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Ahmet DEVECİ<sup>1</sup>


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<sup>1</sup> Ahmet Deveci, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, [ahmetdeveci08@gmail.com](mailto:ahmetdeveci08@gmail.com),

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1814-3539>

## The Importance of Physical Education and Sports in Education: A Study Focusing on Student Development

Ahmet Deveci<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the impact of physical education and sports on the general development of students in the context of education. Qualitative methodology and interview method in accordance with this approach were used in the research. The research group consisted of 29 physical education and sports teachers working in different provinces of Turkey. In participant selection, the purposeful sampling approach, which is a common choice in qualitative research, and the maximum diversity sampling method was used as part of this purposeful sampling strategy. The data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews designed by the researcher. Then, content analysis approach was applied to evaluate the research data. The findings of the study showed that the inclusion of physical education and sports lessons in the school curriculum provides students with a wide range of positive outcomes in psychosocial, physical, cognitive, psychomotor, emotional and health areas. Additionally, the research found that physical education and sports lessons promote fair play values among students and contribute significantly to the constructive use of free time.

**Keywords:** Development Education, Physical Education and Sports, Student



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## INTRODUCTION

Education can be defined as a science and art that contributes to the process of becoming a humane individual. While education increases the productivity of the individual by ensuring the development of his/her entire being, it also provides the opportunity to question life and the processes within it. Education makes individuals competent in areas such as knowledge, skills, ethics, art and culture, strengthens their personal identities and contributes to their development as responsible members of society (Eroğlu, 1998). In this context, education is not only a fundamental process that supports the continuous development of individuals throughout their lives, but is also not limited to the development of individuals' academic knowledge. Therefore, it can be stated that education makes significant contributions to the physical, emotional and social development of individuals. Yıldız et al. (2021) stated that the most important institution that will bring these contributions to individuals in a planned and programmed manner is educational institutions (Yıldız et al., 2021). Especially considering that educational institutions play an important role in the process of shaping society and raising future generations in the desired way, it can be said that the physical education and sports education lesson offered in schools pioneers these contributions.

Physical education and sports are conscious and planned activities that aim at the physical, mental, social and emotional development of the individual, who is the main resource of future generations. It is also considered an integral part and complement of general education (Yıldıran & Yetim, 1996; Yıldız & Güven, 2013). Physical education and sports lessons in schools involve students' participation in structured physical activities. This is an important component that helps students learn and develop in all areas. However, physical education and sports are not limited to just one lesson, they represent a lifelong process. This process continues throughout life in different ways, such as learning new skills, playing sports in after-school activities, and improving health through regular physical activities (Johnson & Turner, 2016).

Physical education and sports education aims, among other things, to help students acquire long-term physical activity and sports habits that will improve their general health (Ardoy et al., 2010). In this way, physical education and sports education have an important place in the development of health-related physical fitness (Cassidy, 1965). It is emphasized in the literature that sports-based curriculum plays an important role in achieving positive physical and psychological results in healthy child development (Pesce et al., 2013).

Physical education and sports lessons contribute to the development of individuals' moral and spiritual qualities, supporting psychomotor skills, protecting health and rehabilitation of various disorders (Prysiashniuk et al., 2018). However, these lessons are not limited to physical development; It also provides positive effects on students' emotional and mental development. For this reason, physical education and sports lessons in schools' curricula stand out as an important component (Yıldız and Güven, 2013). Physical education and sports have the potential to make significant contributions to the development of basic movement skills and physical competencies that children need in later life. Moreover, when this discipline is applied appropriately, they can support the development of children's social skills, behavior, self-esteem, and preschool attitudes, and in some cases, they can also aid academic and cognitive development (Bailey, 2006). Physical education and sports contribute to the acquisition of positive personality traits as well as personal development. This discipline helps people develop more social and effective communication skills. Some people may have the wrong perception that physical education and sports lessons can hinder academic success, but planned and purposeful exercises have been proven to have a positive impact on students' social and cognitive development. Therefore, it is important to explain that it contributes to the academic

success of students and to raise awareness about this issue. Students can be supported to participate in sports activities through encouraging activities for parents (Aras & Asma, 2020).

