





Evaluating middle school physical education students' views on psychological support and emotional intelligence growth

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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to evaluate middle school physical education students' views on psychological support and the development of their emotional intelligence. Conducted in Spring 2024 using the quantitative research model, the study included 186 voluntary participants. Students received psychological support training to enhance emotional intelligence, followed by a data collection tool to gather information. Data were collected using the "students' views on emotional intelligence development and psychological support" tool, which has been tested for validity and reliability. Data were compiled into distribution tables and analyzed to support the findings. Emotional intelligence among secondary school students improved significantly with psychological support, showing positive outcomes. The study highlights the importance of combining psychological support and emotional intelligence development in physical education, which is essential for students' growth. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' emotional intelligence, supported by effective psychological interventions. Gender-based disparities in emotional intelligence between male and female students also showed a decreasing trend. The study ultimately reveals that the psychological support provided to participants was highly successful, resulting in significant enhancements in their emotional intelligence.

Contribution/Originality: This study is original because it examines middle school physical education students' views on psychological support and the development of their emotional intelligence. The research results reveal the level of emotional intelligence in middle school students. In this context, it makes significant contributions to the literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the onset of life, fostering individuals' ability to understand, express, and manage emotions is regarded as one of the most effective methods for societal participation in modern life (Saltanat, Ainagul, Raifa, Karlygash, & Sara, 2022). In the context of mental health outcomes, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a crucial component in the development of resilient communities and the expansion of psychological support networks. Emotional

intelligence denotes the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others. Research illustrating its correlation with diverse psychological facets of health and resilience highlights its significance in the field of psychological support.

The ability to effectively manage emotional experiences greatly impacts mental health outcomes. Guerra-Bustamante, León-del-Barco, Yuste-Tosina, López-Ramos, and Mendo-Lázaro (2019) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and the psychological well-being of adolescents, demonstrating that increased emotional awareness correlates with improved mental health outcomes. Studies demonstrate that adolescents possessing high emotional intelligence encounter less psychological distress, indicating that emotional intelligence may serve as a protective mechanism throughout critical developmental stages.

Building on this concept, San Román-Mata, Puertas-Molero, Ubago-Jiménez, and González-Valero (2020) examined college students and found that physical activity collaboratively influences emotional intelligence and resilience to alleviate psychological distress. This underscores the importance of intervention programs that incorporate emotional intelligence training to enhance mental well-being. Their findings highlight that emotional intelligence facilitates emotional regulation and substantially enhances the development of supportive mechanisms in psychological support environments.

The integration of psychological support into physical education curricula has garnered increasing interest, particularly in middle school settings, where children face significant emotional and social developmental challenges (Piñeiro-Cossio, Fernández-Martínez, Nuviala, & Pérez-Ordás, 2021). Adolescence is a critical transitional phase, and the support provided by educators, particularly in physical education, can significantly impact adolescents' socioemotional health (Mastorci, Lazzeri, Vassalle, & Pingitore, 2024). In addition to offering emotional and mental health support, physical education instructors play a vital role in fostering a learning environment that emphasizes the importance of mental health alongside physical health.

Recent research indicates that the cultivation of children's emotional intelligence (EI) is directly affected by the level of assistance offered by physical education teachers regarding mental health. Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to recognize and regulate one's own emotions and those of others, is essential for effectively managing the complexities of interpersonal relationships and social interactions in middle school (Rico-Gonzalez, 2023). Research by Sarikabak, Ayranci, and Ayranci (2024) demonstrates a strong association between students' perceptions of physical education and their emotional intelligence. Their findings suggest that students who maintain positive relationships with physical education teachers are more likely to engage in emotional learning, thereby enhancing their ability to understand and regulate their emotions. The essential elements of emotional intelligence are the ability to express emotions, empathize with others, and foster a supportive social environment.

