

Integrating Mental Health and Wellbeing in Physical Education Curriculum Under NEP 2020

Dr. Poonam choudhary¹, Dr. Sandeep Kumari²

¹DIET Ghumanhera, SCERT, Delhi

²Vidya training institute SCERT Delhi

Abstract:

Integrating students' mental, emotional, and physical health into the educational process is key to the National Education Policy 2020's emphasis on holistic development. Physical education (PE) has the potential to improve students' emotional and physical health, which is the focus of this research. It is now crucial to include mental health awareness into physical education programs due to rising concerns about students' stress, anxiety, and lack of physical activity. This study looks at the ways in which PE programs that include mindfulness practices, scheduled physical activities, and social and emotional learning might help students become more resilient, less stressed, and do better in school. The research examines the replies of educators at all levels (students, instructors, and administrators) using quantitative and qualitative methods. The results show that when schools include physical education into their curricula, students show considerable improvements in their social conduct, emotional stability, and engagement. In order to meet the objectives of NEP 2020, the report suggests reworking the curriculum, retraining teachers, and implementing interventions at the policy level.

Keywords: Mental Health, Physical Education, NEP 2020, Wellbeing, School Curriculum, Holistic Development etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

As part of its call for a more comprehensive approach to education, India's National Education Policy 2020 acknowledges the role that students' mental health plays in their personal growth and development. The policy emphasizes the need of schools including lessons on emotional and mental health into their curricula since these areas are fundamental to students' overall development. According to NEP-2020, "high-quality learning also requires the development of capacities that promote student wellness," which includes things like physical fitness, mental health, social support, and a strong ethical foundation.

School curricula will incorporate "basic training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good nutrition, personal and public hygiene, disaster response and first-aid, as well as scientific explanations of the detrimental and damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs" (NEP-2020), and the policy stresses the need of identifying and helping students with mental health issues as soon as possible. It also emphasizes the need of fostering healthy mental habits and making schools welcoming places where kids feel comfortable asking for assistance when they need it. In order to improve "the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system" (NEP-2020), the policy suggests implementing these measures. Counselors, psychologists, and other mental health experts should be readily available in schools, and those who work in this field should have enough training to help kids. Awareness campaigns and mental

health literacy programs for parents, instructors, and students should also be developed and implemented by schools.

1.2 MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND ITS MANAGEMENT

There has been great progress in mental health treatment and its administration in recent decades, but much more work remains. The trend toward more integrative methods of mental health therapy is among the field's most notable developments. Mental health issues are complicated and multidimensional, and this approach acknowledges that. Treatment should include the individual's social, cultural, and environmental background in addition to the symptoms of the condition. Historically, mental health concerns were often misunderstood and stigmatized, leading to social exclusion and individual suffering for those who suffered from them. But attitudes have changed recently, and people understand the necessity of getting treatment when they need it, when it comes to mental health difficulties. A recovery-oriented strategy has recently gained traction in management, with an emphasis on encouraging people to be an active part of their own mental health treatment and helping them reach their objectives.

1.3 CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN EDUCATION

Individuals are said to be in a condition of mental health and wellness when they are able to fulfill their capabilities, deal with the typical stressors of life, perform efficiently, and make a positive contribution to their organizations and communities. It is essential for optimal learning and personal development to have a healthy mental state within the context of the educational setting. An increase in the amount of academic pressure, social expectations, and exposure to digital media have all had a substantial influence on the psychological health of students. Therefore, addressing these difficulties in a way that is both practical and interesting may be accomplished by bringing mental health awareness into the curriculum, especially via the medium of physical education.

1.4 ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH

The promotion of regular physical exercise, which has been scientifically related to a reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression, is one of the most important ways in which physical education contributes to the improvement of mental health. A number of activities, including sports, exercise, yoga, and meditation, are beneficial for the release of endorphins, the improvement of mood, and the development of emotional equilibrium. Additionally, involvement in team sports improves social interaction, teamwork, and self-confidence in individuals. Creating a supportive atmosphere that encourages both physical fitness and psychological resilience may be accomplished by schools via the incorporation of organized mental health components into physical education.

