


# International Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Sports (IJPERS)


The Impact of the Gendered Environment on the Pedagogy of Physical Education in  
Primary Schools in Central Uganda

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**Article History**

*Received 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026*

*Received in Revised Form 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026*

*Accepted 28<sup>th</sup> March 2026*



How to cite in APA format:

Musoke, N., & Taddeo, K. (2026). The Impact of the Gendered Environment on the Pedagogy of Physical Education in Primary Schools in Central Uganda. *International Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Sports*, 4(1), 53–78. <https://doi.org/10.47604/ijpers.3697>

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The Purpose of the Study was to Examine the Environment in which the Pedagogy of Physical Education (P.E) in Primary Schools in Central Uganda takes Place. P.E is Still the Most Gendered School Subject in Many Parts of the World.

**Methodology:** The Study was Qualitative in Nature, and so the Design. Maximum Variation Sampling was used and Five Primary Schools were selected Because of their Geographical Locations and School Categories in Uganda. In each School, Two Classes were Selected, Primary Three and Six. The Data Collection Methods Included Participatory Observations, Field Notes, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Interviews and Document Analysis. I Started by Studying the Documents Namely, the P.E Curriculum, P.E and Gender Policies, Schemes and Lesson Plans. I Observed P.E Classes for Eight Weeks, at the End of Which I Engaged Pupils in FGDs, Teachers and Administrators in Semi-Structured Qualitative Interviews.

**Findings:** The Physical Environment was Inadequate with Poor, Insufficient Facilities and Equipment. Most of the Playgrounds were Rough and Unlevelled, Dusty in a Dry Season and Muddy in a Rainy One Rendering the Environment Uncomfortable and Sometimes Dangerous. The Social Learning Environment was Corrupted by Stereotypes where Teachers and Boys Dominated Girls and the P.E Classes. With Inadequate and Poor Equipment /Facilities, P.E Became More Problematic Especially in the Co-educational Classes where Pupils Would Abuse and Sometimes Fight Each Other with Boys Tripping Girls. The poor Gender Relations in the P.E Classes, and the Inadequate Facilities and Equipment Made the Class Environment Hostile and Gender Irresponsive. The P.E Class Environment Worked More against Girls, and Boys Who did not conform to Ideal Forms of Masculinity.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The results clearly show that schools need strong policies especially for teachers to guard against discrimination, segregation and sexism. The gender policies streamline the pedagogical processes and structures in classes /schools for equal opportunities for all. Besides, the gender-education theory by jo-anne dillabough informed the study. I have also developed a gender responsive pedagogy model framework for schools in Uganda to improve the pedagogical, curriculum development and implementation processes for P.E, thereby embracing policies of equal access and development. Lastly, ethics played a major role in the conduct of this study.

**Keywords:** *Impact, Gendered Environment, Pedagogy, Physical Education, Primary Schools*

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## INTRODUCTION

The word, environment in this study refers to what the learners and their teachers interacted with during the Physical Education (P.E) classes, which includes the social and the physical environment. The social environment includes all the interactions between the pupils in the P.E classes and the teachers who teach them. The physical environment refers to all the facilities such as the playgrounds, the courts, swimming pools, gymnasias, etc. and the equipment such as balls, ropes, hurdles, cones, discus, Javelin, shotput, relay batons, etc.; and whatever else the teachers and learners encountered or used /and interacted with during the P.E classes. The facilities and the equipment are supposed to impact positively on the pedagogical processes but unfortunately, some of these can have negative effects on either or both the learners and the teachers.

The article<sup>1</sup> focuses on the impact of the environment on the pedagogy of P.E in primary schools in Central Uganda; and shows the gendered nature of both the physical and social environments. The environment has proved to be a key factor in the pedagogy of P.E. because it affects relations between P.E teachers and their learners. P.E being an academic discipline that is taught mainly through games such as athletics, ball and bat games, aerobics, gymnastics and other recreational activities that originally were known to be for boys /men, gender relations become critical. In Central Uganda, the dominating culture is that of Baganda tribe where women are not supposed to greet men while standing even when they meet them in the streets especially parents, uncles, aunties, clan leaders /elders. Even when the capital city is in Buganda with many tribes and foreigners involved, the ‘respect’ for men remains; and this in itself makes the relationship between men /boys and women /girls problematic. In such a situation and in our schools issues of inequality still exist among learners and teachers, affecting effective pedagogy especially in practical subjects like P.E. Therefore, the social and physical environment many times becomes limiting to effective teaching and learning (pedagogy) of P.E in schools.

The study however took place in Central Uganda, in and around Kampala city where there are people of different tribes, social classes and in some schools, race, which implies that some of the schools have a multi-ethnic variety of learners because school is an extension of the community around it. In different societies and communities, socio-cultural issues such as gender may differ. Each culture has its norms and traditions, and different expectations of men/ boys and women/girls. Therefore, gender is normally played out differently in different cultures, communities and societies; and it changes with culture (Garrett & Wrench, 2018; Kaabwe, 2000; Nemigisha, 2013; Scraton, 2018; Williams, 2017). The study followed my previous studies and other scholars especially from the developed world that showed disturbing gender relations in Physical Education (P.E) classes. For example, a study on Gender Equality and Equity in P.E classes in Uganda and girls’ experiences showed that teachers sometimes misunderstood pupils’ behavior, which led to negative attitude towards a learner or certain groups of learners especially girls and sometimes boys who could not conform to ideal forms of masculinity (Nemigisha, 2021; Nemigisha, 2013).

The teachers thought that the older girls were not interested in some games as compared to boys. Yet lack of appropriate P.E attire and the cultural ties limited the girls’ freedom to extend

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a broader PhD project that focused on identifying Strategies for Implementing Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) in Primary Schools in Central Uganda. GRP, according to the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) refers to the pedagogical processes and practices that pay particular attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys.

and ‘expose’ their bodies. Some of those girls ended up losing interest in P.E classes because of the way teachers ‘handled’ them. Some teachers just ignored the girls and concentrated on the boys; and this is what the latter enjoyed because they got socialized into getting more attention from the teachers during P.E classes (Nemigisha, 2021; Scraton, 2018; Williams, 2017). Moreover, most of the P.E teachers did not know how gendered P.E was and how it reinforced poor gender power relations, with boys reproducing their dominant roles and girls learning their subordination.

Most P.E teachers especially those in the co-educational schools favored and encouraged boys more than the girls as they gave excuses of older girls being sluggish (Nemigisha, 2021; Nemigisha, 2013). Boys on the other hand, did not seem to notice that they were harassing girls and instead they accused them of being rumormongers when the girls reported those who mistreated them to the teachers. The boys could even trip girls in the field and the teachers many times under looked these misdemeanors because of the influence by traditional norms and stereotypes about physical activity. Besides, the formal teacher education had done little to challenge the gender inequalities, sexism and stereotypes; and yet research on teacher education internationally and here had shown how gender matters were still marginalized especially in the developing world (Baxter et al., 2022; Dowling, 2006; Kaabwe, 2000; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016; Mluma, 2005, 2014).

