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INTEGRATION OF WELLNESS EDUCATION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN BACOLOD CITY

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Abstract:

This study examined the integration of wellness education into the junior high school physical education curriculum in Bacolod City during the academic year 2024–2025. A total of 156 public and private school physical education teachers participated. Utilizing a correlational research design, data were collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential tests (Mann-Whitney U and Spearman's rho) at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed strong and consistent integration of wellness education across both public and private institutions, underscoring a shared commitment to promoting students' physical health, emotional well-being, and academic performance. Despite high levels of reported institutional and environmental support, significant implementation challenges were identified, pointing to broader systemic barriers. No significant differences were found between public and private schools regarding levels of integration, perceived benefits, challenges, or institutional support. Likewise, no significant correlations were observed between perceived challenges and integration, or between institutional support and perceived benefits. These results suggest that personal factors—such as teacher motivation and professional experience—may play a more critical role in the success of wellness education. The study recommends system-wide reforms, capacity-building for educators, and collaborative leadership strategies to enhance the sustainability and impact of wellness programs in physical education.

Keywords: Wellness Education, Junior High School, Curriculum Integration, Institutional Support, Perceived Challenges

Introduction:

Integrating wellness education into the physical education (PE) curriculum has become increasingly important in advancing the holistic development of learners. While physical education has traditionally focused on physical fitness, motor skills, and sports participation, contemporary pedagogical approaches advocate for a more inclusive framework that incorporates mental and emotional well-being, nutrition, stress management, and healthy lifestyle habits (SHAPE America, 2017). With escalating concerns surrounding adolescent mental health, physical inactivity, and poor dietary habits, PE classes serve as an essential platform for promoting lifelong wellness practices, particularly during adolescence—a crucial stage for shaping long-term health behaviors (Pepin & Sawyer, 2022).

Globally, research has highlighted both the benefits and challenges of incorporating wellness principles into PE programs. Wellness-focused PE initiatives have been linked to improvements in students' self-esteem, emotional regulation, academic engagement, and reductions in bullying and behavioral issues (Lothes, 2024). However, effective implementation is frequently impeded by factors such as limited time, inadequate resources, and a lack of specialized training among PE teachers (Cortes, 2019). Models from Canada and the United States, for instance, emphasize that sustainable wellness programs require systemic support, school leadership involvement, and cross-disciplinary collaboration (Mayhew et al., 2017).

In the Philippine context, emerging studies mirror global trends, showing that wellness-enriched physical education positively impacts students' physical health, emotional well-being, and social development (Nesterchuk et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the urgency of integrating wellness into the curriculum, as young learners experienced increased levels of psychological stress, physical health deterioration, and diminished social interaction (Bradford et al., 2017). Nevertheless, several barriers persist in the local implementation of wellness education. These include outdated school facilities, a lack of instructional time, and limited professional development opportunities for teachers in this domain (Brewer et al., 2017).

Despite existing literature on wellness integration in education, there remains a dearth of localized studies examining how such programs are specifically integrated at the junior high school level in the Philippines. In Bacolod City, where both public and private school systems operate under diverse administrative structures and resource capacities, it is essential to assess how wellness education is currently implemented within PE curricula. This study addresses this

gap by examining the extent of wellness integration, the perceived benefits and barriers, and the institutional and environmental supports available in public and private junior high schools in the Division of Bacolod City. The findings aim to provide data-driven insights that will guide the formulation of targeted wellness policies, teacher training programs, and curriculum enhancements tailored to the local educational context.

Methodology:

This study aimed to examine the integration of wellness education in the junior high school physical education (PE) curriculum as perceived by teachers in the Division of Bacolod City for the academic year 2024–2025. The research employed a correlational research design, which is appropriate for identifying relationships and differences among variables without manipulating them. This design allowed the researcher to explore associations between the level of integration, perceived benefits and barriers, and institutional and environmental support for wellness education.

The respondents consisted of 156 junior high school physical education teachers from both public and private schools in Bacolod City. While the sample size reflects limitations in terms of statistical power and generalizability, it nonetheless offers valuable insights into the local implementation of wellness education. The findings, therefore, are most applicable to the Division of Bacolod City and may not be generalized to other regions without further validation.