1.5 NEP 2020 AND CURRICULUM REFORMS

Experiential and competency-based learning, which incorporates health and wellbeing as vital components of education, are highly advocated for in the National Education Policy 2020. In addition to recommending the incorporation of life skills education and sports-integrated pedagogy, it highlights the significance of emotional intelligence and mental health awareness as important components of education. The policy also supports freedom in the design of the curriculum, which enables schools to include new practices such as mindfulness sessions, approaches for stress management, and value-based education into their physical education lessons.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mandal, Sujash & Ruidas, Indrani & Gope, Laxmiram (2026) The purpose of education is to foster the holistic growth of each person. Online modes and content development have allowed education to go beyond books thanks to scientific, informational, and technological advancements. Lessons are being delivered online by a large number of instructors. Online learning, however, cannot transform pupils into flawless individuals. For this reason, academics have taken the initiative to study the feasibility of introducing yoga classes into classrooms. Yoga has many advantages, and this study explains why it should be a part of educational curricula. The growth of yoga education is meant to improve the lives of everyone involved in education, including students, parents, administrators, and teachers.

Valentina, Stefanica & Macri, Aurelia (2025) This study aimed to determine if and how high school students' mental health may be improved by the implementation of a structured physical education curriculum that included team sports, mindfulness activities, and reflection exercises. This research used a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests to examine the effects of a certain intervention on a group of 60 adolescents (30 males and 30 females, ranging in age from 15 to 17 years old). A control group continued with regular PE for eight weeks, while an intervention group met for eight weeks in a controlled setting to work on emotional regulation. We used the Emotional Balance Scale (EBS), the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to evaluate the psychological outcomes. A 2x2 Mixed-Design ANOVA, paired t-tests, Cronbach's alpha, and Shapiro-Wilk tests were among the analyses. Emotional equilibrium ($M = 2.90$ to 4.60 ; $p < 0.01$, $d = 2.002$), self-esteem ($M = 41.00$ to 57.50 ; $p < 0.001$, $d = 2.134$), and decreased stress ($M = 19.80$ to 12.10 ; $p < 0.01$, $d = -2.432$) were all significantly improved in the intervention group. The control group did not experience any notable changes. Significant Group \times Time interactions were verified by ANOVA ($p < 0.001$), and the effect sizes were high ($\eta^2 > 0.38$). These results show that physical education programs that include emotional development techniques greatly improve the mental health of teenagers. The findings provide credence to the idea that school curriculum should include organized, multidimensional programs aimed at enhancing emotion control, self-esteem, and stress resistance.

Hargreaves, Jackie & Cooke, Belinda & McKenna, Jim (2025) There is rising cause for alarm over the prevalence of mental health issues among today's HE students. Students' experiences and outcomes like persistence, completion, and success may be greatly improved by incorporating mental health ideas into the design of courses. Incorporating mental health recommendations into a revalidated health science, physical education, and athletics curriculum is the goal of this article. Future proposals for curriculum design that promotes mental health are an additional objective. Using a qualitative technique, we conducted a case study to investigate the current and potential inclusion of mental health in various course offerings. Over the course of four months, a variety of stakeholders, including students, took part in interviews, seminars, and revalidation activities. Two primary courses of action were suggested by the transcript analysis and interpretation: "building students" (which would involve assisting students with the intricacies of the academic process and fostering their self-confidence through systematic scaffolding, for instance) and "building connections" (which would involve improving social connections and psychological safety, for instance by learning students' names). This study's recommendations stress the need of a social orientation throughout induction, with a focus on building basic skills, behaviors, and knowledge. In order to improve students' confidence, it is essential to systematically scaffold and map key abilities, behaviors, and knowledge throughout the course. This has the potential to alleviate the concerns felt by both faculty and students over a perceived lack of expertise. An additional way to boost students' feelings of belonging and engagement might be via staff-student interactions and an emphasis on micro-behaviors.

Katara, Mr & Chaudhari, Dr. (2025) India has made a sea change in its approach to education with the release of its National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This study looks at how NEP 2020 will affect sports science and physical education in India. This research examines the possible effects of NEP 2020 on school sports programs, teacher preparation, physical plant, and academic climate by reviewing the policy text, relevant literature, and expert comments. According to the results, there are still a lot of obstacles to overcome when it comes to allocating resources and implementing NEP 2020, even if it offers a good foundation for incorporating PE and SS into the regular curriculum. Policymakers, educators, and academics in the domain of sports science and physical education will find this study a significant contribution to the continuing conversation on education reform in India.