In Uganda and most parts of Africa, men would teach survival skills to their sons, for example, how to fight and defend their homes and villages against wild animals and intruders /enemies, which included running, fighting, trapping and killing wild animals, etc. This involved training them on how to use weapons, for example, throwing a spear or stone, making traps, identifying animals’ patterns of movement, their habits, tracks and sounds. All these involved throwing, lifting, jumping, running, developing strength, etc., which are predominant in the modern P.E and sports and excluded girls. Therefore, men /boys were socialized into the sports activities earlier from traditional to the modern world; and this culture still exists in most parts of the African continent. Besides, the teachers are part of this culture and many are still stuck and traditional in many ways. Even when colonialists came to Africa, they discriminated against girls and women more than they did to the men. The education of boys /men was empowering them to discover and learn new knowledge while women were basically taught how to take care of their homes, men and children (Kaabwe, 2000; Nemigisha, 2013).

### **The Problem Statement**

In the Education Act 13, 2008 of the Uganda Government, P.E was made a compulsory subject at Pre-primary, Primary and Post Primary. The ministry of Education then directed that P.E be a core school subject at the mentioned levels. Prior to the Act, P.E was not nationally known to be a school subject at secondary school level in Uganda even though very few schools taught it. The primary school curriculum had a well laid out P.E syllabus long before the Act. In spite of this, a number of schools at primary level do not teach P.E while others teach it only to the lower primary. Others teach it the way they want without paying attention to the environment in which P.E is taught or whether the facilities and equipment are available and enough. Most schools do not have shower rooms either where pupils or teachers can change from after P.E Classes.

P.E is supposed to be taught to all learners, from primary one to seven, boys and girls and the curriculum is clear on this (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008, 2010). However, some schools teach it to only lower classes. Even school inspectors do not seem to be interested in

P.E as a school subject or they are not aware of its importance. The teachers and learners know that they are supposed to teach and learn P.E respectively but most schools facilities are in a poor state and some schools do not actually have playgrounds especially those in towns and city suburbs (Nemigisha, 2021; Nemigisha, 2013; Nyaguti, 2017). Since the playgrounds /facilities and equipment form the physical environment, this implies that the latter is lacking or /and inadequate in some schools. Besides, the social environment is marred with poor gender relations, segregation, discrimination and sexist tendencies. This situation creates a hostile pedagogical environment, corrupted with gender inequalities and stereotypes, besides the inadequate and dusty/muddy environment. Therefore, many girls may not be interested or see a future in P.E. Teachers too may not encourage the girls to play the ‘masculine’ games because of socio-cultural stereotypes that make certain activities gender specific. The girls and the boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinities are normally dominated and discriminated by the teachers and the ‘big’ boys.

Some teachers do not appear to understand that P.E is a school subject like any other, taking it through the preliminary phases of pedagogy such as lesson planning, pre-preparation, clearing the field for any sharp or dangerous objects, checking on the equipment and facility before the P.E class, etc. Then the three major phases of a P.E lesson: Introduction and /warm up, lesson development, climax and cool down, taking care of individual learners’ needs and bringing everybody on board by reviewing the lesson as part of conclusion and allowing learners to ask where necessary. Some teachers do not consider individual learners’ needs and so they just move with those that are active or those who know what to do as if it is sports, which is a competitive activity for those who are interested or can compete favorably. The danger with the latter is that those who cannot cope fall out or lose interest especially where the equipment is not enough and the facility is not adequate or good enough. This is where the environment becomes gendered and limiting, with harassment and discrimination by the strong /masculine boys to the weak, boys, girls and the ‘small boys’. The latter are the boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity. Yet all pupils ought to have the right to acquire knowledge and skills and to enjoy physical competency.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the environment in which the Pedagogy of Physical Education takes place and its impact on the learners and their teachers in Primary Schools in Central Uganda.

