

STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR PHYSICAL TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE OF CHINESE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the influence of work stress management factors on the performance effectiveness of physical education teachers in Changsha City. The study adopted a mixed research method, combining quantitative and qualitative research, and collected data through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study sample included 1289 PE teachers and 335 PE administrators from 285 middle schools in Changsha City. The research tools include self-compiled "Changsha City middle school physical education teachers stress management and performance effectiveness questionnaire" and semi-structured interview outline. The results show that there is a significant relationship between physical education teachers' stress management strategies (such as active coping, problem solving, support seeking, delay and escape) and their performance effectiveness. The study also found that effective stress management strategies can significantly improve teachers' job satisfaction and organizational identity. Based on the research results, this paper puts forward some suggestions to improve the stress management and performance effectiveness of PE teachers, including optimizing resource allocation, establishing a fair evaluation mechanism and building a supportive school culture.

Keywords: Stress management, Performance effectiveness, Physical education teachers

INTRODUCTION

The importance of teacher stress management

Teacher stress is a prevalent issue worldwide. The study acknowledges that increased workload, curriculum changes, and administrative demands contribute to high stress levels among teachers, negatively impacting their well-being and job performance. The study highlights that these teachers often experience higher stress levels compared to their counterparts in other disciplines, which can lead to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and decreased effectiveness in teaching. By identifying specific stressors and management techniques, this research provides valuable insights for improving PE teachers' working conditions. Teacher stress management is a critical factor influencing job performance, mental health, and educational outcomes. High stress levels among teachers, particularly physical education (PE) instructors, can lead to job dissatisfaction, burnout, and diminished teaching effectiveness (Jerrim & Sims, 2021). Unlike other subjects, physical education teachers face unique stressors such as managing large class sizes, ensuring student safety, and balancing physical activity with academic learning. Research highlights that stressors such as excessive workload, administrative burdens, and student behavioral challenges significantly impact teachers' well-being (McCormick, 2022; Dawson, 2022).

Effective stress management strategies, including problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 2023), emotion regulation (Gross, 2021), and social support systems (Hakanen & Bakker, 2023), have been shown to improve teacher retention, job satisfaction, and instructional quality. Studies suggest that institutions with strong support mechanisms, fair evaluation policies, and structured professional development programs experience lower teacher stress levels and higher educational effectiveness (Siegrist, 2023; Brackett, 2022). The study establishes a direct connection between teacher stress, performance effectiveness, and student achievement. Stress and burnout among teachers can negatively impact their ability to engage with students, deliver quality instruction, and maintain

classroom discipline. Research has shown that schools with effective stress management support systems tend to have teachers who perform better, leading to improved student outcomes. In China, the rapid evolution of educational policies and the increased importance of PE in high school entrance examinations have intensified the pressure on PE teachers (Zhang, 2023). Addressing these challenges through comprehensive stress management approaches ensures sustainable teacher performance and enhances overall student learning experiences. This study contributes to the growing body of research advocating for institutional reforms and psychological support initiatives to mitigate teacher stress and promote long-term educational success. This study is highly significant because it provides empirical evidence on the link between stress management and teacher performance. Its findings contribute to educational psychology, stress management theory, and policy development. By focusing on PE teachers—a group often overlooked in stress management research—this study fills a crucial gap in educational studies. The research offers practical solutions that can be applied in China and internationally, helping to create better work environments for teachers, ultimately benefiting students and the broader education system.

The importance of teacher stress management to performance effectiveness. Teacher stress significantly influences professional performance, mental well-being, and educational quality. High levels of stress among educators, especially physical education (PE) teachers, can lead to exhaustion, decreased instructional effectiveness, and dissatisfaction with work (Jerrim & Sims, 2021). Research identifies workload overload, bureaucratic tasks, and student disciplinary issues as primary contributors to teacher stress (McCormick, 2022; Dawson, 2022). Prolonged exposure to high stress without adequate coping mechanisms has been associated with lower teacher performance, reduced student engagement, and increased job attrition (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 2019; Siegrist, 2023). Proven stress management techniques, including proactive problem-solving (Folkman & Lazarus, 2023), emotional self-regulation (Gross, 2021), and collaborative support networks (Hakanen & Bakker, 2023), have been shown to enhance teacher retention, morale, and teaching effectiveness. Studies indicate that teachers who actively engage in stress management techniques exhibit greater instructional efficiency, improved classroom interactions, and better student outcomes (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 2019; Brackett, 2022). Schools that provide comprehensive support structures, equitable assessment methods, and targeted professional development programs experience reduced teacher stress and greater overall educational success (Siegrist, 2023; Brackett, 2012). In the context of China, educational reforms and the growing importance of PE in high school exams have exacerbated pressures on teachers (Zhang, 2023). Addressing these challenges through structured stress management interventions ensures sustained teacher well-being and fosters a productive learning environment. This research strengthens the discourse on the necessity for institutional changes and mental health resources to mitigate teacher stress and optimize long-term educational impact.

