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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Women in Physical Education and their Career Development: Current Trends and Issues

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Abstract

Participation in physical education (PE) is a fundamental right for every student (UNESCO, 2012). The quality of learning in PE depends on several factors, including access to facilities, learning opportunities, well-designed curricula, and effective teaching by qualified professionals. While PE teaching is a career open to both genders and protected by policies that ensure equal working opportunities, female professionals often face unique challenges in pursuing and advancing in this field. This study examines the career choices of female PE professionals, focusing on the social constraints they encounter and their implications for women pursuing careers in the field. It also investigates gender-specific perceptions of Quality Physical Education (QPE) to identify differences across key dimensions of QPE. This study draws on data from a global survey on QPE conducted between 2020 and 2021. Using a 49-item questionnaire developed by the International Society for Physical Education and Sport (ISCPES) research team, the study engaged 5,680 professionals comprising 2,431 women and 3,249 men. Respondents were primarily from Asia, the Middle East, and Central and South America, with fewer participants from Europe and Africa. This study employed the boundary concept and compromising practice framework to analyse trends in women's career choices, social and professional challenges, and prospects in PE careers. Findings revealed that both genders exhibited similar attitudes toward QPE development, with no significant differences in the overall score by gender. Nevertheless, women expressed more positive perceptions of QPE at the primary level than men.

Keywords:
Career Development, Women in Physical Education, Boundary Concept, Compromising Practice, Gender Equality

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Introduction

Providing physical education (PE) in schools is crucial for ensuring younger generations learn and develop life skills. A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) survey (2024) revealed that 83% of countries declared PE compulsory, affirming its vital role in youth development. An adequate PE programme requires specific essential components, such as appropriate curriculum arrangement, various learning opportunities, and effective teaching methods. Successfully implementing these quality outcomes requires qualified professionals like PE teachers, sports coaches, and curriculum coordinators.

Becoming a PE teacher is a career choice for many young people. This is a career for everyone, and women and men are expected to work on equal terms and have the same opportunities for career success. The global trend shows a rise in the number of women in education. A chapter on 'Gender differences in career expectations and feminisation of the teaching profession' (Encinas-Martín, 2023) in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2023 report 'Joining forces for gender equality' provided data showing more women selecting service professions such as teaching and nursing than men. Findings revealed that in 2020, women were primarily over-represented among new entrants in education or health and welfare. For example, on average, across OECD countries, the proportion of female teachers reached 70%, with significant differences across levels of education. Female teachers were especially overrepresented at lower levels of education.

Moreover, 82% of the primary teachers were women, compared to 63% at the secondary level and 45% at the tertiary level on average across OECD countries (Encinas-Martín, 2023). Similarly, Eurostat (2023) reported that 5.24 million teachers in European Union countries were employed in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education, with women comprising 73% (3.8 million) of the total and men accounting for 27% (1.43 million) in 2021. Women appear to favour careers in education or teaching and may relate to the gender stereotypes in education (Encinas-Martín, 2023).

Although the number of women entering educational careers is rising rapidly, their experiences pursuing careers in PE differ significantly. According to ZIPPIA (2021), a career data company based in the US, the demographic information of PE teachers shows that of 28,563 PE teachers, 39.4% are women, while 60.6% are men in 2021. Moreover, the data highlighted a gender pay gap, with male PE teachers earning an average annual salary of USD 46,999 compared to an average salary of USD 45,601 for female PE teachers. The pattern of male dominance in PE teaching positions occurs not only in the US but also in other countries.