## The Conceptual Framework

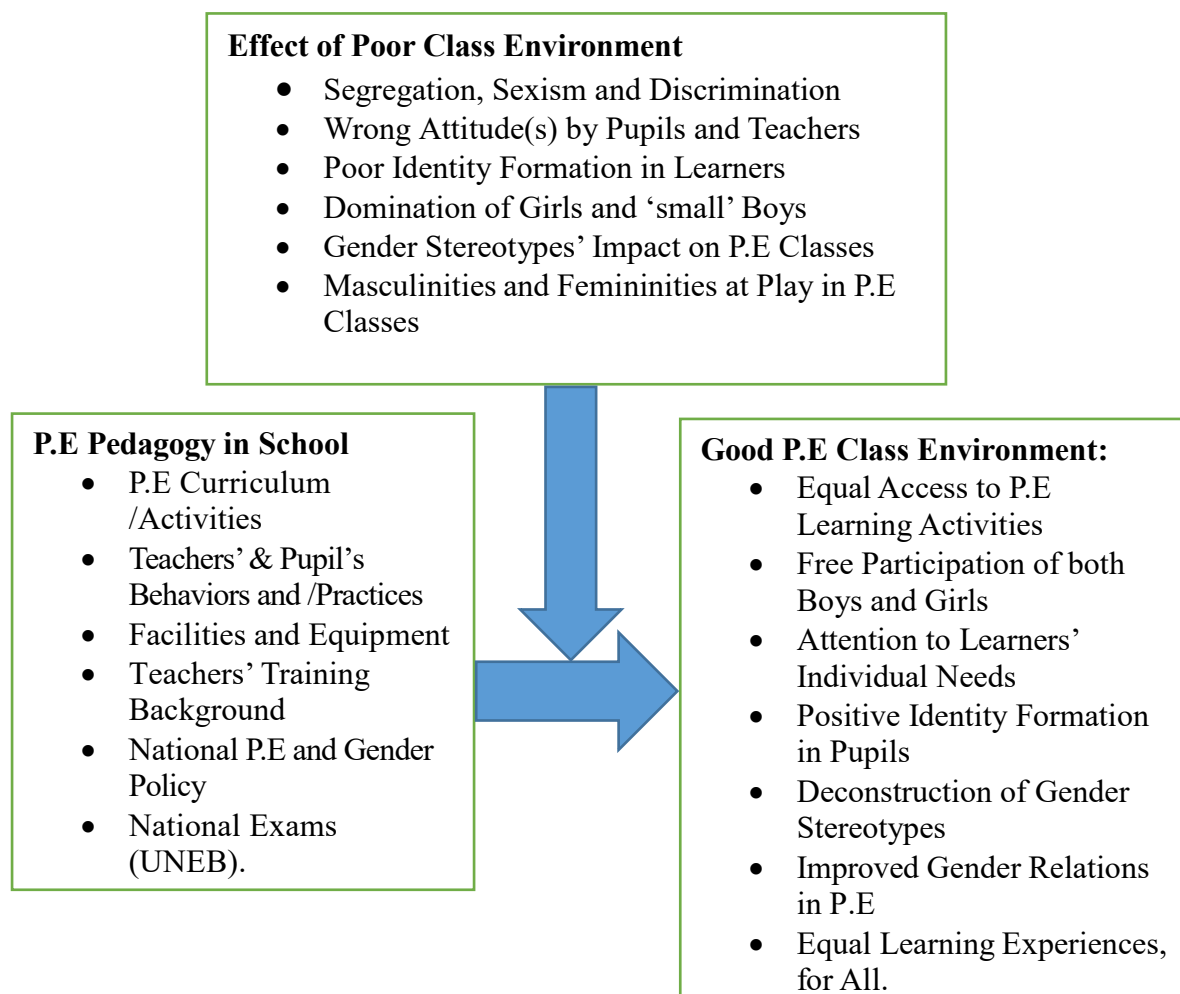


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A study carried out in Europe about redesigning pedagogy for boys and dance, argue for practices that provide safe and supportive learning environments for all learners (Robyne & Alison, 2016). The boys in the study had regarded dance as an activity for girls, and so many were not active during the dance classes and the study improved their participation. This justifies the need for a class environment that is conducive for both boys and girls or an environment that is gender responsive for all learners. Lesson plans, the language used in the classroom, class set-ups, examples used or charts by teachers and other teaching aids should indicate that both girls and boys could be achievers in the same areas of life (Dorji, 2020; Mlama, 2005, 2014; Njuguna, 2016).

Other studies have shown that certain facilities and equipment do not favor all learners, especially those known traditionally to be for men or boys (Baxter et al., 2022; Mlama, 2005, 2014; Nemigisha, 2021), namely; javelin, shot put, discuss etc.. This situation is made worse by the scarcity of equipment which makes learners scramble for the few that may be there which may also be in a poor state. Girls have been seen to step aside and leave the boys to get the equipment because culture in different parts of the world does not allow girls to struggle for such things, and with boys (Nemigisha, 2021; Nemigisha, 2013). Research carried

out by the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda shows that there are a number of challenges faced by schools in teaching P.E especially lack of essential facilities such as play grounds, courts, swimming pools, washrooms, balls, etc., and the rest of the necessary equipment.

Besides, there is also a problem of finding qualified and interested teachers to teach the subject (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022; MoES, 2016). In such a situation, issues like class environment and /or gender relations in class may be under looked even when the Ministry of Education recently released a new policy of P.E and Sports that is agitating for effective teaching and learning of Physical Education in Ugandan schools (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022).

Research carried out on gender and P.E in Uganda reveals that Physical Education as a school subject is minimized, considered minor and not taught seriously like any other subject (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). Both local and international studies show that during P.E classes, girls are not given the same attention and learning atmosphere as boys; therefore, they get limited learning experiences from the P.E classes as compared to boys (Nemigisha, 2021; Scraton, 2013; Williams, 2017). The girls are normally segregated, discriminated against and not encouraged to take part in what is presumed to be hard /boys' games. Therefore, they do not enjoy the P.E classes or physical competence because exceptional girls are considered abnormal, and as such are harassed, despised and given all sorts of names by boys and sometimes teachers. The latter happens especially when the girls fail to perform as expected or when they are reluctant to touch the equipment (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). The girls miss-out on exciting games, known to be for boys or masculine. The boys who have less interest in masculine games also suffer because teachers and fellow learners do not understand them (Connell, 2008; Dillabough, 2006; Stride et al., 2018). Therefore, girls and the boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity are discriminated against, segregated and harassed by the 'normal boys' and some teachers, and are thus denied chance to learn, socialize and rediscover themselves through games and other recreational activities. So, they miss out on the personal and social benefits, life skills and other outcomes of P.E such as preventive health, fitness, teamwork, leadership skills, productive leisure, creativity, self-esteem, intellectual and talent development (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008; Freeman, 2011; Nemigisha, 2021). With this as a backdrop, it leads me to looking closely at the ways in which the environment, both physical and social affects the gender relations between the teachers and the learners, boys and girls and so the pedagogy of P.E in primary school in Central Uganda.

With such gender disparities and inequalities, strategies could be laid to address the poor gender relations in the P.E classes in Primary School in Central Uganda. Research based instructional strategies are teaching methods, practices and approaches that are grounded in scientific research, proven to be effective in promoting learning and achievement; and also those that have been identified by independent research to be effective at influencing learning outcomes and achievement regardless of gender (Robert et al., 2001, 2012). This kind of pedagogy is gender responsive, that is, teaching and learning processes that pay particular attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys during learning or classroom set ups (Baxter et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2017a; UNESCO Bangkok, 2017b). Gender responsive pedagogy calls for teachers to take an all-encompassing gender approach in the processes of lesson planning and teaching. It specifically focuses on how to create a gender responsive academic environment, equipping teachers with skills to understand and address the specific learning needs of both boys and girls; and it explores the various ways of making the teaching and learning processes

respond to the specific needs of learners especially girls (Baxter et al., 2022; Dorji, 2020). The authors also reveal that teachers may not think that socialization and cultural conditioning may leave girls fearful or reluctant to handle heavy and masculine equipment in P.E.

### **The Gender-Education Theory**

The Gender in Education Theory (Dillabough, 2001; Dillabough, 2006; Jo-Anne, 2009) explains how the gender dynamics affect girls and boys (learners) in a learning environment in class, and school as a community. It explains the teacher-learner and boys-girls relations including same gender relations in class plus the impact of the environment on the P.E relations. Jo-Anne Dillabough, in her study about school and how gender is played out in classrooms and the school environment, she discovered how gender as a socio-cultural construction affects the teaching and learning, the class and the school environment at large.

The theory stipulates that individuals construct gender identities in relation to current competing forms of gender (masculinities and femininities) in their class and school environment. Gender is negotiated continually throughout an individual's lifetime; it is dynamic and changes with culture. For example, the school as a community and the classrooms where learners spend most of their time while at school, there is a lot that goes on between learners and teachers, and between learners, boys and girls that affects their life and learning. The masculinities (socio-cultural expectations of men /boys) and femininities (socio-cultural expectations of women /girls) in school and class affect the learners' Identity and the identity search by the learners, and yet they form the class and school environment. The theory further stipulates that, there are many forms of masculinity in schools competing and contradicting; and they shape and affect gender relations in classes during the teaching and learning. For example, boys with muscle power always want to show the small /less masculine boys that they are inferior; and so cannot handle. The girls who are strong or masculine can also bully and overlook the boys that are not masculine or have alternative masculinities.

Gender involves power, which is struggled over in everyday routines and rituals of schooling where male teachers and boys dominate female teachers and girls respectively. This is a cultural issue where culture in most parts of the world, especially the developing world make men /boys believe that they are superior /strong and more powerful than women /girls. This causes a problem for a school subject like P.E where some of the activities learners engage-in in class are traditionally known to be for men /boys or women /girls. Gender also varies within divisions of social class, race and ethnicity, and these are found in schools as well where children of the rich or middle-income earners especially in the developing world dominate others in their class. The girls, and the boys who are less interested in masculine games or who have alternative masculinities may find the environment hostile to them especially where the teachers and the learners are tied up by socio-cultural stereotypes, and where some class activities may be assigned to a particular gender.