Stress Management and Performance Effectiveness of Middle School Physical Education Teachers

Through an extensive review of domestic and international literature, it becomes evident that stress management among middle school physical education (PE) teachers and its impact on performance effectiveness is a complex, multi-dimensional issue. While existing research has made significant progress in identifying stress sources, coping strategies, and their influence on teacher performance, notable gaps remain. Specialized studies focusing on middle school PE teachers are relatively scarce, and much of the existing research lacks a systematic theoretical framework and robust empirical validation. This study, therefore, aims to address these gaps by developing a comprehensive model for stress management and its impact on teacher performance effectiveness, while also providing practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and school administrators. Domestic research has made some achievements in the aspects of stress sources, stress management strategies and their impact on performance effectiveness, but there are still some shortcomings, such as relatively few special studies on middle school PE teachers, and most of the studies lack systematic theoretical framework and empirical support. Many existing studies rely on qualitative assessments without robust statistical validation or longitudinal data analysis, limiting their generalizability and applicability. International research is more diverse, focusing not only on teachers' sources of stress and coping strategies, but also on the impact of stress management on teachers' physical and mental health, students' academic achievement, and the overall school climate. Given the distinctive nature of physical education, PE teachers experience different stress sources compared to their counterparts in academic subjects. For

instance, their responsibilities extend beyond traditional classroom teaching to include. Extracurricular sports activities, Organizing and supervising sports competitions, Ensuring student safety during physical activities, Maintaining sports equipment and facilities. The multifaceted nature of their responsibilities increases workload intensity, making stress management particularly critical. However, whether it is domestic or international research, the special research on middle school PE teachers is still relatively few.

Because of the particularity of their work, physical education teachers in middle schools face different pressure sources and coping strategies from teachers in other subjects. For example, physical education teachers not only have to complete classroom teaching tasks, but also be responsible for extra-curricular sports activities, sports competitions and other extra work. The diversity and complexity of these work contents make the pressure management of physical education teachers particularly important. In addition, with the deepening of education reform, the status of physical education curriculum is gradually promoted, and the work pressure of physical education teachers is also increasing. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the stress management of middle school PE teachers and its influence on their performance effectiveness. First, from a theoretical point of view, this study can provide a systematic theoretical framework for the stress management of middle school physical education teachers and enrich the existing research on teacher stress management. Secondly, by identifying the most effective stress management strategies, the study offers empirical evidence to guide. School leadership in designing teacher-friendly policies, Educational policymakers in developing national and regional guidelines for teacher well-being, Teacher training institutions in incorporating stress management training into professional development programs, Effective stress management strategies will lead to higher job satisfaction, lower burnout rates, and improved teaching quality, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students. To sum up, this study has important theoretical and practical value. It enriches the existing academic literature by providing a systematic framework for understanding stress management for secondary physical education teachers, while also providing concrete solutions for schools and policymakers. Through empirical analysis and practical recommendations, this study contributes to improving teacher well-being and job performance, reducing burnout, improving retention, and promoting healthier and more productive school environments. As physical education continues to rise in importance in education systems around the world, understanding and addressing the unique stressors facing physical education teachers has become more important than ever. Therefore, this study can provide scientific guidance for educators, school administrators and policy makers to ensure the sustainable development of physical education and the well-being of physical education teachers globally.

