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**Attitude and Perception of College of Distance Education Students towards the learning of Physical Education in Ghana.**

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**Abstract**

The body of knowledge about the students` attitude and perception towards Physical Education and Physical Activity has increased in recent times. Despite this notion, some students have negative perceptions about the subject. The current study aims to investigate the College of Distance Education students` attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of Physical Education in Ghana. The study further assessed the factors which influence students` attitudes as well as how students can develop positive attitudes towards Physical Education.

The study involved twenty-six (26) students made up of 14 males and 12 females with an average age of 28 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed thematically. Findings from the study revealed that the students showed satisfactory interest and valued the subject as other academic subjects such as Mathematics. Although Physical Education plays a significant role in every individual, certain factors affect the study of the subject.

In this regard, the results further unveiled that, loaded nature of the (PE) content, tutors` inability to teach the practical topics on the field, and inadequate teaching and learning materials make students dislike the subject. Therefore, the College of Distance Education Curriculum Planners and Authorities should help divide the content into two parts to be studied in two semesters to ensure easy and effective learning of the subject. In furtherance of that, adequate teaching and learning materials should be provided to encourage tutors to teach both the theory and practical topics at all times.

*Keywords:* attitude, college of distance education, perception, physical education, students

## **Introduction**

Over the past two decades, there has been a tremendous increase in the body of knowledge about the attitudes of young people towards physical education (PE) and physical activity (PA) participation (Zeng, Wang & Wang, 2016). According to Basterfield et al. (2014), Physical Education is a unique programme in the school curriculum that helps boosts the immune system; promote the physical and mental health of an individual, and therefore considered atonality for the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles among people (Morgan & Hanson, 2008). Physical Education activities contribute many benefits to the physical well-being of an individual. Research posits that the subject of physical education is an academic discipline that helps students to acquire skills, knowledge, and right attitudes towards the pursuit of life long physically active, and healthy lifestyle (Colquitt, Walker & Longdon, 2008).

Despite the numerous benefits, students` negative attitudes towards (PE) make them develop a low interest in the subject and therefore, do not partake in physical education programmes to attain a healthy lifestyle. Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of children in the United States of America who are overweight and have developed other health-related risks such as hypertension and obesity due to a decline in the participation of physical

education programmes in the school (Morgan & Hanson, 2008). Similarly, Irwin (2007) concludes that 65% of Canadian College students could not maintain their amount of physical activity that is necessary to achieve health benefits. The researcher maintained that students do not have enough interest in the subject and therefore lack the ability and willingness to exercise to achieve health benefits.

This notwithstanding, (PE) programmes are the only opportunity that students have to engage themselves in physical activity which helps to maintain the physical and the general health of an individual (Morgan, Beighle, & Pangrazi, 2007; Pate, Ward, O'Neill, & Dowda, 2007). Hence, there is a need to design interventions and strategies to help students to develop positive attitudes towards (PE). This will enable students to do more physical activities and exercise to achieve physical and mental health benefits.

### **Literature Review**

According to Alvarez-Bueno et al. (2017), physically active students have higher levels of academic motivation; therefore, students' attitudes towards (PE) may influence their learning and participation in (PE) at school as well as organized sports outside school (Kjønniksen, Fjøltoft, & Wold, 2009). However, inculcating moral values and skills among students towards physical education will ensure their continuous involvement in physical activities (Rickard & Banville, 2006). When students learn physical education, they develop interest and use their leisure time judiciously by engaging in physical education programmes. Through this, students will be able to improve their physical activity and exercise routine due to the physical education studied (Nahas, Goldfine & Collins, 2003). Since physical education enables students to develop positive attitudes towards physical activity, there is a need to alter students' behaviour in such activities and programmes to have a sound mind and healthy body to study (Rickard & Banville, 2006). Besides, attitude guides behaviour and it is an important factor in the students' inner and external motivation in the process of learning (Barney & Christenson, 2012).

