

The Factors that Affect Social Acceptance of Students with Disabilities in Physical Education

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The Factors that Affect Social Acceptance of Students with Disabilities in Physical Education

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Abstract

Students with disabilities are not often the target participants for sports or most athletic students in physical education (PE) classes. Because of this and other social differences, students with disabilities are rarely socially accepted by their teachers or peers in PE class. Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied than their counterparts and have to jump through many barriers to experience a truly inclusive environment in physical education. In order for students with disabilities to be successful and included in the sport and PE environment, teachers must make appropriate modifications and accommodations to each lesson and activity, as well as learn their students, listen to their students, and create an environment where all students are included and can be accepted. Less emphasis should be put on athletic abilities and more on working together, being active, and doing your best. The purpose of this synthesis was to review the literature on the social acceptance of students with disabilities in physical education.

Chapter One: Introduction

Individuals with disabilities are less likely to be socially accepted by their peers due to their deficits in social and communication skills, proactive or reactive aggression responses, and general lack of understanding and awareness from their peers without disabilities (Yell et al., 2016). Therefore, students with disabilities are at a high risk of bullying. Research suggests that students with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience victimization than their peers without disabilities. For example, elementary students with disabilities are 24.5% more likely, and middle school students are 34.1% more likely to experience bullying (Blake et al., 2012). According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, social acceptance is defined as the formal or informal admission of an individual into a group and is determined by how students treat each other in social situations. Students who are not accepted or bullied by their peers may experience negative socioemotional and academic effects (Garrote et al., 2020). Feeling accepted and having a sense of connection and belonging is the third most important tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, just behind safety. Without that sense of love and belonging, students can never reach the needs of esteem and self-actualization, which motivate us to grow and become better people.

The inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom refers to a setting where both children with and without disabilities participate together and where all children's needs are being met (CDC, 2022). This type of inclusion in schools is fairly recent. In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) re-authorization stated that all students should have access to a free and appropriate education. Students with disabilities should be placed in the least restrictive environment for them and integrated with students without disabilities as much as is appropriate (Draper, 2019). By including students with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities, there is a greater chance of them being socially accepted by their peers due to the fact that they are not segregated from each other. Inclusion is

known to be beneficial for students with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities are seen to have positive changes in alertness, sleeping and eating habits, enjoyment, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. For students without disabilities, inclusion often helps them learn empathy for others who are different from them and flexibility (Kim et al., 2020). It is proven that inclusion can benefit both students with and without disabilities; with this in mind, more should be advocating for fully inclusive environments at all times.

Statement of the problem

Due to barriers, segregated classrooms, and social differences, students with disabilities do not always feel accepted by their peers. According to the CDC, barriers, such as inaccessible environments and negative attitudes, make it difficult or impossible for some people with disabilities to function (2020). The barrier of negative attitudes can be the hardest to overcome. Students with disabilities do not deserve to be bullied, not be accepted, or feel othered by their peers. This problem stems from school programs that are not inclusive or are not demonstrating inclusion practices in a meaningful and positive way. According to Dalcin (2022), one way that inclusion may negatively affect peers without disabilities is if there are too many children with disabilities in one class. There should be a natural ratio in order to ensure an equitable educational environment for all students in the class. Inclusion is hard, inclusion may be proven to be beneficial, but that doesn't make it easy to achieve. We need teachers with proper training who are willing to do everything to help all the students in their classes; there needs to be an appropriate ratio of students with and without disabilities in a class, trained support staff, and constant opportunities for all students to learn together.

Purpose of the synthesis

This synthesis aims to review the literature on the social acceptance of students with disabilities in Physical Education (PE).

Operational definitions

1. Inclusion is defined as a setting where both children with and without disabilities participate together and where all children's needs are being met (CDC, 2020).
2. Social Acceptance is defined as the formal or informal admission of an individual into a group and is determined by how students treat each other in social situations (Garrote et al., 2020).
3. Students with disabilities are defined as any student (4-21 years) with an IEP or 504 plan that may have a developmental, intellectual, or physical disability.
4. Integration is defined as when students with disabilities join into the same classroom environment as students without disabilities.

Research Questions

1. How does inclusion affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities?
2. How do teachers affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities?
3. What factors affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE?

Delimitations

1. The articles used in the literature review of the synthesis were peer-reviewed and full-text.
2. The articles used in the literature review of the synthesis were published between 2013 and 2023.
3. Articles used in this synthesis review were limited to those on social acceptance and students with disabilities.

Chapter Two: Methods

This synthesis aims to review the literature on the social acceptance of students with disabilities in Physical Education (PE). A comprehensive literature search was done to collect the information necessary to complete the synthesis. This chapter describes the methods used to gather the relevant information for the synthesis.

The studies collected for this synthesis were located using the EBSCO database from SUNY Brockport's Drake Library, the advanced search setting, and articles that were cited in other articles' references. First, databases by the subject were selected on the library website. The chosen subject was Kinesiology, Sports Studies, and Physical Education. The following databases were searched within the EBSCO database: SPORTDiscus, SAGE Premier, DOAJ Directory, and Gale General. Keywords were used in the search to narrow down the number of articles. These keywords included physical education, adapted physical education, social acceptance, PE, students with disabilities, ableism, students' point of view, sport, sports, disabled students, acceptance, adapted, general education, integration, mainstream, segregated environment, self-contained, and inclusion. These keywords were used because they were most fitting of the purpose statement. Physical education, inclusion, and social acceptance were the most useful in finding relevant articles for this synthesis.

Firstly, a search was conducted using SUNY Brockport's Drake Library, library search, and advanced search, which yielded some results. Keywords used were social acceptance and adapted physical education; the search was set to peer-reviewed journals, articles, and 2013-2013; this resulted in 98 articles. The set was then set to education and educational resources and produced 20 results. Another search was conducted using the keywords inclusion and adapted physical education with all the same filters and got 1,713 results; from there, subjects were set to

inclusion and physical education, which resulted in 584 articles; finally, the subjects education, special and inclusive education were added to the search and resulted in 36 articles.