A researcher-made questionnaire was developed and used as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire was designed to assess four major domains: (1) the level of integration of wellness education into the PE curriculum, (2) perceived benefits of integration, (3) perceived barriers to implementation, and (4) the level of institutional and environmental support. Prior to administration, the instrument underwent expert validation to ensure content relevance and clarity.

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Mean and standard deviation were employed to describe the central tendency and variability of responses. To test for significant differences between public and private school teachers, the Mann-Whitney U test was used, which is suitable for non-parametric data that may not meet normality assumptions. Furthermore, Spearman's rho correlation was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between variables, particularly between integration levels and perceived barriers, as well as between perceived benefits and institutional support. All statistical tests were set at an alpha level of 0.05.

Findings and Discussion:

Level of Integration of Wellness Education

As shown in Table 1, both private (M = 4.78, SD = 0.311) and public (M = 4.77, SD = 0.261) schools reported a very high level of integration of wellness education into the physical education (PE) curriculum. The overall mean (M = 4.81, SD = 0.283) indicates widespread and consistent implementation across both sectors.

This high integration level reflects a collective commitment to promoting student wellness in both educational settings. Notably, the slightly lower standard deviation among public schools suggests more uniform practices, possibly due to standardized public policies. In contrast, the marginally higher variability in private schools may stem from differences in institutional resources or autonomy.

Table 1
Level of Integrating Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Integration of Wellness Program	n	Mean	*SD*	Verbal Interpretation
Private	61	4.78	.311	Very High
Public	95	4.77	.261	Very High
Whole	165	4.81	.283	Very High

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Low; 1.81-2.60=Low; 2.61-3.40=Moderate; 3.41-4.20=High; 4.21-5.00= Very High

Perceived Benefits of Integration

Table 2 reveals that both public (M = 4.82, SD = 0.295) and private (M = 4.81, SD = 0.340) school teachers strongly acknowledged the benefits of wellness integration, yielding an overall mean of 4.82 (SD = 0.312), classified as very high.

These findings affirm a shared understanding among educators that wellness education enhances student well-being, academic performance, and long-term health habits. The slightly lower standard deviation in public schools again suggests a more consistent perception, possibly linked to centralized training or program guidelines.

Table 2
Perceived Benefit of Integrating Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Perceived Benefit of Wellness Program	n	Mean	*SD*	Verbal Interpretation
Private	61	4.81	.340	Very High
Public	95	4.82	.295	Very High
Whole	165	4.82	.312	Very High

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Low; 1.81-2.60=Low; 2.61-3.40=Moderate; 3.41-4.20=High; 4.21-5.00= Very High

Perceived Barriers in Integration

As shown in Table 3, both private (M = 3.43, SD = 1.08) and public (M = 3.50, SD = 1.20) schools reported a high level of perceived barriers, with an overall mean of 3.47 (SD = 0.565).

This indicates that, despite recognizing the value of wellness education, teachers across both sectors face significant challenges, possibly due to time constraints, lack of resources, or insufficient training. The high standard deviations point to variability in experience, especially within public schools.

Table 3
Perceived Barrier Faced in Integrating Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Perceived Barrier in Wellness Program	*n*	Mean	*SD*	Verbal Interpretation
Private	61	3.43	1.08	High
Public	95	3.50	1.20	High
Whole	165	3.47	.565	High

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Low; 1.81-2.60=Low; 2.61-3.40=Moderate; 3.41-4.20=High; 4.21-5.00= Very High

Institutional and Environmental Support

Table 4 shows very high levels of support across both private (M = 4.44, SD = 0.515) and public (M = 4.42, SD = 0.597) schools, with an overall mean of 4.43 (SD = 0.565).

These results suggest strong administrative and environmental readiness to support wellness integration in both sectors. The relatively low standard deviations imply stakeholder agreement regarding available support structures, such as leadership, facilities, and training.

Table 4
Environmental and Institutional Supports for Integrating Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Environmental and Institutional supports Wellness Program	n	Mean	*SD*	Verbal Interpretation
Private	61	4.44	.515	Very High
Public	95	4.42	.597	Very High

Whole	165	4.43	.565	Very High

Note: 1.00-1.80=Very Low; 1.81-2.60=Low; 2.61-3.40=Moderate; 3.41-4.20=High; 4.21-5.00= Very High

This also suggests that help is perceived very consistently both within and between school sectors. These findings have significant ramifications. They draw attention to the educational setting's preparedness to give students' well-being institutional priority, which will support their overall development. Notwithstanding the obstacles that have already been noted, the robust support network offers a framework for overcoming them. By coordinating wellness programs with institutional objectives and making sure that existing resources are effectively used to get beyond implementation obstacles, schools can continue to benefit from this encouraging atmosphere.

