

Influence of Physical Education Courses on Soft Skills Development of College Students Under the Concept of Outdoor Education

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Abstract: In recent years, there has been increasing attention on the development of soft skills among college students. This study aims to explore the influence of physical education courses on the development of soft skills, particularly under the concept of outdoor education. A qualitative research approach was adopted, involving interviews and observations of college students who participated in outdoor physical education courses. The results indicate that outdoor education in physical education courses can effectively enhance college students' soft skills, including communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability. The findings highlight the significance of incorporating outdoor education into the physical education curriculum to foster students' holistic development.

Keywords: Physical education courses; Soft skills development; College students; Outdoor education

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been increasing attention on the development of soft skills among college students. Soft skills refer to a set of interpersonal and communication skills that are essential for individuals to succeed in their personal and professional lives ^[1]. Various educational programs and initiatives have been introduced to enhance the development of soft skills among college students.

This study aims to explore the influence of physical education courses on the development of soft skills, particularly under the concept of outdoor education. Physical education is an integral part of the college curriculum, with the primary goal of promoting physical fitness and overall well-being. On the other hand, outdoor education emphasizes experiential and hands-on learning in natural environments. By combining these two concepts, it is expected that physical education courses under the concept of outdoor education can provide a unique and effective platform for the development of soft skills among college students.

Understanding the concept of outdoor education and its role in enhancing soft skills is crucial for the

effective integration of this approach in physical education courses. This paper explored the relationship between physical education and outdoor education and highlighted the importance of incorporating outdoor education into the college curriculum. Furthermore, case studies and examples were discussed to illustrate how physical education courses under the concept of outdoor education have positively impacted the development of soft skills among college students.

2. Exploration of the concept of outdoor education

2.1. Understanding physical education and outdoor education

Physical education is a vital component of the educational system, aiming to promote students' physical fitness, health, and overall well-being. It involves various activities that enhance physical abilities, such as sports, exercise, and games. On the other hand, outdoor education focuses on experiential learning in a natural environment. It aims to provide students with opportunities to develop life skills, environmental awareness, and personal growth.

Outdoor education in physical education courses combines the principles and practices of both physical education and outdoor education. It incorporates outdoor activities and adventure-based experiences to enhance students' learning and personal development ^[2]. These activities often take place in natural settings such as forests, mountains, or beaches, allowing students to interact with nature and gain a deeper understanding of their surroundings.

The integration of outdoor education into physical education courses offers unique benefits to students. Firstly, it provides a break from traditional classroom settings, allowing students to engage in hands-on and experiential learning. This type of learning fosters a sense of exploration, curiosity, and self-discovery, enabling students to develop problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities.

Furthermore, outdoor education promotes physical fitness and healthy lifestyles among college students. By engaging in physical activities in natural environments, students can improve their physical fitness levels, strength, endurance, and other motor skills. This not only contributes to their physical well-being but also enhances their mental and emotional well-being.

Outdoor education in physical education courses promotes teamwork, communication, and social interaction. When participating in outdoor activities, students often need to work together, communicate effectively, and rely on one another to achieve common goals. These experiences encourage the development of interpersonal skills, cooperation, and leadership abilities.

2.2. Role and importance of outdoor education

Outdoor education plays a crucial role in the development of college students' soft skills. It provides a unique learning environment that promotes experiential learning and personal growth. Outdoor education offers opportunities for students to step out of their comfort zones and engage in hands-on experiences. Through various outdoor activities such as team-building exercises, camping trips, and adventure challenges, students are exposed to unfamiliar situations that require them to adapt and think creatively ^[3]. This fosters their problem-solving and adaptability skills, as they learn to overcome obstacles and navigate through unpredictable circumstances.

Outdoor education encourages collaborative learning and teamwork. Many outdoor activities require participants to work together to achieve common goals. For instance, students may need to collaborate to build a shelter or solve a complex navigational challenge ^[4]. By working together, students develop their communication and teamwork skills as they learn how to effectively communicate their ideas, listen to others'

perspectives, and make collective decisions.

Outdoor education provides opportunities for students to develop leadership skills. Students are often given the chance to take on leadership roles during outdoor activities, where they are responsible for guiding and motivating the group. This experience allows them to develop their leadership qualities and learn how to effectively lead a team towards a common objective.