In this research presents a research focusing on the development of students under the title “The Importance of Physical Education and Sports in Education”. Traditionally, academic achievements, which are often emphasized in education, represent only one aspect of students' abilities. However, it is an undeniable fact that physical education and sports lesson provide students with many important achievements that will benefit them throughout their lives, such as physical health, social skills, discipline and self-confidence.

This research aims to reveal the impact of physical education and sports on student development by examining the role of physical education and sports in education as a result of the opinions of physical education teachers. This effect is thought to be of critical importance in revealing students' full potential, going beyond academic achievements. In this context, an ideal education system should support both the mental, psychosocial and physical development of students. It is thought that this situation will enable societies to raise healthier, more balanced and more successful individuals.

Consequently, the purpose of this research is to highlight the role of physical education and sports in education and to provide a basis for understanding the positive impact of this field on students' life skills and overall development. It is thought that this review will be an important reference source for future improvements of education systems and a more comprehensive evaluation of student success.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

The study was crafted with a qualitative research design. Qualitative research can be described as an endeavor to comprehend and interpret the prevailing situations arising from a specific phenomenon and the interactions within this phenomenon (Patton, 2014). The primary objective of a qualitative research design is to provide insight into how individuals derive meaning from their experiences, to elucidate the process of sense-making in terms of outcomes, and to delineate how individuals articulate their perspectives on the situations they encounter. It is imperative to emphasize that the focus at this stage is on understanding events from the participants' viewpoint rather than from that of the researcher (Merriam, 2018).

To directly capture participants' firsthand experiences regarding the subject, the research employed the interview method, which is commonly utilized in qualitative research designs (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). It's worth noting that in the interview method, quality takes precedence over quantity. In fact, it can be argued that even a single participant in the interview method can yield the necessary data to address the research problem (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2014; Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research designs serve as a methodological strategy for modeling a planned theoretical strategy and providing elaboration across the various stages that can unfold the research process. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that centers on phenomena that are defined but do not have a detailed and detailed understanding (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). In the context of this study, a strategic framework was established by employing the phenomenological research design. The rationale behind choosing the phenomenological approach for this research is that the primary data sources are individuals who have personally encountered the phenomena under investigation and possess the capacity to vividly communicate these experiences to the external world.

**Research Group**

The research group comprises 29 physical education and sports teachers actively working in various regions across Turkey.

In comparison to studies designed with a quantitative approach, the number of participants in qualitative research may be deemed limited. However, in qualitative research, the number of participants is determined by the recurrence of concepts and the data collection processes. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as “data saturation,” as noted by Patton (2014) and Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018). Hence, the concept of data saturation is an influential factor in establishing the size of the research group.

In the study, the purposeful sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling strategy commonly used in qualitative research, (Merriam, 2018) and the maximum diversity sampling method, which falls into the category of purposeful sampling techniques, were used in participant selection (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Information regarding the age, gender, school level, education status, total tenure and province of work variables of the participants in the research group are included in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Distribution of data regarding the age, gender, school level, educational status, total tenure, and province of work variables of the physical education and sports teachers who constitute the research group.

Codes	Age	Gender	School Level	Educational Status	Total Tenure	Province of Work
K1	36	Female	Middle school	Master’s Degree	10	Hatay
K2	40	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	12	Hatay
K3	31	Female	Middle school	Master’s Degree	5	Gaziantep
K4	34	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	8	Sanlıurfa
K5	40	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	14	Sanlıurfa
K6	32	Female	Middle school	Master’s Degree	7	Adıyaman
K7	46	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	19	Kahramanmaraş
K8	27	Female	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	3	Sırnak
K9	28	Male	Middle school	Master’s Degree	2	Malatya
K10	43	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	17	Malatya
K11	38	Female	High school	Bachelors Degree	13	Adana
K12	41	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	13	Adana
K13	34	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	7	Mersin
K14	48	Female	High school	Bachelors Degree	21	Mersin
K15	30	Male	Middle school	Master’s Degree	5	Sanlıurfa
K16	35	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	9	Gaziantep
K17	44	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	16	Hatay
K18	28	Female	High school	Master’s Degree	3	Adıyaman
K19	37	Male	High school	Master’s Degree	11	Hatay
K20	39	Female	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	15	Kahramanmaraş
K21	45	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	18	Hatay
K22	29	Female	High school	Master’s Degree	4	Kocaeli
K23	36	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	7	Aksaray
K24	26	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	2	Kilis
K25	37	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	12	Diyarbakır
K26	25	Female	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	1	Hatay
K27	41	Male	High school	Bachelors Degree	16	Ankara
K28	35	Male	High school	Master’s Degree	10	Hatay
K29	36	Male	Middle school	Bachelors Degree	8	Hatay