In China, it was estimated that 26% of female teachers worked in primary schools, and 20% worked in both junior and regular senior secondary schools (Wang et al., 2021). Terayama and Yagi (2021) mentioned that approximately 62.2%, 43.3%, and 32.1% of female PE teachers in Japan worked in elementary, junior high, and high schools, respectively. Most male PE teachers worked at the secondary level. The situation was even astonishing in places where PE was difficult to access in schools. PE teachers have been available in 82% of schools in Bangladesh (Shefali, 2021). The male-to-female PE teacher ratio was 65:34, while the male-to-female student participation ratio in sports was 60:40. The findings also revealed that, in co-educational institutes, all PE teachers are men. There are no women-friendly environments that promote girls' sports. There were 64 district sports officer positions in Bangladesh, but no female sports officers were recruited (Shefali, 2021).

Al-Sinani and colleagues (2021) reported similar trends in Arab countries. Their study indicated that male researchers dominate in the field of PE study. Women specialists in PE and women sport coaches remained sparse across Gulf countries. Turakhanova and Kasymova (2021) found a similar situation in Tajikistan. The enrolment of girls in higher educational institutions on physical culture and sport was 1%, with only 14 of 1,248 students. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 1,670 students were enrolled in the Tajik Institute of Physical Culture, and only 17 women were among them.

Khan and associates (2012) analysed the job of female PE teachers in a province of Pakistan. The female PE teachers were assigned jobs in the organisation of sporting

events and taught PE at senior secondary and undergraduate levels. Although the female PE teachers were assigned teaching jobs, they had no sports background and were not interested in sport-related fields. They entered the teaching field in PE by chance rather than choosing it as a career. Because of their inadequate knowledge of sport activities, they were not respected in the profession and failed to earn the necessary prestige from society compared to teachers of other subjects (Khan et al., 2012).

Project World Impact (2021) highlights women's rights as a vital issue influencing the well-being of communities and global social justice. Of the 195 nations worldwide, 143 have constitutionally guaranteed equality between men and women. Although a notable achievement is recorded, it requires careful interpretation. Hargraves (1990) cautions that while these constitutional guarantees reflect quantitative achievement, they do not necessarily translate into qualitative changes. The battlefront is divided into two sides. It involves not only job opportunities for female professionals but also the job culture within the workplace. This "job culture" is concealed behind social norms, traditions, religious practices, and everyday work dynamics, which can either support or hinder women's advancement. Achieving quality growth for women professionals in PE teaching is another story. Globally, disparities exist, with some countries having made significant strides in increasing the number of women in the profession. However, the quality of the work environment still needs improvement. Nevertheless, many nations are still struggling to achieve even basic levels of gender equality in job access. This study draws on data from recent research in QPE to explore the experiences of female PE teachers, examining their career aspirations and the challenges they face. This study explores current trends of career choices by female professionals, the underlying challenges from social constraints, and the impacts and prospects for women pursuing careers as PE professionals.

Methodology

Participants

The sample adopted in this QPE study consisted of 5,680 PE professionals, 57.2% men and 42.8% women. Data were collected with the assistance of research partners from four continents and completed before mid-2021. Invited professionals came from Asia (57.2%), Latin America (32.6%), Europe (5.8%) and Africa (4.4%). All participants were primary or secondary school PE teachers or professionals in the field of PE in universities or government-educational authorities and school supervisors responsible for developing PE curricula. Research partners recruited participants during local seminars, meetings, and training activities, and a questionnaire was delivered offline or online via the Google platform at the mentioned events. Participation of these professionals in the questionnaire survey was voluntary and anonymous. Only those who signed a consent form to participate were included in the study. The first author's former institute approved the ethical clearance of the study with an approval number of SSHRE21-APP003-FED.