The role of teachers in this process is crucial. Educators with high emotional intelligence can significantly influence classroom dynamics and student relationships. A study by Petsos and Gorozidis (2019) demonstrated that physical education instructors with high emotional intelligence are more adept at cultivating collaborative and respectful learning environments. Research reveals that emotionally intelligent instructors significantly influence students, as they are more skilled at recognizing and addressing students' emotional needs. This fosters a setting that alleviates stress, enhances communication, and promotes students' emotional development.

The emotional and pedagogical environment created by educators profoundly affects middle school students' perceptions of psychological support in physical education (Miao, Chai, Xue, & Wang, 2024). When students feel valued and understood, their attitudes toward the content and their willingness to engage in emotional learning are positively affected (Bergin et al., 2024). Conversely, emotionally unsupportive environments can hinder emotional development and lead to negative outcomes, such as less motivation, insufficient emotional self-regulation, and strained interpersonal connections. This highlights the necessity of physical education programs that prioritize both physical skills and the emotional aspects of student interactions and engagement (Tukaiev et al., 2019).

Students' perceptions of psychological support in physical education are shaped by environmental and cultural factors. Socioeconomic status, prior engagement in sports, and cultural attitudes towards mental health can affect students' expectations of physical education teachers and their receptiveness to emotional learning (Åsebo, Løvoll, & Krumsvik, 2022). Evaluating these factors is essential for developing a physical education program that promotes emotional intelligence and improves physical health. The integration of psychological support within physical education is a crucial educational element that requires further examination, particularly because of its potential to influence students' emotional development during a critical phase of their lives (Bicen, Uzunboylu, & Burgul, 2020).

Peer social connections significantly influence views toward psychological support in physical education. Peer relationships during adolescence are crucial for the formation of identity and self-esteem. Beneficial social connections foster an environment in which children feel comfortable expressing their emotions and seeking support when needed, as evidenced by Portela-Pino, Domínguez-Alonso, Alvariñas-Villaverde, and Chinchilla-Mira (2022). Conversely, negative experiences, such as bullying or exclusion, may dissuade adolescents from seeking psychological support, obstructing emotional development. Furthermore, engagement in physical activities markedly enhances emotional well-being, as children participating in sports or analogous endeavors report improved mental health and increased accessibility to support from educators (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2021). Physical activity promotes teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal skills; hence, it demonstrates a positive association with emotional intelligence.

Academic stress is a crucial factor influencing students' likelihood of seeking psychological support. The pressure to excel academically may dissuade students from seeking help, since they may perceive it as a sign of weakness or stigma (Nguyen-Thi et al., 2024). The demands of assignments, assessments, and competition may exacerbate emotional distress, thereby reducing students' emotional intelligence. Students with high emotional intelligence are better at recognizing their emotional states and seeking assistance when necessary, so enabling more effective management of academic stress. Emotional intelligence specifically enhances this interaction.

The emotional aspects of teenagers, such as empathy and experiences of victimization, are closely linked to their views toward physical education. Research by Arufe-Giráldez, Zurita-Ortega, Padial-Ruz, and Castro-Sánchez (2019) reveals that students with a positive attitude towards physical education are more likely to cultivate supportive peer relationships and exhibit increased empathy. Conversely, students who endure abuse may associate physical education with negative memories, hindering their ability to view it as a constructive means for social connection and emotional expression. Victimized students may avoid situations that could foster empathy, thus intensifying feelings of isolation and impeding emotional development.

The investigation of several factors, such as social interactions, physical activity levels, academic pressure, and experiences of victimization, clarifies the intricacies of secondary school students' views on psychological support in physical education. These impressions significantly impact the cultivation of emotional intelligence, underscoring the need for tailored interventions in the physical education curriculum that foster a nurturing environment. Research demonstrates that cooperative learning activities in physical education enhance students' social relationships and emotional intelligence by cultivating empathy, emotional expressiveness, and teamwork (Rivera-Pérez, León-del-Barco, Fernandez-Rio, González-Bernal, & Iglesias Gallego, 2020). Cooperative learning environments provide students with the opportunity to engage, communicate, and resolve conflicts, all of which are essential elements of emotional intelligence.