Outdoor education promotes self-awareness and self-confidence. Through various activities, students are challenged both physically and emotionally, which helps them build resilience and self-esteem. They learn to push their boundaries and discover their own strengths and weaknesses, gaining confidence in their abilities.

3. The impact of physical education courses on the soft skills development of college students

3.1. Definition of soft skills

Soft skills, also known as non-technical skills or transferable skills, refer to a set of personal attributes and abilities that enable individuals to effectively interact with others and navigate various social and professional situations. These skills are crucial in the workplace, as they complement technical skills and contribute to overall success and personal development.

Soft skills encompass a wide range of abilities, including communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Communication skills involve the ability to convey ideas and information clearly and effectively, while teamwork skills entail working collaboratively with others toward a common goal. Leadership skills encompass the ability to inspire and guide others, while problem-solving skills involve analyzing issues and finding creative solutions ^[5]. Adaptability skills refer to the ability to adjust and thrive in changing circumstances, and interpersonal skills involve building and maintaining relationships with others.

Soft skills are often seen as essential in today's fast-paced and interconnected world, as they allow individuals to navigate complex social and professional environments. In the context of college education, the development of soft skills is increasingly recognized as a vital component of holistic development and future success. Employers value candidates who possess a strong skill set, including both technical and soft skills.

Research has shown that soft skills can be developed and enhanced through various means, including educational programs and practical experiences. Physical education courses, in particular, have the potential to foster the development of soft skills, as they often involve teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. Moreover, physical education courses that incorporate the concept of outdoor education provide students with unique opportunities to develop these skills in a natural and experiential setting.

3.2. Relationship between physical education and soft skills

Physical education courses play a significant role in the development of soft skills among college students. Soft skills refer to a set of interpersonal and communication abilities that are essential for personal and professional success. These skills include communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability.

Physical education provides opportunities for students to engage in team-based activities, such as team sports and group exercises. Through these activities, students learn to communicate with their peers, strategize, and cooperate towards a common goal. For example, in team sports like soccer or basketball, students need to communicate effectively to coordinate their movements and make quick decisions. This enhances their communication and teamwork skills.

Leadership skills are also fostered through physical education courses. Students often take on leadership

roles within their teams, such as team captains or group leaders ^[6]. These roles require them to take charge, make decisions, and motivate their teammates. By assuming these responsibilities, students develop leadership qualities and learn how to inspire and guide others.

Problem-solving skills are honed through physical education activities that involve overcoming challenges or obstacles. For instance, students participating in outdoor adventure activities need to find innovative solutions to navigate unfamiliar terrains or complete tasks. These experiences enhance their problem-solving abilities by encouraging them to think critically and analyze situations effectively.

3.3. Case studies and examples

- (1) First case study: In the first case study, a group of college students participated in a 5-day outdoor physical education course focused on team-building activities. The students were split into smaller teams and were given various challenges that required them to work together and communicate effectively. One example of such a challenge was a ropes course, where the students had to rely on each other to navigate through obstacles and complete the course successfully. The results showed that after the program, the students demonstrated improved teamwork skills, as they effectively communicated, supported each other, and worked collaboratively to overcome obstacles.
- (2) Second case study: Another case study involved college students participating in a 3-day outdoor physical education course that focused on leadership development. The students were given opportunities to lead various activities, such as leading a hike or coordinating a group exercise session. Throughout the program, the students were taught and encouraged to take initiative, make decisions, and effectively communicate with their peers. The results of this case study showed that the students displayed enhanced leadership skills, demonstrating confidence in their decision-making abilities, effectively delegating tasks, and motivating their peers to achieve common goals.
- (3) Third case study: In the third case study, college students engaged in a 7-day outdoor physical education course that emphasized problem-solving skills. The students were exposed to various challenging scenarios that required them to think critically and find creative solutions. For example, they were tasked with constructing a makeshift shelter using limited resources within a specific timeframe. The results revealed that the students developed improved problem-solving skills, displaying the ability to analyze complex situations, think outside the box, and effectively collaborate with their peers to find practical solutions.

