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**MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENJOYMENT IN  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO  
PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL**

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MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENJOYMENT IN PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

BY

SHIMA YOUNES-ALHOURANI

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2015

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION**

**OF**

**SHIMA YOUNES-ALHOURANI**

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## **ABSTRACT**

For many years, the status of physical education (PE) in public schools in Palestine as well as other countries was jeopardized. However, the decline of engagement in PE and the reduction and/or elimination of PE programs in the US and other countries including Palestine, along with the increased obesity and sedentary behaviors among children, have motivated governments in countries like Canada, the United States and England to take action (Cairney et al., 2007; & Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, 2007). Students in the United States and other countries, including Palestine, tend to demonstrate negative attitudes toward physical education (PE) at the middle and high school levels. Middle and high school students who do demonstrate a positive attitude toward PE suggest that it is because of an enjoyment. Thus, to change students' negative attitude at schools in Palestine, enjoyment in PE classes is a promising way to achieve this. The purpose of this study was to investigate Palestinian elementary school students' enjoyment in physical education (PE) classes and physical activity (PA) and the teaching practices that predict this enjoyment in PE. The relationship between Palestine students' enjoyment in PE classes and their engagement in physical activities were also investigated. Participants (n= 203) included students from elementary public schools (6th grade) in West Bank/Palestine. Participants' ages ranged from 10 to 13 years. The students completed the following surveys: 1) PE Enjoyment Scale, 2) Physical Education Teaching Processes Questionnaire, 3) Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children, and, 4) Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale. T-test and

multiple regression analysis were utilized between the variables in the study as well as the descriptive statistics. The results indicated students in Palestine enjoy their PE classes as well as their PA but no gender differences were found in their enjoyment. Results also showed that Palestinian students' enjoyment in PE is positively linked to their participation in PA.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Finally, I would like to thank my husband Dr. Khalid Alhourani. He was always there supporting me and stood by me through this journey.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father the late Dr. Rasem Younes. I miss him every day. Although he is not physically present with me but he was and will always be an inspiration for me. He raised me to be the person I am today and taught me to pursue my dreams no matters what obstacles I will encounter.

I also dedicate my dissertation work to my family, my husband and my three daughters.

Finally, I dedicate my dissertation work to my home land Palestine, hoping peace will come to the holy land one day.



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# **1. MANUSCRIPT-1: ENJOYMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION – LITERATURE REVIEW**

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## **1.1 Abstract**

Students in the United States and other countries, including Palestine, tend to demonstrate negative attitudes toward physical education (PE) at the middle and high school levels. Middle and high school students who do demonstrate a positive attitude toward PE suggest that it is because of an enjoyment. Thus, to change students' negative attitude at schools in Palestine, enjoyment in PE classes is a promising way to achieve this. In this paper, the importance of PE enjoyment and physical activity (PA) enjoyment as well as the relationship between them is discussed. Also reasons for lack of enjoyment and factors that trigger it are suggested. Finally, the theoretical framework and definition of enjoyment are explained.

*Key words: Enjoyment in PE, Enjoyment in PA, Enjoyment framework*

## **1.2 Introduction**

Physical education (PE) is a mandatory subject at schools in Palestine for grades (1-10) (Mousa & Tones, 2012; Sa'adat, 2010); therefore, most youth in Palestine participate in some type of organized PE and physical activity (PA). Students in Palestine do not believe that PE classes as well as PA can improve their fitness nor do they believe it can help them to relieve their stress from studying (Hudhud, 2012). Further, Palestinian youth experienced low levels of health-related physical fitness for both females and males at elementary, middle and high school (Abo Ariedah & Abdel - Haq, 1998; Ishtewei, 2002; Abo Salah, 2011). Research also showed that the vast majority of adolescence in Palestine did not meet the recommendation of 60 minutes of daily moderate-intensity PA and the sedentary behaviors were remarkably high among them along with poor diet habits (Al Sabbah, Vereecken, Kolsteren, Abdeen, Maes, 2007 ; Ghrayeb, Rusli A, Al Rifai, Ismail, 2013).

Although there is no specific study that investigated student enjoyment in PE at schools in Palestine, students' attitude toward PE are likely to be linked with their enjoyment in PE classes (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2002). Hudhud (2012) investigated students' attitude toward PE at school in Palestine and found that girls showed negative attitude toward PE classes. Sa'adat (2010) also found there is a common philosophy at school in Palestine that regarded other subjects as math to be more important than PE and more essential for high school graduation.

Researchers found enjoyment in PE is an important predictor of children participation in PA (Cairney et al., 2007; Hashim, Grove & Whipp, 2008b) and were

related to motivation to engage in PA outside school hours and as a lifestyle (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004; Bernstein, Phillips, & Silverman, 2011). Maximizing enjoyment does not mean using activities without purpose and learning goals to be achieved. Challenge, skill improvement, and mastery are important goals within any curriculum area that could be achieved through successful planning and organization of lesson content. However, the problem in achieving these goals along with providing student with enjoyable experience could be related to the limited pedagogical practices combined with limited understanding of the concept of enjoyment by educators (MacPhail, Gorely, Kirk, & Kinchin, 2008).

Research suggests that there is a consistent decline in students' enjoyment in PE as they grow older and that this lack of enjoyment affects their engagement in PE classes and PA. This article is designed to investigate the reasons behind students' lack of enjoyment in order to give recommendations on how to create and increase students' enjoyment in PE classes and, consequently, their engagement in PA. To do so, the following bullets will be discussed:

- Enjoyment definitions
- Enjoyment models
- Enjoyment in PE and PA
- The relationship between PE enjoyment and PA
- Reasons for lack of PE enjoyment
- Factors that can be used to elicit enjoyment in PE

### **1.3 The Definition of PE Enjoyment**

Many researchers have considered fun in PE as a long-term intrinsic concept influencing students' motivation. Thus, enjoyment was defined as an intrinsic, affective factor linked with motivation to engage in PA and PE (Dishman et al., 2005; Hashim, Grove & Whipp, 2008a; Prochaska, Sallis, Slymen, & McKenzie, 2003; Wallhead & Buchworth, 2004). This definition of enjoyment as long term intrinsic (component of motivational theories) is a critical factor in guiding students' motivation and engagement in PE (Prochaska et al., 2003) and PA (Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000). However, Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986) explained although both sport enjoyment and the construct of intrinsic motivation share the fundamental perception of personal competence and control, yet, there are differences between these two concepts. Enjoyment is viewed as a broader construct that includes different factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) and components (achievement and nonachievement) that could affect enjoyment. This understanding of sport enjoyment allows us to consider factors such as excitement, movement sensation, interaction with friends and socialization.

Although Scanlan and colleagues provide different factors affecting enjoyment in PA through their definition and theoretical framework; however, there is a difference between the concept of enjoyment in PE and PA mainly differences in their behavioral focus, yet both are related somewhat to the individual's "reward, be it fun or "having a good time" from involvement in physical activity (Woods, Tannehill, & Walsh, 2012). Dudley, Okely, Pearson and Cotton (2011) found the construct of enjoyment is repeatedly used interchangeably with other constructs such as interest, fun, liking, and intrinsic

motivation. This finding is consistent with Scanlan and Simons (1992) recommendation based on empirical evidence that children and adolescents use the terms fun and enjoyment interchangeably and these terms consistently cluster together. Dismore and Bailey (2011) suggested that although the term ‘fun’ was repeatedly used by children to show their positive attitude toward PE, there is an essential difference in the meaning of fun used between students who describe it in terms of learning challenge and those who describe fun in terms of their pleasure response to playing games.

Carroll and Loumidis (2001) provide us with a more comprehensive definition of enjoyment in PE classes. The authors believe that “enjoyment is multifaceted and individual. It is about enjoying exercise or the activities per se, but also in a specific context, and influenced by the type of activity and the climate (way it is presented, environment, ego/mastery, and external conditions). It is also about fun, challenge, relaxation, social factors, etc and the individual’s response to these and the contexts” (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001, p.15). Enjoyment is most recently defined as a multidimensional structure associated with passion, excitement, and cognitions such as views of competence and attitude towards the activity (Hashim et al., 2008a). This multifaceted structure of enjoyment consists of different components such as intrinsic and extrinsic, achievement and non-achievement.

### *The Theoretical Framework*

The two most popular models used to study enjoyment are the flow model (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and the sport enjoyment model (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986).

#### *The Flow Model:*



The flow model describes a subjective condition of high engagement that people experience during optimal levels of challenge and skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The flow model has nine dimensions: (a) challenge/skill balance, (b) merging of action and awareness, (c) clearly defined goals, (d) clear, unambiguous feedback, (e) total concentration on performance, (f) sense of being in control without trying to be in control, (g) loss of self-awareness, (h) loss of time awareness, and (i) autotelic experience. Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi have applied this model to PA; however this model did not provide us with comprehensive framework of the concept enjoyment in PA since:

- Enjoyment is not limited to the availability of challenge–skill balance situation as suggested by the flow model of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990). According to Jackson (1996), flow and enjoyment are not the same. Flow could produce enjoyable experiences; however, the positive feeling/affect linked to flow represents only one element of the total enjoyment. The concept of flow (nine characteristics) refers to different positive affect and not all of them are relevant to enjoyment. Furthermore, flow is one of the state (but not the only time) participants experience enjoyment in PA.
- Enjoyment in PA can be achieved by affecting different motivational factors such intrinsic and extrinsic including self-competence, challenge, different social agencies and task. The sport enjoyment model as suggested by Scanlan and colleagues provide a more comprehensive framework to facilitate the understanding of those factors such as teacher, task and other social agencies.