The standard deviations for private schools (SD=0.515), public schools (SD=0.597) are relatively low, suggesting a high level of agreement among stakeholders. These results imply that support mechanisms such as administrative leadership, access to resources, alignment with institutional goals, and opportunities for professional development are widely acknowledged and consistently available. The slightly higher standard deviation in public schools suggests a bit more variation in perceived support, but not to a degree that undermines the overall trend.

It is clear from this high level of support that both public and private institutions have the administrative support, resources, and structures needed to promote wellness education in physical education programs. Program funding, policy reinforcement, facility access, and teacher training chances are a few examples of this type of assistance. According to Mazzucca et al., (2022), having strong support networks is essential since it greatly increases the chances of program implementation and durability.

Difference in the Level of Integration of Wellness Education

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the level of integration of wellness education between public and private schools, where the difference between the public and private schools' levels of integration in the physical education curriculum is not statistically significant (p=.280).

Table 5
Difference In the Level of Integration of Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Integration of Wellness Program	*p*	Verbal Interpretation
Private Public	.280	Not Significant

Note: *difference is significant when p<0.05

These findings suggest that wellness education is being similarly integrated in both educational settings, regardless of institutional type, and could be attributed to curricular guidelines, national or regional education policies, or standardized wellness initiatives that promote equal emphasis on physical and mental health across school systems.

Furthermore, given that both kinds of schools are comparatively equal in terms of integrating wellness education, the results may indicate that curriculum designers and educational officials may decide that sector-specific interventions are not required. Rather than addressing differences between school types, a cohesive and systemic strategy to improving health programs can be put into place, concentrating on removing the obstacles. A larger social understanding of the value of holistic education and student well-being, which has taken center stage in both the public and commercial sectors, may also be reflected in the comparatively uniform integration. The comparatively equitable execution of wellness education programs may be attributed to this consistency in support. According to Flaubert et al., (2020), effective integration of wellness and health education in schools depends not only on resources but also on a supportive policy environment and institutional commitment, both of which seem to be present across public and private settings in this context.

Difference in the Perceived Benefit of Integrating Wellness Education

Table 6 indicates that the difference in perceived advantage between the two groups is not statistically significant because the p value is more than 0.05 (p=2.67).

Table 6
Difference in the Perceived Benefit of Integrating Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Perceived Benefit of Wellness Program	*p*	Verbal Interpretation
Private Public	.267	Not Significant

Note: *difference is significant when p<0.05

Public school respondents may view a somewhat larger advantage from incorporating wellness education, according to the results, which indicate slightly higher mean rankings for public schools than private schools. This finding suggests that teachers in both public and private schools appreciate and acknowledge the advantages of including wellness education to a comparable extent. These alleged advantages probably include better academic achievement, better mental and physical health, and the formation of wholesome habits that last a lifetime.

The consistency in perspective may be the result of a common understanding of the function that wellness education plays in encouraging students' overall development in a variety of educational settings. Educational leaders and policymakers can adopt uniform health promotion tactics across all school types without having to expressly customize benefit messaging for public or private schools, as both types of institutions equally acknowledge the advantages of wellness integration. Furthermore, broader support for wellness policies, funding distributions, and the inclusion of health-related issues in curriculum creation and teacher training may be made easier by this common notion. According to [10], schools that promote wellness education see improvements in student attendance, behavior, and academic performance—results that are advantageous to all kinds of educational institutions. This corroborates the conclusion that educators in both public and private schools share a common perception of the perceived benefit.

Difference in the Perceived Barrier Faced in Integrating Wellness Education

Table 7 shows that there is no significant difference in the perceived barrier faced in integrating wellness education in the physical education curriculum in the public and private school (p=0.755).

Table 7
Difference in the Perceived Barrier Faced in Integrating Wellness Education in the Physical Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Perceived Barrier of Wellness Program	*p*	Verbal Interpretation
Private Public	.755	Not Significant

Note: *difference is significant when p<0.05

Public school respondents appear to perceive slightly more barriers, as indicated by the slightly higher mean rank for public schools compared to private schools As a result, teachers in both public and private schools view obstacles to integrating wellness education at similar levels. This finding suggests that issues like a lack of time, inadequate training, subpar facilities, or a low priority for wellness education are prevalent in both school types, despite differences in administrative structures or resource availability. The consistency of these observed difficulties raises the possibility that systemic problems, not school categorization, are the main impediments to successful wellness integration.