The searches found two literature reviews: "Academic and Social Effects of Inclusion on Students without Disabilities: A Review of the Literature" and "Inclusion in Physical Education: A review of literature." The references of these literature reviews were then investigated. Firstly the dates were looked at, only looking at references between 2013-2023; additionally, only references that were available in the full text were explored and if they could fit into this synthesis based on the article's abstract. Two articles were found using this method.

Next, a search was done in SPORTDiscus using the keywords adapted physical education and inclusion. The options were limited to peer-reviewed journals, articles, and 2013-2023; this resulted in 139. Next, keywords adapted physical education and social acceptance were used, which yielded nine results.

Ten total articles were selected through the search process. For the article to be included in the research process, the article needed to meet specific criteria—the articles related to students with disabilities, social acceptance or inclusion, and physical education.

Articles were produced from journals such as the Journal of sport behavior, Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice, Acta Facultatis Educationis Fisicae Universitatis Comenianae, Frontiers in Education, European Physical Education Review, Disability & Society, British Journal of Learning Disabilities, Sport, Education, and Society, and Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly.

The critical mass for this synthesis included 2,549 total individuals. 2,094 individuals were students without disabilities that were a part of quantitative studies. 241 students with disabilities were all a part of qualitative studies; 113 general physical education teachers, 3 of

which were part of a qualitative and 110 a quantitative study; and 99 adapted physical education teachers and 2 classroom teachers from a quantitative study. Data was acquired from all across the United States, Norway, southwest Ireland, Brazil, and Singapore. The articles chosen were a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The studies collected information using methods such as in-person and telephone interviews, Semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, flexible and responsive interviews, questionnaires, online survey forms, and reflective journals with field notes, drawings, and researcher notes. These various data collection methods were analyzed by using transcripts, coding, organization of codes, selective coding, qualitative analysis, free textual analysis, existential-phenomenological approach, cross-case analysis, content analysis technique, cross-level interactions, and multi-level analyses, reflexive thematic analysis approach, and the constant comparative method.

Chapter 3: Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature on the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE. Specifically, the following topics will be reviewed: experiences of students with disabilities in PE, the teacher's role in creating social acceptance in PE, and factors that affect social acceptance. An analysis of the literature found these two major themes to be the most significant: teacher willingness to include students with disabilities and athleticism's effect on social acceptance in PE.

Experiences of Students with Disabilities in PE

Social acceptance is defined as the formal or informal admission of an individual into a group and is determined by how students treat each other in social situations (Garrote et al., 2020). In other words, being friendly to someone and inviting them in is social acceptance; bullying and pushing others away is not. An inclusive PE class hosts both students with and without disabilities, where all students can work together. In this environment, there should theoretically be more social acceptance due to the assumption that students with and without disabilities would work together and learn to mutually understand one another.

Li et al. (2022) conducted a study in Singapore where they asked typically developing students if they felt that their peers with disabilities should be included with them in PE class. 86.3% responded that yes, they should be included; the participants stated that everyone is entitled to the same opportunities, deserves to have fun in PE, needs to exercise like everyone else and that we should all have equal rights. 13.7% of the respondents believed students with disabilities should not join their PE class because they may get bullied, get hurt, or cause issues with other students without disabilities. All the students who participated in this study, whether they said yes or no to including students with disabilities, had good intentions. Looking at the

reasons why students gave their answers shows that they had the best interest in mind for the students with disabilities and wanted to keep them safe. This study also demonstrates that more than half of the students are socially accepting of having students with disabilities in their PE class.

Feeling accepted and having a sense of connection and belonging is the third most important tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, just behind safety. According to Li et al. (2022), students without disabilities would be accepting of students with disabilities in an inclusive PE class. However, this may not always be the case. Haegele and Maher (2022) studied the experiences of eight students with disabilities in each of their integrated PE classes. These students were educated in the same space as their peers without disabilities. It was found that seven of the eight students had experienced verbal and/or physical bullying during their PE classes. This study was qualitative, and information was gained from the participants via interview. When asked what they did not like about PE class, the participants explained some instances of bullying. Common themes were being laughed at, having balls thrown at them or being pushed, and being told to go kill themselves, which resulted in a few participants' self-harm behaviors (Haegele & Maher, 2022). This study also looked at interactions in the locker rooms. Participants explained that the lack of a teacher's presence in locker rooms made it so that there were no rules; they said others were always horsing around, and comments about people's bodies were often made. One participant explained that he was frustrated that his classmates did not understand autism and that if people understood better, they might be nicer to him (Haegele & Maher, 2022). One of the eight participants talked about his positive experiences in PE class, stating that he is not left out and can be athletic with the group in PE. In conclusion, the majority of students with disabilities did not feel included, and these classes did not result in students

being more socially accepted because the spirit of inclusion was absent. In the experience of these participants, students without disabilities often bully students with disabilities.

Similarly, Healy et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study in Ireland on the experiences of 12 students with disabilities in integrated PE classes. Throughout interviews, these students talked highly of the happy feelings they get when they can make friends and be on the same teams as their friends in PE. One student said, “When I’m running and playing with a ball and passing, they say thanks and after that they say do you want to sleep over or something like that” (Healy et al., 2013, p. 224-225). A student without a disability making friends with a student with a disability and inviting them to hang out outside of school is a big sign of social acceptance. Conversely, some students still had negative experiences with their peers in PE, stating that when they were not able to do a skill as well as the other students, the students without disabilities would get upset with them and yell at them, making them feel like they were not good enough at the sport to participate. Another theme of this study was exclusion. Participants had a few different experiences with exclusion in their PE class; one student talked of their teacher excluding them from a game because they “just were not ready yet” (Healy et al., 2013, p.225). Other students talked about how students without disabilities would exclude them if they were not good at the game. Many spoke of how they would exclude themselves from gameplay if they felt they were not good enough, were scared, or did not want to play (Healy et al., 2013).