The transition from cooperative learning activities can be effectively implemented across various educational levels, allowing students to develop crucial socio-emotional skills as they progress. Studies demonstrate that cooperative learning settings in physical education improve physical skills and cultivate emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness (Zhou & Colomer, 2024). This developmental trajectory highlights the importance of integrating psychological support into physical education curricula to improve students' emotional intelligence.

Structured programs, such as the Sports Education Model (SEM), have been effective in cultivating supportive learning environments that improve emotional intelligence. Zhang et al. (2024) contend that SEM encourages students to assume diverse responsibilities within teams, so augmenting leadership, accountability, and a sense of community. Peer interactions and reciprocal support within this framework promote emotional development alongside physical skills. The emphasis on student autonomy and active participation in SEM improves self-esteem and emotional expressiveness, hence linking psychological support with emotional intelligence.

Moreover, emotional intelligence positively influences student health behaviors and academic performance. Trigueros et al. (2019) established a strong correlation between emotional resilience, enhanced by supportive treatments, and academic success. The ability to manage emotions increases students' motivation and commitment to academic pursuits, leading to improved learning outcomes. Furthermore, emotional resilience developed through physical education encourages the establishment of good habits, such as regular physical activity and proficient stress management (Usán Supervía, Salavera Bordás, & Murillo Lorente, 2020). Emotional intelligence acts as a protective mechanism against stress in adolescence, enabling more effective problem-solving.

Kalkan (2022) underscores the significance of motivation as a pivotal element shaped by emotional intelligence. Augmented emotional intelligence fosters intrinsic motivation for physical activity and correlates with increased dedication to academic pursuits. When students recognize psychological support in physical education, their self-efficacy enhances, leading to increased confidence in both physical and intellectual domains. These findings underscore the potential of psychological support in physical education to cultivate a generation of emotionally intelligent individuals who are not only skilled in physical activities but also prepared to excel academically and lead healthier lives. The careful integration of psychological support into the PE curriculum is essential to maximize the benefits on students' emotional and academic trajectories.

Given the body of research on emotional intelligence and psychological support, there remain significant gaps in the literature, particularly regarding secondary school students. Although students are expected to excel in sports activities by utilizing emotional intelligence during this developmental period, it is well known that students engaged in sports also require psychological support. Thus, research is needed to explore the current status of psychological support within schools, especially in relation to the emotional intelligence development of students involved in sports activities.

1.1. Purpose of the Work

The purpose of this study was to assess middle school students' attitudes toward receiving psychological support in physical education, with a particular focus on the development of their emotional intelligence.

2. METHOD

This study was conducted following the qualitative research model. Data were collected using a survey technique, with a focus on gathering information regarding the provision of psychological support aimed at fostering the development of emotional intelligence among middle school students.

2.1. Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 186 volunteer students who were enrolled in and residing at various secondary schools in Kazakhstan. Data collection tools were administered to the students using the Google Forms platform.

2.1.1. Gender

In the gender section of the study, the participants were categorized into groups, as presented in Table 1, followed by a discussion of the results.

Table 1. The gender variable of the participant groups included in the research.

Gender	Male		Female	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Variable	91	48.92	95	51.08

The data presented in [Table 1](#), when examined in relation to the gender variable, the data shows that 48.92% of participants (91 individuals) were male, while 51.08% (95 individuals) were female. These values accurately reflect the distribution of participants by gender.

2.1.2. Class Situation

This section provides a detailed examination of the class information for the volunteer participants in the study. The relevant data is presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Research participant groups are classified according to their situation and distribution.

Department	Seventh grade		Eighth grade	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Variable	89	47.85	97	52.15

[Table 2](#) shows that 47.85% (89 students) were in the seventh grade, while 52.15% (97 students) were in the eighth grade. The class distribution data reflects the actual distribution of participants.

2.2. Procedure

2.2.1. Instrument

The data collection tools used in this research were the "Personal Information Form" and the "Students' Views on Emotional Intelligence Development and Psychological Support."

1. *Personal Information Form (Demographic Data)*: This form included information regarding the participants' gender and grade level.