Student's attitudes towards (PE) could be influenced by the previous skills, knowledge, and experience in physical education, the teacher, content, facilities, and equipment (Gouveia et al. 2019). The researchers hypothesized that if students learn physical education and developed enjoyable physical activity experiences, they would have a more positive attitude towards (PE). In contrast, some factors undermine the teaching and learning (PE) and for that matter may affect students` attitudes and perceptions towards the subject. According to Hardman (2009), factors such as teaching and learning materials, facilities, curriculum, the teacher, classroom atmosphere, and self-perception influence students` attitudes and behaviours during physical education lessons. Despite this, to be able to know why students have low interest in the subject and do not partake in physical activities, should call for certain strategies and plans to curtail the situation.

Nonetheless, scholars and researchers argue that physical activity and health-related behaviours could be changed through positive attitudes and interventions towards physical education programmes (Wilkins,2010). Hunuk and Demirhan (2010) asserted that students who partake in physical education activities show more positive attitudes to the programme. As a result, physical education teachers should help students to develop their physical education skills and encourage them to do exercises to achieve health benefits. This is because the teacher creates opportunities for purposeful dialogue and optimize their practice in various ways to meet and exceed their learning objectives so that they can become better acquainted with their students and build trusting relationships in the learning process (Koslow, 1998).

Although teachers possess some characteristics such as friendliness and intellectual skills which make students like and believe them in the learning processes, their unfriendly behaviour makes students dislike them (Ryan, Fleming & Maima,2003). This, therefore, provides good reasons why college of distance students should have good intentions for physical education

lessons as it can positively influence their physical, mental, social, and the general health of their lives. On the other hand, students like the physical education curriculum if they could be with their friends and play some sports or games (Tannehill and Zakraisek, 1993), and enjoy the variety of activities they participate in (Rickard & Banville, 2006). Rickard and Banville (2006) maintained that, when students see to it that they have learned some sport skills in (PE), they will be able to apply it perfectly everywhere they go since they have acquired a lot of knowledge and experience in that particular game. This aids the students with the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and how they are applicable in the nearby future.

In Ghana, people's attitudes and perceptions towards physical education are very low. The subject has suffered its declination due to certain attitudes and perceptions from both teachers and learners which includes; (PE) is just playing and it involves only physical activities (Ammah & Kwaw, 2005). Owing to this reason, some high institutions offered it as a programme at Diploma, Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. levels. This has been instituted to help boost the knowledge and acquisition of skills in particular areas of sports and physical education. This notwithstanding, the government in his implementation of the curriculum has made emphasis on the compulsory teaching of physical education in basic schools.

Despite the emphasis, while the subject has been given minimum attention in the basic schools because it is not examinable at that level (Sofu & Asola, 2016), it is examinable at the tertiary levels (Colleges of education and the Universities). Though it is examinable, students do not pay much attention to it when learning at the college level because of the mentality of not being examinable at the basic school and therefore find it difficult when teaching in the basic schools after completion (Opoku, 2020). Because of this, the focus of this present study is on the students of (CoDE) because this is where the researcher is teaching (PE) for the past eight (8) years, and these students are being trained to go out and teach in the basic schools. Although

there are many courses studied at the college which include Mathematics, English, Physical Education, and Science, the students prefer some to others. The researcher observed that sometimes students leave the Physical Education lecture room with the permission of answering a phone call outside or visit the urinal, but do not return. In some cases, students do not come to lectures at all without reasons. Also, some students speculate that the (PE) content is packed and loaded to be completed in only one semester period.

Even though some students do not attend the (PE) lectures, there are some who regularly and punctually come at all times. It is on this note that the researcher would like to inquire from the students, why they behave that way to find out their attitudes towards the learning of (PE). Therefore, the present study seeks to find the students` attitudes and perceptions towards physical education, the factors which affect their attitudes, and how students can develop positive attitudes towards the learning of physical education.

Research indicates that, when dealing with studies involving attitudes and intentions, ‘Theory of Reasoned Action’ is very useful (Zeng, 2012). The theory propounded by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) explains further to support the current study and to explain how and why students` negative attitudes can be influenced by positive intentions. The theory asserts that human action is determined by the intention that is influenced by attitudes and social norms. To elucidate further, the theory of Reasoned Action posits that attitudes do influence behaviour. Regardless, researchers in the field of (PE) studying students` attitudes towards the subject use it with the hope of enhancing students’ interest in physical education (Zeng, Wang & Wang, 2016).

