

PEDAGOGY

Dual Undergraduate Majors of Health and Physical Education: Do They Have the Same Passion for Both Subject Areas?

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Abstract

Little is known about the passion of health and physical education preservice teachers. Being passionate about your content areas is crucial to effective teaching, so do dual-enrolled students have the same passion for health and physical education? This study aimed to collect and compare data on undergraduate dual majors' passion for physical education and health education. An electronic survey was given to dual majors across the United States based on the passion scale created by Sigmundson et al. (2020). Responses from participants revealed that undergraduate dual majors have a significantly higher passion for physical education than health education. These findings show that more research needs to be done to eliminate this possible gap in passion so that students graduating from a health and physical education program are effective teachers in both content areas. Universities may want to determine if their preparatory programs are curating quality, passionate educators who are suited to teach both subject areas.

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Introduction

“Passion can be defined as a strong feeling toward a value or preference that motivates intentions and behaviors to express that certain value or preference” (Sigmundsson et al., 2020, p. 2). In education, passion is a crucial component for effective teaching and the longevity of teachers in the profession. Some research has been conducted regarding passion in current physical education teachers (Castillo et al., 2017), but there’s little about the preservice teachers of the future. Regarding health education or the dual health and physical education (HPE) degree, passion levels are unknown, and little to no research has been done about these topics.

Studies have found that physical education teachers show high passion for their subject and low levels of perceived burnout (Castillo et al., 2017). This could result from programs focusing mainly on physical education in their dual HPE programs. Also, in current teachers, it has been found that the more teaching experience a teacher has attained, the more passion they have regarding their profession (Prates et al., 2019). However, are those pursuing their degree in this field passionate about health and physical education? This study hopes to scope out data that can attest to the passion levels of undergraduate dual HPE students.

We need to look at undergraduate students because they are the building blocks for this profession. If they don’t have passion, then as universities, we are not developing quality, passionate teachers who can go into education systems. The COVID-19 pandemic faced teachers with the challenge of having their PE curriculums completely virtual, which has resulted in less fondness for the profession (González-Calvo et al., 2022). This is placing a much bigger significance on curating passionate teachers and preparing them for challenges in their future profession during their undergraduate degree. Overall, this study is looking to collect data on current levels of passion in the dual health and physical education programs, as there are minimal studies on this topic.

Methods

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in a dual health and physical education degree program at their respective universities. The participants were over the age of 19 and of any sex/gender.

Instrumentation

The passion scale created by Sigmundson et al. (2020) aims to quantify passion related to becoming proficient in an area or skill. Findings from Sigmundson et al. (2020) showed that the passion scale was found to be both reliable (intra-class correlation coefficients $>.53$) and valid ($\alpha=.86$). Using the passion scale, the questionnaire consisted of eight modified passion scale questions regarding physical education and eight modified passion scale question regarding health education. Participants were asked to rate their passion on a five-point scale ranging from “Not at all like me” (1) to “Very much like me” (5). Included with these Likert-scale questions, the questionnaire had four demographic questions.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through an email invitation forwarded via their department chair. The email included a link to the survey along with information related to the study, including the rights of the participants and the ability to exclude themselves from the survey at any time. Demographic or identifying information was aggregated in reports to protect the participants' privacy. Subjects were asked to complete a closed-format survey through Qualtrics that assessed their passion for their dual major. After successfully completing the survey, participants were provided with a link to provide their information to enter a random drawing for a \$10 gift card. If a student answered at the beginning of the survey that they were a graduate student or not currently enrolled in both health education and physical education, they were immediately exited from the survey.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic variables and passion scale items. Because there was a small sample size, a Shapiro-Wilk test was performed and showed that the distribution of all variables departed significantly from normality (p -value < 0.01). Therefore, non-parametric tests such as the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test were used to compare physical education and health education passion scales.

Results

A total of 59 participants responded. Health and physical education undergraduate majors were asked for a few demographic details (Figures 1-4). The majority of respondents were freshmen (36%), from the Northeast (34%), and Caucasian (86%).

When looking at the results of the passion scale, all means for passion regarding physical education were higher than passion for health education (Table 1). A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test reported that there was a significant difference in passion between health education and physical education ($Z = -4.669, -2.706, p < .008$), with students having more passion for physical education in all areas of the passion scale (Table 2). The passion between health education and physical education did not vary by geographical region, gender, class standing, or ethnicity.

Discussion

This is the first study to look at the passion of students who are concurrently majoring in health and physical education. This exploratory study found that passion among dual majors is significantly higher in the physical education area. This is a substantial finding because these majors will go on to be licensed to teach both health education and physical education, and we want them to excel in teaching both areas. However, we do not know the reasons behind the higher passion in physical education. This gap could be a result of preparation programs focusing on physical education more than health education, and therefore, students feel more prepared to teach physical education. Universities should examine their dual

programs to ensure students are given enough preparation courses in both areas of study.