The theory also focuses on the gendered nature of social structures and "the particularity of gender identity formation" that contributed to "uncovering the gendered nature of school knowledge /curriculum" and "revealing its role in shaping girls' and boys' identities and aspirations" (Dillabough, 2009, p. 139). There was also an attempt to address the issues of gender inequity and feminist pedagogy in schools, and that much of early equity research work attempted to expose sexist school practices and to engage in school reforms that were challenging patriarchal school structures. This early phase of Education Feminism began to dissociate from the main stream 'equity research' because the latter "focused too narrowly

on girls' education, issues of discrimination, access and attainment" (Dillabough, 2009, p. 139). This made the study of identity emerge as central and education became a major site for the reproduction of class culture rather than a site for the construction of broader social identities. Innovative research here was majorly concerned with the part played by education in reproducing dominant class structures, codes and corresponding classed identities. Here schools become sites for cultural reproduction and development of social identities.

Most communities and societies all over the world, expect girls to be clean in spite of their environment. Therefore, a muddy/ dusty P.E environment is a site where girls /women teachers reproduce and negotiate femininities because of the general discomfort during the P.E classes. Yet the girls and women teachers are expected to remain clean even when they play or attend a P.E class in a dusty, muddy, or dirty environment. For boys, it is okay to be dirty even when the environment is clean or otherwise because it is part of masculinity. This situation can lead to absenteeism of girls from school or the P.E classes. Besides, the girls fear to get dirty and then attract teasing and /criticism from the boys and teachers. In all these circumstances, girls cannot be as free as the boys during the P.E classes. Yet the teachers expect them to perform like the boys or to excel like the latter even though the boys are also not homogeneous.

The patriarchal school structures make P.E a ritualized subject as education becomes a major site for the reproduction of class culture rather than a site for the construction of broader social identities. Instead of reproducing dominant class structures, codes and corresponding classed identities, which make P.E routines reinforce the patriarchal school structures that may involve lining up, picking captains, equipment distribution, etc. where in most cases boys are captains or in charge of distributing equipment, etc. Lining up of learners, boys /and girls or according to gender or ability /inability does neither encourage the weak nor the girls and boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity. Instead, these practices enhance patriarchal school structures and sexist tendencies that cause discrimination and segregation of learners.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study broadly falls in the Qualitative methodology and design as is normally preferred whenever a social practice is the focus of research activity; and it is the only approach by which the objectives of the study could be achieved (Mohajan, 2018; Patton, 2015; Smith & Sparkes, 2014). Data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the pupils, Semi-structured qualitative interviews with the P.E teachers, analysis of documents such as the P.E curriculum, P.E and Sports Policy, Schemes of work, Lesson plans, etc. and participatory observations of the P, E classes. The study-involved P.E teachers from five primary schools and in each school pupils of two classes, primary three and six were selected basing on the nature of the schools we have in Uganda. That is to say; boarding and day schools, single and coeducational schools, government aided or private, etc. Maximum variation sampling was used which aims for purposeful sampling that captures and describes the central themes that cut across a great deal of participants, and does not generalize findings but looks for information that explains the variation and common patterns (Harsh, 2011; Palinkas et al., 2015; Shaleen et al., 2019). The P.E classes in the chosen schools were observed for a period of eight weeks examining the physical environment in which P.E was conducted and the social environment, which comprised of the interactions between the teachers' pedagogical Practices /behaviors and interactions between the learners (boys and girls) and the learners' interactions with their teachers.

Data was prepared and organized according to types, for example, data from interviews, focus group discussions, class observations, field notes, documents, etc. The researcher started with Inductive analysis where specific observations /information led towards general patterns /themes as the patterns that existed in the empirical world under study started to unveil. Listening and reading through the data many times made me capture some meanings and interpretations of the respondents. Then I selected the data, sieved and the information that I considered relevant to the study from the interview transcripts, the field notes, documents, observations, etc. was coded while searching for and identifying information that could be used to answer the questions of the study. More coding and interpretations brought out general patterns and themes and the underlying meanings began to unveil as I engaged more with the data, reflecting on its impact on the literature and theories informing the study (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Saldana, 2014).

## **FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This section includes the results from both the Social and the Physical class environment, comments and interpretations. The names used here are not real names but synonyms.

### **The Physical Environment: the State of the Facilities and Equipment used for P.E Classes in Primary School in Central Uganda**

The Physical environment includes facilities like the playgrounds, the courts, swimming pools, gymnasias, etc. and the equipment such as balls, ropes, hurdles, cones, discus, Javelin, shotput, etc.; and whatever else the learners encounter or use and interact with during the P.E classes that is solid including goal posts. When I asked the teachers for the problems and challenges they faced in the P.E classes during the interviews, they complained of many things and one of the male teachers' focus groups from the Kampala city primary school listed the following:

Little or no support from school administrators and fellow teachers because P.E is not nationally examined. Large classes of P.E, lack of reference books, less space from where to conduct the classes especially when two classes have P.E at the same time. Some of us are given many classes of P.E yet with poor or no equipment. Sometimes the weather conditions are bad especially when it is very hot or rainy with wet fields; and other teachers who do not want to teach P.E yet all of us were trained to teach it.”

(Focus group of male teachers from the City Primary School)

From class observations, many facilities were in a poor state and others were lacking; and some schools could not teach certain games due to lack of facilities and equipment. In all schools I went to, there were no reference books and some teachers solved this problem by searching on the internet. Whenever it would rain, it would be impossible to conduct P.E classes because the playgrounds would be muddy or full of dirty water and the ground would be slippery. The lack of textbooks and muddy playgrounds is because the school administrators do not see value for teaching P.E since it is not examined at the local and national level. This means that P.E cannot market the school with examination results since it is neither examined locally at the schools nor at the national examination level when UNEB results are out.

Teachers from the suburb school dominated by the Muslim culture complained of the segregation of learners imposed to them by the school directors and administrators as follows:

We are not allowed to mix boys and girls during the P.E classes and it makes it harder to distribute and use the little equipment or facility in the limited time and space for a

P.E class which is normally a single lesson of 40minutes. (Female P.E teachers of the Muslim Community School).

Lack of equipment cannot motivate P.E teachers to prepare properly for their P.E classes. Psychologically and otherwise, they feel inadequate and may not teach in the same way they would if they had enough or the necessary equipment. This may cause a frustration on the part of the teacher which may be transferred to the pupils who may misbehave or fail to follow the teacher' instructions. Many teachers complained too during the interviews that there were physical activities they would have wanted to teach but due to lack of facilities and equipment, they could not. The following activities were named that could not be taught by teachers of the schools where the study took place: "Swimming, Basketball, Volley ball, Dance, Tennis, etc." Some teachers tried to improvise some equipment, for example, teaching pupils to make local balls and ropes out of banana fibers and used polythene bags. I saw these being used in some of the P.E classes during the teaching of Netball and Football and in some games of low organization in primary three such as in the 'ball stealing game'. It reminded me of the ministry of Education and Sports calling upon P.E teachers to be creative and innovative (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022).

