




Physical Education and Emotional Wellbeing of Primary School Children in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda

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Abstract

The study was purposed to establish the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality. The study adopted a mixed method with cross-sectional research design. Out of 196 total populations sampled, 180 respondents participated in the study. From the study findings, it was established that there is a strong positive statistical significant relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality as observed at a positive linear correlation $r = .680, P = .000$ leading to decrease in children's worries and fears, increase children's sense of happiness and joy; improve children's mood and reduces symptoms of depression. It recommends that parents and schools should collaborate to enhance children's emotional wellbeing through physical education.

Keywords: Physical Education, Emotional Wellbeing, Primary School, Children

Introduction

This study was intended to establish the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality. The significant amount of time young people spends in school environments, as noted by Morinaj and Hascher (2022), underscores the importance of rigorous research monitoring children's and young adolescents' wellbeing over time. This would help uncover the underlying mechanisms driving pupils' wellbeing and identify vulnerable areas at different developmental stages. In primary school contexts, practitioners play a vital role. Supporting children's positive wellbeing and skill development is crucial (Ballet et al., 2011). This is important considering the growing concerns about mental health of children

(Bethune, 2018), low wellbeing levels, and multiple areas of concern.

As acknowledged by Bor, Dean, Najman and Hayatbakhsh (2014) today, mental health and emotional wellbeing is a major global health concern even among school-age children and adolescents. Learners with mental health challenges are attributed to poor academic achievement which calls for the urgency to address this concern in order to boost students' emotional wellbeing through physical education. This showed the linkage between education and mental wellbeing of children. In this fight against mental health challenges, schools are required to act as a foundation through physical education to curtail mental disorders and promote children's emotional wellbeing since it is the most contact zone where children spend most of their time after home.

According to a study carried out in Scotland by Teraoka and Kirk (2022) on the pupils and teachers indicated that physical education has a great importance in student wellbeing. It adopted a qualitative approach within a grounded theory to unveil that physical education is a conduit to children's healthy growth and development. In this case, Scotland, it showed that physical education is at the center of extra-curricular activities. However, the extent to which physical education contributes to the emotional wellbeing of pupils is lacking under the new curriculum. This background gave rise to this study with the fact that there is a connection with the current state of inclusive pedagogies that are holistic in children's growth and development was a deep concern to assess from the students' and teachers' perspective as well on how they implement this new curriculum in reference to addressing mental health challenges amongst their learners.

Another investigation carried out by Savahl, Tiliouine, Casas, Adams, Mekonen, Dejene and Witten (2017) in Algeria, Ethiopia, and South Africa showed also some success in studies advanced toward children's subjective well-being (SWB). This advancement has raised questions concerning the measurement of SWB and the extent to which various measures can be compared across countries and diverse cultures. With a dearth of empirical data on cross-cultural comparisons, the validation of existing measures and cross-cultural comparisons and adaptations, have been identified as a critical course of action.

Lastly, in Uganda, a study by Asiimwe, Atuhaire and Babalola (2021) on "physical activities, resources and challenges in the implementation of physical education in Public Primary Schools in Kampala" accentuated that physical activities act as a medium for pupils to develop essential values and skills that support their active lifestyle and promote high self-esteem. This study also showed that there is a decline in the enactment of physical education in most developing countries despite the benefits. Some of the physical activities uncovered were traditional games, athletics, and ball games. It also noted that some factors like lack of funds and devaluing attitude attached to these activities contribute to the decline. Thus, an outcry for allocation of resources and educating the public and schools on the wealthy benefits of these activities in school could generally promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Barry, Clarke, and Dowling (2017) supported that children's emotional wellbeing is essential as it contributes a lot to learners' cognitive ability, processes and functioning, learning and general mental wellbeing. Thus, the role of schools and colleges is indispensable in creating an atmosphere that supports learner emotional wellbeing. Evidence as presented by Bethune (2018) shows that identifying these mental health concerns amongst children, especially in various multiple cases, are paramount to managing mental health issues that impede children's wellbeing.