## Data Collection Tools

As a data collection tool in the study, a personal information form developed by the researcher, which included questions about the participants' age, gender, school level, educational status, total tenure and the province they worked in, was used. In addition, in this research, a question was asked to the participants in the interview form about what effect the physical education and sports lesson had on student development. It is stated in the literature that it is important to include a small number of questions in semi-structured interview forms (Eysenbach & Köhler, 2002). In this context, it can be stated that a question included in the interview form within the scope of the research can shed light on the solution of the current research problem and is compatible with the literature information.

## Validity and Reliability of the Research

In qualitative research, the following alternative terms can be used to ensure validity and reliability: “Credibility” instead of “Internal Validity”, “Transferability” instead of “External Validity”, “Consistency” instead of “Internal Reliability” and “Confirmability” as an alternative to “External Reliability” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018; Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2018). Validity and reliability in research; They are important concepts in terms of revealing the scientificness, credibility, measurability, generalizability and repeatability of that study (Kılınç, 2018). In this context, the researcher implemented essential measures to guarantee the validity and reliability of the research while mitigating factors that could potentially impact them. To ensure validity and reliability, a combination of strategies, including credibility, sustained engagement, in-depth data collection, expert evaluation, participant verification, confirmability, transferability, and consistency, were employed, as outlined by Yıldırım & Şimşek (2018).

## Data Collection Process

The data of the research were collected online with the Zoom application in August and September 2023. Prior to the meeting held via the Zoom application, permission and appointments were obtained from the participants, and then meetings were held in their free time. Before these interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the ethical principles. The fact that the researcher is a lecturer at the faculty of sports sciences allowed him to easily reach physical education and sports teachers working in different provinces of Turkey.

Care was taken to ensure that the interviews took place in a suitable atmosphere so that the participants felt comfortable (Roulston, 2010). Additionally, the interviews started in a conversational style, and this approach helped establish rapport and make the participants feel more comfortable in the interview environment (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes. The interviews were recorded with a mobile phone with voice recording feature during the online meeting, with the permission of the participants, and then each participant's conversations were transferred to the computer in word format and turned into a written document.

## Statistical Analysis

For assessing qualitative data, the content analysis method was employed, which is one of the analytical techniques commonly utilized in qualitative research designs (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). After evaluating the qualitative data, the data obtained were divided into themes, coded and categorized with an inductive approach (Stake, 1995).

Data reliability was assessed using the formula from Miles and Huberman (1994), which is expressed as:

$$[\text{Consensus theme} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement theme})] \times 100$$

In order to gauge the agreement among the experts involved in the coding process, the outcome of the above formula should ideally surpass 70%, as recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994) and Patton (2014). Following the application of this formula, 99 out of the 110 codes proposed by the experts received consensus and a consensus rate of  $99/(99+11) \times 100 = 90\%$  was achieved in terms of code suitability. The 11 codes that did not reach a consensus were subsequently merged with other relevant codes. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the data analysis is reliable.

### FINDINGS

In this section, in Table 2 below, the study group's views on “the impact of physical education and sports lesson on the development of students” have been tried to be described with themes and codes. In addition, themes and codes are listed according to their frequency distribution, and direct quotes from the participants regarding the codes are included.