Related research on stress management strategies

In recent years, with the deepening of education reform, the pressure management of middle school PE teachers and its impact on performance effectiveness have gradually become the focus of domestic research. Domestic scholars have discussed the sources of physical education teachers' stress, the strategies of stress management and their effects on teaching performance from many angles. First, in terms of pressure sources, domestic research generally believes that the pressure of middle school physical education teachers mainly comes from many aspects, such as workload, professional cognition, teaching environment, interpersonal relationship and superior pressure. For example, Li Lili (2021) pointed out that physical education teachers not only have to complete daily teaching tasks, but also bear a lot of administrative work, and this high workload brings significant pressure. Huang Jing (2019) emphasized that students' behavior problems in classroom management are one of the important sources of teachers' pressure. In addition, parents' high expectations of teachers and the complexity of the school management system also aggravate the pressure on teachers (Wu Ming, 2021). Secondly, in terms of stress management strategies, domestic scholars have put forward a variety of coping strategies. Zhang Yong (2019) pointed out that teachers can relieve pressure through positive self-talk, emotional release, time management, rational planning and other ways. Li Xiaohong (2020) emphasized the importance of social support in stress management, arguing that teachers can obtain emotional support by communicating with colleagues, friends and family. In addition, Chen Jiakai (2022) proposed that teachers can optimize resource allocation through cognitive reconstruction and behavioral adjustment, to reduce the negative impact of stress on individuals. In terms of performance effectiveness, domestic

research mainly focuses on teachers' teaching effect, job satisfaction, organizational identity and so on. Li Fang (2020) pointed out that teachers' sense of teaching efficacy is closely related to work pressure, and efficient teachers are often better able to cope with pressure, thus improving teaching effectiveness. Zeng Xiaodong (2019) found through empirical research that the scientific and rationality of the performance evaluation system had a significant impact on teachers' work enthusiasm and teaching effect.

In general, domestic research has achieved some results in the sources of stress, stress management strategies and their impact on performance effectiveness, but there are still some deficiencies. For example, there are relatively few special studies on middle school PE teachers, and most of them lack systematic theoretical framework and empirical support. Therefore, future research needs to further deepen the discussion on the stress management and performance effectiveness of middle school physical education teachers, especially the difference research in different regions and different school backgrounds. Research status of stress management factors in teacher performance effectiveness in the world. Internationally, the research on teacher stress management and its effectiveness on performance started earlier, and the research perspectives are more diverse. International scholars not only focus on the sources of stress and coping strategies of teachers but also delve into the impact of stress management on teachers' physical and mental health, students' academic achievement, and the overall school climate. First, in terms of the sources of stress, international research generally believes that teachers' stress mainly comes from workload, role conflict, student behavior problems, career development pressure and the complexity of school management system. For example, Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (2019) pointed out in their groundbreaking research that teachers' job stress mainly comes from the complexity of teaching tasks, student behavior problems, and school management systems. Moracco and Mcfadden (2023) further pointed out that multiple stressors of society, school and family work together to cause teachers to face different levels of stress. Secondly, in terms of stress management strategies, international scholars have put forward a variety of coping strategies. According to the cognitive assessment theory of Lazarus and Folkman (2020), teachers can relieve stress through problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping strategies. Problem-oriented strategies include actively seeking solutions and reasonably planning time, while emotion-oriented strategies include emotional release and seeking social support.

In addition, the emotional regulation model proposed by Gross (2021) emphasized the importance of cognitive reappraisal in stress management, arguing that teachers could reduce the impact of negative emotions by changing their perceptions of stressful events. In terms of performance effectiveness, international research mainly focuses on teachers' teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, organizational identity, and students' academic achievement. John Hattie (2019) pointed out that teachers' sense of teaching efficacy is closely related to work pressure, and efficient teachers are often better able to cope with pressure, thus improving teaching effectiveness. Linda Darling-Hammond (2020), on the other hand, emphasized the adaptability of teachers in the face of diverse student needs, and held that teachers should timely adjust teaching strategies according to students' feedback to improve teaching effects. In addition, international research has focused on the impact of stress management on teachers' physical and mental health. For example, the study of Sapolsky (2004) pointed out that long-term high-stress environment can lead to physical and mental health problems of teachers, such as insomnia, indigestion, and decreased immunity. Kush et al. (2022) found that teachers' mental health problems were particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic, with teachers who taught distance reporting higher levels of stress than those who taught face-to-face. Overall, international research has produced a wealth of results on the sources of stress, stress management strategies and their impact on performance effectiveness, particularly in the areas of teachers' physical and mental health, students' academic achievement, and the overall school climate. However, there are relatively few special studies on middle school PE teachers, and most of them lack differences in different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, future research needs to further deepen the cross-cultural research on the stress management and performance effectiveness of middle school physical education teachers.