During this study, I discovered that there are schools in Uganda without playgrounds while others have very rugged and bare ones with a lot of dust especially when children are using them for sports, and during the P.E classes. Other schools did not have enough playground for most of the game activities, as reported by both teachers and boys of the single sex boarding primary school, when they were asked for the challenges they face during P.E classes. The boys said that "we do not have where to play games like: basketball, lawn and table tennis and volley ball". Teachers of the rural co-educational school also complained about the same problem and "lack of a full track and field events' playground." Besides, most of the playgrounds were in a bad state as seen in most of the schools. The following states of the playgrounds were captured during the study to show the nature of the poor facilities in most of the schools in central Uganda. Yet the poor playgrounds work on the girls than the boys because society expects girls and women to remain clean in spite of the environment.

Some of the fields are bare, with no grass at all and very dusty while in use. The playgrounds are 'overgrazed' by members of the school community and those around who play from there and even hold competitions in the evenings and weekends. Yet, it is the only field the school has as it was revealed by the teachers and pupils during the interviews. The following figures show the state of some of the playgrounds or the physical environment where the pupils and their teachers interact during P.E classes.



*Figure 2: Pupils of a Muslim Community School with their Teacher learning High Jump on a Bare playground (The Entire Class and Faces not Revealed for Anonymity)*

Figure 2 shows a playground that has been over used to a level of losing all its grass /green color and now it is dusty, rough /hard and uncomfortable for the learners and their teachers during the P.E classes. This condition works more on girls and the women teachers because culture expects them to remain clean despite the dusty /dirty environment for learning and teaching respectively. The girls are not allowed to put on or to change to sportswear and because of this, even the boys remain in their normal uniform. This implies that the learners are not comfortable, only due to the environment but also due the dressing code.



*Figure 3: Pupils of the Primary School in the City learning to throw Discus in a P. E Class (The Entire Class Not Revealed for the Same Reasons)*

This second figure has some scanty grass vegetation at the periphery of the playground where there is normally less activity. The above two figures show the common state of the physical environment for most P.E classes in Central Uganda where the study was conducted. Looking at the first play ground, it is totally bare as if it had never had grass, yet it is because of the

school management allowing local teams of football to use the field everyday after class and during weekends through out the school season. A P.E class environment like this affects more the girls and the women teachers because culture expects girls and women to be clean despite the state of their environment, a femininity that may not allow the girls to feel free as the boys during the P.E classes (Dillabough, 2001; Scraton, 2018; Williams, 2017). The state of the playground like this cannot encourage P.E teachers and their pupils especially women and girls respectively to go for P.E classes and to enjoy them. This state can make P.E classes neither enjoyable nor pleasurable to both teachers and pupils especially the women and girls. Moreover, in a situation where there are no wash rooms for both teachers and pupils especially in the day schools. Pupils /schools that use playgrounds that are fairly covered by grass are very few in central Uganda because most schools share playgrounds with others. Two of the schools in the study shared their play fields with other schools. One of these playgrounds was shared by three schools of the same administrative body. Two are primary schools, one for girls and another for boys, all single sex; and the third one, a secondary school for girls. The schools were always programmed to use the field at different times; and if all of them were teaching P.E at the same time, the field would not be enough. Sometimes other P.E classes could not be conducted because of lack of space. This kind of environment can encourage neither teachers nor their learners. At the peak of co-curricular activities in schools in Uganda especially during the preparation for sports days of the three schools, the state of the playgrounds gets worse.

The dusty playgrounds as seen in the two figures work more against girls and women because of a culture, which expects girls to be cleaner than the boys/ men; and so the girls may not perform as expected because of fearing to make themselves dirty as they engage in the P.E activities. Moreover, in a situation where there are no shower rooms for the pupils to bathe after the P.E classes. The girls normally try their best to remain clean and therefore failing to participate fully or enjoy the activities however engaging the teacher may be. Other playgrounds were located in semi-swampy or swampy areas and others were also affected by soil erosion leaving behind scanty grass, rills, rugged and low ground areas due to soil erosion.. Sometimes with evidence of people, animals or even cars and motor cycles passing through the same playground making it bare, dusty and muddy during a rainy season. Consider the following playground located in a low swampy ground and yet eroded by running water, over used, a passage and a grazing ground for humans and animals respectively:



*Figure 4: One of the City Suburb School's Playground showing the pre-described features with their P.E teacher and Pupils of Primary Six engaging in Warm up Exercises*

Note that the learners and their teacher were reduced in size to conceal their identity and the buildings across were submerged still to conceal the identity of the school, This state of the

field encourages neither the P.E teachers nor the pupils especially the girls to teach or learn P.E from there respectively. Some playgrounds were littered with polythene bags locally known as 'kaveera', normally located in valleys and with a unique type of vegetation that is scanty, prickly, rough and unlevelled. Otherwise, these fields had the most unsuitable environment for P.E classes. As already explained this kind of environment works more against girls because traditionally the latter are known to be fragile and therefore not expected to working under harsh conditions (Nemigisha, 2021; Nyaguti, 2017; Williams, 2017).

In line with the poor state of the facilities, pupils of the rural school during the focus group discussion listed a number of challenges during the P.E classes, which included the poor physical environment and generally lack of equipment as the following shows:

Our field is normally flooded with water; and during the rainy season, we rarely use it. Yet there are even some stones; and kicking a stone hurts and the foot can start bleeding; and even some boys kick each other intentionally. Yet up there at school, there is very little space. Even, sometimes there are no balls or any other thing to play with. Our teachers do not normally take us for P.E instead they teach us other subjects. Yet, we would want to play other games like volley ball, Tennis, Basketball and even go for swimming but we cannot afford since our school does not have such things. (Focus group of primary six Boys from the rural school)

The primary six boys of the rural school have said it all about the P.E situation at the school; the state of the field, the inability of the school to do anything; and the despair of the boys who want to go there and learn P.E or play on their own even when the environment is not favorable.

Some fields can be green especially during and shortly after a rainy season; others can be well levelled, and so providing a conducive environment for P.E classes but for a short period because of over use of the playgrounds in most schools. The problem here is that most of the girls want to keep their femininities especially that of being clean even when the environment is dirty implying that many of them cannot enjoy the physical competency most boys enjoy. The girls thus miss out on exciting games like football, basketball, handball, volleyball, Lawn tennis, etc. in order to keep their femininities like cleanliness, quietness, shyness, etc. even during P.E classes and so keep their identity as girls, clean, quiet and slow to act as society expects them to be (Nemigisha, 2021; Scraton, 2018; Williams, 2017). This explains the impact of the socio-cultural dynamics and stereotypes on the pupils especially the girls during P.E classes.