Research Tool

The Global Index of Quality Physical Education (GIQPE) questionnaire was adopted for this study. Methods and procedures of item development were discussed in articles by Ho and associates (2021; 2023). Items in this study were determined to be a good fit for investigation. The items were divided into eight dimensions, each describing one situation in QPE. The dimensions were: Skill Development and Bodily Awareness (SDBA) – 8 items; Facilities and Norms in PE (FNPE) – 13 items plus one additional item (to distinguish PE as a compulsory subject at school at primary and secondary levels, respectively); Quality Teaching of PE (QTPE) – 6 items; Plans for Feasibility

and Accessibility of Physical Education (PFAPE) – 2 items; Social Norms and Cultural Practice (SNCP) – 3 items; Governmental Input for PE (GIPE) – 5 items; Cognitive Skill Development (CSD) – 5 items; and Habituated Behaviour in Physical Activities (HBPA) – 6 items. A Likert scale scoring system from 0 to 10 was employed, with 0 representing 'fully not achieved' and 10 'fully achieved'. English was used as the original language in the questionnaire. The original language of the questionnaire was English. For those who were not proficient in English, translations or interpretations were available and carried out by the research partners from different cities. These research partners were proficient in English and native speakers of the language in the countries they lived or worked. The purpose was to guarantee a suitable understanding of the items before answering the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The study explored the current trend of career choice of female professionals in the teaching field of PE and their perceptual understanding in different dimensions. The following methods were employed with descriptive statistics and frequency analysis to understand the distribution of returning questionnaires from different groups. The significant differences in the proportion of female and male PE professionals were determined using the Chi-square test to determine whether there was a statistical difference between the expected and observed frequencies. An independent T-test was used to compare the differences between the achieved means among women and men in the overall QPE questionnaire and its dimensions because of the normality in data distribution according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (Version 23), and the significance level was set at 0.5. The significance level was set at 0.05 for all statistical tests.

Results

This study investigated the proportion of men and women and their employment in PE based on questionnaires returned from the QPE study. Table 1 shows the distribution of men and women concerning work positions (primary school teacher, secondary school teacher, and 'others'), type of school system, years of work experience, and the chi-square test results and significance. Significantly more men than women worked as PE professionals. A significant difference was not evident between male and female PE teachers at the primary level.

Table 1. Frequencies and Chi-square test results of participants by gender, position, school type, and years of work experience

	Male	**Female**	**Total**	**Chi-square**	**p-value**
Gender	3249	2431	5680	117.804	.000
Position					
Primary	978	950	1928	.407	.524
Secondary	1259	794	2053	105.321	.000
Others	854	584	1438	50.695	.000
School Type					
Government	2015	1528	3543	66.940	.000
Private	560	367	927	40.182	.000
Others	160	135	295	2.119	.146
Years of work experience					
1-5	1227	982	2209	27.173	.000
6-10	566	397	963	29.658	.000
11-15	434	313	747	19.600	.000
16-20	288	264	552	1.043	.307
21-25	231	139	370	22.876	.000
26-30	160	98	258	14.899	.000
31-35	130	79	209	12.445	.000
36-40	47	42	89	.281	.000
41 above	48	24	72	8.000	.005

Table 2 presents the proportions of men and women working in PE across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, along with the corresponding Chi-square results. In this sample, more questionnaires were returned by men than women who worked in PE. However, a notable exception was observed in Africa and Asia, where significantly more women working in primary schools responded than their male counterparts. This unexpected pattern prompted the research team to delve deeper into the social factors influencing women's career choices and their challenges when pursuing PE teaching roles in primary schools. The investigation also explored how these factors impact both teaching practices and student learning outcomes in these regions.

Table 2. The proportion of both gender and their position in different continents and Chi-square statistics

	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total	Chi-square	p-value
		Africa			
	135 (54%)	114 (45.6%)	249	1.771	.183
Teacher Primary	31 (35.2%)	56 (63.6%)	87	7.184	.007
Teacher Secondary	64 (60.4%)	42 (39.6%)	106	4.566	.033
Others	40 (71.4%)	16 (28.6%)	56	10.286	.001
		Asia			
	1679 (52.5%)	1476 (46.2%)	3155	13.061	.000
Teacher Primary	487 (44.2%)	604 (54.8%)	1091	12.547	.000
Teacher Secondary	653 (57.5%)	471 (41.5%)	1124	29.470	.000
Others	512 (56.3%)	389 (42.8%)	901	16.791	.000
		Europe			
	180 (55%)	147 (45%)	327	3.330	.068
Teacher Primary	50 (52.1%)	46 (47.9%)	96	.167	.683
Teacher Secondary	69 (52.3%)	63 (47.7%)	132	.273	.602
Others	60 (62.5%)	36 (37.5%)	96	6.000	.014
		Latin America			
	1255 (60.3%)	694 (32.6%)	1949	161.478	.000
Teacher Primary	410 (56.4%)	244 (33.6%)	654	42.135	.000
Teacher Secondary	473 (65.2%)	218 (30%)	691	94.103	.000
Others	242 (61.6%)	143 (36.4%)	385	25.457	.000

