject Teachers differ slightly. Where the mean score of Physical Education Teachers is slightly higher than that of Subject Teachers

8. Discussion on Findings

8.1 Group Wise Comparison of Mean Scores on Mental Health

In case of Individual Insight on Mental Health of Physical Education Teachers and Subject Teachers, the result shows that the mean scores of Mental Health of Physical Education Teachers and Subject teachers differ slightly. Further, the mean score of Mental Health of Physical Education Teachers

which is slightly higher than that of Mental Health of Subject Teachers whose mean score has Individual Insight.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

This comparative study on the mental health of Physical Education teachers and other subject teachers in the Mumbai Suburban District reveals significant insights into the unique stressors and coping mechanisms of educators across disciplines. The findings highlight the importance of addressing the mental well-being of all teachers, with particular attention to those in Physical Education, whose roles are often undervalued. By fostering a more inclusive understanding of mental health in education, this research advocates for the development of targeted support systems and policies that prioritize teacher well-being. Ultimately, ensuring the mental health of educators is not only crucial for their personal and professional fulfillment but also for the holistic development of the students they serve. This study

underscores the need for ongoing dialogue, research, and intervention to create a resilient educational environment that values the mental health of all its members.

10. Recommendations

- **Mental Health Programs:** Implement targeted mental health programs tailored for teachers, especially in Physical Education, to address unique stressors and enhance their coping mechanisms.
- **Regular Assessments:** Conduct regular mental health assessments for all teachers to identify issues early and provide timely support.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Promote initiatives that encourage work-life balance to reduce burnout and improve overall well-being.
- **Professional Development:** Offer workshops on stress management and mental health awareness to empower teachers with tools for maintaining mental health.
- **Peer Support Networks:** Establish peer support networks within schools to foster a sense of community and shared resilience among teachers.
- **Reduce Stigma:** Launch campaigns within educational institutions to reduce stigma associated with mental health, encouraging teachers to seek help without fear of judgment.
- **Counselling Services:** Ensure that accessible and confidential counselling services are available to all teachers.
- **Policy Changes:** Advocate for educational policy changes that prioritize teacher mental health as a critical factor in overall educational success.
- **Increased Funding:** Secure funding for mental health resources and support systems within schools, particularly in underfunded districts.
- **Research Continuation:** Encourage further research on the mental health of teachers across different disciplines to develop more effective interventions.

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