

Role of Physical Education Teachers in Developing Discipline and Sportsmanship among School Students

Deepak Dalal¹ and Dr. Rajwinder Pal Singh²

Student, ¹Master of Physical Education & Sports¹

²Principal

Mata Gurdev Kaur Memorial Shahi Sports College of Physical Education, Samrala

Abstract: *Physical education plays an important role in the holistic development of school students by promoting physical fitness, emotional regulation, social responsibility, discipline, and ethical behaviour. Physical education teachers are not merely instructors who teach games and physical exercises; they also act as mentors, role models, and facilitators of character development. Through structured physical activities, team games, sports competitions, and classroom management strategies, teachers can cultivate punctuality, self-control, respect for rules, cooperation, fairness, and acceptance of both victory and defeat. The present paper examines the role of physical education teachers in developing discipline and sportsmanship among school students through a conceptual review of relevant literature.*

Keywords: Discipline, Sportsmanship, School Students, Character Development, Fair Play, Moral Education, Teacher Role.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a comprehensive process that aims to develop the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and moral dimensions of an individual. Schools are responsible not only for imparting academic knowledge but also for preparing students to become responsible, disciplined, cooperative, and socially conscious citizens. Within this educational framework, physical education occupies a distinctive position because it provides practical opportunities for students to learn through movement, interaction, competition, and shared responsibility.

Physical education involves planned learning experiences designed to improve physical competence, health, movement skills, and understanding of physical activity. However, its educational value extends beyond physical fitness. Bailey (2006) explained that physical education and school sport can contribute to physical, social, affective, and cognitive development, although these outcomes depend on the learning environment and the quality of interactions among teachers, students, and coaches. Similarly, Bailey et al. (2009) emphasized that the educational benefits of physical education and school sport should not be assumed automatically; they depend on how activities are organized and taught.

Physical education teachers have a significant role in creating environments where discipline and sportsmanship can be practised consistently. During physical education lessons, students are expected to follow instructions, observe rules, respect equipment, cooperate with classmates, and control their behaviour. Sporting activities also expose students to situations involving competition, success, failure, disagreement, and emotional pressure. These situations offer valuable opportunities to develop patience, honesty, resilience, and respect for others.

Discipline in physical education should not be understood merely as obedience to authority. Rather, it includes self-discipline, responsibility, punctuality, perseverance, and the ability to regulate one's actions in accordance with shared expectations. Sportsmanship refers to fair play, respect for opponents and officials, honesty, graciousness in victory,

and dignity in defeat. Both qualities are essential for the development of healthy interpersonal relationships and responsible citizenship.

The importance of these values is reflected in UNESCO's (2015) guidelines for quality physical education, which emphasize inclusive participation, holistic development, and the social and educational value of physical activity. Therefore, physical education teachers should deliberately integrate discipline and sportsmanship into their teaching practices instead of treating them as incidental outcomes of participation in sports.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the recognized educational potential of physical education, school sports may sometimes become overly focused on winning, performance rankings, and competitive achievement. Such an approach can reduce opportunities for students to learn cooperation, fairness, respect, and emotional control. Inadequate facilities, limited instructional time, large class sizes, unequal participation, and inconsistent behavioural expectations may further restrict the development of positive sporting values.

The central problem addressed in this paper is the need to understand how physical education teachers can systematically promote discipline and sportsmanship among school students through appropriate instructional methods, teacher modelling, fair competition, and inclusive sporting experiences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the role of physical education teachers in developing discipline among school students.
- To explain how sportsmanship and fair-play values can be promoted through physical education.
- To identify teaching strategies that encourage self-control, respect, cooperation, and responsibility.
- To analyse the importance of teacher behaviour and the sporting environment in shaping students' attitudes.
- To identify challenges faced by physical education teachers in promoting discipline and sportsmanship.
- To suggest practical measures for strengthening value-based physical education in schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do physical education teachers contribute to the development of discipline among school students?
- Which teaching strategies are most appropriate for promoting sportsmanship and fair play?
- How does teacher behaviour influence students' sporting attitudes and interpersonal relationships?
- What institutional challenges affect the development of discipline and sportsmanship through physical education?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Educational Benefits of Physical Education

Bailey (2006) reviewed evidence concerning the educational benefits of physical education and school sport and identified potential contributions to social behaviour, self-esteem, physical competence, and cognitive development. The review also indicated that such benefits depend on the quality of experiences provided to students. This finding supports the view that physical education teachers must design activities with clear educational purposes.

Bailey et al. (2009) critically examined claims about the educational benefits of physical education and sport. Their review highlighted the importance of pedagogical approaches and contextual factors in determining whether participation produces meaningful developmental outcomes. Thus, simply organizing games is insufficient; teachers must intentionally connect sporting experiences with learning objectives related to discipline and responsible conduct.

2. Personal and Social Responsibility

Hellison's (2011) teaching personal and social responsibility model offers a useful framework for integrating character development into physical activity. The model emphasizes respect for others, participation and effort, self-direction, leadership, and the transfer of responsibility to other areas of life. Physical education teachers can apply these

principles by assigning leadership roles, encouraging students to resolve disagreements constructively, and asking them to reflect on their conduct.