The theory in the current study implies that students who have positive attitudes towards (PE) and do participate in (PE) lessons will be influenced in the future to apply it where ever they go. Although the theory of reasoned action has been influential, some researchers criticize it not to be a hundred percent (100%) good. Greve (2001) and Ogden (2003) contend that because

a theory needs to be falsifiable, then it is not a good theory, regardless of how many researchers believe it to be useful. Therefore, it is necessary to specify not only the theory but also a set of auxiliary assumptions to combine with the theory.

Nonetheless, the theory of reasoned action has been used by many researchers such as Dunlavy (2008) and Zeng (2012). The researchers hypothesized that teachers' behaviours, contents of the curriculum, class atmosphere, dressing out, self-perception, and quality of the PE program possess enormous impacts on students' attitudes toward Physical Education. Similarly, Zeng, Wang, and Wang (2016) confirmed that factors such as physically fit and strong, good body shape, and feeling about (PE) class had more impacts on students' attitudes towards (PE) lessons. This determines that attitudes of students affect the way they behave and how they lead their lives towards learning in school or outside school. Therefore, this theory is significant as students will identify deficiencies with the way they should lead their lives and behave towards an activity which in turn influences their behaviours.

In Ghana studies and literature on students' attitudes towards learning (PE) are limited compared to other subjects. While there have been many studies into students' attitudes toward Physical Education at the basic school level, far fewer studies have been conducted at the tertiary level. Meanwhile, studies on students' attitudes and perceptions have focused on other subject areas like English and Social Studies. For instance, Akurugu (2010) studied students' attitudes and perceptions toward the learning of the English Language while Mensah (2019) worked on the students' attitudes towards the learning of Social Studies.

Therefore, this study is a novel one in the area of students' attitudes and perceptions towards (PE) learning in the College of Distance Education. The present study will therefore add knowledge to the body of literature in physical education and also remind, and inform policymakers, implementers, educators, teachers, and students of the impact the subject (PE)

have on the individuals and the need to give maximum attention to (PE), and also develop positive attitudes towards the subject.

The following are the research questions for the study:

- 1 What attitude and perception do students have towards the learning of Physical Education in the College of Distance Education?
- 2 What are the factors that affect students` attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of Physical Education?
3. How can students develop a positive attitude towards learning of Physical Education to enhance effective teaching of the subject?

### **Objective**

The main objective of the study is to assist decision-makers and other stakeholders to implement consistent policies on awareness-raising and measures for combating students` negative attitudes and perceptions towards physical education in Ghana. Again, to come out with possible suggestions in which students` negative attitudes could be improved to enhance effective teaching and learning of physical education in Ghana.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The current study aims to determine the College of Distance Education (CoDE) students` attitude and perception towards the learning of Physical Education and assesses the factors that affect students` attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of (PE) in Ghana. It also showed how a positive attitude towards learning (PE) can be developed to enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject. The study utilized a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews which helped in gathering detailed information on the research questions; students` attitudes and



perceptions towards learning of Physical Education, factors that affect students` attitudes, and how students` attitudes and perceptions could be improved to enhance effective teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, the phenomenological type of qualitative was used to conduct the research. According to Patton, (2002), this type of qualitative research focuses on the commonality of lived experience within a group. Through this, the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrived at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In phenomenology, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation, or experience. According to Slavin (2007), the purpose of phenomenology is to enter people`s worlds and then to understand their world from their perspectives. This enables one to determine if there are patterns in the experiences of others.

Despite the advantages, this is not to suggest that phenomenological interviewing is easy. Seidman (2006) posits that such interviewing has challenges regarding gaining access, logistics, the ideal number of participants, follow-up, managing data, and the actual interviewing. Therefore, this methodology was adapted because the researcher is a tutor at the college of distance education; hence have to experience the same issues that the respondents faced. Besides, students' experience in Physical education also was shared during the data collection process. The students described what they experience and how they experience it (Moustakas, 1994).

## **Participants**

College of Distance Students of 2019/2020 academic year at the University of Cape Coast Konongo Study Centre, was interviewed in the study. In all, twenty-six (26) students offering a Diploma in Basic Education Programme were interviewed. The study included both male and female students to ensure gender balance. The male students were 14 while the female

students were 12. A purposeful sampling technique was employed for the current study. This technique, also called judgment sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable persons within. In purposeful technique, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002; Lewis & Sheppard, 2006). Besides, key informants are observant, reflective members of the community of interest who know much about the culture and are both able and willing to share their knowledge (Bernard, 2002).