Even though more freshmen took the survey, there was no difference in passion by class standing, so we cannot conclude that freshmen haven't had any health or other major courses yet. The lower passion for health education was evident in all class standings. The largest difference in passion was "I work hard enough to do well in my (health or physical) education courses." More research is needed to examine why dual majors do not put as much effort into their health courses as physical education courses.

The findings of this study once again raise the question of whether health education and physical education should be their own entities or should we continue to try to bridge the gap between the two areas? Are students who are interested in physical education just adding to the health education area to make themselves more marketable, but don't really want to teach that subject area?

Future Implications

While the findings of this study may leave us with more questions than answers, this is a good starting point for examining health and physical education professional preparation programs. Universities should advocate more for health education and the importance of this content area. Current health and physical education teachers should also be surveyed on the passion scale to see if experience in the field helps lessen the gap between passion for health education and physical education.

Limitations

Due to snowball sampling (depending on department chairs to email the survey to their students), we had a lower response rate than expected. Therefore, this study cannot be generalized to all undergraduate dual majors. The survey was in a closed format; additional information was not elicited and may have kept students from providing important information related to their passion for physical education and health education.

Figure 1
Demographics by Class

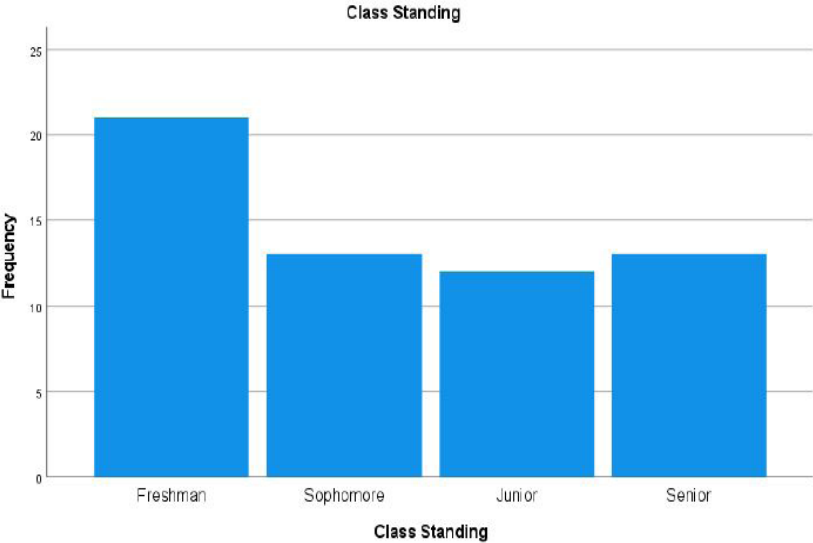


Figure 2
Demographics by Geographical Region

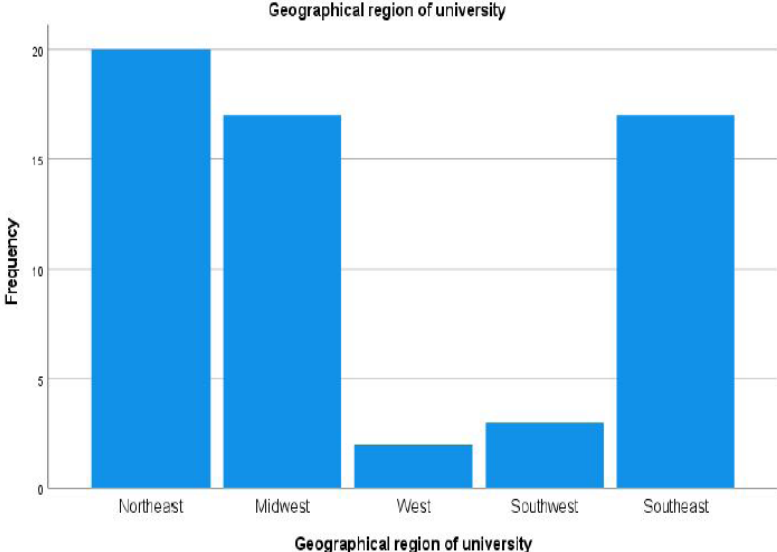


Figure 3
Demographics by Ethnicity

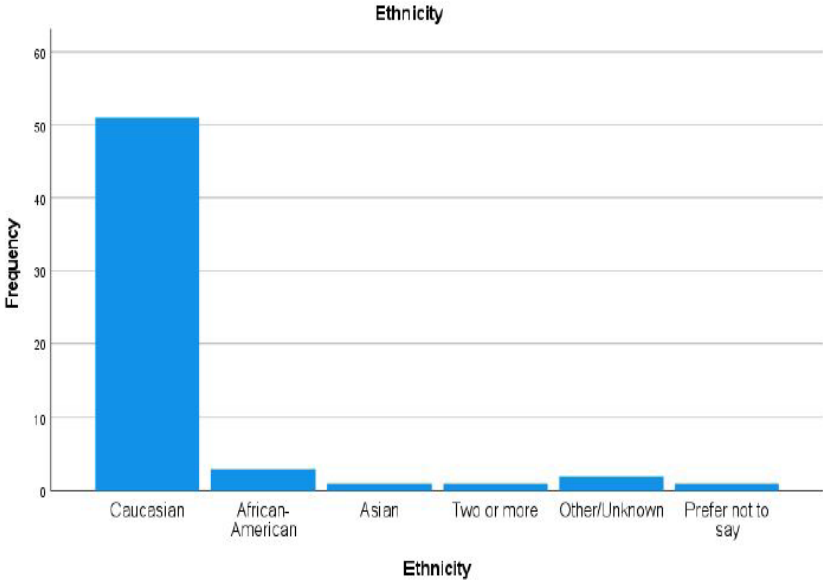


Figure 4
Demographics by Gender

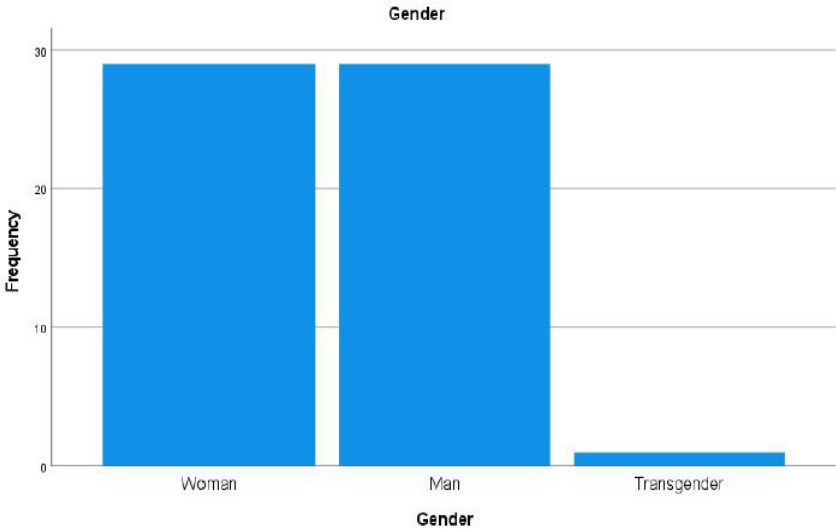


Table 1
Passion Scale Means

	Physical Education Mean	Health Education Mean
I have an area of _____ education I am really passionate about	4.45	4.04
I would like to use a lot of time to become good in teaching _____ education	4.48	4.15
I think I could be an expert in _____ education	4.36	3.97
I have passion enough to become very good in teaching _____ education	4.71	4.25
I work hard enough to do well in my _____ education courses	4.84	4.35
I have a burning passion for _____ education	4.45	3.88
I spend a lot of time on _____ education projects/assignments	4.34	4.02