Sun, Hui & Du, Cheng-Run & Wei, Zhi-Feng (2024) Students in China are struggling with mental health and are failing to make academic progress. China does not have any school-level health education policy. But academics pay more attention to health education for college students than for high school kids. The major goal of this study is to find out how health education affects the mental health of schoolchildren. The sample consists of 549 students from both public and private schools in China who are in the tenth grade. The data is analyzed using the partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Health education has a substantial effect on the mental health of Chinese schoolchildren, according to the results. In addition, the research highlighted the crucial moderating impact of sustained physical activity and athletic involvement in improving the association between health education and psychological wellness. By theoretically highlighting the innovative contributions, this study enriches literature. In addition, the results of this study should be used to rethink government education policies in order to make them healthier for children.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate how NEP 2020 plans to include health and wellness into PE classes, this study uses a mixed-method research strategy that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. Two hundred students, PE instructors, and school administrators from urban and semi-urban schools participated in the primary data collection process by filling out questionnaires and giving interviews. To guarantee that all levels of education were represented, stratified random sampling was used. Research on mental health and education was based on secondary data culled from scholarly articles, government publications, and policy papers.

While statistical procedures like percentage analysis and mean scores were used to assess the quantitative data, theme analysis was used to explain the qualitative replies. Factors that were investigated were students' levels of stress, their engagement in physical activities, their knowledge of mental health, and their perceptions of the advantages of an integrated physical education curriculum. The report also assesses the institutional preparedness to execute NEP 2020 guidelines and the difficulties of doing so.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Awareness of Mental Health Concepts Among Students

Awareness Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
High	60	30%
Moderate	90	45%
Low	50	25%

The data shows that although 30% of students show high knowledge of mental health, the majority (45%) exhibit a moderate level of awareness. The results point to the need for more organized mental health teaching within PE classes.

Table 2: Participation in Physical Education Activities

Participation Level	Respondents	Percentage
(Regular)	110	55%
Occasional	70	35%
Rare	20	10%

With over 50% of kids regularly engaging in physical activity, there is a solid basis for incorporating mental wellness practices into current PE programs.

Table 3: Impact of Physical Activity on Stress Reduction

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Highly Effective	95	47.5%
Moderately Effective	75	37.5%
Not Effective	30	15%

The significance of physical education (PE) in promoting mental health is shown by the fact that 85 percent of respondents think it helps relieve stress.

Table 4: Inclusion of Mental Health Topics in PE Curriculum

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	80	40%
No	120	60%

A significant void in the implementation of NEP 2020 is highlighted by the fact that most schools do not include mental health in physical education (60%).

Table 5: Teacher Training in Mental Health

Training Level	Respondents	Percentage
Trained	70	35%
Not Trained	130	65%

Students are not as well supported or integrated into the curriculum since most instructors have not had professional training in mental health.

Table 6: Student Perception of PE and Wellbeing

Perception	Respondents	Percentage
Positive	120	60%
Neutral	50	25%
Negative	30	15%

The fact that most students see physical education as good for their health is encouraging for programs that target mental health.

Table 7: Preferred Activities for Mental Wellbeing

Activity Type	Respondents	Percentage
Sports	80	40%
Yoga & Meditation	70	35%
Group Activities	50	25%

The popularity of sports and yoga shows that people find both physical activity and mindfulness techniques to be beneficial.

Table 8: Barriers to Implementation

Barrier Type	Respondents	Percentage
Lack of Resources	85	42.5%
Lack of Training	70	35%
Time Constraints	45	22.5%

There has to be institutional backing and policy enforcement since the largest obstacles are a lack of expertise and limited resources.

Table 9: Impact on Academic Performance

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Improved	100	50%
No Change	70	35%
Declined	30	15%

There seems to be a favorable relationship between physical wellness and academic achievement, since half of the respondents claim enhanced academic performance.