To overcome these obstacles, a thorough, system-wide strategy is needed. Better infrastructure support, more time and money dedicated to health initiatives, and improved teacher training in wellness-related subjects are some potential remedies. Given the issue's cross-sector prevalence, centralized educational policy initiatives and cooperation between public and commercial organizations may be useful in reducing these difficulties. Lack of professional development, time constraints within an already packed curriculum, and uneven administrative support are frequent obstacles to implementing health and wellness initiatives in schools, according to [9]. These issues frequently affect many kinds of schools, highlighting the necessity of coordinated approaches that are advantageous to the whole educational system.

Difference in the Level of Environmental and Institutional Supports Available for Integrating Wellness Education

Table 8 shows that there is no significant difference in the level of environmental and institutional supports available for integrating wellness education curriculum in the public and private school (p=0.906).

Table 8
Difference in the Level of Environmental and Institutional Supports Available for Integrating Wellness Education Curriculum in the Public and Private School

Supports for Integrating Wellness Education	*p*	Verbal Interpretation
Private Public	.906	Not Significant

Note: *difference is significant when p<0.05

Based on mean ranks, the results indicate a slight variation in the degree of institutional and environmental support available for incorporating wellness education in public and private schools. According to the result, the perceptions of institutional and environmental support for wellness education are comparable in public and private schools. This could be the result of a comparatively constant application of regional or national health-promoting school policies, guaranteeing that administrative assistance, institutional preparedness, and resources are continuously accessible throughout educational sectors. When it comes to promoting wellness education and advancing educational equity and student well-being, this parity is encouraging since it shows that neither kind of school is clearly at a disadvantage.

These findings suggest that, from the standpoint of policy and program creation, wellness education programs can be successfully applied in all kinds of schools without requiring support mechanisms to be specifically designed for public and private institutions. In order to assist the entire student body, efforts could instead concentrate on expanding effective wellness initiatives or bolstering current supports. It was asserts that the success of wellness programs in schools depends on institutional and environmental support, including community involvement, staff training, leadership commitment, and facilities [4]. In order to promote student health and well-being throughout school systems, it is recommended to have equitable infrastructure, which is in line with this case's lack of notable discrepancies.

Relationship between the Level of Integration of Wellness Education and Perceived Barrier of Integrating Wellness Program

The research shows no statistically significant link between these two variables (p=0.641), with the p value greater than 0.05.

Table 9
Relationship Between the Level of Integration of Wellness Education and Perceived Barrier of Integrating Wellness Program to the Physical Education Curriculum

Variables	*p*	Verbal Interpretation
Integration Barrier	.641	Not Significant

Note: *relationship is significant when p<0.05

The statistical correlation between perceived obstacles to incorporating wellness programs into the physical education curriculum and the degree of wellness education integration. This implies that the degree of perceived barriers has no direct bearing on how well wellness education is included into the curriculum. This finding suggests that the degree to which wellness education is included into the curriculum is not always diminished, even when educators or administrators believe that certain obstacles, including a lack of resources, time constraints, or inadequate training,

are present. It can imply that despite obstacles, educators are dedicated to wellness education or that integration efforts are more heavily influenced by other elements like school administration, regulatory requirements, or individual lobbying.

This study demonstrates how educators have persevered and taken the initiative to put students' wellbeing first in spite of institutional or operational challenges. It might, however, also point to a possible discrepancy between perceived difficulties and real implementation, which might conceal underlying problems that must be resolved to promote long-term program delivery. When educators are driven, supported by leadership, and in line with institutional objectives, the integration of wellness and health initiatives in schools can continue despite perceived obstacles [5]. The study highlights that even when there are obstacles, if there are strong internal drivers, they do not always translate into bad execution.

Relationship Between the Perceived Benefit and Level of Environmental and Institutional Support Integrating Wellness Program

Table 10 indicates that there is no statistically significant link between the two variables (p=0.823), with the p value being greater than 0.05.