General wellbeing of primary school children is wanting. Ideally, it is said that physical education aids learners' abilities and academic performance, cultivate interest in physical activities, build strong network as a team, maintain healthy and active lifestyle, increase their socialization, reshape their sense of direction/concentration and improve academic performance (Monitor report, 2021). On the contrary, the study noted challenges like lack of enough resources, physical education being time consuming with less time allotted for it contribute to the decline in schools incorporating physical education which in turn pose negative impacts on learners (Staff Writer Report, 2023). Some of these adverse effects lead to decrease in academic achievement, dullness, obesity and frequent fatigue, Eric Ligwale on Monitor report (2021). It further states that it is very challenging now that only a few children walk to school unlike in the past. At home, they watch television or play video games. They do not get enough chance to learn to socialize and relate with their peers. This causes them to miss out on their social development.

Going forward, physical education has essential benefits of which emotional wellbeing of learners are part of them. Generally, it promotes not only physical health, but also helps learners cultivate social and cognitive skills which enables them to perform well at school, stay active and alert, increase mobility and bone health, reduce other health complications like obesity and fatigue. Implementing effective physical education would improve the wellbeing of the learners. It was due to this urgency that the researchers carried out this study to constitute the linkage between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality.

Literature Review

In trying to understand the link between physical education and emotional wellbeing, numerous studies have confirmed that there is a correlation, especially among children. For example, according to the study by Hinkley et al. (2012) on the impact of physical education on children's emotional wellbeing over time through longitudinal design, finds showed a positive relationship among primary school children. It confirmed that children who partook in physical education improved emotionally, and anxiety and depression were controlled. This study also showed that the emotions of children are regulated. These outcomes are critical components of overall wellbeing, highlighting the

significance of physical education in promoting emotional wellbeing. However, the study's focus on physical activity, rather than comprehensive physical education programs, limits its generalizability to physical education. Physical education encompasses a broader range of activities and learning objectives, including social and emotional learning, which may have a more profound impact on emotional wellbeing outcomes.

Wang et al. (2019) in their investigation through a quasi-experimental study about the impact of physical education on children's emotional wellbeing on students and teachers affirmed that physical education improves the emotional wellbeing of children. Distinctively this study enveloped that physical education is vital in the enhancement of children's self-esteem, body image and develop emotional regulation skills. Though very crucial findings, this study did not factor in contextual and environmental variations that limit its generalisability in the context of Uganda and Entebbe Municipality.

Another case study conducted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) showed that student's emotional wellbeing in schools that incorporated physical education and implemented a holistic child approach improved. This study showed significance between physical education, holistic child approach and emotional wellbeing of students. However, the categories of students varied limiting the generalizability of their findings to the case of Uganda. This current study was specifically looking at primary school children in Entebbe municipality. Understanding the perspective of this context was crucial and central to this study. Also being a single case study limits generalization of findings.

Spencer et al. (2018) also studied the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing among primary school children adopting a cross-sectional. On a confirmatory level, a positive link between physical education and emotional wellbeing, thus, physical education is significant in promoting emotional wellbeing. Nevertheless, the geographical and time gaps in the applicability of these findings also needed to be tested among the primary school children in Entebbe Municipality to ascertain whether physical education directly impact emotional wellbeing or if other factors are at play. To address these limitations, a mixed method was applied to provide comprehensive and contextualized insights with specific apparatuses of physical education tailored to improve emotional wellbeing.

Supportively, Lubans et al. (2016) also contributed greatly to this study. Their review conjectured that physical education plays a crucial role in bolstering the emotional wellbeing of primary school children. Through various analyses of numerous studies, the researchers acknowledged key concurrent themes which denote that physical education greatly has a link with emotional wellbeing in primary school children. However, their study had a contextual gap that prompted this current study in another context, Entebbe Municipality, Uganda precisely. Also, the time of their review required a new study to verify whether the theory still holds the same significance in another context, Uganda, currently.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study by Okely et al. (2017) on the long-term impact of physical education on children's emotional wellbeing targeted at primary school children placed a notable significance between sustaining physical education programs geared toward the improvement of children's emotional wellbeing especially at the primary school level. The particularity of their study in conjunction with this current study made it relevant in this study which aim was to establish the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality. Equally, understanding this study from Uganda context where cultural and socioeconomic factors may impact the relationship posed the need for the current study. Therefore, the current study addressed this limitation by conducting research in Ugandan context, providing insights into the applicability of physical education programs in promoting emotional wellbeing among primary school children in diverse settings.