Therefore, the participants were chosen based on their willingness and readiness to give out the information needed by the researcher. This approach assisted the researcher to get a piece of reliable information from the participants. This also aided in the selection of information-rich individuals whose experiences amply illuminated the questions being studied (Patton, 2002; Nolan Jr. & Meister, 2000). Although the purposive sampling technique gives reliable and rich information, it is not free from bias. Informants may be chosen out of convenience or from recommendations of knowledgeable people (Lopez, Atran, Coley, Medin, & Smith, 1997; Smith, 1983). However, data collected from purposive sampling may still be valid for certain studies (Bernard, 2002).

### **Instrument**

Semi-structured interviews involving twenty-six (26) students at the College of Distance Education was conducted to determine students' attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of Physical Education. It also assessed the factors that affect students' attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of (PE), and how positive attitude towards learning (PE) can be developed to enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject. According to Opie (2004), semi-structured interviews have an overall shape, which helps to avoid aimless ramblings. Therefore, it allows the respondents to open up about sensitive issues regarding the problem. Moreover, the

interviewer does have a list of questions intended to ask but can ask supplementary questions if required.

The interview could be done face-to-face or through telephones. In this study, telephone interviews were used because of the observation of COVID-19 pandemic protocols. Besides, telephone interviews have the advantage of reaching a wider audience especially when the sample is geographically dispersed and this enriches the study without the necessity of traveling (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Apart from enabling data to be gathered very fast, telephone interviews also allow coding and analysis of interview data to begin almost immediately (Merriam, 2002).

Although telephone calls were costly, their advantages and convenience tend to outweigh the costs. Having direct contact with students to conduct face-to-face interviews was most ideal but was not safer since one can contract the COVID-19 disease through direct contact with an infected person. All the interviews were carefully recorded, transcribed verbatim into themes and codes, and then analyzed.

### **Pilot study**

Before the main interview, the researcher conducted a pilot study of the interview among two students to improve on any ambiguous questions and to check that confidentiality and anonymity were maintainable (Opie, 2004). The interview included a male and a female of ages 26 and 29 years respectively. Furthermore, the researcher was able to rephrase the questions after identifying some that appeared to be inappropriate (Gall et al, 2007). More so, the questions were centered on pre-determined questions that were standardized and lasted for 30 minutes which revealed the importance of adjusting some of the questions to suit the participants' needs and to elicit their best responses. The interview questions and how they mean is presented in table 1 below:

**Table 1. Questions used and Justifications during the data collection**

<u>Question</u>	<u>Justification</u>
How did you gain admission into CoDE?	These questions were asked to know from the participants the background of how they got admission to study at CoDE. Also, to know whether they enjoy CoDE activities and what makes them enjoy, the courses studied and their favourites. This helped to usher the participants into the interview and create an expectation for the questions that followed.
Do you enjoy the activities and structures of CoDE?	
What are some of the activities you like and dislike about CoDE?	
How many courses do you learn every semester? Mention some of them	
Can you tell me more?	To let participants identify reasons why they like or prefer some of the courses to others and why
Which of the courses mentioned do you like most? Can you explain why you like those courses?	To find out participants` knowledge and interest in the subject of physical education.
Are you interested in Physical Education?	
How do you assess Physical Education?	
What is your general perception and attitude toward PE?	To find out from the participants how they perceive (PE).
How do you value PE as compared to the other subjects mentioned earlier?	To know from respondents how (PE) is different from other subjects such as Mathematics.
Do you bring all PE learning materials to lectures all the time?	To find out whether participants value (PE) and bring all learning materials to lectures.
Is the subject important as compared to other subjects? Why do you think it is important?	To find out from participants if (PE) is equally important as compared to other subjects and why so.
Do you find it easy to learn PE content?	To find out whether participants find learning (PE) content challenging or not challenging
Are you punctual and regular at PE lectures?	To know from participants whether they attend (PE) lectures every day and on time
What factors affect your perceptions and attitudes towards learning PE?	To know from the participants the factors undermining the teaching of (PE).
Can you say more?	To let participants mention more of the factors
Explain how the factors mentioned could influence the teaching and learning of PE	To let participants elucidate, and throw more light on how the factors mentioned hindering the teaching of (PE).
	To let participants examine some of the