**Table 2.** Participants' Opinions on What Effect Physical Education and Sports Lessons Have on the Development of Students

Themes	Codes	Participants	Frequency	Sample Quotes
Psychosocial Development	✓ Developing Social Harmony	K13, K17, K20, K22, K25	5	<i>“Physical education...is effective in ensuring social harmony.”</i> <b>K25</b>
	✓ Gaining Awareness of Being a Group	K16, K25, K28	3	<i>“... Gaining awareness of being a group, that is, it has a great impact on keeping the goals and interests of a group above personal goals and interests.”</i> <b>K16</b>
	✓ Instilling a Sense of Responsibility	K19, K23, K24	3	<i>“I think it contributes to students becoming responsible individuals.”</i> <b>K19</b>
	✓ Contributing to the Development of Character and Personality Traits	K6, K25, K27	3	<i>“...in addition, physical education contributes to character and personality development.”</i> <b>K6</b>
	✓ Developing Material and Spiritual Values	K21, K23, K27	3	<i>“In addition to being more enthusiastic in lessons, it has both a material and moral impact.”</i> <b>K23</b>
	✓ Teaching the Concept of Discipline	K12, K14	2	<i>“I think it has a lot of impact, such as teaching how to work with discipline....”</i> <b>K14</b>
	✓ Developing the Understanding of Helpfulness	K19, K28	2	<i>“...learns...to help others.”</i> <b>K28</b>
	✓ Providing Interaction in the Classroom	K13, K25	2	<i>“Interaction in the classroom is at a very high level thanks to physical education lessons...”</i> <b>K13</b>
	✓ Increasing the Perception of Freedom	K3	1	<i>“...contributes significantly to raising a free, independent youth.”</i> <b>K3</b>
	✓ Ensuring Being a Questioning Individual	K3	1	<i>“...makes a great contribution to raising inquisitive youth.”</i> <b>K3</b>
✓ Contributing to Cultural Development	K6	1	<i>“...physical education...contributes to cultural development”</i> <b>K6</b>	

**Table 2.** Participants' Opinions on What Effect Physical Education and Sports Lessons Have on the Development of Students (continued)

	✓	Enabling Different Sports Branches to Be Recognized	K7	1	<i>"...they are starting to focus on different sports. In this way, they have the opportunity to get to know almost all sports branches."</i> <b>K7</b>
	✓	Gaining the Spirit of Fighting	K10	1	<i>"The spirit of struggle, of course..."</i> <b>K10</b>
	✓	Teaching to Cope with Stress	K12	1	<i>"...they learn to overcome their stress more easily through movement."</i> <b>K12</b>
	✓	Ensuring Being a Sharing Individual	K19	1	<i>"I think it contributes to students becoming more optimistic individuals in terms of helpfulness."</i> <b>K19</b>
	✓	Developing Self-Confidence	K21	1	<i>"...Of course, I also think that students improved their self-confidence with this lesson..."</i> <b>K21</b>
	✓	Ensuring Individuals Achieve Appropriate Behaviors	K25	1	<i>"...the dynamic nature of the games applied in physical education is effective in helping individuals obtain more appropriate behavioral patterns in the desired direction."</i> <b>K25</b>
	✓	Contributing to Democratic Processes	K25	1	<i>"...contributes to democratic processes..."</i> <b>K25</b>
	✓	Revealing Leadership Traits	K28	1	<i>"...It plays a role in revealing these characteristics of students with leadership qualities..."</i> <b>K28</b>
<b>Total</b>				<b>34</b>	
Physical Development	✓	Aesthetic Body Development	K1, K5, K6, K10, K13, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K20, K21, K22, K27, K28, K29	16	<i>"It contributes positively to physical development, primarily in terms of aesthetic appreciation..."</i> <b>K28</b>
	✓	Creating the Foundation for Growth and Development	K6	1	<i>"Physical education activities are fundamental to growth and development. Because the development of the human organism depends on the physical activities in which large muscle groups participate..."</i> <b>K6</b>
<b>Total</b>				<b>17</b>	
Cognitive Development	✓	Supporting Mental Development	K1, K5, K13, K14, K25, K27, K29	7	<i>"...Kinesthetic intelligence has an important structure on mental development. There are many studies and articles on this subject. Especially for children and young people, kinesthetic intelligence is an ability that can be developed by practicing physical activities such as team sports and individual sports. For this reason, I think physical education lessons have an important place in student development because they contain these features..."</i> <b>K1</b>