Related research on performance effectiveness

Teacher performance effectiveness is concerned with the quality and results of teaching practices, especially in improving student learning outcomes and overall development. Many scholars (such as John Hattie and Linda Darling-Hammond) have emphasized that teacher performance is not only about completing teaching tasks, but also about whether teachers can achieve students' academic progress and

all-round development through innovative and effective teaching strategies. Scholars such as Carol Ann Tomlinson have pointed out that differentiated teaching and individualized teaching are the keys to effective teacher performance, especially in diverse classrooms. Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black's research shows that teachers can significantly improve student learning by adjusting teaching strategies through classroom assessment and feedback. Robert J. Marzano believes that the systematic application of best teaching practices is the core method for teachers to improve teaching effectiveness. Student learning outcome is one of the main evaluation indicators of teacher performance effectiveness, covering cognitive, emotional and skill dimensions. Teachers' teaching performance is not only reflected in test scores, but also in students' learning motivation, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The effectiveness of teacher performance is closely related to the adaptability of teachers. Linda Darling-Hammond pointed out that teachers need to adjust their teaching methods according to the diverse needs of students to ensure that teaching is fair and effective. Teacher performance effectiveness is a comprehensive concept that emphasizes the integration of teacher's teaching skills, student outcome orientation, adaptability and feedback mechanism. Scholars agree that improving the effectiveness of teacher performance not only contributes to the overall academic development of students but also has far-reaching significance for the overall improvement of the education system and social progress. In conclusion, these studies reveal the key role of teacher performance effectiveness in educational practice and provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for teachers to optimize teaching strategies, pay attention to students' needs and give effective feedback.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that these studies collectively provide a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the relationship between stress management strategies and performance effectiveness across various educational contexts in China. By analyzing how stress impacts teacher performance, these studies emphasize the critical need for tailored interventions and evidence-based policies that specifically address the occupational stressors faced by educators. Given the diversity in teaching populations, it is essential to develop context-sensitive approaches that cater to the unique challenges encountered by teachers in different regions, school types, and subject areas. Implementing strategic stress management frameworks can foster a more supportive and resilient educational environment, thereby improving teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and instructional quality. While existing research offers valuable insights into the effects of stress management on PE teachers' performance effectiveness, there remain significant gaps and limitations that warrant further investigation. One of the primary shortcomings of current studies is their tendency to adopt generalized perspectives, often failing to account for the distinctive stressors faced by PE teachers, particularly those operating at the grassroots level.

Unlike teachers of academic subjects, PE educators must balance a physically demanding work environment, extracurricular responsibilities, and administrative tasks, often with limited institutional support. These factors contribute to heightened occupational stress, which can diminish their teaching effectiveness and overall job satisfaction. Additionally, the increasing emphasis on physical education in national education reforms has added new pressures, requiring PE teachers to meet evolving curricular demands while ensuring student safety and engagement in sports activities. To address these gaps, future research should adopt a multi-disciplinary perspective, integrating insights from educational psychology, occupational health, sports science, and organizational behavior to develop a more holistic understanding of stress dynamics in PE teaching. By drawing from these disciplines, researchers can better assess the physiological, psychological, and institutional factors contributing to stress and identify effective coping mechanisms. Furthermore, diverse research methodologies should be utilized to capture the complexities of teacher stress comprehensively. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable data on stress trends and their long-term impact on teacher retention and performance, while case studies can offer in-depth, context-specific insights into the lived experiences of PE teachers. Mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and observational research, would allow for a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding of stress management strategies. Beyond academic contributions, such research holds substantial practical implications for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training institutions. The development of targeted intervention programs aimed at reducing stress and promoting teacher resilience can lead to higher job satisfaction, lower attrition rates, and improved student learning outcomes. Additionally, the implementation of institutional support systems, such as peer mentoring programs, structured professional development, and school-

wide wellness initiatives, can further enhance teachers' ability to manage stress effectively. Ultimately, by deepening the understanding of stress management in PE teaching, future research can contribute to the creation of healthier, more sustainable educational environments, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to provide high-quality instruction and meaningful learning experiences for their students.

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