*The Sport Enjoyment Model (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan & Simons, 1992):*

Despite the confusion in the conceptual and theoretical framework of enjoyment in PE, researchers in sport psychology have studied the construct of fun with more structured use of conceptual frameworks and, therefore, provide us with more comprehensible concepts of fun in youth sport and PA. Generally, researchers suggested that children use the term fun to refer to their enjoyment in these fields; therefore, enjoyment was used as a key concept for their frameworks (Scanlan & Simons, 1992). Scanlan and associate have proposed a two-dimensional model of enjoyment contains four quadrants reflecting different combinations of enjoyment processes: achievement-intrinsic (AI), achievement-extrinsic (AE), non-achievement-intrinsic (NAI), and non-achievement-extrinsic (NAE). In their model, Scanlan and colleagues make significant conclusions regarding sport enjoyment. First, the authors suggest it is crucial to identify the factors (i.e., enjoyment) that positively affect one's motivation in sport. Individuals can be motivated and enjoy their experience for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. These two factors of achievement (intrinsic and extrinsic) (intrinsic achievement; in reference to personal perceptions of mastery and competence while extrinsic achievement refer to competence derived from social approval), could be used to foster enjoyable experience depending on the individual. For example, in a sport competition, one can experience enjoyment in sport from feeling competent (intrinsic) while others enjoy receiving recognition from other (extrinsic). The authors created the four quadrants in the sport enjoyment model as achievement-intrinsic and non-achievement extrinsic are most readily applied quadrants to the physical education context. Second, achievement intrinsic factors are an essential aspect of sport enjoyment (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986). Many participants considered task as fun when it is related to the concept of a skill–

challenge balance. Task-involved goal orientations that focus on learning and improving have been used to encourage the development of effective motivational patterns in sport (Duda & Nicholls, 1992). To promote achievement-intrinsic factors and thereby increase fun and enjoyment, an environment that utilizes a task-involved goal orientation should be used (Garn & Cothran, 2006).

Third, the sport enjoyment model also suggested that non-achievement factors of intrinsic and extrinsic play a crucial role in sport enjoyment. These factors include socializing and interactions with friends, student-teacher relationship as non-achievement factors of extrinsic (non-performance related such as affiliation), and movement sensation and excitement as non-achievement factors of intrinsic (physical movement sensations and excitement). Researchers highlighted the importance of social aspects (non-achievement-extrinsic) of PE in fostering fun and enjoyment (Scanlan & Simons, 1992; Garn & Gothran, 2006).

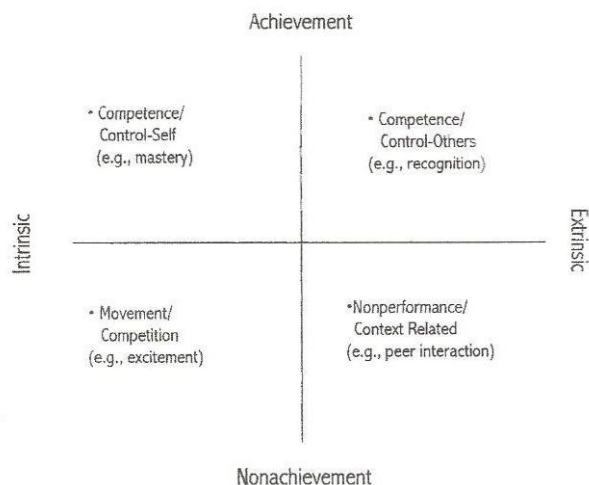


FIGURE 1 Pictorial representation of the theoretical model of the sources of sport enjoyment.

From “Social Psychological Aspects of Competition for Male Youth Sport Participants: IV. Predictors of Enjoyment,” by T. K. Scanlan and R. Lewthwaite, 1986, *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 8, p. 33.

Using Scanlan and Lewthwaite's (1986) youth sport enjoyment model in PA, Hashim validated this model in PE settings (Hashim et al., 2008a). Hashim et al. (2008a) identified six teaching processes related to PE enjoyment. The processes are: (a) self-referent competency, (b) other-referent competency, (c) teacher-generated-excitement, (d) activity-generated excitement, (e) peer-interaction, and (f) parental encouragement. Using these teaching processes, Hashim et al. (2008b) validated a model of PE enjoyment and PA that demonstrate strong relationships between the PE delivery processes, PE enjoyment, and PA inside and outside school.

#### **1.4 The Importance of Enjoyment in Physical Education**

PE is a subject that includes curriculum, instruction, and assessment and provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities and to maintain physical fitness. To promote positive attitudes toward PE classes and encourage students to engage during class time, students should experience an enjoyable PE class (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2002; Prochaska et al., 2003).

Researchers have acknowledged that enjoyment is both an important element of students' positive attitudes toward PE as well as an important aim and mean for PE teachers (Smith & Pierre, 2009). Carroll and Loumidis (2001) conclude that enjoyment in physical education is a reason contributing to the quality of activity participated by

children outside school. According to Cairney et al. (2007) children who enjoy their PE classes will most probably decide to continue their engagement in PE classes while those who enjoy it less, are also less likely to adopt PA as a lifestyle and to appreciate the associated health benefits.

Dismore and Bailey (2011) showed that fun and enjoyment were found to be vital to students' attitude toward PE, along with other factors. They also found fun, which is considered as a significant factor for making PE enjoyable, was the single most repeatedly expressed reason for students' positive feeling toward PE. Using the self-determination theory, Yli-Piipari and associate studied how the different levels of motivation (low & high) are related to PE students' enjoyment, state anxiety, and PA. Participants were divided into two clusters as high and low motivation profiles. They found students with a high motivation profile (high in intrinsic and extrinsic) enjoy more their PE and are more physically active than students with a low motivation profile (low in intrinsic and extrinsic) (Yli-Piipari, Watt, Jaakkola, Liukkonen, & Nurmi, 2009).

Other studies, like the ones conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (1997), and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (2007) have emphasized the importance of PE being enjoyable to youth and suggested the use of active learning strategies to facilitate this.

### **1.5 The Importance of Enjoyment in Physical Activity**

PA is defined as any bodily movement that enhances or maintains physical fitness and overall health. Youth can engage in different types of PA such as walking, gardening,

climbing the stairs, playing soccer, or dancing. The intensity of PA may also range from light, moderate or vigorous (CDC, 2011). According to MacPhail et al. (2008) enjoyment has always appeared as an important motive for participating in PA or sport and has been related to PA engagement in PE (Wallhead & Buckworth 2004). Increasing enjoyment of PA among children may possibly reduce the attractiveness of sedentary activities such as watching TV or playing computer games (Coulter & Woods, 2011). Also, enjoyment of sports is the most common motive for participating and is the main predictor of sport commitment (Scanlan & Lewthwaite 1986; Scanlan, Simons, Carpenter, Schmidt, & Keeler, 1993). Adachi and Willoughbys (2014) found students' enjoyment in sport resulted in increasing their self-esteem over time suggesting that adolescents with higher self-esteem play sports more regularly and enjoy sports more than adolescents with lower self-esteem.

Carroll and Loumidis (2001) found that level of enjoyment was higher among children who participated in the recommended level of PA compared to those who did not. Focht (2009) reported participants who enjoy walking for exercise reported greatest intention to walk for exercise in the future. According to Grieser et al., (2008) African American girls, who reported perceiving lower teacher support for PA, enjoy their PA less than Caucasian girls. These results suggest that creating the right environments that girls of all races will perceive as supportive is crucial in order to address differences in PA participation among girls of all races (Grieser et al., 2008). In addition, overweight and obese children's commitment to and enjoyment of PA can be enhanced through participation in a PA program that fosters mastery motivational climate such as minimizing social comparison, rewarding engagement and effort during the learning

process (Griffin, Meaney & Hart, 2013). According to Wiersma and Sherman (2008) students generally define fun as “participating/playing and improving/getting better.” As a result, teachers utilizing fitness testing should make it fun and enjoyable for students by allowing them to try different PA and perform them regularly. The base for fitness testing should be the promotion of enjoyable and regular PA involvement resulting in the adoption of regular PA as a lifestyle.

### **1.6 The Relationship between PE Enjoyment and PA**

Studies have suggested that enjoyment in PE is an important predictor of children’s participation in PA, particularly among boys in grades 4 to 12 and girls in grades 6-12 to the extent that it positively affects their physical health (Sallis, Prochaska, Taylor, & Hill, 1999; Cairney et al., 2007; Hashim et al., 2008b). Researchers have found that the more students enjoy PE, the more they tend to participate in PA on a daily basis (Dishman et al., 2005; Woods, Tannehill & Walsh, 2012). Wallhead and Buckworth (2004) found that enjoyment in school PE was related to motivation to adopt PA and a healthy lifestyle outside school hours (Bernstein et al., 2011). In a study targeting students in the US, grades four to twelve, it was suggested that PE enjoyment was one of the three variables that had the strongest and most consistent correlates of children PA (Sallis et al., 1999). Using a data from a large survey in Northern Ireland, Kremer, Trew and Ogle (1997) reported that young people choose enjoyment as the main reason for their participation in sport.

Camacho-Min˜ano, LaVoi and Barr-Anderson (2011) conducted a narrative systematic review to find which intervention is the most effective to increase girls’

participation in PA. They found multi-components school-based, with an enjoyable PE being one of their main components is the most effective intervention for girls aged 5–18. Experimental evidence provided by Dishman et al. (2005) proposed that increased enjoyment in PE resulted in increased PA among African American and Caucasian high school girls. In this experimental study, the authors used the *Lifestyle Education for Activity Program* (LEAP) to study its outcomes on changes in different variables such as enjoyment of PE, self-efficacy, and PA enjoyment by targeting factors identified to influence these variables. Building on the findings from the LEAP study, Schneider and Cooper (2011) found that interventions designed to increase enjoyment among girls with low levels of exercise enjoyment resulted in increasing their level of engagement in PA.

Ferrer-Caja and Weiss (2000) proposed that children and adolescents who have higher perceptions about their physical competencies are more likely to enjoy and participate in PA compared to children and adolescents who have lower perception of their physical competences (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). Further, Wright (2004) believed it is crucial to build a child's awareness of the effects of exercise on his/her body so that he/she will be more motivated to participate in PA. Bernstein et al. (2011) suggested that the encouragement of students' engagement in PA during an enjoyable PE experience is crucial to a sustained healthy lifestyle. In summary, enjoyment in PE is positively associated with enjoyment in PA and regular PA contributes to a healthy lifestyle (Woods et al., 2012).