<p>How can students` negative attitudes towards PE be improved?</p> <p>What is your gender?</p> <p>Which Level are you?</p> <p>Do you have any issues to say concerning students` attitudes towards PE?</p> <p>How old are you?</p>	<p>possible measures that can be used to improve students` attitudes towards (PE).</p> <p>To provide an opportunity for the researcher and the participants to share any other information on the teaching of (PE).</p>
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### **Data Collection Procedure**

The participants were made known of the purpose of the study, the nature of data collection procedures, how the data would be handled, and stored before the interview started. Also, permission to record the interviews was sought from the participants before the interviews. Pseudonyms were used to represent an individual's names for privacy sake with each transcript named, 1 to 26. Moreover, participants were made to be aware that they can decide to stop at any time as participation is voluntary and that there is no monetary reward for participation. The interviews lasted between 40-45 minutes. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. After the transcription, the transcripts were sent back to the participants to confirm if they represented what they said during the interview as a form of validity. Anonymity and assurance of confidentiality from the researcher enabled the participants to freely express their views. This helped removed biases associated with the study.

### **Data Analyses**

The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Responses from the participants were put into four themes. The first theme was about the demographic information of the participants which was

meant to find answers to questions like their gender, age, and level in which they are. The next theme was to find the students` knowledge on general attitudes and perceptions towards learning of Physical Education and this was put into sub-themes; interest, students` comparison, and students` satisfaction with the subject. The proceeded theme was to examine the factors which affect students` attitudes and perceptions towards Physical Education. This was also put into sub-themes such as the (PE) tutors, the (PE) content, and the teaching and learning materials factors. The last theme was to suggest ways in which students` attitudes could be improved to enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject. The above information consisting of themes and codes are shown in the tables below.

**Table 2. Themes and codes of students` interest in physical education**

Theme	Codes	
Interest in Physical Education	students pretend to be ill so that they do not attend PE lectures	2x
	students find PE activities boring because they always learn difficult scientific terms	8x
	students run away from PE lectures because they just do not like PE	1x
	students attend (PE) lectures regularly and punctually	2x
		10x

**Table 3. Themes and codes of students` comparison of physical education to other subjects**

Theme	Codes	
Students` comparison of (PE) to other subjects	we go to school to do important Subjects like mathematics and science but not (PE)	1 x
	content is loaded	20x
	limited job opportunities	3x
	it is the only subject in the school in which students go through to develop physical fitness	14x
	students use the (PE) lessons to release stress and tension developed from other subjects like mathematics and science	6x
	discouraging words from predecessors	9x

**Table 4. Themes and codes of students` satisfaction with the (PE) curriculum**

Theme	Codes	
Students` satisfaction with the curriculum	students will take part in PE lessons even if they do not have to	3x
	students will not miss (PE) lectures even if they are not feeling well	8x
	students like (PE) because it is fun	16x

**Table 5. Themes and codes of the (PE) tutor factor**

Theme	Codes	
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The (PE) tutor factor	tutors teach the theory topics and leave the practical topics	15x
	tutors do not teach with adequate Teaching and Learning Materials	8x
	tutors teach with varied teaching styles and methods for students to grab meanings of concepts	3x
	tutors teach with demonstrations for students to understand skills and concepts	8x
	tutors pay attention to students` questions at all times	6x
	tutors relate well with students	3x
	tutors do not treat all students equally	1x

**Table 6. Themes and codes of the (PE) content factor**

Theme	Codes	
The (PE) Content	too many contents (Loaded)	21x
	limited (short) time to finish the contents	15x

**Table 7. Themes and codes of Teaching and Learning materials**

Theme	Codes	
Teaching and Learning Materials	inadequate teaching and learning materials	5x

**Table 8. Themes and codes of suggestions to improve students` attitudes**

Theme	Codes	
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Suggestions to improve students' attitudes	both the theory and practice topics should be taught at all times	12x
	adequate TLMs should be provided and used to explain concepts	5x
	tutors should vary their teaching methods and styles	6x
	tutors must treat all students equally	1x
	PE contents should be divided into parts and taught for more than the one semester	18x

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## Reliability

Reliability refers to a situation where results from a particular study are consistent across people and time. For qualitative research to be reliable, there should be the trustworthiness. In the study, this could be achieved by providing trustful accounts throughout the study (Sparkes, 1992; Patton, 2002). According to Sandelowski (1986), the trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative study are assured when it describes and interprets human experience so accurately that people who also share experience would immediately recognize the descriptions.