My passion for _____ education is important for me	4.71	4.13

Table 2
Comparison of Passion of Health Education and PE

	Health Education	Physical Education	Health Education	Physical Education	Health Education	Physical Education	Health Education	Physical Education
I have an area of health education I am really passionate about	4.04	4.45	I would like to use a lot of time to become good in teaching health education.	4.15	4.48	I think I could be an expert in _____ education	3.97	4.36
- I have an area of physical education I am really passionate about	4.04	4.45	- I would like to use a lot of time to become good in teaching physical education.	4.15	4.48	- I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36
I have passion enough to become very good in teaching health education	4.25	4.71	I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	I have passion enough to become very good in teaching physical education	4.25	4.71
- I have passion enough to become very good in teaching health education	4.25	4.71	- I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	- I have passion enough to become very good in teaching physical education	4.25	4.71
I work hard enough to do well in my health education courses	4.35	4.84	I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	I work hard enough to do well in my health education courses	4.35	4.84
- I work hard enough to do well in my physical education courses	4.35	4.84	- I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	- I work hard enough to do well in my physical education courses	4.35	4.84
I have a burning passion for _____ education	3.88	4.45	I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	I have a burning passion for _____ education	3.88	4.45
- I have a burning passion for _____ education	3.88	4.45	- I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	- I have a burning passion for _____ education	3.88	4.45
I spend a lot of time on health education projects/assignments - I My passion for health education is important for me.	4.02	4.34	I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	I spend a lot of time on health education projects/assignments - I My passion for health education is important for me.	4.02	4.34
- I spend a lot of time on physical education projects/assignments - I My passion for physical education is important for me.	4.02	4.34	- I think I could be an expert in physical education	3.97	4.36	- I spend a lot of time on physical education projects/assignments - I My passion for physical education is important for me.	4.02	4.34
Z	-2.706 ^b	-2.873 ^b	-2.651 ^b	-3.666 ^b	-4.669 ^b	-3.792 ^b	-2.876 ^b	-3.976 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.004	.008	<.001	<.001	<.001	.004	<.001

References

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