The model also suggests that responsibility should be progressively developed rather than imposed only through punishment. Students need opportunities to make decisions, accept consequences, help others, and evaluate their own behaviour.

3. Sports Education and Fair Play

Siedentop et al. (2011) presented sport education as an instructional model intended to provide meaningful and authentic sporting experiences. Students can participate in team membership, practice, competition, officiating, and record-keeping. These roles provide opportunities to learn cooperation, accountability, respect for rules, and appreciation of different contributions.

Vallerand et al. (2010) examined contextual and individual influences on sportsmanship among young athletes. Their work supports the importance of considering the motivational and social environment in which sporting conduct develops. Teachers should therefore encourage fair participation and ethical behaviour instead of rewarding victory alone.

4. Respect and Moral Development Through Sport

Research on respect in young athletes indicates that appropriately structured educational interventions can improve respect for opponents and adherence to sporting conventions. The systematic review and meta-analysis by the authors of *The development of respect in young athletes* reported positive effects associated with approaches including sport education, personal and social responsibility, and fair-play programmes (The development of respect in young athletes, 2021). These findings suggest that sportsmanship benefits from explicit instruction and structured practice.

5. Quality Physical Education and Inclusion

UNESCO (2015) emphasized that quality physical education should be inclusive, appropriately resourced, and directed towards the holistic development of learners. An inclusive environment enables students with different abilities, backgrounds, and levels of sporting experience to participate meaningfully. Such an environment can reinforce respect, cooperation, empathy, and responsibility.

Overall, the reviewed literature supports a central proposition: discipline and sportsmanship are not guaranteed consequences of playing sports. They are educational outcomes that require purposeful instruction, positive role modelling, fair rules, and opportunities for reflection.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The present paper adopts a conceptual and descriptive research design based on a review and synthesis of relevant literature concerning physical education, discipline, sportsmanship, moral development, and value-based teaching.

2. Sources of Information

The discussion draws on published academic literature, theoretical frameworks related to personal and social responsibility, research on sportsmanship and respect, and international guidance on quality physical education. The sources include peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books, along with UNESCO guidance.

3. Method of Analysis

The selected literature is examined thematically under the following headings:

Development of discipline and self-regulation.

Promotion of sportsmanship and fair play.

Teacher behaviour and role modelling.

Teaching strategies and student participation.

Institutional challenges and recommendations.

4. Scope and Limitation

The paper focuses on the educational role of physical education teachers in school settings. It provides a literature-based analysis rather than primary empirical findings. No original sample, questionnaire, interview, experiment, or statistical test was conducted for this paper. Consequently, the discussion identifies plausible educational contributions and literature-supported approaches but does not establish a new causal relationship or measure the effectiveness of a particular intervention.

ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING DISCIPLINE

1. Establishing Rules and Expectations

One of the primary responsibilities of physical education teachers is to establish clear and consistent rules for lessons, games, and sporting competitions. Students need to understand expectations concerning punctuality, appropriate clothing, safety procedures, equipment use, listening to instructions, and respect for classmates.

Rules are most effective when teachers explain their purpose and apply them consistently. For example, requiring students to wait for instructions before beginning an activity promotes safety and attentiveness. Ensuring that students return equipment after a lesson encourages responsibility and care for shared resources.

Discipline should be constructive rather than humiliating. Teachers should correct inappropriate behaviour fairly, explain its consequences, and give students opportunities to improve.

2. Developing Self-Control and Emotional Regulation

Sporting situations can produce excitement, frustration, disappointment, and anger. Students may become upset when they lose a match, disagree with an official, or perceive unfair treatment. Physical education teachers can use these situations to teach emotional regulation and thoughtful responses.

Teachers may encourage students to pause before reacting, communicate disagreements respectfully, accept refereeing decisions, and use positive self-talk. These practices can help students understand that discipline involves controlling one's behaviour even when emotions are intense.

Hellison's (2011) personal and social responsibility approach provides a framework for teaching self-direction and responsibility through physical activity.

3. Promoting Punctuality and Regular Participation

Regular attendance, punctuality, preparation, and consistent effort are important aspects of discipline. Teachers can reinforce these behaviours through organized routines, achievable goals, attendance monitoring, and constructive feedback.

However, teachers should distinguish unwillingness to participate from genuine barriers such as disability, illness, inadequate sportswear, or other personal circumstances. A fair approach requires reasonable accommodation and alternative forms of participation where appropriate.

4. Encouraging Perseverance and Goal Setting

Students develop discipline when they learn to work towards realistic goals and continue practising despite difficulties. Teachers can break complex skills into manageable stages and encourage students to monitor their progress.

For example, a student learning basketball may initially focus on correct dribbling technique before progressing to movement under pressure. Recognition of improvement, persistence, and effort encourages students to value the learning process rather than immediate success.