Alternatively, in a qualitative study, 20 students with disabilities from southwest Louisiana shared their experiences in self-contained PE classes (Pellerin et al., 2022). Contrary to other research reviewed for this paper, these experiences were all positive. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews, unscripted follow-up questions, and drawings.

Researchers found that participants often talked of their friends in their PE class, enjoyed the activities and sports they played, and were happy during PE. During her interview, one student said she did not want to switch to the general PE class because she would miss her friends (Pellerin et al., 2022). Another student talked about how he was in general PE in middle school but is now in self-contained PE; he feels it helps him talk to people more, and he does not want to return to general PE class. This shows that in the self-contained setting, students are able to develop friendships and have positive social experiences. Participants did not have students without disabilities in their class, which resulted in more social acceptance by each other. By playing together and including everyone, their need for belonging was being met. Self-contained PE class had students with various disabilities and different levels of challenge, but students were able to feel connected to each other and form friendships.

A study with 20 participants with disabilities from Norway participated in semi-structured interviews to understand their experiences in integrated PE (Bredahl, 2013). They were asked what the most positive and negative experiences that they have had. All participants recalled that their most positive PE experiences were when they did something that no one thought they would be capable of or when they exceeded others' expectations of themselves. This shows the ableist viewpoint that the only way students with disabilities could feel successful in PE class is if they are able to do something without any accommodation or modification. Students with disabilities should have more opportunities to feel proud of themselves, even if the activity needs to be modified in order for them to be included. Students also talked about their negative experiences in PE class. The most common theme was not being included and therefore feeling like they did not belong. Participants talked about being exempt from PE, sitting on the sidelines, training separately, or needing an aid with them and feeling odd about this. Others

talked about the embarrassment of failing as their teachers had not modified activities for them in a way that could make them successful. The third theme of this study was not being heard; one student spoke of advocating for himself and suggesting an alternative assignment, and he was ignored (Bredahl, 2013). His teacher made him do the same assignment as everyone else, which he felt he failed, making other students laugh at him. This study highlights the importance of the teacher's role in creating an environment where students feel included.

Listening to the voices of students with disabilities is essential to understanding their experiences in PE and improving social acceptance. The studies reviewed in this section point out that students felt excluded or ignored even in integrated PE settings. Moreover, in integrated PE classes, the teacher's job is essential to provide appropriately differentiated instruction in order to make students feel a sense of achievement. Teachers need to encourage all students, help them succeed in class, and increase social acceptance for everyone.

Teacher Role in Creating Social Acceptance in PE

A teacher is the facilitator and guide to their students and needs to ensure that they are creating a positive learning environment in their classes where all their students are successful and part of the same supportive learning community. A teacher must use differentiated instruction in order to support all students learning needs in their class, whether or not they have a disability. A review of studies where teachers were participants reveals two important factors in making the PE class inclusive: teachers' interactions with the students influence the interactions students will have with each other, and teachers need to be better educated on the importance of PE for everyone, including their students with disabilities.

Furrer et al. (2020) conducted a study looking at the social interactions students with disabilities have in inclusive classes based on the instructional strategies used by the teachers in

their classes. The two teaching strategies in this study were individual reference norm orientation (IRNO) and the teaching cooperative skills strategy. IRNO is a teacher feedback approach that compares students' past results rather than other students' results or the standards. The benefits of the IRNO approach are that the teacher can give individualized feedback to each student and is more likely to give students positive feedback. Teacher feedback provides a model of interaction for their students as they interact with each other. If students see a teacher having positive interactions and feedback for a student with a disability, they are more likely to think positively of that student (Furrer et al., 2020). Participants in this study included 1,961 students and 110 teachers from 112 inclusive PE classes in Switzerland. Students with and without disabilities and their PE teachers responded to five in-person questionnaires with a proctor. Social acceptance was measured by the perceived interaction students without disabilities had with their peers with disabilities. Acceptance was measured by how much they talked and played with a student with a disability during PE class. On the other hand, poor social acceptance was measured in terms of how much they felt upset with their peers with disabilities in PE. Social acceptance in PE classes was significant when the teachers used the IRNO and cooperative skills approach. The teaching cooperative skills approach showed a correlation between teaching cooperative skills and social acceptance in PE; this strategy increased social acceptance for all students in PE with and without a disability. The IRNO approach also showed a relationship to positive social acceptance of all students regardless of if they had a disability or not.

Haegele et al., (2021) sought to discover the barriers to an inclusive environment through the integrated PE experience for students with disabilities. Throughout this study, 99 certified APE teachers noted barriers to an inclusive experience for their students through an online survey with open-ended questions. The researchers looked at inclusion as a feeling that they

want their students to experience in PE rather than an inclusive class being their placement. Students are in an integrated class, and the feeling of being included is due to many factors. It was found that most of the certified APE teachers believed that the biggest barriers that students face are teacher attitude, activity selection/modification, and instructional quality (Haegele et al., 2021). This further pushes the point that teachers' influence is essential in providing an inclusive environment for students with disabilities.