## **1.7 Reasons Contributing to a Lack of Enjoyment in PE and PA in the US and Palestine**

Carroll and Loumidis (2001) suggested that girls' lack of enjoyment and engagement in PE and PA could be related to the fact that PE curriculum focuses on traditional team sports and, thus, produces a traditional male bias. PE curriculum in Palestine is games-centered, where the focus is on teaching the skills of different sport (football, basketball, handball, volleyball, badminton) gymnastics, athletics and swimming (although there are no public schools with a swimming pool) (Mousa & Tones, 2012). Also, traditional PE programs do not take into account the changing nature of a young's woman's life and constructs curricula activities and pedagogy on out-dated gendered relations and identities (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). These sport-based programs result in a gap between enjoyment in PE programs for young women and an interest in PA outside schools. Other potential reasons for decline of enjoyment in PE among girls include the choice of activities, the replication of some activities and the boredom from a lack of physical challenge in other activities (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007).

Flintoff and Scraton (2001) reported that PE teachers' attitudes and expectations of learners is one of the reasons that affected girls' enjoyment in PE. Hudhud (2012) believed the lack of positive effect PE teachers have on their students is reflected on students' negative attitude toward PE at schools in Palestine. Sa'adat (2010) also found PE teachers' motivation to teach is vary depending on students' grades. He explained PE teachers for grades (5-9) are more motivated to put effort to meet PE curriculum plans and goals than PE teachers for high school. In addition, the variation in PE teacher motivation is also reflected by school principal engagement in PE and PA as

school principals are more engaged in PE classes and PA for grades first through ninth while paying less attention to grades tenth and eleventh (Sa'adat, 2010). Contradictory, Azab (2006) reported that PE teachers believed that school principals support for them depend largely on how school principals themselves value PE regardless of students' grades. Hudhud (2012) also suggested that a principal's negative view of PE can result in PE class usually scheduled at the end of the school day or time in class reduced to provide more time for other subjects.

Mousa and Tones (2012) found the lack of facilities such as changing room for girls negatively affected their engagement in PE. Due to budget restrictions and shortage in sport equipment available at schools, teachers are only able to teach basics skills in PE. Further, Azab (2006) found that although elementary and middle PE teachers believed that their students have the desire to engage in PE, the shortage in PE equipment and facilities at schools in Palestine negatively affect and limit students' engagement.

According to Garn and Cothran (2006), there is detachment between students and teachers' opinions regarding the concept of fun in PE and the factors that play important roles in producing and increasing fun in PE. Other researchers found that the decline in student enjoyment can be due to our insufficient understanding regarding the practices that elicit enjoyment in PE and therefore called for in-depth understanding of such practices that maximize enjoyment (Hashim et al., 2008a; Ntoumanis, Pensgaard, Martin, & Pipe, 2004). So, what are these factors?

## **1.8 Factors Contributing to Enjoyment in PE in the US and Palestine**

Researchers found different factors that elicit enjoyment in PE. To understand these factors, Garn and Cothran (2006) investigated both students and teachers' perceptions of "fun" in PE class. They found that achievement motivation concepts such as teacher, task, and the social aspects of fun are important factors that should be considered in PE and PA. Using Scanlan and Lewthwaite's (1986) sport enjoyment model, Garn and Cothran (2006) suggest that teachers use different methods to promote enjoyment in PE by creating a task-involving climate and by creating a student-teacher relationship and social opportunities in a non-achievement context.

To maximize students' enjoyment, school-based PE programs should include activities that are modified to fulfill students' interest and ability levels where they can feel as if they are active participants in the learning process (El Ansari, El Ashker, & Moseley, 2010; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007) It is also important that the activities in class are exciting and stimulating according to students' gender and skills and are socially meaningful and appropriate to both genders (Hashim et al., 2008b; Woods et al., 2012). Such activities should utilized different levels of challenges to sustain children enjoyments in PE as they move toward secondary school (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). School-based PE programs should also include activities that take into account the changing nature of a girls' life (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001).

PE teachers also have a great influence on students' perceptions toward PE (Garn & Cothran, 2006). Teachers who understand and identify the different

aspirations and motivations of their students will probably be more successful in creating a safe and supportive environment than those who support traditional curricula and pedagogies with hierarchy and authority relationship (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). PE teachers will be able to provide students with enjoyable PE experiences by involving them in the decision-making process, helping them to feel as if they are active participants in the class (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). Teachers can also offer students sufficient exploratory opportunities while introducing them to a mixture of different and new PA (Chen, Darst, & Pangrazi, 2001; Wang & Liu, 2007). PE teachers should be aware of their students' rights to agree on their own activity, on their preference in working with same gender vs. mixed group, and their choices of dress code in PE classes (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). Teachers should create an environment where students can experience positive social interaction with teachers, parents and peers who play an important role in enhancing students' enjoyment in PE and PA (Garn & Cothran 2006; Hashim et al., 2008b). Hudhud (2012) suggested that community, parents, and school principals in Palestine can play an important role on student's positive attitude toward PE. More importantly, PE teachers should be directed to develop students' skills in activities they will most likely engage in as adults (Green, 2007).

Although teacher and curriculum play important roles in student enjoyment of PE, Subramaniam and Silverman (2002) believe self-motivation is an essential component for enjoyment. Students with relatively positive attitudes towards PE tended to take charge of their engagement and enjoyment, whereas those with negative attitudes 'surrendered' their enjoyment to the teacher and the curriculum (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2002).

Students' enjoyment and awareness of their abilities are usually the result or of being taught different movement skills in different environments (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). This could be achieved through creating the right environment for children according to their abilities by offering a less competitive and male-dominated environment among girls, by using task-involving motivational climate to support perceived competence, intrinsic motivation, and further enjoyment in school PE (Cox, Smith, & Williams, 2008; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Garn & Cothran, 2006; Gråstén, Jaakkola, Liukkonen, Watt & Yli-Piipari, 2012; Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004).

Yli-Piipari et al. (2009) studied how the different levels of motivation (low & high) using the self-determination theory are related to physical education students' enjoyment, state anxiety, and physical activity. The authors concluded different kind of motivations such as intrinsic and extrinsic can be utilized to create and/or sustain students' enjoyment in PE and stimulate more positive engagement from under motivated students.

### **1.9 Gender Differences in PE and PA**

The level of enjoyment in PE and PA differ between males and females. Subramaniam and Silverman (2007) suggested that boys have a more positive attitude toward PE compared to girls. This could be related to the lack of competence among girls as researches suggest that they identify physical education as less enjoyable than boys because of their lower perceptions of their capability (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001; Lyu & Gill, 2011). Girls view themselves as less competent than boys viewed themselves; therefore, they enjoy their PE less than boys and spent less time participating in PA

(Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). Also, male students enjoy their PE classes more than their female counterparts in both same gender and coeducational classes (Lyu & Gill, 2011). Same gender PE classes are considered a better teaching environment for adolescence female because of its potential to increase competence, effort, and enjoyment compared to coeducational classes (Lyu & Gill, 2011).

In Palestine, there is a significant difference between boys and girls in how they spend their time at recess. Boys tend to be more active than girls during recess time where girls prefer to sit down and talk. This could be related to the fact that the PA offered at school is more available in quantity for boys than for girls (Sa'adat, 2010). Thus, boys use their free time at recess to engage in PA that they were introduced to and available for them through their schools. Also, boys prefer to spend their recess in sport activities in large groups while girls prefer sedentary activities and smaller groups (Woods, Graber, & Daum, 2012).

Gender expectations and stereotypes are rooted children at early stages by encouraging boy and girls to involve in activities according to their genders and by linking involvement in sports activity with notions of masculinity for boys and less femininity for girls (Lyu & Gill, 2011). Gender difference is found in PE curriculum in Palestine in which PE programs do not take into account the changing nature of a girl's life. According to Amezdroz et al. (2010), students' experiences during school PE classes can maintain and promote the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. To achieve gender equity in PE, girls should be allowed to participate in activities of their own choice, including all sports currently regarded in PE curriculum in Palestine as male sport.

Finally, girls face more obstacles than boys from their parents that prevent them from engaging in PA outside school in Palestine (Hudhud, 2012; Mousa & Tones, 2012). These obstacles are due in part to the nature of the Palestinian society as a conservative society, ruled by tradition that allowed boys to spend more time outside the house and give them more opportunities to play sport through the availability of male-only sports club while limiting the ones available for girls including the sport facilities used only by women (Hudhud, 2012).

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## **2. MANUSCRIPT-2: STUDENT'S ENJOYMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PLAESTINE**

*To be submitted for publication to the Journal of Teaching Physical Education*

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## 2.1 Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate Palestinian elementary school students' enjoyment in physical education (PE) classes and physical activity (PA) and the teaching practices that predict this enjoyment in PE. The relationship between Palestine students' enjoyment in PE classes and their engagement in physical activities were also investigated. Participants (n= 203) included students from elementary public schools (6th grade) in West Bank/Palestine. Participants' ages ranged from 10 to 13 years. The students completed the following surveys: 1) PE Enjoyment Scale, 2) Physical Education Teaching Processes Questionnaire, 3) Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children, and, 4) Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale. T-test and multiple regression analysis were utilized between the variables in the study as well as the descriptive statistics. The results indicated students in Palestine enjoy their PE classes as well as their PA but no gender differences were found in their enjoyment. Results also showed that Palestinian students' enjoyment in PE is positively linked to their participation in PA.

*Key words: Enjoyment in PE, Physical activity, PE in Palestine.*

## 2.2 Introduction

Studies have suggested that children's levels of engagement in PA decline as they get older, notably during the ages of 11-14 (Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000; Telama & Yang, 2000; Lowry, Lee, Fulton, Demissie & Kann, 2013; Wallhead, & Buckworth, 2004). In Palestine, three different research studies were conducted using the American health-related fitness battery (AAPHERD) of 1980 to examine Palestinian students' level of health-related physical fitness. Results demonstrated that Palestinian youth experienced low levels of health-related physical fitness for both females and males at elementary, middle and high school (Abo Ariedah & Abdel - Haq, 1998; Ishtewei, 2002; Abo Salah , 2011). In addition, research showed that the vast majority of adolescence in Palestine did not meet the recommendation of 60 minutes of daily moderate-intensity PA; and the sedentary behaviors was remarkably high among them along with poor diet habit (Al Sabbah, Vereecken, Kolsteren , Abdeen, Maes, 2007 ; Ghrayeb, Rusli A, Al Rifai, Ismail, 2013).