**Table 2.** Participants' Opinions on What Effect Physical Education and Sports Lessons Have on the Development of Students (continued)

	✓	Developing Healthy Thinking Skills	K9, K3	2	<i>"It contributes greatly to raising healthy-thinking individuals."</i> <b>K3</b>
	✓	Developing Creativity Abilities	K6	1	<i>"...Physical education... provides opportunities to develop creative abilities..."</i> <b>K6</b>
	✓	Helping to Make the Best Decisions	K9	1	<i>"...I think students make healthier and correct decisions thanks to the relaxation in their mental thoughts."</i> <b>K9</b>
	✓	Increasing Academic Success	K12	1	<i>"... I also think that academic success will come with this lesson."</i> <b>K12</b>
	<b>Total</b>			<b>12</b>	
	✓	Ensuring the Development of Movement Skills	K20, K25, K29	3	<i>"... Considering that it contributes to the development of motor movement skills, I can say that it has a significant effect on psychomotor development."</i> <b>K20</b>
	✓	Discovery of Movement Skills	K8, K28	2	<i>"It is of great importance for students to discover their own personal movement skills..."</i> <b>K8</b>
	✓	Enabling Different Motor Skills to be Demonstrated in an Artistic Context	K6, K7	2	<i>"...in addition, students demonstrate different artistic movement skills in this lesson..."</i> <b>K7</b>
Psychomotor Development	✓	Facilitating the Performing of Movements Needed in Daily Life	K2	1	<i>"Physical education lessons, properly conducted, benefit students' development in every subject. First of all, it develops the movement skills necessary for performing daily routine tasks."</i> <b>K2</b>
	✓	Facilitating the Acquisition of New Movement Skills	K6	1	<i>"Physical education... has rich opportunities in the formation of new movements..."</i> <b>K6</b>
	✓	Developing Fine Muscle Motor Skills	K27	1	<i>"...I think it is a very important lesson in terms of helping the student acquire fine motor skills..."</i> <b>K27</b>
	<b>Total</b>			<b>10</b>	
	✓	Supporting Raising Healthier Generations	K13, K24, K25, K26	4	<i>"...It contributes to raising healthy generations. I think this may be the most important impact in today's world. Because with technology, people are becoming more sedentary..."</i> <b>K24</b>
Health	✓	Improving Mental Health	K4, K21, K27	3	<i>"...Students relax and heal themselves spiritually with the body energy they will release in our lesson..."</i> <b>K4</b>
	✓	Protecting Mental Health	K9, K26	2	<i>"...I believe that thanks to sports, a healthy body and mental health are also protected."</i> <b>K26</b>

**Table 2.** Participants' Opinions on What Effect Physical Education and Sports Lessons Have on the Development of Students (continued)

	✓	Providing Physiological Development	K4	1	<i>"...As the name of the lesson suggests, it provides physiological development. "I can say that this completely matches the name of the lesson." K4</i>
<b>Total</b>				<b>10</b>	
Emotional Development	✓	Developing the Skill of Expressing Emotions and Thoughts	K3, K6, K27, K28	4	<i>"...the ability to express one's feelings and thoughts easily is developing..." K28</i>
	✓	Enabling Emotion Control	K6, K29	2	<i>"...contributes to controlling emotions. Because interaction in the game and sports environment provides suitable opportunities for the release and control of emotions..." K29</i>
	✓	Contributing to a Person Being at Peace with His Own Self and Loving Himself	K28	1	<i>"...by allowing the student to be at peace with himself, his self-love...develops..." K28</i>
<b>Total</b>				<b>7</b>	
Fair Play	✓	Creating Awareness of Complying with the	K11, K12, K28	3	<i>"Life is a game. Playing the game according to the rules is the greatest virtue. In this context, the first step in transferring the behavior of following the rules to students begins with physical education lesson." K11</i>
	✓	Developing the Understanding of Competition under Equal Conditions	K14, K28	2	<i>" I think it has a lot of impact, learning to compete under equal conditions, etc." K14</i>
	✓	Teaching the Understanding of Appreciating One's Opponents by Accepting Defeat	K28	1	<i>"... learns to compete under equal conditions, to appreciate others by accepting defeat, to be humble when he wins..." K28</i>
<b>Total</b>				<b>6</b>	
Time Evaluation	✓	Enabling Free Time to be Utilized in the Desired Way	K6, K15, K28	3	<i>"...I think they make their time valuable after lessons." K15</i>
<b>Total</b>				<b>3</b>	