Table 10
Relationship Between the Perceived Benefit and Level of Environmental and Institutional Support Integrating Wellness Program to the Physical Education Curriculum

Variables	*p*	Verbal Interpretation
Benefit Support	.823	Not Significant

Note: *relationship is significant when p<0.05

The relationship between the perceived value of including a wellness program and the degree of institutional and environmental support offered for its incorporation into the physical education curriculum is examined. This implies that the degree of support (resources, training, facilities, and policies) offered by their organizations or surroundings may not always coincide with the benefits of wellness education as perceived by educators or stakeholders.

This result can indicate a discrepancy between instructors' awareness of the advantages of wellness programs and institutional support systems. There is no guarantee that implementers will feel more benefited, even when schools offer substantial institutional and environmental support. This may suggest that rather than institutional or logistical enablers, perceptions of advantage are more influenced by intrinsic motivation, observed student outcomes, or personal values.

It also raises a critical concern such as support structures alone may not be sufficient to ensure educators recognize or value wellness integration unless accompanied by effective communication, engagement strategies, and professional development. According to He et al., (2022), the success of school-based wellness interventions frequently depends not only on structural support but also on stakeholders' belief in the efficacy and relevance of such programs. In order to fully leverage institutional support, it must be made relevant and visible to educators in a way that connects to their experience and observed outcomes. Even well-supported projects may not be able to motivate complete implementation or active engagement if the benefits are not properly communicated or if the results are not seen as good.

Discussion

The findings reveal a strong and unified integration of wellness education in physical education programs across both public and private schools, driven by educators' shared understanding of its benefits on students' holistic development, including academic performance and emotional well-being. This alignment suggests a standardized approach to wellness education, supported by consistent institutional and environmental backing in both sectors, enabling the implementation of wellness initiatives despite the presence of notable challenges.

However, the data also highlight systemic barriers faced by educators in both types of schools, indicating that solutions should be approached at a broader educational policy level rather than tailored solely by school type. Interestingly, while institutional support is prevalent, it does not directly influence educators' perceptions of the benefits of wellness programs—pointing to the role of individual motivation and experience in shaping attitudes. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for strategic, system-wide improvements that leverage existing support structures and address shared challenges to enhance the integration of wellness education.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that both private and public schools demonstrate a very high level of integration of wellness education within their physical education programs. This strong integration suggests a widespread acknowledgment across educational institutions of the importance of wellness instruction in promoting students' holistic development. It also reflects a shared commitment across both sectors to support physical activity, mental well-being, and health as essential components of education. These efforts are likely to contribute to better academic outcomes, improved attendance, and the long-term development of healthy lifestyle habits.

Likewise, the results reveal that both public and private schools recognize the significant benefits of incorporating wellness education into their physical education programs. While public schools showed a slightly stronger perception, both sectors reflect an extremely high level of perceived value. This indicates a shared understanding among educators and stakeholders of the positive impact wellness education have on students' academic success, emotional well-being, and physical health. The findings underscore a unified commitment to nurturing well-rounded, healthy learners through comprehensive wellness initiatives.

Moreover, the findings show that teachers across both public and private schools perceive significant challenges in integrating wellness education into their curriculum. Despite variations within school sectors, the overall perception of barriers remains consistently high. This highlights widespread difficulties in implementing health education initiatives, regardless of the type of institution. These results signal a need for educational leaders and policymakers to address the obstacles teachers face and support more effective integration of wellness programs in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that school administrators take a proactive role in reinforcing the integration of wellness education by developing inclusive policies and allocating sufficient resources. By ensuring that physical, mental, and emotional health are equally emphasized within the physical education curriculum, administrators can foster a supportive environment for holistic student development. Regular professional development, adequate funding for wellness facilities and materials, and inter-departmental collaboration are crucial strategies to overcome barriers and strengthen the overall implementation of wellness education programs.

At the school level, principals should take the lead in identifying specific challenges faced by PE teachers and ensuring alignment between wellness initiatives and broader school goals. By encouraging open communication among educators and stakeholders and promoting a school culture that values mental and emotional well-being, principals can significantly enhance the reach and effectiveness of wellness efforts. Meanwhile, physical education teachers must take an active role in diversifying their instruction to include all dimensions of wellness, advocating for additional resources, and embracing student-centered methods. Students, as key participants, should be empowered to engage in wellness programs, apply what they learn to real-life situations, and contribute constructive feedback. A shared commitment among administrators, principals, teachers, and students will help establish a sustainable and impactful wellness education framework in schools.

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