A multiple case study conducted in Brazil with PE teachers highlighted the importance of planning ahead and caring to include students with disabilities in PE (Tanure Alves et al., 2022). The researchers studied three PE teachers' day-to-day work in terms of the inclusion or lack of inclusion of their classes. Throughout their school year, the PE teachers completed weekly field notes and participated in two focus group interviews. The major theme emerging from the data was the overwhelming ableism in the PE teachers' practice. Firstly, when the sports court/gym was not accessible to students with physical disabilities, teachers did not attempt to make them accessible. One of the PE teachers admitted that she does not plan her adaptations for students with disabilities ahead of time but rather decides what she needs to do as the class is happening when she does not have resources available. She said that students with disabilities are an afterthought to her (Tanure Alves et al., 2022). Another PE teacher talked of being proud of her student when they “participated in the class properly” (Tanure Alves et al., 2022, p.10), disclosing that the teacher feels that being able to do the activities with no modification or adaptation is the only way to be proud of students with disabilities. The PE teachers questioned the meaning of PE classes that included students with disabilities and did not seem to want them to be there. Because these PE classes have been designed for students without disabilities and the teachers are not trying to include students with disabilities, these students are considered

outsiders (Tanure Alves et al., 2022). Students without disabilities are shown through their teachers' actions that sports and physical activity are not important for people with disabilities, which is not true. This article highlights how a lack of understanding of inclusive education and differentiated instruction from the teachers set up the students for failure in PE. Teachers seemed to lack the motivation to adapt their instruction to include students with disabilities. If the PE teacher cannot include and socially accept students with disabilities in their class, then it can not be expected that students without disabilities would be socially accepting of these students.

Athleticism in PE

Many factors contribute to the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE class. Classroom environments and teachers' roles are huge factors to consider, as well as the results of research styles and differences in students' athletic abilities. A participant identified as a good athlete was the only one from Haegele and Maher's (2020) study with a positive experience in integrated PE. Was he able to fit into PE class more easily due to his athletic nature? Dane-Staples et al., (2013) sought to understand the bullying experiences of people with disabilities and their relationship with sports. The purpose of this study was to investigate status. Status typically plays a huge role in who is getting bullied and who is being the bully. Typically athletes are considered high-status and tend to be the bullies, while people with disabilities are considered low-status and tend to be bullied (Dane-Staples et al., 2013). Thirty athletes and 19 non-athletes with disabilities participated in this study; the athletes were gathered from the 2011 National Goalball Championships. Data were gathered through individual interviews as well as a questionnaire. Forty-one of the 49 participants reported experiencing bullying in their life. Out of those eight participants who reported never experiencing bullying, seven of them were athletes. This indicates that 94.7% of the non-athlete population had experienced bullying, while only

76.6% of the athlete population did (Dane-Staples et al., 2013). Both populations experienced a large percentage of bullying; however, the non-athletes experienced more than the athletes. This study further shows that the athletes were also more likely to fight their bullies back, both physically and verbally, while the non-athletes were more likely just to avoid their bullies the best they could (Dane-Staples et al., 2013). This suggests that athletes with disabilities may be more socially accepted by their peers without disabilities because they are more respected for being athletic despite having a disability.

In a similar study, Hollett et al. (2020) sought to find the characteristic that most highly contributed to a student's social status and social acceptance. Forty-six students and 2 classroom teachers filled out surveys based on social status, attractiveness, popularity, and perceived skill ability. A video determined actual skill ability, and a cognitive unit test determined cognitive ability (Hollett et al., 2020). Additionally, students' sex, weight, and height were factored into the data analysis. Researchers found that perceived skill ability and height were the only significant factors that predicted social status. Students who were taller and others had perceived their skill ability to be higher had a higher social status, while students who were shorter and others had perceived their skill ability to be lower had a lower social status. Without considering the social status of students with disabilities, all students in PE had higher social status when they were perceived to be more athletic. This demonstrates how much emphasis society puts on individuals' athletic abilities and how athleticism can positively or negatively affect the social acceptance of all students in PE.

Furrer et al. (2020) had teachers complete a psychomotor clumsiness assessment for their students. It was found that "the higher the clumsiness, the lower the social acceptance of a student in PE" (Furrer et al., 2020, p. 8). This further shows the emphasis on athleticism in PE

and how lower-skilled students may face a more difficult social scene in PE class whether or not they have a disability. Regarding athleticism and increasing the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE, Healy et al. (2013) also talked about sensory issues and fear of injury due to the student's disability. Students with sensory issues may have difficulty in a PE environment as it can be very overstimulating between the noise and the number of people. If a student is afraid they will get hurt by a ball hitting them or another student running into them, they will not perform to the best of their athletic abilities. When students with disabilities have these struggles, and the teacher does not help them through these issues, they remove themselves from the environment. If students with disabilities are no longer participating in PE class because of these difficulties, then they are no longer getting the education that they deserve and can no longer consider social acceptance because students are not being social at all anymore. Students with disabilities not participating in PE class at all negatively affects social acceptance.

Summary

This review of the literature looked at qualitative and quantitative studies from the perspectives of students with disabilities, students without disabilities, and their teachers. Research has shown that many factors affect whether or not a student is socially accepted by their peers; the teacher, the instructional strategies, the environment in which they are taught, and athleticism. Creating an environment where students with disabilities are truly included and socially accepted by their peers and teachers is the ultimate goal. Students with disabilities should feel they belong in PE class. This research has shown that integrated settings with students with and without disabilities in the same environment do not mean inclusive, and inclusive settings do not automatically make students with disabilities more socially accepted.

Chapter 4: Results, Discussion, and Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the literature review on the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE and how these results align with the purported research questions which guided this synthesis project. In addition, recommendations for future research regarding the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE.

The results of this review indicate that many students with disabilities do not feel included in integrated PE classes. Despite being taught in an environment where students with and without disabilities are present, students with disabilities are often bullied and excluded by their peers and teachers. This review highlighted the first-hand experiences that students with disabilities had in their PE classes by synthesizing multiple qualitative research articles dedicated to listening to the voices of those with disabilities. Additionally, results found that teachers are most often the cause of students' positive or negative PE experiences. This explains that teachers are responsible for creating an environment for students with disabilities that displays inclusion in a meaningful way where increased social acceptance is allowed. Lastly, the results of this review showed many additional factors that contribute to the social acceptance of students with disabilities; the most significant factor found behind teacher influence was athleticism. Students with higher skill and athletic abilities were more likely to be socially accepted by their peers whether or not they had a disability.