## DISCUSSION

According to the first findings obtained from Table 2 regarding the research problem, physical education and sports lessons help to increase social harmony, develop the sense of group identity, instill a sense of responsibility, shape character and personality traits, improve both social harmony and teach material and moral values, Teaching the concept of discipline, developing a sense of helpfulness, facilitating in-class interaction, increasing the perception of freedom, developing an inquisitive mindset, contributing to cultural development, ensuring recognition of various sports disciplines, instilling spirit, encouraging competition, teaching stress management, encouraging a sharing attitude, increasing self-confidence. It makes a significant contribution to the psychosocial development of students by facilitating the acquisition of appropriate behavioral patterns, contributing to democratic processes and revealing leadership qualities. According to the second result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It contributes to the physical development of students by allowing aesthetic body development and laying the foundation for growth and development. According to the third result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It contributes to the cognitive development of students by providing a basis for supporting mental development, developing healthy thinking skills, improving creativity abilities, helping to make the best decisions and increasing academic success. According to the fourth result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It allows the development of movement skills and the discovery of movement skills. In addition, it contributes to the display of different motor skills in an artistic context and to facilitate the performance of movements needed in daily life. It contributes to the psychomotor development of students by facilitating the acquisition of new movement skills and the development of fine motor skills. According to the fifth result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It has a great importance in helping students become healthy individuals by helping to raise healthy generations, improving mental health, protecting mental health, and ensuring physiological development. According to the sixth result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It has an impact on the emotional development of students by contributing to improving the ability to express feelings and thoughts, ensuring emotional control, being at peace with one's own self and loving oneself. According to the seventh result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It supports the development of fair play characteristics in students by providing them with the opportunity to gain awareness of obeying the rules, developing the understanding of competing under equal conditions, and teaching them the understanding of accepting defeat and appreciating their opponents. Finally, according to the eighth result of the research problem, physical education and sports lesson; It provides the opportunity to spend free time as desired. These results appear to reveal that physical education and sports lessons, unlike other disciplines, contribute to the development of students in a wide variety of areas.

This research was examined and conceptualized with an approach aimed at discovering the effects of physical education and sports lessons on student development during the education process. There are limited studies in the literature on how physical education and sports lessons and physical activities affect student development. In addition, suggestions are made in the literature that more research should be done to better understand this situation and the specific structures that lead to the acquisition of life skills in school environments (Holt et al., 2012; Zeng et al., 2017; Camiré et al., 2009). Based on this, it can be said that the current study subject and the results obtained regarding this study subject meet this expectation in the literature.

Student learning outcomes in school can be classified into mental (cognitive), emotional, social, physical, and psychomotor domains (Sumarsono et al., 2018). In this sense, it can be stated that physical education and sports discipline is widely used by societies all over

the world in order to encourage the positive development of students in existing fields and to include students more effectively in education and social life (Armour et al., 2013; Bailey, 2006). Because physical education and sports lessons and the physical activities performed within these lessons provide significant contributions to students in terms of their physical, emotional, cognitive, social, psychomotor development and becoming healthy individuals, compared to other disciplines (Bailey, 2006; Teodora-Mihaela et al., 2017; Matson, 2019; Abate et al., 2020). In addition, physical education and sports lessons have the potential to make significant contributions to the development of children's basic movement skills, physical competence and psychosocial adaptation levels, which are necessary precursors to their later lifestyles and participation in sporting physical activities. It can be stated that when physical education and sports lessons are presented appropriately, they can make positive contributions to the development of social skills and social behaviors, as well as life satisfaction, self-esteem, autonomy and positive attitudes towards school. In addition, it should not be forgotten that physical education and sports lessons provide undeniable benefits on both academic and cognitive development (Bailey, 2006; Abate et al., 2020; Klizas et al., 2012). In a study whose results were reported, it was stated that high school students gained skills that are constantly necessary for their lives, such as self-efficacy and communication, by participating in sports activities. Based on this, it can be said that the results of the current research are valuable in terms of emphasizing the importance of physical education and sports lessons, which make positive contributions to many development areas of students.