The negative consequence of children's lack of or low level of PA engagement is well documented. Pate et al. (1996) reported that a low activity of PA is associated with negative health behaviors as cigarette smoking, marijuana use, alcohol consumption (mainly among female students), greater television watching, low perception of academic performance and improper dietary behaviors (Pate, Heath, Dowda, & Trost, 1996). Also, a lack of PA and poor diet among youth can cause certain chronic health problems in their adult years including obesity (US Department of Health and Human, 2001), which



is associated with many immediate health risks such as type 2 diabetes, and social and psychological problems such as discrimination (Institute of Medicine, 2004).

Similar to the chronic disease affecting those in the United States, Palestinian Ministry of Health documented the four top causes of death in the Palestinian territory in 2010 as cardiovascular diseases, cancer (led by lung, colorectal and breast cancer) and respiratory system diseases, which means the primary cause of death in Palestine is linked directly to nutrition and obesity status (Ellulu, Rahmat & Abed, 2014)

To increase the quantity and the quality of youth's engagement in PA and improve their fitness, PE can be a powerful method to achieve this (Wallhead, & Buckworth, 2004). Children in general are introduced to PA and sport through schools in which they spend 12 years (Woods, Tannehill & Walsh, 2012). Children in their primary school years build and develop their first interest and confidence in the idea of PA (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). Consequently, this age is critical in creating and maintaining physical and emotional interest within the subject of PE (Sloan, 2011). Lowry et al. (2013) found that participation in daily PE and sports teams is positively associated with participation in PA whether it's daily, moderate, or vigorous; and with decreased participation in sedentary behaviors. The authors explained that such a relationship is expected since students will spend more time at team practices and games and have less time to watch television. Students can achieve the recommended PA levels through curricular activities offered in PE classes.

However, one of the drawbacks of using PE classes as a way to achieve the recommended level of PA for adolescence is the limited time allocated to PE classes (Fairclough & Stratton, 2005). In addition, the decline in vigorous activity during late

youth is to some extent explained by the decline in required participation in PE during the graduation years (Zakarian, Hovell, Hofstetter, Sallis, & Keating, 1994).

In Palestine, the enduring trend in cutting down PE classes for other subjects (Sa'adat, 2010; Hudhud, 2012) and scheduling PE classes at the end of the school day (Hudhud, 2012) restricted the influence PE has on youth PA (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004). Therefore, PE teachers and students' motivation to engage in PE and PA at high schools is declining (Sa'adat, 2010), and high school students in Palestine do not believe that PE can help them to improve their fitness or relieve their stress from studying (Hudhud, 2012). In addition, the out-dated PE curriculum that focuses on traditional sport; the shortage in sport equipments and facilities available at schools (Azab, 2006; Mousa & Tones, 2012); and parents' restrictions on their daughters' engagement in PA outside school mainly in rural areas (Hudhud, 2012; Mousa & Tones, 2012) are negatively affecting students' engagement in PE.

To promote positive attitudes towards PE classes, and ultimately PA participation, students should experience enjoyable PE classes (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2002; Garn & Cothran, 2006). Research has suggested that children who enjoy their PE classes will potentially decide to continue their engagement in PE classes (Dishman et al., 2005; Woods et al., 2012) and that enjoyment in PE is an important predictor of children's participation in PA (Cairney et al., 2007; Hashim, Grove, & Whipp, 2008b). Wallhead and Buckworth (2004) found that enjoyment in school PE was related to motivation to engage in PA outside school hours, and as a lifestyle (Bernstein, Phillips, & Silverman, 2011).

Camacho-Min˜ano, LaVoi and Barr-Anderson (2011) conducted a narrative systematic review to find which intervention is the most effective to increase girls' participation in PA and found multi-components school-based, with an enjoyable PE class, as one of their main components to be the most effective intervention for girls aged 5–18. Experimental evidence provided by Dishman et al. (2005) showed that increased enjoyment in PE resulted in increased PA among black and white high school girls. In summary, enjoyment in PE is positively associated with enjoyment in PA and both enjoyments are related to higher levels of PA engagement and associated health benefits (Woods et al., 2012).

Since PE is a school-based curriculum subject, there are different factors that could affect students' enjoyment in it (Motl et al. 2001). These factors include the curriculum, PE classes' length, teachers' attitude, and students' gender and perceptions. To maximize students enjoyment, school-based PE programs should include activities that; are modified to fulfill students 'interest (El Ansari, El Ashker, & Moseley, 2010); are personally meaningful to students where they can feel they are active participants in the learning process (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007); are exciting and stimulating according to students' gender and skills (Hashim et al., 2008b); and are socially meaningful and appropriate to both genders (Woods et al., 2012). Curricular programs provide the kids with the physical and behavioral skills needed however using the appropriate pedagogy is crucial to foster enjoyment and to maintain youth's motivation to continue to participate in PA (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004). Teachers have great influence on students' perceptions toward PE (Garn & Cothran, 2006). Teachers who understand and indentify the different aspirations and motivations of their

students will probably be more successful in creating a safe and supportive environment than those who support traditional curricula and pedagogies with hierarchy and authority relationship (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). Students' enjoyment and awareness of their abilities are usually the result or "byproducts" of being taught different movement skills in different environments (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). This could be achieved through creating the right environment for children according to their abilities by offering a less competitive and male-dominated environment among girls (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). Same sex PE classes are considered a better teaching environment for adolescence female because of its potential to increase competence, effort and enjoyment compared to coeducational classes (Lyu & Gill, 2011). To sum up, research strongly suggest that successful interventions that resulted in increasing students' out-of-school PA were either, rooted within pedagogical motivational theoretical frames or found in a curriculum that highlights the importance of fostering students' enjoyment through appropriate pedagogy (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004).

### **2.2.1 Physical education in Palestine**

PE class in Palestine is considered a compulsory main subject for both boys and girls from 1st-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Two classes per week are offered for grades 1-7(primary school): 90 minutes, while one class is offered for grades 8-12 (secondary school): 45 minutes. Further, PE has prescribed national curriculum, with the focus on the activity/sport for both primary and secondary schools such as team and individual games/sports, swimming and track and field. Team and individual games share the majority of time allocated for PE classes with (60% -70%) of PE class time. The main goals of the school PE curriculum are to promote active lifestyle, to develop socialization

skills, to create sense of team belonging, to develop motor skills, to maintain physical Fitness, and to introduce them to a variety of hobbies they can practice during their free time. Also PE is taught by teachers with a university degree. For primary schools, teachers could be specialist or generalists teachers while for secondary schools it has to be specialist teachers. PE teacher (either specialists or generalist class teachers) required to take part in any continuing professional development (CPD) at least one week /year. In addition, the monitoring of PE programme is carried by local supervisors using an evaluation sheet and observation every four months. The monitoring is for quality assurance and advisory and guidance. Facilities and equipments are below average and very limited with almost no indoor facilities. Finally, PE does not have the same legal status as other subjects taught in schools. PE lessons cancelled more often than other curriculum subjects because of: the climate, makeup for other subjects, and exams for other subjects. And no connection between PE programs in schools and PA practiced in/outside-of-school community settings found.

### **2.2.2 Statement of the Problem**

Studies have shown that Palestinian youth reported negative attitude toward PE classes and experience low levels of health-related physical fitnesses (Abo Ariedah & Abdel - Haq, 1998; Abo Salah, 2011; Ishtewei, 2002; & Hudhud, 2012). Inactivity, poor fitness, and diet can lead to immediate health risks, such as obesity and diabetes, which can have long-term effects for youth affecting them into adulthood (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2011).

To enhance youth's engagement in PA and improve their fitness, PE can be a powerful method to achieve this (Wallhead, & Buckworth, 2004). Researchers have found that enjoyment in PE is an important predictor of children's participation in PA (Cairney et al., 2007; Hashim et al., 2008). However, based on the current research available, it is not known to what extent students in Palestine enjoy their PE and if there is a relationship between this enjoyment and their engagement in PA outside schools; nor have the factors that predict students' enjoyment in PE classes in Palestine. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate sixth grade students' enjoyment in their PE classes as well as PA in Palestine and whether gender differences regarding this enjoyment exist. A second purpose was to investigate sixth grade students' engagement level in PA outside the schools and whether gender differences regarding this engagement exist. A third purpose was to study the relationship between sixth grade students' enjoyment in their PE classes and their engagement in PA outside schools and whether gender differences regarding this relationship exist.

The research questions are:

1. To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine enjoy their physical education classes? Does this enjoyment differ by students' gender?
2. To what extent do teaching practices affect students' enjoyment in physical education classes?
3. To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine enjoy their physical activity outside the schools? Does this enjoyment differ by students' gender?
4. To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine participate in physical activity outside the schools? Does this participation differ by students' gender?

5. To what extent is the enjoyment in physical education classes related to the participation in physical activities outside the schools? Does the relationship differ by students' gender?

### **2.2.3 Significance of the Study**

There are very few studies that address PE at schools in West Bank, Palestine. Mostly these researches focused on measuring students' fitness level. Only one research investigated student's attitude toward PE at high school level. When looking at elementary school level and the relationship between student enjoyment in PE and physical activity in Palestine, there is almost no existing research. Without understanding this relation, it will be hard to develop PE programs in Palestine that are enjoyable for students. Creating such enjoyment in PE is essential in promoting students' involvement in sport and PA outside school in Palestine. If a link can be established between student enjoyment in PE and student participation in PA in Palestine, then a strategy for promoting PA among youngster can be suggested. Knowing these factors will help PE teachers in planning their lessons that are enjoyable to their students and at the same time provide them with the needed skills and experience that might encourage and facilitate students' engagement in PA as a lifestyle. Also researches that demonstrate the importance of enjoyment in PE will probably evoke and remind policy makers about the importance of adding this element (enjoyment) as a main component of PE curriculum as well as adding enjoyment in any other policies aiming at promoting PA among youth-adult to be-.