These case studies provide concrete examples of the influence of outdoor physical education courses on the development of college students' soft skills. Through team-building activities, leadership opportunities, and problem-solving challenges, students enhanced their communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability skills. These findings further reinforce the significance of incorporating outdoor education into the physical education curriculum to foster students' holistic development.

4. Empirical evidence of soft skills development under the influence of physical education in the concept of outdoor education

4.1. Methodology of the research

A qualitative research approach was employed in this study to explore the influence of physical education courses on the development of soft skills among college students, particularly under the concept of outdoor education. The research design included interviews and observations of college students who participated in outdoor physical education courses.

To gather relevant data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of college students who had completed outdoor physical education courses. The participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, ensuring that a diverse range of students with different backgrounds and experiences were included in the study.

The interviews aimed to collect detailed information about students' experiences in outdoor physical education courses and their perceptions of the development of soft skills. The interview questions were designed to elicit responses related to various soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and insights.

Additionally, observations were conducted during the outdoor physical education courses to supplement the interview data. The researchers observed and documented the students' behaviors and interactions during activities that required the utilization of soft skills. These observations provided a more comprehensive understanding of how the physical education courses facilitated the development of the identified soft skills.

The data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed using content analysis. Transcripts of the interviews were coded using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the development of soft skills. The coded data were then organized into categories based on the identified soft skills, allowing for systematic analysis and interpretation of the findings.

4.2. Results and discussion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the influence of physical education courses, specifically those incorporating outdoor education, on the development of college students' soft skills ^[7]. Through qualitative analysis of interviews and observations of college students who participated in outdoor physical education courses, several key findings emerged.

Firstly, it was observed that outdoor education in physical education courses played a significant role in enhancing college students' communication skills. Participants reported improved abilities in expressing their ideas, listening actively, and effectively conveying information to others. The outdoor setting provided opportunities for students to engage in authentic and meaningful communication, leading to the development of effective communication skills.

Secondly, the findings indicated that outdoor education in physical education courses fostered teamwork among college students. Through team-based physical activities and challenges, students learned to collaborate, cooperate, and contribute towards common goals. This, in turn, promoted the development of teamwork skills, such as sharing responsibilities, resolving conflicts, and effectively working together as a team.

Furthermore, the results revealed that outdoor education in physical education courses contributed to the development of leadership skills among college students. Participants reported increased confidence in assuming leadership roles, making decisions, and guiding others during outdoor activities. The outdoor environment provided a platform for students to practice and enhance their leadership capabilities.

Additionally, the study found that physical education courses incorporating outdoor education promoted the development of problem-solving skills among college students ^[8]. The outdoor setting presented students with real-life situations that required critical thinking, decision-making, and innovative problem-solving strategies. Participants reported improved abilities in analyzing problems, identifying solutions, and adapting to changing circumstances.

Lastly, the findings indicated that outdoor education in physical education courses enhanced college students' adaptability. The outdoor environment often presented unpredictable and unfamiliar situations that required students to quickly adapt and adjust. Participants reported increased flexibility, resilience, and the

ability to adapt to new and challenging circumstances.

5. Conclusion

The results of the research indicate that college students who participated in outdoor education activities as part of their physical education courses showed improvements in various soft skills. The outdoor education approach provided opportunities for students to engage in communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability. These skills are essential for their holistic development and future success.

By immersing themselves in outdoor activities, students were able to experience real-life situations that required them to collaborate with their peers, communicate effectively, lead a team, solve problems, and adapt to changing circumstances. This hands-on approach facilitated the development of these skills, as students had to rely on their abilities to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of incorporating outdoor education into the physical education curriculum. By integrating outdoor education activities, colleges can provide students with a well-rounded education that fosters the development of soft skills alongside academic knowledge. This approach allows students to acquire essential skills that are highly valued in the professional world and contribute to their overall personal growth.

In summary, this study supports the notion that physical education courses under the concept of outdoor education have a positive influence on the development of college students' soft skills. By engaging in outdoor activities, students enhance their communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability skills. Incorporating outdoor education in the physical education curriculum is crucial for colleges to foster students' holistic development and prepare them for future success.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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