5. Developing Responsibility and Leadership

Leadership opportunities can strengthen personal responsibility and self-discipline. Teachers may assign students rotating roles such as team captain, warm-up leader, equipment manager, scorekeeper, or assistant official.

These responsibilities teach students to organize activities, communicate clearly, follow agreed procedures, and accept accountability for decisions. Rotating roles also prevents leadership opportunities from being restricted to the most athletic or popular students.

ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING SPORTSMANSHIP

1. Teaching Respect for Rules and Officials

Sportsmanship requires students to respect the rules of a game and the individuals responsible for applying them. Teachers should explain rules before competitions and ensure that students understand the purpose of fair play.

When a student disagrees with a referee, the teacher can demonstrate how to raise a concern politely rather than resorting to shouting, insults, or aggression. Students learn that respecting an official does not mean that questions are forbidden; it means disagreements should be handled appropriately.

2. Encouraging Respect for Opponents

Opponents should be regarded as participants who make competition possible rather than as enemies. Teachers can reinforce this principle through greetings before matches, appropriate conduct during play, and congratulating opponents afterwards.

Activities in which students work with changing teammates can also reduce social divisions and help students appreciate different abilities. Such practices support the development of respect and positive interpersonal relationships (Bailey et al., 2009).

3. Promoting Fair Play and Honesty

Fair play includes following rules, avoiding deliberate cheating, acknowledging mistakes, and accepting legitimate outcomes. Teachers should make clear that winning through dishonest conduct is not an acceptable achievement.

For instance, if a student acknowledges that the ball touched them last before going out of bounds, the teacher should recognize the honesty involved. Such actions demonstrate that ethical conduct has value even when it may disadvantage a team competitively.

4. Teaching Students to Accept Victory and Defeat

Winning and losing provide opportunities for emotional maturity. Teachers should help students celebrate success without insulting opponents and accept defeat without blaming teammates or officials.

After a competition, students may discuss what went well, what could be improved, and how both teams contributed to the experience. This reflective approach emphasizes learning, effort, and respect rather than humiliation or excessive celebration.

5. Encouraging Cooperation and Teamwork

Team sports require communication, coordination, trust, and shared responsibility. Physical education teachers can organize activities in which success depends on every participant's contribution rather than the performance of a single highly skilled student.

Teachers should discourage ridicule of less experienced classmates and encourage students to provide constructive feedback. Team-based tasks can help students understand that individual ability becomes more useful when combined with cooperation and mutual support.

6. Preventing Bullying and Unsporting Behaviour

Physical education lessons can expose students to teasing, exclusion, aggressive conduct, or discrimination based on physical ability and other differences. Teachers should respond promptly to bullying, establish safe reporting procedures, and communicate clear consequences for harmful conduct.

They should also avoid practices that publicly shame students for poor performance or use physical exercise as humiliating punishment. An emotionally safe learning environment helps students participate confidently and understand that respect is expected from everyone.

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR DISCIPLINE AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Physical education teachers can integrate the following strategies into their regular teaching practice:

Value-based instruction: Explain the meaning of discipline, honesty, respect, cooperation, and fair play before relevant activities.

Positive role modelling: Demonstrate calm communication, impartial decision-making, respect for rules, and appropriate responses to mistakes.

Cooperative learning: Use group tasks that require communication, shared planning, and mutual assistance.

Student officiating: Give students opportunities to referee or score games so that they understand the responsibilities of officials.

Rotating leadership: Provide leadership roles to students with varied abilities and backgrounds.

Reflective discussion: Conduct brief post-activity discussions about behaviour, teamwork, fairness, and lessons learned.

Positive reinforcement: Recognize ethical behaviour, improvement, effort, and helpfulness in addition to athletic achievement.

Inclusive competition: Modify activities and rules where necessary to enable meaningful participation by students with different abilities.

Peer support: Encourage experienced students to support beginners without dominating or embarrassing them.

Consistent accountability: Apply transparent behavioural expectations fairly and use proportionate, educational responses to misconduct.

These strategies align with responsibility-based teaching and quality physical education principles (Hellison, 2011; UNESCO, 2015).

II. CONCLUSION

Physical education teachers play an important educational role in developing discipline and sportsmanship among school students. Their responsibilities extend beyond teaching physical skills to creating learning environments that encourage self-control, punctuality, perseverance, respect, cooperation, honesty, and accountability. Through clear rules, positive role modelling, cooperative activities, student leadership, inclusive competition, and reflective discussion, teachers can provide practical opportunities for students to develop these qualities.

The reviewed literature suggests that physical education has the potential to support students' social and personal development, but positive outcomes are not automatic. They depend on the quality of teaching, the fairness of participation, and the deliberate integration of ethical values into sporting experiences. Discipline should therefore be understood as responsible self-regulation rather than fear-based obedience, while sportsmanship should be treated as a commitment to fairness and respect regardless of the result of a competition.

Schools should support physical education teachers through appropriate facilities, professional training, consistent policies, and cooperation with families. When these conditions are present, physical education can become an important part of holistic education and help students develop habits and values that extend beyond the playground into classrooms, families, and wider society.

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