Almost all the researches that investigated PE in Palestine took place in certain cities and did not include all public schools in West Bank/Palestine. Therefore, large

scale data that investigate students' perception of enjoyment and how it could be used to increase their involvement in PA and improve their fitness levels is needed. Using self-reported questionnaire, this study will investigate students' perception of enjoyment at all public school in West Bank, Palestine. Plus, this large scale data can be later used as a start point for other kind of research such as qualitative to get more in-depth data.



## 2.3 Method

### 2.3.1 Participants

A total of 203 students from elementary public schools (6th grade) in West Bank/Palestine participated in this study. Participants ranged from 10 to 13 years of age. Out of 850 schools in West Bank/Palestine, nine schools were selected using stratified random sampling. Schools were stratified into three groups based on school type; single sex schools for boys, single sex schools for girls, and co-educational schools. Three schools were selected from each group at random. The majority (72%) of the sample were from single-sex schools; where (37%) from girls' schools and (35%) from boys' schools only, and the remainder (28%) of the sample were from co-educational schools.

*Table 1*

*The Distribution of Study Population Based on School Type*

School type	Count	Probability
Same sex: Females	316	0.37176
Same sex: Males	296	0.34824
Co-ed	238	0.28000
Total	850	1.00000

### 2.3.2 Instrumentation Description

The Enjoyment in PE and PA for Palestinian Students Survey has four subscales: 1) PE Enjoyment Scale, 2) PE Teaching Processes Questionnaire, 3) PA Questionnaire for Older Children, and, 4) PA Enjoyment Scale, and 5) Demographic questions.

The PE Enjoyment Scale: The scale has four items, using the Finnish version (Soini, Liukkonen, Jaakkola, Leskinen, & Rantanen, 2007) of the Sport Enjoyment Scale (Scanlan, Simons, Carpenter, Schmidt, & Keeler, 1993). The items were modified to represent the school PE setting and were utilized to assess students' enjoyment in their PE classes at schools. Respondents completed the scale using a five-point Likert-scale ranging from disagree a lot (1) to agree a lot (5). Cronbach's Alpha scores for PE enjoyment scale was .78. Thus, score was highly reliable as a measure of PE enjoyment.

PE Teaching Processes Questionnaire: The questionnaire has 20 items and was utilized to measure six teaching processes previously shown to predict enjoyment in PE (Hashim et al., 2008b). The 20 items used in this study measure the different teaching process such as teacher and activity-generated excitement as well as parental encouragement. After conducting exploratory factor analysis, three items were loaded on multiple factors with small factor loadings to all. It was decided to exclude these three items from the further analysis under both conceptual and empirical consideration. Cronbach's Alpha scores for the questionnaire (17 items) was .84. Cronbach's alpha and for each subscale as follow; *self-referent competency with three items (SRC= .52)*, *other-referent competency with three items (ORC= .53)*, *teacher-generated excitement with three items (TGE= .73)*, *activity-generated excitement with four items (AGE= .63)*, *peer interaction with two items (PI= .61)*, and *parental encouragement with two items (PE= .55)*. Thus, scores were marginally reliable as a measure of PE enjoyment. Respondents completed the scale using a five –point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 5= Strongly agree.

PA Enjoyment Scale (PACES): The questionnaire has 16- items (Moore et al. 2009). The scale was utilized to measure students 'enjoyment in PA outside the school. Two items were dropped from the scale under conceptual (somewhat different from other items conceptually) and empirical (multi-loading with small factor loadings) consideration. Cronbach's Alpha scores for PACES survey was .88. Thus, score was highly reliable as a measure of PE enjoyment. Respondents completed the scale using 5-point likert scale ranging from (1) disagree a lot to (5) agree a lot.

PA Questionnaire for Older Children (PAQ-C): A 7-day recall instrument developed to assess general levels of PA throughout the elementary school year for students in grades 4 to 8 and approximately 8 to 14 years of age (Kowalski, Crocker, and Kowalski, 1997). The PAQ-C is ten items; only nine items were used due to not applicability of one of the items to the Palestinian's schools. Lunch break item was not used because schools in Palestine have only recess break (in which students had their lunch as well) and do not have lunch break. Cronbach's Alpha scores for PAQ-C survey was .78. Thus, score was highly reliable as a measure of PA engagement. Respondents completed the scale using 5- point scale. Finally, demographic questions were administered that incorporated the following items: location of the school, student's age and gender, parents occupation and education, number of siblings and involvement in organized sport.

### **2.3.3 Procedures and Statistical Analysis**

The researcher mailed the Enjoyment in PE and PA for Palestinian Students survey to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) in Palestine.

MOEHE, which was established in 1994, is the official organization in charge of the whole education sector from pre-primary to higher education in Palestine. The MOEHE has a responsibility for managing governmental educational institutions and supervising private educational institutions and institutions run by UNRWA as well as recruiting and training teachers. First, the initial approval was obtained from MOEHE to conduct the study at schools in West Bank/Palestine. Then, the parental permission form, assent form, and questionnaires were translated to Arabic and emailed to the MOEHE to obtain the final approval. Once the final approval was obtained along with IRB approval, parental permission form was mailed to the selected schools by MOEHE. School's principals in the selected schools disseminated and collected the parental permission forms. After the parental permission forms were obtained, the key investigator disseminated and collected the assent form from the subjects; explained the purpose of the questionnaire to the subjects; and disseminated and collected the questionnaires from the subjects. The subjects were given 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaire was anonymous and the response rate was 99% (203 out of 205 secondary-school students). The parental permission form, assent form, and questionnaires were translated from English to Arabic and adequate translation procedures were followed using the parallel back- translation procedure (Brisling, 1986).

## 2.4 Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate sixth grade students' enjoyment in their PE classes as well as in their PA in Palestine and whether gender differences regarding this enjoyment exist. A second purpose was to investigate sixth grade students' engagement level in PA outside the schools and whether gender differences regarding this engagement exist. A third purpose was to study the relationship between sixth grade students' enjoyment in their PE classes and their engagement in PA outside schools and whether gender differences regarding this relationship exist. I examined the following five questions:

1. To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine enjoy their physical education classes? Does this enjoyment differ by students' gender?
2. To what extent do teaching practices affect students' enjoyment in physical education classes?
3. To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine enjoy their physical activity outside the schools? Does this enjoyment differ by students' gender?
4. To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine participate in physical activity outside the schools? Does this participation differ by students' gender?
5. To what extent is the enjoyment in physical education classes related to the participation in physical activities outside the schools? Does the relationship differ by students' gender?

**To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine enjoy their physical education classes? Does this enjoyment differ by students' gender?**

A descriptive statistic was utilized to understand how students enjoy their PE classes in Palestine. Students' responses to the scale questions were 90% in agreement category. In other words, Palestinian students enjoy their PE classes.

*Table 2*  
*Frequency distribution of students' reports of enjoyment in Physical Education*

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	220	58.98	216	52.30	436	55.47
Agree	123	32.98	140	33.90	263	33.46
No Opinion	17	4.56	32	7.75	49	6.23
Disagree	8	2.14	13	3.15	21	2.67
Strongly Disagree	5	1.34	12	2.91	17	2.16

T-test analysis was utilized to determine if there was a gender difference in students' enjoyment in PE classes. The result showed there was no significant difference between boys (M= 4.32, SD=9.45) and girls (M= 4.26, SD=6.95) in their enjoyment in PE classes with  $t(198) = .544, p > .05$ . However, gender difference was found between students in same sex schools (M= 4.40, SD=6.34) and students in co-educational schools (M= 4.14, SD=6.56) with  $t(199) = 2.39, p > .05$ .

### **To what extent do teaching practices affect students' enjoyment in physical education classes?**

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between teaching practices and students' enjoyment in PE classes (dependent variables) at schools in Palestine. All the variables are positively related with students' enjoyment, yet only three variables out of six were significant predictors of students' enjoyment in PE classes. In other words, the Activity –generated excitement, Self referent competency, and Other referent competency had significant positive regression coefficients with Activity

generated excitement being the most significant predictor among three ( $\beta = .307, p < .01$ ). This indicates students who reported; higher excitement generated by activities; higher on their perceptions of their personal performance; or/and higher on their perceptions regarding their ability comparing to others, tend to enjoy their PE classes more. However Parental involvement, Peer interaction and Teacher-generated excitement were not significant predictors in explaining students' enjoyment in PE classes. The multiple regression model with all six predictors explained 35 % of the variances in students' enjoyment ( $R^2 = .345, F(6, 194) = 17.023, p < .001$ ).

*Table 3*  
*Coefficient Variables Resulting From Multiple Regression Analysis*

	<u>Unstandardized Coefficients</u>		<u>Standardized Coefficients</u>	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.393	0.300		4.638	0.000
OTHER	0.126	0.055	0.155	2.275	0.024
SELF	0.138	0.067	0.149	2.068	0.040
ACTIVITY	0.307	0.082	0.307	3.732	0.000
PARENT	0.063	0.043	0.094	1.456	0.147
PEER	0.043	0.053	0.058	0.817	0.415
TEACHER	0.032	0.064	0.038	0.506	0.614

*Note:* dependant variable: Enjoyment in physical education

**To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine enjoy their physical activity outside the schools? Does this enjoyment differ by students' gender?**

A descriptive statistic was utilized to understand how students enjoy their PA outside the school. Students' responses to the scale questions were 85% in agreement category. In other words, Palestinian students enjoy their PA.

*Table 4*  
*Frequency distribution of students' reports of enjoyment in Physical Activity*

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	612	57.68	671	60.83	1283	59.29
Agree	296	27.90	251	22.76	547	25.28
No Opinion	63	5.94	69	6.26	132	6.10
Disagree	58	5.47	57	5.17	115	5.31
Strongly Disagree	32	3.02	55	4.99	87	4.02

T-test analysis was utilized to determine if there was a gender difference in students' enjoyment in PA outside the school. The result showed there was no significant difference between boys (M= 4.28, SD=6.25) and girls (M= 4.29, SD=7.12) in their enjoyment in PA outside the school with  $t(198) = .544$  with p-value = 0.587.