Discussion

As shown in chapter one, three research questions were asked before the review of the literature was conducted. The first question was, how does inclusion affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities? The hope of asking this question was to find evidence that, yes, inclusions helped students with disabilities be more socially accepted by their peers. However,

the research reviewed in this paper did not confirm that theory. Simply having a class where inclusion took place did not directly translate to the feeling of inclusion to be present or an increase in social acceptance. Putting students with and without disabilities together in an environment where they can all work together is only shown to work if teachers and students put in a conscious effort to include each other, work together, and use proper strategies, modifications, and accommodations to allow students to be able to work together in a positive way. Furrer et al. (2020) showed two teaching strategies IRNO and the teaching cooperative skills strategy, that allowed for a more inclusive environment for all students, but many of the other studies lacked strategies, modifications, and accommodations resulting in detrimental experiences in PE for students with disabilities.

The second research question that was asked was: how do teachers affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities? The results revealed that teachers have a huge role in the social acceptance of students with disabilities and have a lot of power to provide students with positive or negative experiences in PE. The teacher sets the tone of the class. If they put in a conscious effort to support, listen to, and accommodate students with disabilities, students will be more socially accepted. On the contrary, if teachers are not putting in any effort to include or accommodate students with disabilities, students will not be more socially accepted by their peers. The way teachers speak to and treat their students with disabilities gives other students a blueprint for how they should also speak to and treat students with disabilities (Furrer et al., 2020). Students without disabilities will always be looking to the teacher. If the teacher is accepting of students with disabilities, that will rub off on the students without disabilities. Correspondingly, if a teacher is not accepting of students with disabilities themselves and does not speak to and treat them well, students without disabilities will do the same.

The last research question that was asked was: what factors affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE? The results demonstrated many relevant factors. First, it was found that teachers have a major impact on the social acceptance of students with disabilities. Second, instructional strategies used had an impact on the social acceptance of students with disabilities. Specifically, such factors as the environment in which the class took place, for example, was it integrated, inclusive, or self-contained; did the teachers use specific strategies when teaching, such as the IRNO or teaching cooperative skills; and what was the impact of the physical environment in terms of where the class took place, if it was in a gym, weight room, outdoor space, or if the students used locker rooms. Another major factor that was found was the relationship between high athletic abilities and social acceptance. Multiple studies touched on this topic, and the results showed that if a student with a disability is athletic, they are more likely to be socially accepted in and outside PE class. This has to do with the emphasis on athletic ability in PE class and the high social status of an athlete. Hollett et al. (2020) confirmed that those perceived as more athletic had a high social status. A similar study by Dane-Staples et al. (2013) also confirmed this theory finding that students with disabilities who were athletes were less likely to be bullied and more likely to be socially accepted.

Another factor that may affect the results of the studies used in this review is whether the study was qualitative or quantitative and whom the study focused on—students with disabilities, students without disabilities, or teachers. An example of this is in Li et al. (2022) quantitative study, 86.3 % of Singapore students without disabilities said students with disabilities should be included in their PE classes. This showed that these students were socially accepting of their peers with disabilities; however, the quantitative nature of this study makes the results theoretical. Theoretically, 86.3% of these students would include, work together with, and initiate friendships with peers with disabilities in PE, but in practice, there is no way of knowing

if that would still be true. The nature of this study and the survey's questions only sought to find the perceived social acceptance of students with disabilities. The only way to know if all 86.3% of students were being truthful would be to put them in an environment where they have a student with a disability in their PE class, and many of the participants in this study did not have that experience.

The outlier study by Pellerin et al. (2022) showed us a different perspective. This was the only study that focused on students' experiences in a self-contained PE class. This class environment was not integrated, so by our definition of inclusion, a setting where children with and without disabilities participate together, and all children's needs are being met (CDC, 2020), this was not an inclusive environment. However, researchers noticed that bullying was never mentioned in their findings of experiences from self-contained PE classes. From the experiences of these 20 individuals, self-contained PE class was depicted as a fun, happy, and safe place to learn, where the teacher was able to make appropriate accommodations in order to make sure everyone was successful. In a self-contained class, there are no hierarchies, which may result in decreased bullying and higher levels of social acceptance among other students with disabilities. Maslow's hierarchy of needs talks about the need to belong. This was the only study where all participants felt they belonged and did not have negative PE experiences. It is important to include students with disabilities in all areas of life. But is it possible that some people with disabilities only truly feel like they belong when they are around others similar to them? However, despite the idea that students with disabilities feel included together, they are still being excluded from general education. The goal is to make a class a place where everyone is accepted and celebrated for whatever they have to offer.

Many more factors can potentially affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE that were not directly discussed in any of the articles in this literature review.

Factors include but are not limited to the age, disability type, location, race, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexuality of students, the cultural environment, and any other intersecting identity factors of the student.

Implications

Based on the literature review results, various implications can be used to help improve the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE class. There are many books and articles about the benefits of inclusion of students with disabilities in PE and other classes, as well as strategies of how to best include students with disabilities in settings with students without disabilities. Many of these books and articles state that inclusion is found to have a positive effect on students with disabilities. For example, Students with disabilities are seen to have positive changes in alertness, sleeping and eating habits, enjoyment, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging when they are included in an inclusive class setting (Kim et al., 2020). The research in this review, however, has some contradicting evidence. It adds to this depiction of inclusion by showing positive social acceptance by peers when included properly in the class, as well as the dark side of “inclusion,” where it shows that without proper support and strategies, an integrated environment can lead to far more harm and negatively affect social acceptance of those with disabilities. In this literature review, it was not found that inclusion is bad; it was found that true inclusion does not always exist in environments that are labeled as so. These findings show the feelings of students with disabilities, not their parent's feelings or anyone else. The research focused on the first-hand experiences of students with disabilities. This is scarcer, and many articles are more recent. In order to truly discover the positive and negative attributes of inclusion, more first-hand research needs to be done.