Lastly, Hill et al. (2016) also used a systematic review to address the concerns of the interlink between physical activities interventions in school to shape the upshot of physical education. Their study showed that social environment is pertinent to physical education and the emotional wellbeing of children in primary school. Their contributions unveiled that the social environment plays a great role in propagating social connection, modelling aggression in children and facilitating a supportive climate for children to socialize and thrive. These key contributions revealed the dynamic impact of social context on the emotional wellbeing of children. It was of great importance to carry out this study currently to verify this information in the social structures in which African children are trained specifically in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda.

To sum up, the numerous studies reviewed pinpointed that there is a significant tie between physical education and emotional wellbeing among primary school children. On the other hand, study gaps loom including previous study focus on physical activity, lack of contextualized study, adoption of single case studies and systematic reviews for some researchers. Again, there was methodological gap in the literature in terms of the research approach and design adopted. Also, time gap in some of the literature required this current study to address these limitations by focusing on the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children, from African domain particular in Entebbe Municipality, Ugandan context, using a mixed-method, and a cross-sectional design to support rich and insightful results that support triangulation and generalisation.

Materials And Methods

In this study, we adopted a cross-sectional research design which enabled us to collect data through different methods and support triangulation. This served as the foundation upon which we based our study structural framework. In the approach, we

adopted a mixed-method to establish the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda. We chose this approach due to its power to incorporate simultaneously both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation targeting two distinct groups. The first group comprises children aged 6-11 years, who were enrolled in primary schools within Entebbe Municipality. The second group consists of teachers and head teachers from these primary schools.

To determine the sample size, we utilised Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) guidelines, which resulted in an accessible population of 400 respondents. This was divided into 350 primary school children, 30 teachers and 20 head teachers. In this study, we sampled 196 respondents from the total population of 400, comprising 171 pupils, 15 teachers and 10 head teachers in the study area.

We also used probability sampling (Simple random sampling technique) and non-probability sampling (purposive sampling technique) to enrol the two categories of respondents into the study. We used purposive sampling to choose the teachers and head teachers who shared their expert and first-hand insights on this topic of inquiry. In addition, a simple random sampling technique was adopted to enrol the primary school children into the study. This was done to ensure that each individual had an equal chance of participating in this study.

This study utilized two primary data collection methods: questionnaire survey and an in-depth interviews. While self-administered questionnaire and interview guide instruments were employed to collect data from participants, ensuring a structured and objective approach to data gathering. In this study CVI score is **0.90**, the questionnaire is deemed to have high content validity, ensuring that the items effectively measured the intended concept. From the test, it deduced that Cronbach's alpha is $\alpha = 0.732$, which indicates a high level of positive internal consistency for the scale with this specific sample. Quantitative data was subjected to statistical analysis, including descriptive and inferential statistics, to identify trends, correlations and regression analysis. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to uncover underlying themes and meanings. By integrating both types of data, we intended to uncover valuable insights and knowledge that can inform decision-making and future studies, providing a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical conduct, we requested permission from the respondents and schools. We also obtained informed consent from the participants. No one was coerced to participate in this study. It was voluntary and we ensured that every personal identifier were edited to maintain the anonymity and dignity of the respondents. Lastly, we

maintained the confidentiality of this information by not divulging it to anyone.

Results

In this section, we have presented empirical findings. Also, it has been analysed and interpreted according to the purpose that propelled this study.

Response Rate

In this study there were a total of 196 participants. 160 respondents participated in quantitative survey and 20 key informant participated in qualitative study. The results of the respondents' background were presented in frequency tables indicating their responses by gender and age respectively.

Gender Distribution

The rating on gender of the respondents was presented in frequency table below.

Table 1: Indicating gender distribution

	Frequency	Percent	Interviews	Frequency	Percent
Male	70	44	Male	8	40
Female	90	56	Female	12	60
Total	160	100.0		20	100

Source: primary data (2024)

The statistical results in table 1 above showed that greater percentage of 56% (n=90) of the respondents were females and 44% (n=70) were males who responded to the quantitative study. Among the key informant for interviews, the findings showed that 40% (n=8) were males and 60% (n=12) were females. This indicates that majority of the respondents were females. This showed that females were more to males both among the learners, teachers and head teachers. This was important to the study to know the most group opinion by sex that participated in the study and their knowledgeability about the subject of inquiry.