Another study objective was to investigate the differences in responses to the QPE questionnaire and its dimensions between genders. Table 3 shows the data from four continents. Means are compared for genders in the same continent. The average mean for women was higher than for men in Asia and Africa in all dimensions and QPE. In Asia, significant differences were observed in the PFAPE dimension. In Africa, there were significant differences in PFAPE, SNCP, GIPE, HBPA, and QPE (overall). A different pattern is observed in Latin America. Men attained higher mean scores in each dimension, and QPE (overall) was also high among men. Significant differences were observed in the QTPE dimension. There was no evidence of significant differences between dimensions in Europe. Female professionals had a higher mean score than male professionals.

Table 3. Gender differences in the overall QPE and eight corresponding dimensions

	SDBA	FNPE	QTPE	PFAPE	SNCP	GIPE	CSD	HBPA	QPE (overall)
Asia									
Male	6.80	6.93	6.71	6.18	6.5	6.36	6.54	6.61	6.69
Female	6.95	7.04	6.82	6.43	6.65	6.44	6.66	6.71	6.81
T-test	1.885	1.549	1.318	2.658	1.729	.934	1.460	1.180	1.587
Sign	.059	.121	.188	.008	.084	.350	.144	.238	.113
Latin America									
Male	7.00	6.93	7.35	5.50	6.14	6.18	6.89	7.14	6.83
Female	6.83	6.76	7.15	5.29	6.01	6.05	6.75	6.98	6.67
T-test	1.739	1.862	2.225	1.349	1.043	1.037	1.226	1.559	1.720
Sign	.082	.063	.026	.177	.177	.300	.220	.119	.086
Europe									
Male	6.30	6.86	6.50	4.57	5.63	5.10	5.83	5.99	6.17
Female	6.52	7.07	6.68	4.55	5.79	5.23	5.94	6.04	6.32
T-test	1.171	1.257	.976	.070	.709	.629	.536	.265	.867
Sign	.244	.210	.330	.944	.479	.530	.592	.791	.387
Africa									
Male	5.64	4.99	5.07	4.01	3.59	4.06	5.44	5.11	4.95
Female	6.03	5.32	5.52	4.61	4.48	4.80	5.82	5.78	5.43
T-test	1.588	1.515	1.590	2.069	3.102	.677	1.394	2.142	2.082
Sign	.114	.131	.113	.040	.002	.007	.165	.033	.038

Discussion

The study invited 5680 professionals in PE from Asia, Latin America, South America, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe to answer a questionnaire. Female professionals comprised 42% of the total, and male professionals accounted for 57%. In Asia, female participants outnumbered male PE professionals at the primary level in returning the questionnaires. Madagascar and Nigeria were two countries involved in this research and a similar situation was observed in these two countries. Overall, the number of questionnaires from both genders reflects a gradual decrease in the number of secondary positions in universities or posts in schools for female professionals. The number of returning questionnaires caused the research team to investigate the actual situation of women teaching PE, and individual reports in other countries provided corresponding evidence to describe the career situation.