**To what extent do sixth grade students in Palestine participate in physical activity outside the schools? Does this participation differ by students' gender?**

A descriptive statistic was utilized to determine the level of students' engagement in PA on a 7 day recall scale. Results showed Palestinian students (boys and girls) reported moderate level of PA participation on a 7 day recall scale with mean = 3.1. Also results showed that boys reported moderate level of PA participation as well as girls with mean =3.2 and 3.1 respectively.

T-test analysis was utilized to determine if there was a gender difference in students' general level of PA outside the school. The result showed on a 7 day recall scale, there was no significant difference between boys (M= 3.28, SD=7.15) and girls (M= 3.14, SD=6.75) in their level of engagement in PA with mean difference of 0.1379 and 95% CI between -0.56 and 0.33 with  $t(198) = 1.40$  with p-value = 0.162. More



specifically, T-test analysis showed there were no significant differences between boys and girls in their engagement in PA in term of; The type and the frequency of the activities, the day of the week and the frequency of participation in each day, the level of the activity participated by students in PE class, and the level of students' engagement in PA activity during their free time.

Yet there were significant differences between boys and girls in their PA engagement in term of; Time spent at recess with  $t(196)= 2.09$  with  $p\text{-value} = 0.038$ ; Students' engagement in PA activities right after the school with  $t(198)= 3.48$  with  $p\text{-value} = 0.001$ ; Students 'engagement in PA activities during evening time  $t(198)= 2.41$  with  $p\text{-value} = 0.017$ ; And the frequency of students' PA participation during the weekend  $t(198)= 2.12$  with  $p\text{-value} = 0.035$ .

**To what extent is the enjoyment in physical education classes related to the participation in physical activities outside the schools? Does the relationship differ by students' gender?**

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between; students' enjoyment in PE classes, gender, school location, number of siblings, engagement in organized sport, father and mother education as well as father and mother occupation; and students' level of engagement in PA (dependent variables) at schools in Palestine. Most of the variables were positively related with students' level of engagement in PA (students' PE enjoyment, gender, engagement in organized sport, father and mother occupation and mother education). Yet only two variables out of nine were found to be significant predictors of students' level of engagement in PA. In other

words, students' enjoyment in PE and their engagement in organized sport had significant positive regression coefficients and were the only two significant predictors among the nine variables ( $\beta = .311$ , &  $.305$  respectively,  $p < .01$ ). This indicates students who reported higher level of enjoyment in PE classes and students who are engaged in organized sport tend to engage more in PA outside the school. However gender, school location, number of siblings, father and mother education as well as father and mother occupation were not significant factors in explaining students' engagement in PA. The multiple regression model with all nine predictors explained 22 % of the variances in students' enjoyment ( $R^2 = .217$ ,  $F(9, 170) = 5.248$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

*Table 5*  
*Coefficient Variables Resulting From Multiple Regression Analysis*

	<u>Unstandardized</u>		<u>Standardized</u>	T	Sig.
	<u>Coefficients</u>		<u>Coefficients</u>		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.166	0.557		2.091	0.038
mother job	0.096	0.094	0.071	1.017	0.311
father job	0.067	0.070	0.067	0.951	0.343
mother education	0.008	0.025	0.031	0.327	0.744
father education	-0.040	0.024	-0.143	-1.643	0.102
siblings #	0.335	0.075	0.311	4.463	0.000
PEenjoy	0.414	0.101	0.305	4.097	0.000
organized sport	-0.023	0.022	-0.086	-1.092	0.276
school location	0.090	0.108	0.067	0.832	0.407
gender					

*Note:* dependant variable: Engagement in physical activity

## **2.5 Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate sixth grade students' enjoyment in their PE classes as well as PA in Palestine and whether gender differences regarding this enjoyment exist. A second purpose was to investigate sixth grade students' engagement level in PA outside the schools and whether gender differences regarding this engagement exist. A third purpose was to study the relationship between sixth grade students' enjoyment in their PE classes and their engagement in PA outside schools and whether gender differences regarding this relationship exist.

Results of this study showed that Palestinian students enjoy their PE classes. This finding is important and encouraging since student's attitude toward PE is linked with enjoyment and their decision to continue their engagement in PE classes (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2002; Prochaska, Sallis, Slymen, & McKenzie, 2003; Garn & Cothran, 2006; Cairney et al., 2007; Dismore & Bailey, 2011). Therefore, officials in Palestine should act to create and sustain enjoyment among students at schools. Such enjoyment is crucial to enhance students' engagement in PA and consequently enhance their fitness mainly as researches showed that Palestinian's students experience low levels of health-related physical fitnesses (Abo Ariedah & Abdel - Haq, 1998; Ishtewei, 2002; Abo Salah, 2011). This can be done through creating a more fundamental role for PE in school curriculum (Ntoumanis, Pensgaard, Martin, & Pipe, 2004) and by increase the time allocated for PE class both in quantity and quality.

Also, no gender difference in students' enjoyment was found. However, when students in same sex schools (both in boys' only schools and girls' only schools) were compared with co-educational schools, gender difference was found. This is in accord

with Lyu and Gill (2011) study suggesting that same sex PE classes are considered a better teaching environment mainly for adolescence female because of its potential to increase competence, effort and enjoyment compared to coeducational classes (Lyu & Gill, 2011). Also gender difference is found in PE curriculum in Palestine in which PE program does not take into account the changing nature of young's women life. For example PE curriculum in Palestine does not offer soccer for girl, yet girls play soccer outside schools by engaging in Soccer federation teams in Palestine. According to Amezdroz et al. (2010), students' experiences during school PE classes can maintain and supply the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. To achieve gender equity in PE, girls should be allowed to participate in activities of their own choice, including all sports currently regarded in PE curriculum in Palestine as male sport.

Palestinian students reported that activity offered at PE classes is their main source of enjoyment in PE. This is in accord with Hashim et al. (2008b) finding suggesting that school-based PE programs should include activities that are exciting and stimulating according to students' gender and skills. Zeng, Hipscher and Leung (2011) found that girls showed more positive attitude toward PE activities and regarded it as important as other school subjects when these activities focused more on aesthetics movements such as dance, gymnastics and yoga. In Palestine, the focus should be on creating up to date curriculum that fulfills students' interest and skills. And at the same time, providing schools with facilities and equipments needed for each activity. For example, swimming is listed as one of the sports in Palestinian PE curriculum, yet almost all public schools do not have any swimming pool, nor they have access to any swimming pools. Also, students should be provided with opportunities to

choose which sport/activity to engage in. Having all the students engage in the same activity during PE will affect some students' enjoyment and engagement mainly those who have no interest in that particular activity.

However, Palestinian students do not believe that social agents such as parent and teachers play any role in their PE enjoyment. This is in contrast with previous research done by Garn and Cothran (2006) where students ranked nonachievement-extrinsic factors including social aspects higher than other factors. Parents as well as teachers in Palestine do not consider PE as important as other subject such as math and therefore encourage their students to spend their time on studying rather than engaging in PE classes and PA. In addition, Palestine is one of the developing countries where sport does not play vital role in its people lives; and is also a conservative country where sport is considered more as a male domain. Therefore, students mainly female suffer from their parents' restrictions on their engagement in PA outside school (Hudhud, 2012; Mousa & Tones, 2012). To address this issue, it's the school responsibility including PE teachers to work on changing such belief about PE and sport among students and their parents. This can be done by stop the trend in reducing PE requirement and curriculum time and used it for other subjects such as math. Also by having better communication with students' parents and involve them more in different sport activities inside and outside the school. Furthermore, PE teachers themselves should be qualified and trained to provide students with enjoyable environment in which they can practice their favorite sport and feel as valuable member of the class. As Wallhead and Buckworth (2004) explained it, theories of motivation showed that the success of curricular programs is also reliant on the methodology used by the teacher. Thus, although curricular programs provide the kids

with the physical and behavioral skills needed, yet it is crucial to foster enjoyment using the appropriate pedagogy in order to maintain youth's motivation to continue to participate in PA (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004).

Despite the fact that students in this study enjoy their PA with no gender difference, studies have shown that Palestinian's students experience low levels of health-related physical fitnesses compared to the international standards. Using the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) standards including cardio respiratory endurance; body composition (body & storage fat); muscular skeletal Fitness; and flexibility, results showed Palestinian youth experience low level of health-related physical fitness for both female and male (Ishtewei, 2002); at elementary and middle school (Abo Ariedah & Abdel - Haq, 1998; Ishtewei, 2002); as well as high school (Abo Salah, 2011). Also studies have showed Palestinian students experience low activity, sedentary and poor diet behavior as well as high smoking rate mainly among student at age 13 and under (MOE, 2002, Al Sabbah et al., 2007; Ghayeb et al., 2013). Such studies should bring public concern in Palestine. The question now is why such enjoyment is not reflected in students' fitness in Palestine? Reasons could be due to the lack of awareness among students about the benefits and effects of PA on their bodies. Thus, even though they enjoy their PA, they do not practice them to the level recommended according to their age. Another reason is parents' restrictions on their kids engagement in PA whether for more focus on academic reasons or for religious and cultural reasons.

Palestinian students engage in moderate level of PA with no gender difference found in this general level of engagement in PA on a 7 day recall scale. Yet gender

differences were between boys and girls in their engagement in PA activities; right after the school; during evening time; and the regularity of PA participation during the weekend. In other words, boy engages in PA outside the school sitting more than girls. Such results are expected in a conservative country like Palestine where girls are still facing many obstacles that prevent them from engaging in PA outside school (Mousa & Tones, 2012). Also sport facilities available for boys outnumbered in quantity and quality the ones available for girls. The chances for girls, who have parents' permission and are willing to engage in PA activities outside the school, are still very limited. Therefore, a policy that requires all educational institutions to provide student with access to sport facilities on a gender-neutral basis is needed. Title IX is a good example of a policy that can be adopted in Palestine due to the enormous benefits gained by female in USA. For example, Title IX helped so many girls and young women in USA to play sports and thus increase the number of female representing high school and college athletes (Brammer, 2005).