Age of the respondents

It was also necessary to assess the age of the population that we studied, and the

findings were present in the frequency table as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Indicating Age distribution of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
6-11 years	160	100
Total	160	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2024

From the findings shown in table 2 above, 100% (n=160) of the pupils were in the age range of 6-11 years which was specified in the category chosen for survey for this study. This confirmed the maturity of the pupils to provide response to the survey as evidenced by high level of response by the 6-11 years age group in establishing the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality.

Physical Education and Emotional Wellbeing

This study was carried out purposely to constitute the correlation between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school Children in Entebbe Municipality. Data was presented descriptively as underscored in table 3 below.

Table 3: Descriptive Outcomes of Physical education and emotional wellbeing

Items	Responses in Percentages (%)					Mean	Stand Dev
	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %		
Physical education classes can reduce children's worries and fears.	5.0	4.4	3.8	47.5	39.4	4.12	1.02
Participating in physical education can increase children's sense of happiness and joy.	5.0	5.6	5.0	26.9	57.5	4.30	1.11
Participating in physical education can improve children's mood and reduce symptoms of depression.	1.9	1.3	3.8	58.1	35.0	4.23	0.75
Physical education classes provide opportunities for children to express their emotions in a healthy way.	6.3	4.4	2.5	53.8	33.1	4.03	1.05
Physical education can help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges	8.1	5.0	0.0	41.9	45.0	4.20	1.10

Source: Primary data, 2024

Statistical evidence above indicated that 87% of respondents agreed that physical education classes can reduce children's worries and fears. 4.12 mean score on the scale of 1-5 was high confirming that physical education classes can reduce children's worries and fears. Again, 84% of respondents agreed that participating in physical education can increase children's sense of happiness and joy. Evidence from the high mean value of 4.30 on the scale of 1-5 attests that participating in physical education can increase children's sense of happiness and joy.

Furthermore, the results also showed a high percentage of agreeableness 93% from the rating of the participants that participating in physical education can improve children's mood and reduce symptoms of depression. Also, the mean score was high on a scale of 1-5. It scored 4.23 which confirms that participating in physical education can improve children's mood and reduce symptoms of depression.

More so, the results revealed that 87% of respondents agreed that physical education classes provide opportunities for children to express their emotions in a healthy way. Evidently, a mean value of 4.03 on a scale of 1-5 was high which indicated that

physical education classes provide opportunities for children to express their emotions in a healthy way.

Lastly, the findings unveiled 87% of acceptance among the study participants that physical education can help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges. With a mean score of 4.20 on the scale of 1-5 was high thus confirms that physical education can help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges.

Overall, 88% (M = 4.20; Std = 1.01) implied that physical education has an impact on emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality. Comparatively, the themes that emerged from the qualitative findings further confirmed and reinforced the quantitative results that there is a link between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children; one informant (P1, P2... = Participant 1, 2...) was quoted

“In our sessions I can affirm vividly that doing physical exercise is a key element in building resilience and emotional balance in pupils and these they carry on as they grow...” P1

Furthermore, another informant noted that:

“...it is a source of tackling boredom and isolation which could lead to depression in children. So physical education is very essential in promoting children's emotional wellbeing as they can be able to express how they feel through this medium!” P2

The study further revealed that with physical education, there is coping mechanism that is inculcated in children to develop emotionally the shock absorber to remain resilient and learn how to express themselves and handle their emotions through doing physical exercises. This is a justification that physical education has a significant relationship with emotional wellbeing of primary school children.

Correlation Results

The correlation analysis below further proved the above assertions. To investigate the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children, Pearson correlation Coefficient table was generated as underpinned in Table 4 down below.

Table 4: Physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children

Variables		Physical education	Emotional wellbeing
Physical education	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.680** .000
Emotional wellbeing	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.680** .000	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary data (2024)

Evidence presented by the correlation results confirmed a positive and significant link between physical education and emotional wellbeing ($r = 0.680^{**}$, $p < .01$). This finding was enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, and the alternative hypothesis retained; there is a statistically significant and positive correlation between physical education and emotional wellbeing at $r = 0.680^{**}$, $p < .01$. This outcome further showed that physical education influences the emotional wellbeing of primary school children by reducing children's worries and fears, increasing children's sense of happiness and joy; improving children's mood and reduces symptoms of depression; opportunities for children to express their emotions in a healthy way and help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges by 68.0% significance. This suggests that schools and parents should collaboratively support pupils to boost their emotional wellbeing as this supports the general wellbeing of children and promotes happier and healthy life.

