



Her Perspective: Sailing the Tides of a PE Career

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Abstract

Background: Research on the experiences of women who teach physical education has identified numerous factors that impact their careers (Lockyer & Robinson, 2025; Macdonald, 1999; White & Hobson, 2017). This presentation reports findings from the second and final phase of a three-year qualitative research project examining the experiences of women physical education teachers.

Method: In Phase One, eighty participants composed reflective letters to their younger selves, offering insights into their careers in teaching and coaching. These letters served as a powerful methodological tool for eliciting critical reflection and generating nuanced understandings of gendered experiences across all aspects of the physical education profession. Phase Two built upon this foundation through in-depth semi structured interviews with twenty Phase One participants, representing a range of career stages and roles. The interviews explored participants' reflections on the letter-writing process, significant career moments, and advice for colleagues, administrators, post-secondary programs, and professional organizations. Data from Phase Two were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-step reflexive thematic analysis.

Results & Conclusion: Key themes identified included the importance of mentorship and support, gender-related challenges, the impact of family on career trajectories, the undervaluing of physical education, and the need for advocacy across institutional and community contexts. We anticipate that the findings from this study will be of interest to a wide audience, including teachers, administrators, professional organizations, school sport administrators and teacher educators. It is hoped that these results will help colleagues support one another and provide meaningful guidance to young women starting their careers and women physical education teachers at all stages of their careers.

Keywords: Careers; Female Physical Education Teachers



References

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