In this regard, member checking, a process whereby the transcripts are reviewed by the participants to ensure the accuracy of the recordings to their experiences (Patton, 2002), demonstrated reliability since there was no suggestion for changes. The themes conveyed by the participants were deemed trustworthy, thus indicating the reliability of the results. Although consistent findings may be observed in interpretive research of a particular study, consideration must be given to the fact that "human descriptions and meanings change over time as a result of changing experiences" (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

## Validity

Validity is often defined as the extent to which an instrument measures what it asserts to measure (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2005). According to Robson (2011), the validity of a

research instrument assesses the extent to which the instrument measures what is designed to measure. Moreover, it is the degree to which the results are truthful. Qualitative research depends on the fact that validity is a matter of trustworthiness, utility, and dependability (Zohrabi, 2013). In qualitative research, you can measure by asking questions that deal with themes and context. Therefore, to ensure the validity of this study the following steps were employed.

In the first place, the researcher chose a well-trained and skilled facilitator or moderator to check the personal biases and expectations in the study. The facilitator was interested in the candid information of students' attitudes towards (PE) from research participants. Also, a good sample group was chosen. The participants were made known about the ethical issues and therefore they provided accurate responses. Again, respondents' validation was also checked. The initial results with the participants were checked to see if they still ring true.

## **Results and Findings**

### **Demographic Results**

The participants in the study were between the ages of 22 and 34 years. There were 12(46.2%) females and 14 (53.8%) males. All the participants (100%) were in level 300 pursuing a Diploma in Basic Education programme at the University of Cape Coast College of Distance Education (CoDE).

### **General attitudes and perceptions of Physical Education.**

The level 300 students of the College of Distance Education study different courses every semester which include: mathematics, English language, Physical Education, Measurement and Evaluation, and Critical Thinking. Among the courses, the majority, 19(73.1%) of the participants contend that critical thinking is the most difficult one. Even though students have their favourite courses, others too have those that they wish should be given the maximum attention but not getting as such.

## **Students` interest in Physical Education**

Eighteen (18), constituting 69% of the respondents were of the view that the subject of physical education is very interesting. In this regard, the students attend lectures regularly and punctually with all the necessary learning materials such as modules and textbooks. In contrast, only a few, 8 (30.1%) accused that the subject is boring and sometimes students pretend to be sick and do absent themselves from lectures. Two respondents asserted that *(PE) is interesting and important, which has to be studied and examined across all levels in the Ghana Education Service as a compulsory subject.*

## **Comparing Physical Education to Other subjects**

To 20 (77%) of the participants, although (PE) is the only subject studied in schools that educates more on physical fitness and wellness, the content to be studied in the College of Distance Education is loaded. Moreover, it is too much to be studied within the one-semester given to complete the course. This notwithstanding, 14(53.8%) of the respondents confirmed that (PE) the subject helps to release stress and tension in the learning of other subjects. Two respondents acknowledge that *after learning mathematics and sciences which involve much calculation, develop stress, fatigue, and anxiety but learning the (PE) especially the “games part” makes them refreshed and relieved.*

Despite the significance of the subject, 5 (19.2%) argued that the subject has limited job opportunities. They supported that, you cannot get more job opportunities as compared to other subjects like mathematics and therefore its neglect. Besides, 1/3 of the respondents said their predecessors scared them about the subject. They maintained that their predecessors frightened them with the scientific and technical terms in the PE content before they get to the third year to study it. This also puts fear in them before getting to the third year to study the course. *It could be a very interesting and easy subject if you get time to study it, attend lectures regularly, and*

*remained focused, you will be able to pass and get a very good grade.* One participant advised that.