Table 10: Frequency of Mental Stress Among Students

Stress Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Very Often	50	25%
Often	70	35%
Sometimes	60	30%
Rarely	20	10%

Sixty percent of students report feeling stressed on a regular basis. This shows how critical it is to include mental health techniques into PE classes immediately.

Table 11: Effectiveness of Yoga and Meditation in Schools

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Highly Effective	85	42.5%
Moderately Effective	80	40%
Not Effective	35	17.5%

Yoga and meditation are important parts of physical education programs for students' emotional and psychological health, as more than eighty percent of those who took the survey find them helpful.

Table 12: Availability of Counselling Support in Schools

Availability	Respondents	Percentage
Available	90	45%
Not Available	110	55%

There is a major void in meeting the mental health requirements of pupils in addition to their physical education demands, as over half of the schools do not have counseling services.

5. CONCLUSION

As part of its National Education Policy 2020, India is working toward a more holistic approach to education by including lessons on emotional and mental health in physical education programs. Despite students' awareness of the mental health advantages of physical exercise, this research found that there are major gaps in curriculum development, teacher professional development, and institutional backing for physical education programs.

Curriculum redesign, teacher capacity development, and improved stakeholder awareness are the three pillars upon which the study's successful implementation rests. Yoga, mindfulness, and group exercises are some of the ways that physical education classes may help students cope with stress and improve their health. If we want to raise a generation that is healthier and more well-rounded, we need lawmakers and teachers to work together to make mental health education a priority in the classroom.

REFERENCES:

- Mandal, Sujash & Ruidas, Indrani & Gope, Laxmiram & Ed, B & Kumar, Sujash. (2026). Integrating Yoga into School Curriculum: A Path to Physical and Mental Well-being. 3. 579-586. 10.70849/ijsci03042636405.
- Valentina, Stefanica & Macri, Aurelia & Maria Cristina, Man & Vasile, Ana & Mateescu, Adriana & Popescu, Corina & Cojanu, Florin & Hristache, Diana & Talpas, Petronela & Tataru, Ana & Mavritsakis, Nikolaos. (2025). Integrated Physical Education for Mental Health: Enhancing Emotional Regulation, Self-Esteem, and Stress Resilience in Adolescents through Sports, Mindfulness, and Reflection. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*. 17. 295-312. 10.18662/rrem/17.3/1023.
- Hargreaves, Jackie & Cooke, Belinda & McKenna, Jim. (2025). Integrating Mental Health in Curriculum Design: Reflections from a Case Study in Sport, Exercise, and Health Science. *Education Sciences*. 15. 529. 10.3390/educsci15050529.
- Katara, Mr & Chaudhari, Dr. (2025). NEP 2020 in Terms of Physical Education and Sports Science: A Comprehensive Analysis. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2. 44-52. 10.32628/IJSRHSS252211.
- Sun, Hui & Du, Cheng-Run & Wei, Zhi-Feng. (2024). Physical education and student well-being: Promoting health and fitness in schools. *PLOS ONE*. 19. e0296817. 10.1371/journal.pone.0296817.
- Shirotriya AK, Sharma L, Beighle A. Exploring the barriers to physical education opportunities in India's schools: A study of parental perceptions after the unprecedented performance at the Tokyo Olympics. *Education Sciences*,2023;13(12):1184. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/13/12/1184>
- Robinson LE. Effect of a mastery climate motor program on object control skills and perceived physical competence in preschoolers. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*,2011;82(2):355–359.

8. Phillpots L, Grix J. New governance and physical education and school sport policy: A case study of school to club links. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 2014;19(1):79-95. <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/2270/227074833013/227074833013.pdf>
9. Bailey R. Physical education and sport in schools: A review of benefits and outcomes. *Journal of School Health*, 2006;76(8):397-401. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8709296/>
10. Patil, S. (2022). Understanding the transdomain model of health: Bridging the gap in health perception. *International Journal of Health Studies*, 8(1), 15-22. <https://doi.org/10.22138/ijhs.2022.1572>
11. Wang, M. T., Brinkworth, M., & Eccles, J. S. (2020). Moderating role of teacher-student relationships on the association between school climate and students' mental health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 246, 112689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112689>