Terayama and Yagi (2021) described the career situation of PE teachers in Japan and a higher percentage of female professionals in PE would like to work in primary schools, and the percentages were 62.2%, 43.3%, and 32.1% for job engagement in elementary, junior high, and high schools, respectively. Approximately 26% of female PE teachers in China work in primary schools and 20% in junior and regular senior secondary schools (Wang et al., 2021). In the region of Taiwan, 30.64%, 39.03%, and 35.25% of female PE teachers work in primary, secondary, and vocational high schools (Ministry of Education, 2019). The 2019 report by the OECD on gender and education stated that, in many countries, there are more female teachers than males in primary and lower secondary schools. Nevertheless, when it comes to teaching PE and health education (HE), the overall situation indicates more men are pursuing careers in these fields. This creates a concerning scenario, as the limited number of female teachers means fewer role models

for students. The OECD (2019) report also highlighted the challenge involving the scarcity of female PE teachers, compounded by persistent gender stereotypes in teaching approaches. These stereotypes can influence the way PE is taught, potentially reinforcing traditional gender roles rather than promoting inclusivity.

To understand this stereotyping behaviour, Verbrugge (2012) highlighted the tradition of sexism and gender stereotyping in the profession of female PE teachers. Aron (2017) reviewed this and highlighted how professionalism among female PE teachers developed in the early 20th century. At that time, there was significant growth in exercise programmes in public schools, and many young women joined the profession to become PE teachers. Those who engaged in the profession were either athletes who wanted to continue their enthusiasm for sport or discovered PE through physical therapy after an injury. During their training, they were trained to be 'ladylike' or 'to teach like a lady'. Female PE teachers were expected to look feminine but behave virtuously, look strong and vigorous but earnest, and be willing to accept being underpaid.

The shadow of the stereotyping behaviour described by Verbrugge (2012) in the early days seemed to no longer exist in modern education for PE professionals but was replaced with other concerning issues in education. For example, studies from the 1990s indicate the robust construction of gender differences and masculinity image in PE (Clarke, 1998; Griffin, 1989; Wright, 1997); thus, there is a preference for separated class teaching for male and female students. Berg and Lahelma's (2010) study in Finnish secondary schools revealed gender-segregated PE. Male teachers were usually assigned to teach boys, while female teachers taught girls. The reason for this class arrangement is complex. Berg and Lahelma (2010) observed the link with the general perception of a higher demand for male students to develop masculine efficiency in sports activities; conversely, it was suggested that there was a lower demand for girls' performance. Separate class arrangement seems to solve the differences in masculine demands between boys and girls.

Berg and Lahelma (2010) further described the boundary concept as indicating teachers' preferences while teaching the subject in separate class arrangements. Their report described an example of the borderwork in PE. Teachers maintained their teaching with their understanding of differences by invoking the gender boundary. Some individual boys or girls might cross this boundary (a boy learns to dance), but as the teacher moves to the group teaching (boys as a group), the teacher goes back to reinforce the demand for masculine efficiency. What follows are the differentiated instructions of teachers according to students' gender', and the general conceptualisation of gender turns out to be a boundary in giving teachers what and how to respond. The extent to which these gender stereotyping boundary preferences in teaching may affect women's perception when they take over a career as a female PE professional is still unknown. Itani (2005) described the boundary of gender culture as the cause of shaping our career practice and satisfaction and, in turn, limiting the choice preferences when considering a career as a professional in teaching PE. Itani (2005) discussed different hurdles affecting teachers' preferences in teaching PE, and one was related to PE curriculum and teacher behaviour. The masculine principles of strength, bravery, winning, and so on were dominant during the interaction in class. There were different expectations for men and women in the classroom teaching, which helped create the different school roles. Male teachers had a masculine role and expected severeness and toughness in boys.

On the other hand, education for women was deeply rooted in the culture of

dance education for girls. Itani (2005) further discussed the practice of the company-style office atmosphere in Japanese schools and the emphasis on long working hours and holidays. The gym and office culture of PE reinforced male dominance and left female PE teachers on the sidelines. This boundary concept, along with the authentic practice of the masculinity culture and gender differences in the workplace, may eventually support the growth of a different perspective for social relationships and career development between men and women who work in the same field (Ginsburg, 1987).