2. *Tool for Students' Opinions on Emotional Intelligence Development and Psychological Support*: A 5-point Likert-type scale was developed by the researchers to gather secondary school students' opinions on emotional intelligence development and psychological support.

Initially, the tool consisted of 22 items based on existing literature on emotional intelligence and psychological support. The tool was then reviewed by a panel of experts with at least a doctoral degree, including two physical education specialists, two developmental psychologists, and two school guidance counselors. After expert consultation, 18 out of the 22 items were deemed suitable, while four items were removed based on expert feedback.

The final version of the tool consisted of two factors: "Emotional Intelligence Development" and "Psychological Support" for secondary school students. In addition to the main research group, the tool was applied to 98 students as a preliminary test.

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the tool was calculated to be 0.87, indicating that the tool is both valid and reliable. The scale used for responses was as follows: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). The evaluation range for responses is provided below.

M Value

- 1.00 – 1.79 = Definitely I disagree.
- 1.80 – 2.59 = Disagree
- 2.60 – 3.39 = Indecisive
- 3.40 – 4.19 = I agree.
- 4.20 – 5.00 = Definitely I agree.

2.2.2. Application

In Kazakhstan, middle school students' emotional intelligence development is recognized as a priority, with a growing need for psychological support initiatives. As part of this effort, a voluntary educational program focused on "Emotional Intelligence Development and Psychological Support" was introduced in schools. This educational program was announced and facilitated through the mediation of schools.

The educational process covered the following topics:

1. Emotional Awareness Development: Recognizing emotions and maintaining a feeling diary.
2. Empathy Skills Development: Engaging in role-playing activities and group games.
3. Communication Skills Support: Encouraging open communication and active listening.
4. Emotional management techniques: practicing stress management and promoting positive thinking.
5. Social Support and Motivation: Creating a supportive environment and celebrating achievements.
6. Individual Support: Providing advice, guidance, and resources.

A total of 843 secondary school students participated in the training, which was conducted in groups at various times. The subjects were taught using a combination of oral presentations, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, case studies, and video examples. The training program lasted for 40 minutes per session, conducted twice a week over a four-week period, resulting in a total of eight sessions per student.

At the conclusion of the course, a data collection link was sent to students' email addresses via Google Forms, and participation was voluntary. Students were instructed to complete the data collection tool with a focus solely on their "physical education" lessons. They were given one week to complete the form, and a total of 186 middle school students filled out and submitted the data collection tool.

2.2.3. Compliance with Ethical Rules

In this study, the principle of voluntary participation was applied. The research was conducted with students who expressed a willingness to contribute to the study. Participant identities were anonymized through the use of codes to maintain confidentiality. Furthermore, students' inquiries were responded to in accordance with the training content they had received, and clarifications about the data collection instrument were offered to the participants. Additionally, online consent forms were acquired from the families of the participating students to guarantee informed consent.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis entailed the evaluation of statistical data collected from middle school students, employing frequency (f), percentage (%), mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and independent t-test, all performed using statistical software. The outcomes generated by the program were presented in tabular form, accompanied by numerical data, conclusions, and analytical comments.

3. RESULTS

This segment of the research involves the digitization of data collected from middle school students, which is subsequently organized in a tabular format. After each table, the results are provided alongside a thorough analysis of the findings.

Insights from participating students on the improvement of emotional intelligence and the psychological support they received. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistical results derived from 18 statements aimed at capturing participants' perspectives on the enhancement of emotional intelligence and the psychological support provided to them.

The examination of the data presented in Table 3 indicates that the viewpoints of middle school students concerning the activities and events they engaged in after training have been digitized.

Each statement was evaluated individually, and the corresponding findings are presented in detail. According to the findings, all statements fall within the "Strongly Agree" range, indicating a positive perception among the students regarding the training.

The statement that received the highest average rating among middle school students was, *"Receiving education on emotional intelligence development and psychological support makes me happy"* ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.69$). Additionally, the second highest-rated statement was, *"Now I can easily receive psychological support when needed"* ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.67$), demonstrating a significant positive shift in students' attitudes toward seeking psychological support.