Literature studies on physical activity have drawn particular attention to the positive development role of physical activities in terms of children's general health and early development. Many physical activity-themed studies show that physical activity activities have significant positive effects on individuals' social, physical, cognitive, psychological, personality, moral and lifestyle development (Gibbons et al., 1995; Miller et al., 1997; Martinek & Hellison, 1997; Fox, 1998; Burt, 1998; Hassmen & Koivula, 2000; Theodoulides & Zırh, 2001; Strauss et al., 2001; Eley & Kirk, 2002; Bäckmand, 2006; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008; Lemos et al., 2012; Armour et al., 2013; Zeng et al., 2017). For this reason, it can be stated that it is important to see it as a duty for both families and educators to instill motivation in children to participate in physical activities at an early age (Brustad et al., 2008).

Nowadays, researchers want to have information about the effect of physical activities on the development of cognitive processes. In studies conducted on school-age individuals on the subject, it is observed that there is a relationship between high physical activity levels and high cognitive and academic performance (Janssen et al., 2014; ElleMBERG & St-Louis-Deschênes, 2010; Gallotta et al., 2012; Gallotta et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be stated that students' cognitive performance will increase with the physical education and sports lessons implemented in the school curriculum. Because physical education and sports lessons are a discipline that leads students to increase their mental capacity by providing them with the opportunity to do high-level activities. In this way, students can improve their cognitive performance by focusing better and increasing their learning processes (Travlos, 2010). One study showed that moderate to vigorous exercise led to greater memory improvements during the school day in elementary school-aged children. In this context, it is important to use physical education and sports activities as a means of regulating cognitive processes among children in the classroom. Additionally, according to this study, it was stated that increasing the time devoted to physical education and sports could support acute cognitive benefits, such as improved memory functioning, which have significant effects on academic performance (Aguayo et al., 2019). In terms of cognitive development, positive changes occur especially in children's language learning, academic achievement, attention and working memory (Zeng et al., 2017; Lemos et al., 2012). In addition, research strongly argues that children's academic success, physical fitness and health cannot be improved by limiting the time allocated to physical education and sports and in-school physical activity programs (Trudeau & Shephard,

2008). However, unfortunately, in Turkey, physical education and sports lessons, and even professions in this field, do not receive the necessary importance and as a result, no studies are carried out by the relevant ministries regarding the inadequacy of lesson hours.

When physical education and sports lessons are implemented for at least two hours per week, increasing physical activity can help achieve physical goals such as improving health, improving well-being and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, this lesson can positively influence students' personal characteristics such as body awareness, self-confidence in physical skills, general sense of well-being, sense of security, self-esteem, sense of responsibility, patience, courage and mental balance. A study found that children had high levels of physical activity during physical education and sports lessons. The results of this study show that somatic anxiety levels in children decrease after physical education and sports programs. In addition, this study stated that after physical education and sports programs, lower levels of depression, isolation, somatic complaints, aggression and criminal behavior were observed in children. These results show that an eight-month physical education program positively affects primary school children's physical activity levels and emotional well-being (Kliziene et al., 2021). A different study suggested that a 16-week physical activity program was not sufficient to reduce deviant behaviors of young people and that longer-term programs were needed for behavior change (Erkmen Hadi et al., 2023). Therefore, while there are study results in the literature that may support the current research results, it is seen that there are studies reporting results contrary to these results.

Studies have emphasized that while increasing the level of sports activity has a positive relationship with emotional health, physical inactivity is associated with emotional problems such as depression and anxiety (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006; Kantomaa et al., 2008). Based on this, it can be said that the results of this research indicate that young people can positively affect their mental health with regular physical activity.