Meaningful and proper inclusion is what all teachers should strive for, as it is no easy task. Teachers must create a positive classroom environment for all students, where everyone has

an opportunity to be successful. This research has conveyed that if a teacher uses proper strategies, thinks ahead, and makes an effort to create an environment where students with disabilities are more socially accepted, then students will be more socially accepted. When PE teachers are not educated in how to teach students with disabilities, don't make an effort to create modifications, and don't socially accept students with disabilities themselves, students will not be more socially accepted. Additional considerations PE teachers should make when creating a truly inclusive environment are using the universal design for learning (UDL), adding the modifications directly in their lesson planning, creating a sports court/gym space that is physically accessible to all students, consulting with other teachers or service providers, and listening to the needs of the student.

Many PE classes are very sport, skill, and competition-oriented; there is a feeling of worth for those with high athletic skills. Due to this, many students with lower athletic skills do not enjoy PE or feel they can succeed in PE class. Based on the reviewed research, students with disabilities with high athletic skills are often seen as more worthy than students with disabilities who have lower athletic skills. This conveys a theme of a hierarchy of athletic students and shows the ableism that is inherent in the PE/sport environment. There is such an emphasis on being able to do a skill correctly and playing a game well without accommodations that students forget or are not taught the expansive reality of the benefits of physical activity and sports for all people. Teachers must teach their students that this is not the case. Teachers must accommodate and show their students how to play games with modified rules, have the students modify the rules for themselves, teach disability sports, and talk to their students about the importance of physical activity and fitness under a non-competitive and sport-based model.

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

In reviewing the database on social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE, the following limitations were noted regarding the studies chosen. First, ten studies were chosen to be a part of this review of research; six of these studies were based on qualitative research. The findings of a singular qualitative research study cannot be generalized due to the specifics of these studies. This is why it was important to find multiple studies with similar results to compare and contrast the research which was found. Next, the four quantitative research articles used provide us with the limitation of not being as in-depth and the ease with which the researcher may misinterpret results due to the nature of not being able to member check and make sure a participant means what the researcher thinks they mean. Third, many of these studies use the words “integrated” and “inclusive” interchangeably, which becomes confusing for the reader. Additionally, there are many more factors to consider when looking at the social acceptance of students with disabilities that this review did not touch on. The age of students, the type of disability, the cultural environment, as well as the demographics of the students. Based on these limitations and other insights related to the literature, the following recommendations for future research should be considered:

1. Researchers should seek to look at the experiences of students with disabilities in all different settings, integrated, self-contained, and inclusive. It should not be assumed that inclusion provides the best experiences for students. Understanding their experiences is much more valid.
2. Looking at the differences in the experiences of social acceptance based on two or more factors such as age, gender, or disability type/severity.

3. Examining the effect of professional development training of teachers, pre and post to determine if additional training in disability studies impacts the PE program for both students and teachers.

Summary

This synthesis reviewed the literature on the social acceptance of students with disabilities in PE. The review sought to see what factors affect the social acceptance of students with disabilities and whether inclusive environments and teachers had anything to do with it. The articles were found using the delimiting variables that fit the purpose of this paper. Research revealed positive and negative experiences from students with disabilities, the teacher's overwhelming responsibility in social acceptance, and the role that athleticism plays in PE. In this paper, students with disabilities are defined as any student (4-21 years) with an IEP or 504 plan that may have a developmental, intellectual, or physical disability. This means that across the ten articles reviewed, participants had different types of disabilities. Throughout the review, the participant's disability type was never mentioned; however, the findings yielded similar results. Without a PE teacher who made meaningful modifications and accommodations, treated students with respect, listened to students, and fostered a truly inclusive environment, students with disabilities did not have positive PE experiences, nor were they socially accepted by their peers. When students with disabilities social, physical, and learning needs were met, they did have positive PE experiences and were socially accepted by their peers. It was found that sometimes the bullies were the teachers. It was not solely up to the environment being integrated/inclusive or the peers without disabilities being kind, but the teachers' influence.

Other outlying factors were brought to light through multiple articles in this review. Such as the inherent ableism in the PE and sport environment due to the idea that in order to participate properly in an activity, you must overcome your disability to have value as a student

in the class. This was found to be significant in the PE environment because of the want to be athletic. The social status that athleticism gives a student is enough to show the difference between a peer or teacher respecting and accepting that student. The design of social status plays a huge role in social acceptance and bullying, in and out of PE class. This is due to ableism and the superiority of athletes in our society and is directly linked to social acceptance.

In conclusion, students with disabilities deserve to feel valued and be properly included in PE class. It is the job of the teacher to create an environment in which this is possible. Future research on hierarchies, athleticism, and ableism may find more interesting results on the topic of social acceptance.