Regression Model

In this study, regression analysis was essential to test the hypothesis. More so, to concretized the evidence on the variation between the predictor (physical education) and the prediction (Emotional wellbeing). The findings were presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: Showing the Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	R Square	Adjusted R Square	
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
(Constant)	1.691	0.207		8.180	0.000	.462	.459	
Physical education	0.575	0.049	0.680	11.653	0.000			
Dependent Variable: Emotional wellbeing of Children								

Source: Primary data (2024)

According to Table 5, R^2 results showed that physical education predicts 46.2% of emotional wellbeing of children with adjusted R^2 slightly lower by 45.9%. This was significant and reliable to conclude that physical education is a significant predictor of emotional wellbeing of primary school children (Beta= 0.680, Sig=0.000).

Summarily, the results confirmed that physical education affects emotional wellbeing of primary school children positively ($r=.680^{**}$, $p<.01$). This conclusion was reached through the multiple response from the primary school children aged between 6-11 years, teachers and head teachers who were the key informants confirmed a positive and significant relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children supported by the regression results (Beta=.680).

Discussion

From the analysis of results, it showed that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children. Most vividly, 87% of respondents agreed that physical education classes can reduce children's worries and fears with a mean score of 4.12 on a scale of 1-5. This high rating confirmed that physical education classes can reduce children's worries and fears. This is line with Hinkley et al., (2012) who noted that physical education has a profoundly positive impact on emotional wellbeing among primary school children. As a result, children who participate in physical education programs demonstrate improved emotional wellbeing, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, and enhanced emotional regulation skills.

It was evident that 84% of respondents agreed that participating in physical education can increase children's sense of happiness and joy. The mean of 4.30 on a scale of 1-5 was high. This confirmed that participating in physical education can increase children's sense of happiness and joy. Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) sums up admirably

that students' emotional wellbeing improves in schools that incorporate physical education and implement a holistic child approach. By and large, there is a significant relationship between physical education, holistic child approach and the emotional wellbeing of students.

From the table above, the findings uncovered that 93% of respondents agreed that participating in physical education can improve children's mood and reduce symptoms of depression. The mean of 4.23 on the scale of 1-5 was high which indicated that participating in physical education can improve children's mood and reduce symptoms of depression. In confirmation, Hill et al. (2016) study showcased that the social environment is pertinent to the physical education and the emotional wellbeing of children in primary school. Their contributions unveiled that social environment plays a great role in propagating social connection, modelling aggression in children and facilitating a supportive climate for children to socialize and thrive.

The study revealed that 87% of respondents agreed that physical education classes provided opportunities for children to express their emotions healthily. The mean of 4.03 on the scale of 1-5 was high which indicated that physical education classes provide opportunities for children to express their emotions in a healthy way. Okely et al. (2017) placed a notable significance on sustaining physical education programs geared toward the improvement of children's emotional wellbeing especially at the primary school level.

Lastly, the study result of 87% agreeableness indicated that physical education could help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges. This item scored highly at 4.20 on a scale of 1-5. This implies that physical education can help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges. Supportively, Lubans et al. (2016) conjectured that physical education plays a crucial role in bolstering the emotional wellbeing of primary school children.

Conclusion

This study was intended to establish the relationship between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children in Entebbe Municipality. Evidently the correlation between physical education and emotional wellbeing of primary school children is on a positive and significant level of relationship ($r=.680^{**}$, $p<.01$.) It further elucidates that physical education promote emotional wellbeing of primary school children by reducing children's worries and fears, increase children's sense of happiness and joy; improve children's mood and reduces symptoms of depression; opportunities for children to express their emotions in a healthy way and help children develop a growth mindset and positive attitude towards challenges. The study recommends that schools should motivate pupils to engage in physical exercises and allocating time for outdoor games to improve teamwork and social capital among pupils. Also, the study recommends

that parents and schools should collaborate to enhance children's emotional wellbeing through physical education.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors acknowledged that there is no conflict of interest arising from this work. We are pleased to share our findings and knowledge regarding the subject of inquiry to better improve the mental health of children.

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