### **Students` satisfaction with the Physical Education Curriculum**

With the issue of students' satisfaction with the subject, 19 (73.1%) of the respondents pointed out that the subject is fun and also makes you learn more about physical activities. Besides, they will never miss (PE) lectures even if they are not feeling well. They emphasized that, although some people have negative perceptions, they will learn and engage in physical education programmes even if they are not supposed to do that because the subject makes them learn some skills concerning various sports and apply them as well. One respondent confirmed that *during her teaching practice, they had inter-school games and athletics competitions and were asked to construct a netball field. All teachers present had no idea about the measurements of a netball court and how to construct it. Fortunately, she was able to apply what she learned in (PE) to teach how to construct the netball court.* Regardless, the subject (PE) is very important and should be learned by every individual.

### **The Physical Education Content factor**

Furthermore, the majority of 21 (80.8%) of the respondents submitted that the (PE) content is loaded and too much to finish within one semester. The (PE) content contains history, scientific, and technical terms, as well as different types of games that need to be studied in only one semester. In this regard, seventeen 19 (73.1%) suggested that the content should be divided into parts and taught within at least two semesters to ensure easy learning of the course.

### **The Physical Education Tutor factor**

Twenty-three (23), (88.5%) of the participants were of the view that the (PE) tutor also influences students` attitudes and perceptions towards learning of the subject. The participants

explained that the tutor possesses certain characteristics and features that can promote or undermine teaching. Because of this, (76%) respondents concluded that some (PE) tutors teach only the theory topics and do not include the practice topics. Moreover, tutors` inability to teach with adequate teaching and learning materials and also varying teaching methods and styles were all responded by the participants. One participant claimed that *tutors are not able to teach the practical (PE) lessons on the field due to the limited time given to finish the (PE) content*. On the other hand, some (PE) tutors pay attention to all students` questions and relate well with them.

Nevertheless, students added that some tutors teach with a demonstration of activity for students to get an understanding of skills and concepts and apply them. The tutor`s actions and performances during the presentation and delivery of his lessons inspire students to learn more in the classroom and applied them. Despite this, one respondent reported that *(PE) tutor`s attitude, roles, and behaviour exhibited in the lecture room encouraged her to play certain sports and games with her kids at home every weekend*. Therefore, to curtail the challenges, two participants suggested that, the time to complete the content should be extended to two or three semesters.

### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) is very important for the teachers in their teaching lessons effectively as they help the teacher to a better interpretation of the concepts, contents as well as the subject matter. These materials also enable the students to proceed towards concrete learning. Despite this, respondents explained that tutors do not teach with adequate (TLMs), and therefore find it difficult to understand certain concepts.

### **Suggestions to improve students` attitudes towards Physical Education**

Since (PE) plays a very crucial role in the development of every individual, (PE) tutors should be encouraged to teach it with adequate teaching and learning materials, together with different teaching methods and styles to help bring complex and abstract terms into simplest and

clear terms. Participants encourage tutors to teach the theory topics as well as the practice topics at all times. Nevertheless, the content entails lot areas which include foundations, history, games, athletics, science, and others which have made it voluminous and loaded to finish within only one semester. Therefore, the content needs to be divided into parts. Two respondents *suggested that the content should be divided into two parts and taught for two semesters in one year to make learning more interesting and easier.*

Again, tutors` relationships with students should be improved. However, this can be improved by giving out equal treatment to students, answering them whenever they ask questions and giving them words of encouragement. One participant opined that; *some tutors make certain pronouncements such as “when you fail, I will be happy because the College will get money”*. This kind of an assertion by some tutors discourages students as they learn. Therefore, tutors should say words of encouragement to arouse students` interest to study to enhance effective teaching and learning in the College.

## **Discussion**

The present study was to determine students` attitudes and perceptions of the learning of Physical Education. It also assessed the factors that affect students` attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of (PE). Participants were further asked to suggest how positive attitudes towards the learning of (PE) can be developed to enhance the effective teaching of the subject. Nonetheless, about 69% of the respondents expressed interest in (PE) since it helps individuals to go through physical activities and exercises to improve their fitness levels as well as the general health of a person. This finding is in line with the previous studies with an assertion that (PE) helps promote a healthy lifestyle, promote the physical and mental fitness of an individual (Basterfield et al, 2014; Morgan & Hanson,2008).