Discussions about students' dissatisfaction, apathy, and actions seen as antisocial behavior in society are widely maintained in many different fields and disciplines (Sandford et al., 2006). In these discussions, a perception prevails that physical education and sports encourage prosocial behavior and respect for others (Eley et al., 2022). Therefore, it can be stated that physical education and sports lessons have a significant power in terms of involving students who are dissatisfied with school again (Bailey, 2005). However, a study by Ennis (1995) observed different maladaptive behaviors of students (e.g., wearing inappropriate clothing, disobedience, etc.), suggesting that physical education and sports lessons are meaningless in their current situation and have little relevance to students' daily lives. In another study, it was determined that students experienced high levels of fear in learning environments. However, this study found that physical education and sports programs generally contribute to reducing negative behaviors by prioritizing safety (Ennis et al., 1997). In this context, it is clearly seen that physical education and sports lessons can positively affect students' behavior.

Meta-analysis studies conducted using electronic research databases show that physical education and sports education have positive effects on students' emotional states (Espoz-Lazo, 2020; Cho, 2020). Additionally, a study found that students who do sports, passively participate in sports, and are physically active experience lower levels of negative emotions (Çakır, 2023). Differently, in another study, a moderately significant relationship was found between the physical activity level and sleep quality of secondary school students. Accordingly, it has been determined that increasing the level of physical activity increases the sleep quality of students (Kızılkoca & Tokgöz 2023). Based on this, it can be stated that physical education and sports lessons have an important place in students' learning and experiencing emotional states such as happiness, joy, pride, anxiety, despair, boredom, sadness, shame, anger, guilt, fear and surprise (Tjerdsma, 1999). This discipline, which is an important tool in educating students who have

emotional behavioral problems (Medcalf et al., 2006), also contributes to increasing emotional intelligence levels (Siskos et al., 2011; Rico-González, 2023).

Finally, it can be stated that the physical activities in which students participate in physical education and sports lessons are of great importance in terms of their psychomotor development. For this reason, movement should be at the center of students' lives. With the slogan "I Move, Therefore I Am" (Seitz, 1993), it is thought that it is important for school administrations and physical education and sports teachers to carry out sensitive studies on this issue. This effort will allow positive development of students in many aspects and will lead to constructive results on their learning processes (Abate et al., 2020).

As can be seen, it can be stated that the results of the current research overlap with the results of related studies in the literature. However, results that do not coincide with the existing research results have been found in the literature. For example, physical education and sports lessons do not cause any change in the physical development of students.

### **Conclusion**

As a result, physical education and sports lessons make significant contributions to the social, physical, mental, emotional, psychomotor and cognitive development of students. This lesson provides students with various skills that they can use throughout their lives and contributes to the development of healthy, balanced individuals. In this context, the research results reveal that physical education and sports lessons should be emphasized more in the education system.

### **Recommendation**

- Educational institutions should conduct regular assessments and enhancements of their physical education and sports programs. The responsibility for these evaluations should be shared among school administrators and physical education instructors.
- Drawing upon the findings of academic research, the relevant ministries and school administrations within the Republic of Turkey should recognize the significance of physical education and sports and provide support for initiatives in this domain. In this regard, these governing bodies should allocate increased resources to enrich the physical education and sports curricula, thereby promoting and strengthening these programs.
- Compared to other countries, it is seen that physical education and sports lesson time is insufficient in Turkey. In this context, relevant institutions and organizations, especially the Ministry of National Education, need to work on increasing lesson hours. This situation is thought to be important in terms of providing opportunities for students' development in all developmental areas.
- In order to eliminate the negative perception towards physical education and sports discipline and to ensure that this discipline is positioned in the place it deserves, school administrations and physical education and sports teachers need to organize encouraging activities to encourage the participation of families during physical education and sports activities in schools. It is thought that this effort may help eliminate existing prejudices regarding this disciplinary field.
- Local authorities, sports clubs, and voluntary organizations should establish collaborative efforts to enhance the accessibility of sports facilities and activities within the community. This measure is anticipated to facilitate greater engagement of children and youth in sporting activities.

## Limitations

The data obtained;

- Opinions of 29 physical education and sports teachers working in different provinces of Turkey,
- It is limited to a single question in the semi-structured interview form.

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*Author(s)' statements on ethics and conflict of interest*

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