### **The Social Environment: The Teacher – Pupil /Learner and Boy /Girl or Same Sex Relations In The P.E Classes**

Besides the physical environment, there is a social environment, which consists of interactions between the teachers and their administrators, learners and their teachers, girls and boys and interactions of the same gender especially during the pedagogy of P.E. This situation is made worse by the poor facilities and the scarcity of equipment during P'E classes which makes pupils scramble for the few that are normally there which may also be in a poor state. This normally causes quarrels and sometimes fights between pupils and teachers may become rough making the class environment hostile. The latter cannot make the learners free and responsive especially the girls that are normally harassed by boys and sometimes teachers.

During the interviews, the teachers lamented over lack of support from school administrators and fellow teachers, most of whom despised them, and could not help or provide them with what they needed most such as encouragement, equipment, facilities, books and other things

they needed most to teach and enjoy P.E. The teachers of P.E complained of making requests for simple equipment like balls, ropes, etc. to the school management; and they would not provide them, yet they would want them to continue teaching P.E. They even talked of fellow teachers who did not teach P.E, but they would laugh at them when they saw them struggling with the learners. Even when they asked them for help. Yet, in Uganda, teachers of primary school qualify to teach every school subject.

During the observations, the teachers and pupils had practices /behaviors that influenced the pedagogy of P.E in their classes. These included the way teachers treated the pupils or portioned activities to their pupils, girls and boys, the language /tone they used especially when a pupil or a group of them went wrong, etc. The pupils too had their own flaws, which sometimes elicited a reaction either from the teacher (s) or from fellow pupils. Some of these reactions became practices, which could affect the pupils individually or collectively and generally the gender relations in the pedagogy of P.E. When the P.E teachers were asked, whether they treated boys and girls equally, almost all of them said yes but some teachers said no explaining that sometimes they separate boys from girls during P.E depending on the type of activity or game. I had observed some teachers segregating pupils basing on gender during some of the classes I observed at the beginning. The boys from the co-educational rural school made this clear during the interviews as stated here:

Sometimes they separate us from girls and leave them to skip ropes or play netball because the girls do not want to play football with us because we play roughly; and girls fear we can trip them and they fall badly. (Primary six boys of the Rural Co-educational School)

One of their P. E teachers, David, confirmed this during the interviews as follows: “Sometimes we separate them because some girls don’t want to play with boys; the boys push them; and overrun them causing some of them to fall as a result.”

Generally, pupils complained of segregation whereby boys were given masculine equipment such as football or rugby ball and sent to the respective fields while girls would be given ropes or netball, and sent to the netball court or any other free space where they could play from. When primary six boys of the same rural school were asked as to whether they were treated equally or in the same way as girls, they said “no”; but one of them said: “sometimes teachers are soft on girls; and they cane us, the boys and not the girls”. When I asked teachers about this, they retorted, “Boys can be very stubborn and unruly unlike the girls”. I had observed a similar incidence in primary three of the same school where a teacher punished boys and left the girls free. When I queried him, he just said, “You don’t know these boys.” This means that boys have also been treated unjustly by their teachers and sometimes parents because culture makes them ‘strong’ and ‘wise’ and when they go wrong, normally, they are punished severely. On the contrary, girls are sometimes ignored for doing something unwise because ‘they are girls’. This happens because society considers girls to be less wise compared to boys, which creates inequalities in class and sometimes a hostile environment.

When teachers of the co-educational suburb school were asked as to who performs better in the P.E classes, all the teachers, men and women gave one answer, “the boys”; and when I asked them why, they said that “boys are strong”; and one of them, from the Muslim community school Abraham emphasized it with these words:

Boys are more active and energetic than girls; and sometimes in the upper classes, boys fight for girls. However, some girls are also picking up and some are taking over boys slowly in some games, even in ‘games of boys’ such as rugby and football”.

(Teacher Abraham from the Muslim community school)

Jonan, a male teacher from the city school when asked the same question, and why girls were not as active as the boys, according to their answers he said, “Some girls can compete favorably especially those whose breasts are still small because those with big breasts shy off”. The teachers do not know that the girls need more encouragement because traditionally they are not supposed to compete with boys. Those they call big girls are the girls who have just grown breasts and in most cases they have no bras because the breasts are small and the girls are young, and when they run or jump, their breasts’ movements make them uncomfortable, and sometimes boys laugh at them. These girls cannot perform as they would in a less abusive environment. Sometimes-even teachers abuse them when they fail to perform well or as expected.

When the P.E female teachers of the rural school were asked about the behavior of pupils during the P.E classes, they acknowledged that sometimes the pupils engage in fights, boys and even girls. One of the teachers, Jean said: "Sometimes, there is teasing and boys are normally rough and abusive". Another teacher, Jane said: “Yes, they tease, quarrel and fight each other; they even trip each other and girls; and worse when the victim is not aware. We do not normally see them but when we do, we beat or punish them accordingly”. It is common for teachers to cane pupils even when they have committed small offences. Yet corporal punishments were abolished in schools in Uganda by the ministry of Education. Traditional teachers think that the best way to punish learners is to inflict pain because that is how they were punished at home and school. The policy makers themselves are not any better, some are very traditional and others have never known any other means of resolving conflict or making young people change behavior. This kind of punishment affects the pupils negatively especially the girls whom some teachers enjoy beating because of their bodies being soft. Contrastingly, Sarah, one of the female teachers in the co-educational city school had this to say, “Some girls are also not easy and boys kick them when they misbehave or disturb them”. Personally, I observed boys harassing girls and even fellow boys who did not conform to ideal forms of masculinity. The latter are normally shy and /or small or girlish in their behavior and form or both, and those that are not interested in masculine games like football, rugby, boxing, wrestling, etc. face teasing from fellow boys and sometimes from girls and teachers as well.

Pupils also accused some teachers of injustice during the P.E classes. The boys of the single sex boarding primary school had this to say during the focus group discussions:

When running slowly because one is tired, teachers beat us or can slap as if one has committed a crime. Sometimes the field is congested because we share it with other schools, sometimes with nowhere to play from and yet they do not allow us to play or practice from the compound at school. When we want to play, the big boys refuse us. We ask a teacher for a ball and he refuses also; and we make ours out of banana fibers or ‘kaveera’ (polythene bags) and when the teachers find us, they take our balls. Yet some boys tease us, beat or take our balls too. (Primary three boys of the single sex boarding primary school)

The young boys were complaining of injustice from their teachers and the fellow pupils, the big boys. After getting the small boys’ ball (equipment), the big boys play it: and this is

bullying. In this case, the young boys suffer at the hands of both teachers and fellow pupils. This shows that the pupils are not free to play or practice whatever they learn in the P.E classes. When I asked teachers about this during the interviews, they simply said that the boys laid to me and that sometimes, they want to play when it is time for their private study. The teachers of the rural co-educational school had also accused the pupils especially the boys of misbehaving to a level of fighting each other. Sometimes the boys beat the girls during the P.E classes as the teachers of the Rural Co-educational School said: “the learners themselves misbehave and sometimes reach a level of boys fighting each other and sometimes beating or kicking the girls during the P.E classes”. Here is the girls’ voice from the same primary school of the co-educational rural school; “some boys misbehave during P.E; they abuse and bully us and sometimes kick us”. I had actually observed some of these fights and quarrels during the P.E classes. All were gender based and showed the presence of poor gender relations in the P.E classes that saturate the environment with injustice, indiscriminate, violence, abusive language, etc.