On the other hand, despite the misconceptions such as no job opportunities which has resulted in the development of negative attitudes towards (PE) among students, about (54%) students go through (PE) to have fun and enjoy themselves to release stress and tensions developed from the day`s hard works. To throw more light on this, two participants confirmed that, the (PE) lectures especially the games` topics, help them release stress after they have studied mathematics and the sciences.

With the issue of students` satisfaction, even though 1/3 of the participants responded that their predecessors discouraged them on the subject, 73% of the respondents were satisfied with the (PE) curriculum. Consequently, (PE) make them learn more about particular sports and other physical activity programmes like gymnastics. This however encourages students to attend (PE) lectures punctually and regularly at all times. Given this, a participant with the privilege of learning netball at (PE) lectures applied it during her teaching practice in their inter-school sports competition. The participant used the knowledge acquired in netball at (PE) lectures to construct a netball court during her teaching practice. This conforms to the previous study by Rickard and Banville (2006) with the assertion that, when students learn a class skill, they will be able to apply it perfectly everywhere they go since they have acquired the knowledge and experience in that particular field.

Although students` attitude towards (PE) is satisfactory, there are certain factors which underpin their attitudes. Nevertheless, the majority (76%) of the participants contend that the (PE) tutors normally teach only the (PE) theory topics without the practice topics (practical). This sometimes brings boredom in (PE) learning in the College. Moreover, tutors do not teach with adequate teaching and learning materials. Hence, students` inability to learn and get into contact with the real objects in the teaching process. In contrast, some (PE) tutors teach with

varied teaching methods and styles to bring complex terms into simple ones. Some tutors demonstrate activities for students to get a clear picture of an activity for students to perform.

As a result, the tutors` actions and performances during the lesson delivery motivate and inspire students to learn skills and concepts, and apply them outside school. In spite of this, one respondent confirmed that (PE) tutor`s attitudes, roles, and behaviour exhibited in the lecture room motivates and encourages her to play certain sports and games with her kids at home every weekend. This statement is directly inconsistent with the theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) which asserts that human action is determined by the intention that is influenced by attitudes and social norms. In other words, students who have positive attitudes towards (PE) and do participate in (PE) lessons will be influenced in the future to apply it where ever they go.

Furthermore, (80.8%) of the participants added that the (PE) content is voluminous to be completed within one semester. Therefore, the content should be divided into parts. Two respondents suggested that the content should be divided into two parts to be studied in two semesters. In this regard, stake-holders and the college authorities should help provide teaching and learning materials while tutors also relate well with students, and treat all students equally to attract students` attention to study in the college.

## **Conclusion**

Students` positive attitude towards physical education is increasing in recent times. Despite this notion, some students have limited interest in the subject due to certain factors such as inadequate teaching and learning materials as well as the way some tutors handle the subject. The subject of Physical Education helps people set values to plan and partake in physical activities and exercises which help have positive effects on an individual. In the study, it was



observed that students have satisfactory interest in (PE) and value it important as other academic subjects such as Mathematics and English Language.

Although some students do absent themselves from (PE) lectures, the majority attended lectures regularly and punctually to learn sports skills and concepts, and apply them where ever they go. This notwithstanding, the present study has exposed other challenges in the (PE) curriculum such as the loaded nature of the (PE) content and the (PE) tutors` rejection of the practical topics which has to be taught on the field. Therefore, the College of Distance Education Authorities and the Curriculum Planners should do well to divide the content into two parts to enhance easy and effective learning of the subject.

### **Limitation**

The study was limited to students studying a Diploma in Basic Education at the College of Distance Education, Konongo Centre. This is a category of students who have gained the opportunity even though they qualify for admission, fail to enter the conventional University System due to constraints in facilities. The study considered a sample of twenty-six (26) level 300 students in the 2019/2020 academic year. Ironically, in phenomenological qualitative research, few participants would be enough because the objective is to provide an in-depth account of individual experiences. However, students were randomly selected to express their views on the topic under investigation and therefore, offered divergent views.

Future studies should be conducted involving many students from different educational settings to find out students` attitudes towards different subjects using both qualitative and quantitative (mixed) methods.

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