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Appendix A

Author	Title	Source	Purpose	Methods & Procedures	Analysis	Findings	Discussion/ Recommendations Research Notes Commonalities/Differences
Li, Chunxiao; Haegele, Justin; McKay, Cathy; Wang, Lijuan European physical education review, 2022, Vol.28 (1), p.137-150	<u>Including students with physical disabilities in physical education in Singapore: Perspectives of peers without disabilities</u>	SAGE Premier EBSCOhost SPORT Discus with Full Text SAGE Education Collection	The purpose of this study was to explore students' perspectives toward the enrollment and education of students with physical disabilities in their integrated PE classes.	Participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) study at a public primary or secondary school in Singapore; (b) identify as age 10 years or above; (c) identify as not having a disability; and (d) identify as able to answer the survey questions. There were 219 valid respondents.	Data was exported into a spreadsheet and were separated into two components: (a) a closed-ended component and (b) an open-ended component representing the reason why they selected the closed-ended response. Frequency counts were used for the closed-ended component.	The findings demonstrate the importance of peers' perspectives toward the enrollment of students with disabilities in integrated classes, and how unfavorable attitudes can still lead to poor experiences for those with disabilities.	The present study found that secondary school students expressed a more favorable perspective toward including peers with physical disabilities in general PE classes than primary ones. The finding is in disagreement with earlier research, in which an inverse relationship between age and attitude was found (Campos et al., 2014). The disagreement may be attributed to confounding factors that could potentially affect students' perspectives.
Dane-Staples, Emily; Lieberman, Lauren; Ratcliff, Jennifer; Rounds, Kala	<u>Bullying experiences of individuals with visual impairment: the mitigating role of sport participation</u>	EBSCOhost SPORTDiscus with Full Text	The purpose of the current work is to examine the frequency and types of bullying of those individuals with visual impairments experience.	Participants were forty-nine individuals with visual impairments ranging from legal blindness to total blindness and congenital loss as well as acquired loss. Each completed an in-person or telephone interview.	The constant comparative method was used to define the concepts from the transcribed interviews from both groups (Merriam, 1998). Athlete and non-athlete data were first explored independently and then explored as a collective population of individuals with visual impairments. Emergent themes for each were discovered, and significant outlier responses were noted	Bullying was found to be present in the experiences of the large majority of participants in this study. This data supports previous literature indicating that individuals with disabilities are often the target of bullying behaviors.	Both populations indicated that verbal attacks were most common. Name calling, teasing, and even verbal threats were mentioned. While physical attacks were less commonly mentioned. These responses support the broader definition of bullying that is now being used which includes verbal harassment

<p>Haegle, Justin A; Maher, Anthony J</p>	<p><u>Male autistic youth experiences of belonging in integrated physical education</u></p>	<p>SAGE Premier 2019 SAGE Education Collection</p>	<p>The study examined the subjective experiences of autistic youth regarding the role of peer interactions and relationships in feelings of belonging in integrated physical education classes.</p>	<p>Eight autistic youth (all male, aged 13–18 years) who had received most of their physical education in integrated classes acted as participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate qualitative data, which were analyzed using a reflexive thematic approach.</p>	<p>Reflexive thematic analysis approach, clustering together labels of sameness and similarity to establish initial themes. Interview transcripts were harvested to identify extracts that aligned to establish themes that may have been missed during the second step of the analysis.</p>	<p>Findings are presented in three themes: (a) bullying can lead to self-harm and self-isolation, (b) peer interactions and relationships in the locker room, and (c) peer relationships are based on shared interests and take time to develop.</p>	<p>If we accept <u>Baumeister and Leary's (1995)</u> claim that belonging is a fundamental human need, that is especially crucial for the well-being of youth (<u>Anderman, 2002</u>), it is noteworthy that our research found that that need is not being fulfilled in integrated PE for autistic youth. Specifically, PE as a subject and the locker room as a parallel and linked space are notably problematic for connecting with peers and developing a sense of belonging.</p>
<p>Nikki Hollett, Sheri J. Brock, Jessica R. Grimes & Brenna Cosgrove</p>	<p><u>Is knowledge really power? Characteristics contributing to social status during group work in physical education</u></p>	<p>EBSCOhost SPORT Discus with Full Text Taylor & Francis Social Science and Humanities Lib</p>	<p>Sought to find the characteristic that most highly contributed to a student's social status and social acceptance</p>	<p>Forty-six students and 2 classroom teachers filled out surveys based on social status, attractiveness, popularity, and perceived skill ability. A video determined actual skill ability, and a cognitive unit test determined cognitive ability (Hollett et. al., 2020). Additionally, students' sex, weight, and height were factored into the data analysis.</p>	<p>Sociometric data were analyzed to produce preliminary descriptive categorical results of status. After peer nomination surveys were collected, frequency of positive and negative nominations were calculated for each student to determine social rankings within the group. Results were then transferred to a sociogram, representing hierarchy within a target-like figure. Typically, the individual in the middle of the target demonstrates or exhibits the highest status within the group, with the individual furthest away from the middle classified</p>	<p>Researchers found that perceived skill ability and height were the only significant factors that predicted social status. Students who were taller and others had perceived their skill ability to be higher had a higher social status, while students who were shorter and others had perceived their skill ability to be lower had a lower social status.</p>	<p>Without considering the social status of students with disabilities, all students in PE had higher social status when they were perceived to be more athletic. This demonstrates how much emphasis society puts on individuals' athletic abilities and how athleticism can positively or negatively affect social acceptance of all students in PE.</p>

					as the lowest status. Using these targets, all four participants of the team were classified as higher status.		
Vitus Furrer; Stefan Valkanover; Michael Eckhart; Siegfried Nagel	<u>The Role of Teaching Strategies in Social Acceptance and Interactions: Considering Students With Intellectual Disabilities in Inclusive Physical Education</u>	DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals	This multilevel study explored the relations between the teaching strategies teaching cooperative skills and using individual reference norm orientation (IRNO), taking into consideration students' social acceptance and interactions in inclusive PE.	A cross-sectional study used quantitative student and PE teacher questionnaires, gathering more data than was used for this study. It was reasonable to decrease the wide heterogeneity of the group of students with SEN by limiting the sample to students with ID. 1,961 individuals took part	The values of the present study clearly indicate the necessity of applying multilevel analyses. And because the central goal of this study was to investigate cross-level interactions, multi-level analyses were conducted for both dependent variables.	The results showed that IRNO is positively related to social acceptance and positive interactions in inclusive PE, and the special educational need (SEN) status of children with ID moderated both relationships.	High IRNO of the PE teacher is positively related to higher social acceptance of the students and that the SEN status of children with ID positively moderated the relationship between the IRNO teaching strategy and both social acceptance and positive social interactions in inclusive PE in Switzerland's primary school classes
Haegle, Justin A; Wilson, Wesley J; Zhu, Xihe; Bueche, Justin J; Brady, Ellie; Li, Chunxiao	<u>Barriers and facilitators to inclusion in integrated physical education: Adapted physical educators' perspectives</u>	SAGE Premier 2019 SAGE Education Collection	The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore certified adapted physical educators' (CAPEs') perspectives on barriers and facilitators to students with disabilities experiencing inclusion in integrated physical education.	A sample of 99 CAPEs across the United States provided valid responses to an online survey form. Guided by the established two-step coding protocol, two independent reviewers coded the responses to open-ended questions.	A two-step data coding protocol was adopted in this study. Codes were grouped into seven categories.	Codes related to programmatic or equipment-related factors were underreported, suggesting that even in integrated physical education classes where adapted equipment and personnel support are available, inclusive experience may not be.	These findings suggest the inclusiveness of integrated physical education is complex and influenced by numerous factors.