There have been attempts to solve this issue by taking different measures. Independent observations seem to reflect attitudes of refusal towards solving issues of gender differences. For example, McKenzie and colleagues (2004) mentioned the vigorous promotion of co-education under the Public Law of 92-318 in the US. Resistance to having a single-sex class arrangement in middle schools, however, remained strong due to preference for choice. The co-education model has also been adopted in China, but this one-size-fits-all system raises concerns. PE inspires the natural desire for conquest and achievement in male students but not in female students. Wang and associates (2021) stated that most PE teachers consider this to be a normal phenomenon and even ignore the presence of gender inequality in school sports, which not only leads to the generally poor sports performance of girls and a low sense of participation but also affects the implementation of equality in education.

For this, we must understand that such practice for separate class arrangements for boys and girls and masculine efficiency development is reinforced by our culture and general practice. For example, Vertinsky and colleagues (2005) discussed the colonial influence of Britain and gender-made arrangements to teach PE in Hong Kong SAR. Schools in this city followed the British tradition of class segregation. This practice was common and became a curriculum practice, especially at the secondary level. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a separate system for educating female students for religious reasons (Shahab et al., 2021). Male and female students did not mix for PE lessons. In Japan, sex-specific health and PE curricula classes were required in the past because females attended dance classes, and males attended martial classes, such as judo and kendo (Terayama & Yagi, 2021). These kinds of stereotyping and masculinity culture seem to be reinforced by cultural norms and practices and serve as a challenge for the women who would like to choose PE as their profession for their career development. When Vernet and Butera (2005) investigated the wave of feminism development, they were concerned with women's complete control of their bodies. The present situation indicates a freedom of career choice for women in the PE profession. Nevertheless, it is necessary to move forward and investigate a hidden practice for social compromise and a balance of masculinity and femininity culture in the workplace; it will enable an equal contribution of both genders in the teaching works of PE in school.

Female PE professionals strongly preferred teaching in primary schools in Asia. This scenario suggests a different perspective for investigation. Although most women in Macao SAR can make independent decisions regarding their careers, when raising a family, some stop working and follow the tradition of staying home (Macau News, 2017). This indicates the existence of a compromising practice when a career decision is made. Meanwhile, in Singapore, Chan and Protzen (2018) stated that by splitting responsibilities, both partners share gains and losses; thus, to establish balance in a situation involving compromise, both genders must decide. Women considering jobs in primary schools as their first preference reflects the decision to compromise after the division of labour in society or family needs (Van Damme,

2017). This parental concept plays a role, especially among younger generations of women who value motherhood more than their baby-boom mothers do. Teaching jobs in schools may allow teachers to work part-time and flexibly combine work, family life, and the care of one's children. This fact seems more appealing to women and may serve as a reason for the strong preferences of female professionals who want to work in primary schools.

This study examined QPE across its eight corresponding dimensions using gender as a critical variable. Regarding average perceptions, female PE professionals had a higher perceptual index than their male counterparts in Asia, Europe, and Africa, but not Latin America. Overall, there were also no significant differences between the genders, except in some isolated dimensions. Notably, African female professionals significantly differed from males in at least four dimensions: PFAPE, SNCP, GIPE, and HBAP. Both genders' close perception of QPE indicates a shared cognitive understanding of PE in schools. This may be related to increased educational awareness among female PE teachers and changing their roles and responsibilities in schools. UNESCO's reports (2013, 2016) have highlighted this trend, noting that supporting women's empowerment relates to the improvement of educational opportunities for girls. The improvement of educational opportunities and the introduction of educational reform for girls are happening worldwide; however, the scope of the reforms and procedures varies across regions, as they must be adapted to the local context.