During class observations, I watched boys of primary three in the City school refusing to pass a ball to the girls, both in football and in netball at different times, passing the ball only to fellow boys until when some girls stopped playing, and that is when the teachers noticed. These were primary three girls and boys all dressed in similar shorts and T- shirts; and I could not easily distinguish boys from girls because of their age and being at the beginning of the study. The girls accused the boys of being “rough and selfish”; and the boys retorted that the teachers “favor the girls”. Yet at this level of class, primary three, there is normally little difference in body form and interests between boys and girls. During interviews, the primary six girls of the city school in response to whether their teachers treat them the same as boys or different, they said the following: “sometimes boys play alone football and we, the girls alone netball.” Some teachers accepted sometimes segregating the pupils and their reason was inadequate equipment. When I would notice inappropriate behavior or sexist tendencies with some teachers during class observations, I would discuss it with the teacher(s) concerned and then caution them. However, sometimes girls could be separated from boys in an attempt to help them gain confidence first or to find out first whether the girls would do better alone in a boys’ game like football before allowing them to mix with boys in game situations or competitions. This was done sometimes to minimize possibilities of injuries and accidents during the P.E classes until both boys and girls were familiar with the game and its rules and regulations.

## **Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The study findings include those of the physical and the social environment, all of which affect the gender relations in the P.E classes in primary school in central Uganda, and thus the social and the physical environments affect each other as well. The physical and social context of the environment greatly affect the teaching and learning of P.E as shown by the findings. The pedagogy environment for Physical Education classes, both physical and social has been found to be problematic, and so affecting the motivation for learning; and yet environment orientations have been instrumental in creating the desired environment in P.E classes especially for girls (Dillabough, 2006; Ennis, 2016; Sparks et al., 2015).

### **The Impact of the Physical Environment on the Pedagogy of P.E in Central Uganda**

Lack of essential teaching aids such as facilities, equipment, textbooks, etc. causes unpreparedness that makes it hard for teachers to think about contemporary issues like

supporting class environments and gender relations especially in a situation where every teacher at primary level in Uganda is expected to teach all school subjects. It is not even clear whether the teachers get sufficient training because at the Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTCs) in Uganda, teachers are not allowed to specialize in particular teaching subjects. This could be another cause of some teachers under looking the subject of P.E in addition to P.E not being locally and nationally examined at the primary school level. In the Gender –Education Theory, Dillabough (2006) explains how market forces such as National Exams and Grades market schools to the public when results for national exams are released. P.E is not one of the subjects that can market schools because it is not nationally examined or graded.

The study has shown that certain facilities and equipment do not favor all learners, especially those known traditionally to be for men or boys, for example, javelin, shot put, discuss, weights, football, rugby, vaults, running over hurdles, etc. Therefore, teachers themselves do not support girls to use such equipment. The girls have been seen to step aside and leave the boys to get the equipment first because culture in different parts of the world especially here in Uganda does not allow girls to scramble for such things with boys (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021; Nyaguti, 2017). In situations of scarcity like these, teachers are not encouraged either, to plan for P.E or teach it, another reason why some teachers substitute P.E classes with other subjects or leave pupils to do whatever they please during the P.E class periods. It is also important to note that the study also found that boys are not as homogenous as they have been constructed by society but are diverse; and some face consistent patterns of exclusion especially those who do not conform to Ideal forms of masculinity as Robyne and Alison (2016) found out. Therefore, good gender relations among teachers and learners, good classroom-based settings, with the necessary facilities and equipment, constitute good class relations, create a favorable environment, and these bring in better learner engagement and academic achievement for both boys and girls (Dillabough, 2006; Ennis, 2016; Sparks et al., 2015).

Interestingly, teachers, both men and women could easily notice the girls whose uniform (sports' wear) got dirty but not the boys; and this would make the girls more uncomfortable and failing to follow the class proceedings. This is simply because society expects girls and women to be clean and not boys or men. The poor state of the playground, the roughness and the dust made it hard for girls to be free and enjoy P.E because the community expects them to be clean even when they work or study from dusty and dirty environments (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). Even their teachers and fellow pupils did not expect the girls especially those who had grown some breasts to be soiled and they would tease and or laugh at them. The limited facilities and equipment therefore work more against the girls than the boys because culturally, girls are not supposed to compete with boys for these things or for anything or else the boys could trip or beat and abuse them as well (Dorji, 2020; Nemigisha, 2013, 2021; Njuguna, 2016). Some schools had comfortable playgrounds that were not bare, dusty, or rugged and the girls were motivated and encouraged. Thus, girls especially the elder ones were normally unable to enjoy P.E classes in such 'hostile' environment(s) and where possible they would dodge the P.E classes (Nemigisha, 2021; Scraton, 2018) .

Physical Education classes in primary school in Uganda are essentially conducted outside in playgrounds unlike at secondary school level where some classes are theoretical and so taught in door. When pupils are outside classroom walls, they are free and so they want to do anything they feel like including teasing their fellow pupils, and in most cases, they think that the teachers are not seeing them. Poor gender relations become eminent, masculinities and

femininities get at play (Connell, 2008; Dillabough, 2006; Hickey & Mooney, 2012). Unfortunately most learners especially boys, and male teachers do not seem to notice because it is part of the culture that boys /men dominate girls /women in everyday life situations especially here in Uganda and other developing countries. This is similar to what most feminists have accused the male race of, discriminating against and dominating women /girls and treating them like second-class citizens in families and communities like churches and schools (Dillabough, 2006; Kwesiga, 2015; Nemigisha, 2013; Williams, 2017), etc.

Some schools did not have their own playgrounds; others had very little space where they could have a small P. E class while others moved some distances to access a playground, which was normally shared with other schools and / or community members. Yet the minimum standards set by the ministry of Education for schools in Uganda require each school to have its own playground where children can play freely in a free atmosphere (Ministry of Education, 2010). Schools whose fields were a distance away from the school were not teaching P.E because by the time they would reach the field, half the time has already be gone and normally it is one lesson of forty minutes. Moreover, there was no time interval between the classes; and the very teacher of P.E could be the one going in for the next class and sometimes the next teacher would complain. Thus, the school timetables and other schedules sometimes made it hard for effective teaching of P.E demotivating both the pupils and the teachers. The situation would become worse with the scarcity of the equipment, which would make pupils scramble for the few that were there and sometimes in a poor state. This would affect more the girls discouraging them from actively participating in P.E classes. Yet, the P.E curriculum, the P.E and Sports policy together with the Gender sector policy do encourage the teachers to involve equally, boys and girls in all subjects including P.E and games without bias or discrimination (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016, 2022).