Table 3. Descriptive statistical results.

Articles	Expressions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Emotional intelligence development</i>			
1	I have trouble recognizing my feelings.	4.42	0.61
2	I believe that with the development of my emotional intelligence, my analytical intelligence also developed.	4.46	0.58
3	I believe that I have successfully combined my physical education lessons with the development of emotional intelligence.	4.42	0.63
4	I can stay calm in stressful situations in physical education classes.	4.49	0.63
5	I can easily understand the feelings of other students in class.	4.42	0.62
6	When I use the development of emotional intelligence in my social life, I realize where I made a mistake.	4.47	0.67
7	I can express my feelings effectively	4.41	0.64
8	It makes me happy to see the difference in my development of emotional intelligence.	4.42	0.68
9	I share every education I receive with my friends and argue with myself to be more successful.	4.44	0.62
10	I used the activities in the given training effectively for my intellectual development.	4.47	0.62
11	I am good at resolving conflicts.	4.45	0.61
<i>Psychological support</i>			
12	Now I think that I can get psychological support more easily.	4.48	0.67
13	I am glad that I received psychological support in every physical activity training I received.	4.47	0.63
14	Combining the practice of psychological support with the practice of physical education helped me understand the subject better.	4.41	0.54
15	I did not experience any difficulties in applying psychological support; I was able to perform physical activities easily.	4.47	0.68
16	I knew whom to turn to when I felt psychologically abused in physical education class.	4.43	0.67
17	I think that the psychological support in the education I received was effective and explanatory.	4.41	0.69
18	I think that making new friends in a new environment that I enter for physical activities is the strongest aspect of my psychological support.	4.39	0.71
	Total	4.44	0.63

The statement with the third lowest average rating was, "I believe participating in physical activities and acquiring new friends in this environment is the strongest aspect of psychological support for me" ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.71$). These findings indicate that middle school students hold overwhelmingly positive views regarding the development of emotional intelligence and the psychological support they receive. The results suggest that students were able to effectively apply the methods they learned during the training to their lives. Additionally, it was observed that these interactive processes enabled students to discuss issues more comfortably with their peers, leading to positive outcomes.

In this context, the data presented in [Table 3](#) highlight the meaningful impact of the training on middle school students. The findings demonstrate that the students found value in the experience, participated actively, and

integrated what they learned into their daily lives, fostering a holistic understanding and appreciation of emotional intelligence development and psychological support.

3.1. Research Participant Groups' Emotional Intelligence Development and Psychological Support of the Situation Gender According to the Situation

Work hard this section; the latest research findings carried out to be known. This is in the context of research participant groups, emotional intelligence development, and psychological support of the situation. Gender is examined according to the situation, and there is a meaningful difference; however, there is no related information given in Table 4.

Table 4. Research participant groups' emotional intelligence development and psychological support of the situation gender according to distribution.

Emotional intelligence and psychological support	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
	Male	91	4.45	0.31	186	-204	0.147
	Female	95	4.49	0.34			

When examining Table 4, the results indicate that there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence development and psychological support scores between male and female participants based on gender criteria [$t(186) = -0.204, p > 0.05$].

The average score of male participants in the field of emotional intelligence development and psychological support was found to be $M = 4.45^{**}$, while the average score for female participants was slightly higher at $M = 4.49^{**}$. Despite female participants achieving slightly higher scores, the difference lacked statistical significance.

The data indicate that both male and female participants saw comparable benefits from the training in emotional intelligence enhancement and psychological support. This indicates that gender does not significantly affect the efficacy of the intervention, as the scores of both groups were similar.

4. DISCUSSION

The connection between psychological support and emotional intelligence (EI) in physical education students has attracted significant attention in recent years. A growing body of research highlights the critical role of emotional intelligence in enhancing academic performance and promoting emotional well-being, particularly in demanding educational settings. Emotional intelligence, which refers to the ability to perceive, employ, understand, and manage emotions, plays a vital role in educational settings, including physical education (Wang et al., 2020).