There are two main approaches to implementing comprehensive education policies. The first must focus on establishing equal terms that support educational rights and quality education for both genders. The second must stipulate targeted measures for reducing discrimination against specific groups. This approach implies giving extra attention to issues safeguarding women's rights. In places where there is insufficient development of educational opportunities for females, intentional consideration of such issues in policymaking and program interventions appears to be the appropriate strategy for dismantling barriers and ensuring equal access to educational opportunities.

'Gender equality is not a women's issue but affects both women and men, as it is rooted in the relationship between the two' asserts in the opening page of a Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) report on the topic of 'Promising Practices: Empowering Women, Empowering Communities' (SCIAF, 2019). Furthermore, the report also stated that 'both women and men have to change their way of working, attitude, and social norms to ensure both are equal, empowered, and dignified'. Nevertheless, the initial stages of female professionals' involvement in PE did not follow this sentiment. Coakley (2015) remarked that stereotyping was used to limit opportunities for women's participation in physical activities worldwide. In addition, the reality of our society eventually wraps this stereotyping practice with boundaries, and the decision is tied up with compromising needs in society and family.

Moreover, compromising practices reinforce gender practices and stereotyping ideas. Although there are more women in education, this does not change their view of masculinity culture and the male dominance concept in PE. This may be an issue worth considering. Equal opportunities for career development for both genders are needed. Nevertheless, the focus should be on more than just quantitative change. It is necessary to pay attention to the hidden culture, as this is the real agent shaping the professional development of females in PE.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

This study reflects a scenario in PE, where more women express interest in pursuing PE as a career, and many of them choose to

have their teaching work in primary education. However, female representation declines at higher levels, such as secondary schools, universities, or other related institutions. Women remain underrepresented in senior academic roles and hold fewer influential positions within decision-making structures, limiting their numerical presence and influence within academia. Female PE teachers encounter challenges related to a dominant masculine culture, entrenched gender stereotypes in teaching approaches, and the added social demands and responsibilities of family life. Women in the PE profession face subtle yet significant barriers that hinder the career progression of women in PE. Interestingly, the perspectives of female PE teachers in this study suggest a perception of professional equality, indicating a belief in the scope and value of the PE profession across genders. While this finding may indicate a positive attitude of 'we are the same, and there is no difference,' it also raises questions about whether such perceptions might influence women's career choices in PE.

To support female professionals in PE, it is essential to address the different structural and cultural issues, including religious norms, professional etiquette, workplace environment, policies on equal pay, and the role of unions in advocating for women's rights. The rising numbers of female professionals in teaching PE may indicate a positive trend of job equality in career development. Nevertheless, it is essential to review the core problems behind the change. Recommended strategies include creating partnerships with educational authorities to deliver workshops for teachers to discuss the gender role in teaching, presentations at seminars or conferences to address the stereotyping issue of class experiences in sport learning, increased focus on social and family support for female teachers, impose a fair and comprehensive review structure for job promotion and scaling-up research in evidence-based pedagogical practices may help to improve the current condition of females in their profession in PE. This study's result may contribute to further understanding of the barriers and challenges towards the career development of female professionals in PE teaching.

Several limitations are associated with our reviews. Although there was an attempt to identify the global circumstances of females in teaching PE, the research mainly included information from countries in Asia and Latin America. Limited responses were received from Europe, Africa, and North America. It could not have a complete review of career development for females in PE and hence restricted the generalisation of the findings to settings and countries with diversified social, economic, and political backgrounds. Further study is needed to provide a validated conclusion to the current discussion. Despite the limitations, the study should be valuable in bringing attention to the current situation and challenges for female professionals working in PE. To close the discussion, the SCIAF (2019) report asserted that 'neither women nor men can flourish without one another, and there is no sustainable path to development, poverty reduction, and eradication of hunger without gender equality'. This study underscores the importance of gender equality and recognition of differences in achieving high-quality education for future generations. Without these, genuine progress in the PE profession—and in education as a whole—remains out of reach.

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Ethics Approval
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