In addition there was a significant difference between boys and girls in how they spent their time at recess. Boys tend to be more active than girls during recesses time where girls prefer to sit down and talk. This could be related to the fact that PA offered at school are more available in quantity for boys than for girls and more supported by male principal than female principles at same sex schools in Palestine (Sa'adat, 2010). Thus, boys use their free time at recess to engage in PA that they were introduced to and available for them through their schools. Our finding is in accord with previous findings showing gender differences in recess time. Male students are significantly more active at recess and spent most of their recesses time engaging in outdoor activities compared with

female students (Sarkin, McKenzie, & Sallis, 1997; Haapala et al., 2014). Also boys prefer to spend their recess in sport activities in large groups while girls prefer sedentary activities and smaller groups (Woods et al., 2012). Such results call for more attention to recess time that could be used to engage more Palestinian students mainly girls in PA to help them meet the recommended PA level according to their age. With the insufficient time allocated for PE in Palestine, recess could be one way to provide students with more opportunities to involve in PA and consequently enhance their fitness and health. In other word, recess might be and should be an important factor of a complete school PA program in Palestine. According to CDC (1997), school recess should be considered as fundamental part of a child's physical, social, and academic development.

Finally, although Palestinian students enjoy their PE and PA, and this enjoyment is related to their engagement in PA however this is not reflected in their health and fitness as literature suggested. Studies have shown enjoyment in PE is positively associated with enjoyment in PA and both enjoyments are related to higher levels of PA engagement and consequently health benefits (Scanlan & Simons, 1992; Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004; Dishman et al., 2005; Cairney et al., 2007; Hashim et al., 2008b; Bernstein et al., 2011; Schneider & Cooper, 2011; Woods et al., 2012). One reason could be due to the lack of knowledge among Palestine students regarding the benefit of PA on their health now and as a lifestyle. Thus, Palestinian students do not practice their PA to the level recommended to achieve the health benefit associate with them. Also, the lack of health curriculum that is available for students at school in Palestine, whether as part of PE curriculum or as a main subject. As Wright (2004) illustrated it, it is crucial to build children awareness of the effects of exercise on their bodies and the importance of



PA as a lifestyle and link this awareness with enjoyment of participation. In addition Palestinian students could be losing their enjoyment as they progress over time at school and thus their engagement in PA decrease. Such results call for more in-depth study to understand more the potential cause and effect between variables that affect student's enjoyment and engagement in PE and PA now and over time in Palestine.

Furthermore, seven different factors including parent's occupation and education play no role in students' engagement in PA. This result emphasizes the result of question two regarding the absence role of parents in their children physical life. More attention should be giving to the importance of parents' role and encouragement that could be used to engage more students in PA and adopt it as lifestyle to have healthier generation physically, mentally and emotionally.

To sum up, to enhance students' fitness/health in Palestine different steps should be taken such as; increasing children awareness of the effects of exercise on their bodies and the importance of adopting PA as a lifestyle; constructing a health curriculum for students in Palestine; focusing on more cooperation between the ministry of health and the ministry of education to ensure students' health through free checkup as well as educational seminars and brochures; and organizing different meetings and seminars to increase parents' awareness of the importance of PA on their kids' mental and physical health. In addition, more attention should be giving to the importance of enjoyment in Palestinian curriculum policy. The ministry of education in Palestine should change its policy regarding PE and concentrate efforts to provide students with enjoyable

experience in PE to engage them more in PE and progressively in PA throughout the school years.

There are limitations which create boundaries for this study:

1. The main limitation of this study is the lack of the information and researches, whether new or old, that investigates physical education classes at schools in Palestine. Most of the studies found discuss students' fitness and principals' attitudes. However, researches about students' attitude, enjoyment or involvement in PE and PA are rare.
2. The result will be generalized to all students at public school in west bank/ Palestine. Through random sampling I believe I will have a representative sample that will allow me to generalize it to this population. However, the finding may not be generalized to all schools in west bank such as private school or UN school.
3. This is not experimental study but an associative study. Correlation is not necessarily causation. So, if relationship is found between variables in this study, then this will be a starting point for examining potential cause and effect study.
4. Finally, conducting this study through the ministry of education in Palestine could limit the freedom and the participants' choice to engager or not in this study by feeling they are obligated in taking part of it which could affect their responses.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

As the results suggested, Palestinian students enjoy their PE classes and their PA and this enjoyment is related to their engagement in PA. No gender differences were found between Palestinian students' enjoyment in PE and PA as well as their level of engagement in PA. Palestinian students' enjoyment can be enhanced by different factors inside the school as well as outside the school. Students believed the activity/sport provided at their PE classes is the main reason for their enjoyment. However, surprisingly, students in this study believed that their parents played no role in their enjoyment.

The significance of the findings of this study is that if Palestinian students enjoy their PE classes and this enjoyment is derived mainly from the activity/sport they engage in, and then perhaps more opportunities for engaging Palestinian students in different activity/sport of their own choice should be afforded to them. Currently, there is no national PE curriculum that supports students' right to choose which activity to engage in since PE in Palestine has a prescribed curriculum with more traditional teacher role practices. The results of this study may encourage officials in Palestinian to reconsider PE curriculum, teacher role in PE classes, PA in recess time, and parents' role in their children PA life. Also this study could bring attention to the importance of health curriculum at school, whether as a mandatory subject or within PE curriculum, for all ages to help enhance students' health in Palestine as it should be a public concern as the evidences suggested.

## **2.7 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future studies should incorporate other populations such as students at private and UNRWA schools in West Bank/ Palestine as well as students in Gaza Strip to support the generalizability of the result. Also, there is a need to investigate students' enjoyment as they progress to higher grades at schools in Palestine to understand the reasons for changes, if any, that could affect their enjoyment. Future studies could also follow Palestinian students from age 12-18 to study changes in their PA participation as well as their fitnesses. Finally, future studies could look at government policies and practices regarding PE and PA in Palestine.

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### **3. MANUSCRIPT-3: EFFECTIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN PALESTINE: BARRIERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **3.1 Abstract**

For many years, the status of physical education (PE) in public schools in Palestine as well as other countries was jeopardized. However, the decline of engagement in PE and the reduction and/or elimination of PE programs in the US and other countries including Palestine, along with the increased obesity and sedentary behaviors among children, have motivated governments in countries as Canada, the United States and England to take action (Cairney et al., 2007; & Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, 2007). Such actions include initiating new PE programs as well as developing and implementing new policies to provide students with quality PE. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how similar actions can be taken to overcome the different barriers that resulted in marginalizing PE in Palestine. Further, the paper will discuss the specific barriers and actions that are sensitive to the Muslim culture and society that could be applied to help students in Palestine as well as Muslim students, mainly girls, worldwide to facilitate their engagement in PE and physical activity (PA).

*Key words: PE barriers, PE programs, Policy*

### **3.2 Introduction**

Physical education (PE) is being reduced or eliminated in many schools in different countries, including Palestine, as a result of budget cuts and a lack of advocacy. Studies, however have shown Palestinian students experience low activity, sedentary and poor diet behavior as well as high smoking rate mainly among student at age 13 and under (Ministry of Education, 2002, Al Sabbah, Vereecken, Kolsteren , Abdeen, Maes, 2007 ; Ghrayeb, Rusli A, Al Rifai, Ismail, 2013), which will lead to immediate health risks such as obesity and diabetes. Lack of educational efforts to minimize these health risks will not only affect the educational system but also the health-care system. Improving PA levels for youth in order to have a healthy future generation with better productivity should be public objective in Palestine. Achieving this objective is fundamental in a small country like Palestine which may be limited in financial resources but abundant in ‘human’ resources.

For the past decade, research has shown the importance of providing students with quality PE to their mental and physical health; therefore, officials in Palestine should act to increase Palestinian students’ engagement in PA and consequently enhance their fitness. This can be done through creating a more fundamental role for PE in school curriculum (Ntoumanis, Pensgaard, Martin, & Pipe, 2004) and by initiating policy/s regarding PE at school in particular and sport outside the school in general. This article describes the barriers that resulted in marginalizing PE at school in Palestine and the recommendations to overcome such barratries. While some of the barriers and recommendations discussed in this paper are similar and relevant to schools in the US,

others are more relevant and specific to Muslim female students at public schools in the US as well as Islamic schools in the US.

### **3.3 Barriers to PE and PA**

The marginalization of PE in the US can be attributed to a collection of issues including large class sizes taught by unqualified instructors, inadequate scheduling, philosophical and curricular differences, downgrading of subject matter, lack of school administrative support, lack of equipment and poor facilities, and inadequate opportunities for professional development (Barroso, McCullum-Gomez, & Hoelscher, 2005).

In Palestine, the status of PE is also a result of the same issues in the US. Mousa and Tones (2012) investigated issues that affected PE at schools in Palestine such as school policy and practice; physical education curriculum; pedagogy; teaching resources, facilities and learning environments; and teacher training. They found that in public schools, PE curriculum is games-centered, where the focus is on teaching the skills of different sport (football, basketball, handball, volleyball, badminton) gymnastics, athletics and swimming (although there are no public schools with a swimming pool). Also, they found budget restrictions, a shortage in sport equipment and a lack of facilities such as changing room for girls that negatively affect students' engagement in PE (Mousa & Tones, 2012). Furthermore, schools in Palestine regarded other subjects as more important than PE (Sa'adat, 2010). The trend in reducing PE classes to provide more time for other subjects (Sa'adat, 2010; Hudhud, 2012), scheduling PE classes at the end of the school day (Hudhud, 2012), and the variation in PE teachers and school advocacy and support for PE (Sa'adat, 2010) negatively affected the expected influence PE has on Palestinian youth PA.

Finally, female students in Palestine face more obstacles than male students that prevent them from participating in PE and engaging in PA outside of school (Hudhud, 2012; Mousa & Tones, 2012). Palestinian society is conservative and ruled by a tradition that allows boys to spend more time outside the house and more opportunities to play sport compared to Palestinian girls. As a result, Palestinian parents are more supportive of boys' participation in PA and PE compared to girls.