This research demonstrates a notable correlation between psychological support and increased emotional intelligence among secondary school students. According to Jiménez-Picón et al. (2021), physical education enhances emotional intelligence by equipping children with coping strategies to manage the challenges posed by rigorous academic curricula and the pressures associated with both academic and physical performance. Furthermore, emotional intelligence facilitates the establishment of strong interpersonal relationships and fosters a supportive learning environment, which is crucial for student engagement and success. This study emphasizes the important relationship between emotional intelligence and participation in physical activity within the context of physical education.

The present study indicates that middle school students exhibit notably high levels of emotional intelligence and derive significant advantages from psychological support within the realm of physical education. The effective integration of multimedia, including videos, in training sessions, along with students' eagerness to implement these practices in the classroom, suggests an enhancement in their emotional intelligence through experiential activities. The findings are consistent with the observations made by Acebes-Sánchez, Diez-Vega, Esteban-Gonzalo, and Rodriguez-Romo (2019), who identified a significant correlation between the emotional intelligence of university

students and their participation in regular physical activity. The significance of these results is evident in the way physical education and sports foster not only the development of physical skills but also the emotional intelligence essential for psychological support within academic environments. As a result, creating environments that prioritize physical activity can significantly enhance children's emotional intelligence, thus supporting their academic and psychological health.

This study demonstrates that while female students show slightly higher scores in emotional intelligence and psychological support than their male counterparts, the differences are not statistically significant. This discovery holds considerable importance as it challenges established notions surrounding gender disparities in emotional intelligence and psychological support. [Salavera, Usán, and Teruel \(2019\)](#) suggest that socialization processes often lead to differing emotional experiences and expressions between genders, with female students generally exhibiting higher emotional intelligence compared to their male counterparts. This indicates a possible widening gap in emotional intelligence between genders, warranting further examination.

Gender disparities in emotional intelligence have additional implications. [Fernández, Brito, Miarka, and Díaz-de-Durana \(2020\)](#) highlight the interplay between gender, emotional intelligence, and anxiety levels within sports contexts. Their findings suggest that athletes with higher emotional intelligence experience reduced anxiety and improved performance. The findings underscore the importance of implementing gender-specific strategies to enhance emotional intelligence and, in turn, psychological support. Improving the awareness of emotional intelligence among male physical education students could promote their emotional expression and reduce the stigma associated with vulnerability.

Furthermore, comprehensive reviews, such as those conducted by [Ubago-Jiménez, González-Valero, Puertas-Molero, and García-Martínez \(2019\)](#), highlight the importance of sports and physical activity in the development of emotional intelligence. The findings advocate for the integration of emotional intelligence training into structured physical education programs to comprehensively enhance psychological well-being. Programs should aim to meet the unique needs of both genders, offering tailored support that acknowledges inherent emotional differences. Furthermore, it is essential to create a safe environment that allows male students to express their emotions and develop their emotional skills.

The results of this study enhance the existing evidence regarding the importance of incorporating emotional intelligence and psychological support within physical education. The findings highlight the necessity for additional research to replicate and build upon this study, underscoring the importance of developing emotional intelligence to improve students' psychological and academic outcomes. Future research in this area has the capacity to enhance educational methodologies, foster emotional health, and maximize the advantages of physical education initiatives for every student.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Gender dynamics significantly affect the relationship between psychological support and emotional intelligence in physical education classes for secondary school students. Gender disparities in physical education practices, similar to other domains, have been progressively decreasing. Research indicates that emotional intelligence is a crucial element of support systems within educational environments and serves as a significant predictor of psychological well-being and academic achievement. This study demonstrates that psychological support for students significantly enhances their emotional intelligence, especially within physical education settings.

The findings indicate that prior knowledge and exposure to diverse activities enhance students' emotional intelligence, subsequently improving their academic performance. The study concludes that the psychological support provided to participants was effective, resulting in significant enhancements in their emotional intelligence. The findings underscore the significance of promoting emotional intelligence through organized support and customized interventions within educational settings.

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Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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