<p>Tanure Alves, Maria Luiza; van Munster, Mey A.; Alves, Isabella dos Santos; Souza, Joslei Viana de</p>	<p><u>The 'normal' physical education classes: the ableism facing the inclusion of disabled students</u></p>	<p>Taylor & Francis Social Science and Humanities Lib</p>	<p>The study aims to understand the ableism facing the presence of disabled students in physical education (PE) classes.</p>	<p>Through a study with an exploratory qualitative design, we captured the inclusion (or lack thereof) of disabled students through the perspectives of 3 PE teachers who participated in this study over one school year. The teachers completed a weekly reflective journal with field notes, and participated in two focus group interviews, which were assessed using the content analysis technique. Three PE teachers</p>	<p>The focus group interviews, and reflective journals were treated/processed using the content analysis technique (Saldana 2009). This process consisted of the recognition, codification, and classification of information into larger thematic categories for the understanding of the study object.</p>	<p>Our findings underscore the difficulty encountered in the inclusion of disabled students because it is considered a counterpoint to what is believed to be PE. A comprehensive change in perspectives regarding the understanding of disability and normativity is required.</p>	<p>Disability needs to be regarded in education not as a difference but as a critical part of the human condition. The difference between students must be recognized and valued in a creative way, promoting cooperation and interdependence rather than competition and radical individualism (Erevelles, 2005). Education for all, built on the pillars of inclusion, aims to eliminate all forms of oppression first.</p>
<p>Healy, Seán; Msetfi, Rachel; Gallagher, Stephen</p>	<p><u>Happy and a bit Nervous': the experiences of children with autism in physical education</u></p>	<p>EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete</p>	<p>The purpose of this study was to assess the good and bad experiences of autistic students in PE class.</p>	<p>A sampling strategy was used to recruit the 12 students with autistic spectrum disorder into this study. Participants were recruited through a week-long summer camp held in the south-west of Ireland for</p>	<p>Initial codes were then made, identifying interesting features of the data, collating data relevant to each code. The researchers then returned to the data sets and reviewed codes and themes again. It was decided that four themes should be collapsed into three themes to provide a</p>	<p>The first theme, individual challenges, was comprised of physical ability, sensory challenges and a fear of injury. The second theme, peer interactions, encapsulated subthemes of initiation of friendship, camaraderie, social comparison and bullying. The final</p>	<p>Most notably, however, this theme relates to children requesting to be excluded. These findings are discussed in relation to research on the perspectives of students with and without disabilities. Considerations for future research are also provided</p>

				children with autistic spectrum disorders. The interview protocol was flexible and responsive to participant preferences to promote comfort (King 2009). Two children opted to have their parents present during the interview. Interviews were audio-recorded.	more accurate and data-driven	theme that emerged from the data was exclusion, which attends to children’s experiences of being excluded by the teacher or as a result of activities being too difficult	
Pellerin, Sarah; Wilson, Wesley J.; Haegele, Justin A.	<u>The experiences of students with disabilities in self-contained physical education</u>	SPORT Discus with Full Text Taylor & Francis Social Science and Humanities Library	The purpose was to explore the subjective experiences of a diverse cast of students with disabilities in self-contained physical education.	This study explored the perspectives of a group of 20 students with disabilities, aged seven through 20, enrolled in heterogenous self-contained physical education across eight public schools. Data collection included individual semi-structured interviews, drawings, and researcher notes.	A three-step inductive thematic analysis, free textual analysis to identify and comment upon data units, cross-case analysis was used to examine and describe the collective experiences across participants, and resulted in the final thematic structure that was presented in the findings.	A three-step inductive thematic analysis revealed three primary themes: (a) importance of friendship for most, (b) interests in specific sports, and (c) most enjoyed self-contained settings.	This contrasts with prior research examining integrated physical education settings, as students with disabilities have reported a number of challenges associated with the discriminatory nature of interactions with their physical education teachers. Participants in the current study appeared to have positive experiences with their adapted physical education endorsed teachers, who provided activities that were viewed as favorable and accommodating.
Bredahl, Anne-Mette	<u>Sitting and watching the others being active:</u>	SPORT Discus with Full Text	The purpose of the study was to explore participants’	The experience of participation in physical activity was explored in a	The interviews were analyzed applying an existential-	The participants with relatively minor degrees of disability and with the least visible	The negative experiences were centered in these common themes: experiences of not being included, experiences of

	<p><u>the experienced difficulties in PE when having a disability</u></p>		<p>experiences of participation in physical activity, not focusing on any particular arena for activity.</p>	<p>qualitative study with 20 Norwegian adults with physical and visual disabilities. The interviews showed that more than 75% of negative experiences reported in this study originated from physical education (PE), suggesting that this was a particularly challenging arena.</p>	<p>phenomenological approach.</p>	<p>disabilities were the ones who most often reported negative experiences regarding PE. This suggests the experiences were not generated solely by the actual physical or sensory limitations, but equally by how well the participants' challenges were understood by their teachers and to what degree adaptations were implemented.</p>	<p>failing, and experiences of not being listened to. As stated, the participants did all recall particular positive experiences with participation in physical activity (Bredahl & Spinelli, 2012). The fact that none of those originated from PE, however, might indicate that a context like PE tends to leave less room for experiences of "feeling capable" and of "surpassing limitation," at least for participants with disabilities.</p>
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