American girls faced obstacles to participation in PA and sport before Title IX was passed in 1972, many are similar to those that girls in Palestine are currently facing. Prior to Title IX, for example, the number of US females representing high school athletes and college athletes were significantly small (Brammer, 2005; King, 2012) and the number of women competing in the Olympics were moderate (King, 2012). Further, scholarships for female athletes in schools and colleges did not exist (Brammer, 2005; King, 2012). In Palestine, there is no law like Title IX that is being considered to support and promote girls' participation in PE and PA. If such a law was created in Palestine, perhaps participation in PE, PA, and sport would also lead to improved access to education, work and health prospects; however, the battle for gender equity is waged on much more basic terms in many Islamic countries (Dupre, Gains, Paul & Roslyn, 1997) including Palestine.

### **3.4 Recommendations for Increased Participation in PE and PA**

#### **3.4.1 New PE curriculum**

The first step in overcoming the marginalized status of PE is to strengthen the current curriculum and construct alignment between PE goals, PE programs and the practices of PE during the class in Palestine. Currently, the main goals of the Palestinian school PE curriculum (focused mainly on boys) are to promote an active lifestyle, to develop socialization skills, to create sense of team belonging, to develop motor skills, to maintain physical fitness, and to introduce students to a variety of hobbies they can practice during their free time. However, practices during PE classes provide students at most with some motor skills at schools. Additionally, there is a nationally prescribed, common curriculum that focuses on the activities/sports for both primary and secondary schools such as team and individual games/sports. Team and individual games share the majority of time allocated for PE classes with (60% -70%) of PE class time. Also, the common view about PE at schools in Palestine is that it is a time where students can run and play, be out of the classroom, and/or participate for the annual competitions between schools teams; therefore, the actual practices during PE classes are not aligned with the theoretical main goals and are difficult to assess. Thus, PE programs in Palestine should be revisited and reevaluated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) which is the official organization of the pre-primary to higher education levels in Palestine.

PE programs should be designed to develop both the body and the mind of the students. It is not enough to teach students different skills for different sports without teaching them what happen to their body/ muscles and brain when they learn/master these



skills. Also, teaching students different techniques and strategies for each game will help in developing their critical thinking skills. The scientific information provided to the students will develop their mind as well as the training will develop their body. PE programs should provide students with knowledge regarding their fitness, health and nutrition that guide them to adopt a healthy life style. Textbooks that facilitate acquiring this knowledge are recommended as it will also give more academic value to the subject of PE. Furthermore, many countries worldwide including USA have adopted recently a new term –physical literacy- as an outcome of quality PE (Roetert & Jefferies, 2014). As stated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, “a physically literate young person, has the skills, knowledge, habits, confidence, and desire to continue participation in physical activity throughout the lifespan” (Roetert & Jefferies, 2014, p. 3). Implementing the concept of physical literacy into the PE curriculum and programs in Palestine will help to align the goals of PE and consequently improve the status of PE among our students.

In order to achieve quality PE in schools and to be considered as a viable academic subject, community collaboration is essential. This includes the support and collaboration of school personnel, parents and universities. Hudhud (2012) recommended increasing the community awareness about the importance of PE at schools using different media tools that are available through MOEHE, creating and increasing parents’ motivation and engagement in PE and PA inside and outside the school, and providing more educational lectures and seminars about PE and PA for both the school principals and the parents. Much like in the US, Universities in Palestine can provide the schools

with experts who can help in PE teacher training and professional development and modifying and improving PE curriculum and programs to meet the intended goals of PE. Universities can also facilitate students' access to its sport facilities so students can maintain their engagement in PA mainly after school time.

Changing the public perception about the subject of PE at school is challenging yet crucial in a country like Palestine. Such perception affects and shapes the decisions made regarding PE at schools by the principals, district superintendents, legislators, and other government officials (Krause, 2014).

### **3.4.2 Initiating new Policies**

Another step to overcome the marginalized status of PE at school in Palestine is policy reform. PE does not have the same core status compared with other school curriculum such as languages and math in Palestine. PE is cancelled more often than other curriculum subjects for different reasons such as makeup for other subjects and/or exams for other subjects (Hardman & Marshall, 2000). One way to counter these issues is for MOEHE to equalize PE with other curriculum subjects at schools in terms of its core status and budget spending. Also, this new policy could emphasize the importance of enjoyment as an important factor for engaging more students in PE and progressively in PA. Research has suggested a relationship between enjoyment in PE and increase engagement in PA among youth. According to Wallhead and Buckworth (2004), a successful intervention programs that resulted in increasing students' out-of-school PA were either rooted within pedagogical motivational theoretical frames or found in a curriculum that highlighted the importance of fostering students' enjoyment through appropriate pedagogy. As a result, many countries including Canada, the US, and

England have been changing its PE curriculum policy by giving more attention to the importance of enjoyment in their new policy. In England, one of the 2003 Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) themes, was entitled 'Enjoying and Achieving' (Dismore & Bailey, 2011). Accordingly, physical education curriculum in England is now described as "a high-quality PE curriculum that enables all students to enjoy and succeed in many kinds of physical activity" (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, 2007).

Creating a policy that focuses on enjoyment and motivation among students, particularly girls, is not enough to increase the involvement in PE and PA in a conservative country like Palestine. According to Boyle (1997) changing men's conservative attitude toward women will not be possible without changing the rules from which men are gaining the benefits. Therefore, another policy that requires all educational institutions to provide student access to sport participation on a gender-neutral basis is needed. Title IX is a good example of a policy that can be adopted in Palestine due to the enormous benefits gained by girls and women in the US. For example, the number of girls representing high school athletes as well as college athletes increased significantly from 1972-2012 (Brammer, 2005; King, 2012) and, at a more national level, the number of American women who competed in the 2012 Summer Olympics outnumbered the men for the first time in Olympics history (King, 2012). Title IX did not only increase female opportunities in sports, but also had enormous impact on women and society. Women in the United State suffered long tradition of gender bias. As Killion (2012) stated "Title IX helped change all of the society, starting on the fields and courts and reverberating outward into all of society." She also added, "Title IX didn't just

provide athletic opportunities to girls; it created a fundamental shift in society, changing perceptions and attitudes and boundaries.” In Palestine, having such law would help schools to play vital role in educating the new generation of boys and girls about gender equity in sport.

According to Amezdroz et al. (2010), students’ experiences during school physical education classes can maintain and supply the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. The prescribed sport-focused PE curriculum in Palestine reinforces the stereotypical roles by offering activities that are seen to be appropriate based on students’ gender such as offering soccer for boys only. To achieve gender equity in PE, girls should be allowed to participate in activities of their own choice, including all activities currently regarded in PE curriculum in Palestine as only for boys.

Furthermore, to successfully deliver a policy regarding female PE, PA and sport in Palestine, the policy should be sensitive to the cultural and religious beliefs in Palestine. Cortis and Muir (2008) examined the involvement of Australian women who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) in sport. The authors found that Muslim women in Australia face many obstacles in sport related to the cultural and religious beliefs as dress code, family responsibility and gender issues. According to Dagkas, Benn and Jawad (2011), policies that are aligned with the requirements of the cultural and religious beliefs will successfully increase Muslim girls involvement in physical education and sport in England (Dagkas, Benn, & Jawad, 2011) as well as Muslim women in Australia (McCue, 2008). Therefore, to successfully deliver a policy regarding women sport in Palestine, the policy should address the following issues:

1. Dress code: Accommodating the different sports dress rules to Muslim girls' and women's' dress codes. Implementing this national policy should follow the international FIFA policy regarding lifting a ban on headscarf (Hijab) which opens the door for many Muslim women (including Palestinian women) athletes to play football and compete on international level.
2. Religious requirements: Training and activities should be planned to address religious requirements such as having no males present in certain sports like swimming, scheduling activities during the day time, and having more female coaches in the different sports as well as female-only coaches in certain sports such as swimming.
3. Facilities: Preparing the sport facilities to be used by women only at certain times and planning in the future to have facilities that are only used by women.
4. Family requirements: Permitting and encouraging family members to attend their daughter's training and activities.

### **3.4.3 Revising Teacher qualification and preparation**

Some researchers suggested that better qualified teachers may make a difference for student learning at the classroom, school, and district levels (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, teacher quality are often difficult to interpret because it is broadly defined, giving the many ways of identifying and measuring teacher qualifications, characteristics and practices that contribute to the concepts of what makes a good teachers and this can produce contradictory findings about educational efficacy (Geo & Stickler, 2008). Goe's (2007) examination of teacher quality focuses on four categories of

teacher quality indicators: teacher qualifications, teacher characteristics, teacher practices and teacher effectiveness.

In Palestine, we need PE teachers to be qualified to help our students becoming physically literate people. That is, our students should have the knowledge and the skills that help them to be fit and adopt PA as a lifestyle. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Palestine should improve the quality of PE teacher by providing them with different preparations and training that enable them to provide students with quality PE classes. For example the Ministry of education should provide PE teachers with:

1. Preparation program: PE teacher should engage in initial teacher preparation to help them; aliening their practices with PE goals; providing students with enjoyable environment according to their age and interest; and evaluating students using different assessment tool and methods.
2. Professional development: PE teacher should engage and view professional development as a continuing learning process that helps them to systemically review their teaching practices, curriculum and assessment tool.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Children are introduced to PE, PA, and sport through schools from elementary school to high school. Children in the primary school years will have the first experience of organized PE and PA (Sloan, 2011) and this experience may or may not create positive attitudes toward PE. Children in their primary school years build and develop their first interest and confidence in the idea of physical activity (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001). Therefore, the barriers that contribute to the marginalized status of PE at school in Palestine should be addressed. Different strategies can be used to address these barriers including a new PE curriculum that provides student with quality PE classes and qualified PE teachers as well as policies are needed in Palestine. In addition, new policies similar to Title IX can be developed and implemented to assure that both boys and girls are receiving equal opportunity to participate in PE, PA, and sport.

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