### **The Impact of the Social Environment on the Pedagogy of P.E in Primary Schools in Central Uganda**

The social environment of the P.E classes in the study was also found to be problematic with the boys and sometimes teachers harassing the girls, and sometimes the boys pushing or tripping them during the games. More of what was taking place in the P.E classes was of gender structure where teachers and pupils had a tendency of teaching and learning respectively what traditionally /culturally was considered to be suitable for boys/men and girls women (Flintoff & Scraton, 2008; Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). Some of the teachers used discouraging and abusive language during P.E instruction like some of the boys while making fun of the girls when they would fail to throw or run or jump like them, and this would discourage the girls. Most of the teachers could not even pay attention to this teasing and sometimes they would not notice the teasing or harassment of girls by the boys. Some of the teachers thought it was normal because they disturbed /teased the girls themselves and so they would ignore them. This again shows how masculinities and femininities are perpetuated and 'legalized' by school communities especially in a situation where gender stereotypes are reproduced and re-enforced (Connell, 2008; Dillabough, 2006; Nemigisha, 2013, 2021; Scraton, 2018).

Masculinities and femininities make P.E classes problematic because they create a hostile class environment as masculinities and femininities compete and contradict. The girls, and the boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity suffer rejection or harassment from the other learners and sometimes from teachers (Dillabough, 2006). The author explains further that particular attention in schools has been put on the role of masculinity and femininity in shaping class relations and gender inequality. Besides, many authors have cited masculinities

and femininities as the cause of inequalities in classes and schools all over the world as many authors ascertain (Hill, 2015; Holdaway, 2016; Robyne & Alison, 2016; Skelton et al., 2019; Stride et al., 2018; Williams, 2017) etc. There were many complaints during the interviews about the hostile environment in which the pupils study P.E. including teachers segregating them during the P.E classes, for example, giving girls netball or ropes to skip and boys football. This implies that sometimes the P.E teaching and learning environment is neither friendly nor gender responsive and so affecting negatively the pupils. Hence, the need for the teaching and learning processes in P.E that pay particular attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys and so gender responsive (Baxter et al., 2022; Dorji, 2020; Njuguna, 2016; UNESCO, 2017a; UNESCO Bangkok, 2017b).

Individuals have been known to construct gender identities in relation to current competing forms of gender (masculinities and femininities) and this is negotiated continually throughout one's life time because gender is dynamic and changes with culture (Dillabough, 2006; Kaabwe, 2000). This also shows that learners' identity and behavior can be affected by emerging and changing masculinities and femininities in schools and communities where they live. Beside, at school, some learners may keep away or absent themselves or dodge classes or be in class but dormant because of the emerging and competing masculinities and femininities in that class or school at large (Dillabough, 2006). Masculinities and femininities are the root cause of gender inequalities in class and school at large and so affect class relations; and sometimes create a crisis of identity among the learners, which may cause fights or/and quarrels. Girls can also be hostile to boys especially those boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity because masculinity is not exclusive of boys/men because it is not determined by sex. Some girls /women have been referred to as boys /men respectively because they possess masculine features and character and masculinity is not determined by sex (Connell, 2008; Dillabough, 2006; Dillabough, 2009).

The rural school had more of its teachers and pupils tied up by socio-cultural stereotypes with more boundaries for girls than those for boys. The children of the city appeared to have a broader social class than the rural schools with the children of the medium income earners being at an advantage compared to those of the low-income earners. Since school is an extension of the community, even the gender is played out differently, There were rigid and stable masculinities and femininities in the rural school than the urban ones because of the social class in town set ups and schools (Dillabough, 2006; Dillabough, 2009). The authors ascertain that schools in the urban areas have children of the rich dominating children of the low-income earners or the poor. It is now known that gender is played out differently in urban and rural set ups due to different socio- cultural backgrounds. The rural setups have masculinities and femininities that are more rigid, and so more gender stereotypes at play; where boys and male teachers dominate the girls and even female teachers. In city or town schools, there are many femininities and masculinities emerging and competing. So children from the remote areas of a country like Uganda especially those from far off villages and the town slums and other poor areas face more effects of inequality and discrimination. Girls and boys that study from such poor schools of poverty-stricken areas and /or slums) suffer the same or more inequalities and effects of gendered environments.

Tight school schedules worsen the situation especially where P.E is presumably taught after class or not time tabled in normal class hours where it becomes hard to distinguish between P.E and Sports. Some schools actually claim to teach P.E after class during the time for games /co- curricular activities when they do not actually teach it (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). The

sports teachers may be in the playgrounds helping other pupils who come for practice in various games, and not teaching P.E. This implies that P.E sometimes is overshadowed by sports in some schools; and so taught seldom or only to lower classes. In such circumstances, the teachers may ignore important aspects of class preparation and teaching such as the class environment, both physical and social. Besides, teachers have sometimes intoxicated the learning environment by their insensitivity to socio-cultural dynamics and inability to deconstruct stereotypes that hold learners captive in class (Dillabough, 2006; Dorji, 2020; Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). Some of these teachers use a language that is abusive and gender insensitive, thereby polluting the whole class environment (Dillabough, 2006; Njuguna, 2016; UNESCO Bangkok, 2017b). Besides, the equipment available also determines the structuring/formations of the P.E Class. The P.E Class formations /learner groupings together with good gender relations make the P.E Class Environment good and friendly enabling effective pedagogy.

The fact that P.E is not examinable at the primary school level, teachers/ administrators do not give it priority and they think it is not important or equivalent to other subjects. It is this mentality that makes teachers teach P.E the way they want and even use its time for the nationally examined school subjects. The teachers and the school administrators know very well that there is no accountability for P.E. It is the same reasons that cause the institutional neglect of P.E, allowing the pedagogical environment to remain toxic because there is no accountability for the learning outcomes. This instructional vacuum of leaving pupils (girls and boys) on their own instead of instructing them, with or without equipment, reinforces hegemonic masculinity as the “the strongest”, the boys naturally seize the space in the absence of the structured instruction or teachers. Because of the competing nature of the masculinities, the gendered environment is hostile to all but the ‘athletic elite’, thereby marginalizing both the girls and the boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary**

Many schools were found with poor playgrounds, some were unlevelled and others levelled but dusty while some schools did not have their own playground and some schools that were near each other shared playgrounds, and sometimes with the community around the school, which left most of such fields dusty, rough and bare. The poor state of these play grounds becomes worse in a rainy season becoming muddy, and slippery and taking long to become dry and ready for use. Some playgrounds were being used as grazing areas and passages for both animals and humans. The dusty and bare playgrounds make it hard for pupils especially girls to enjoy P.E because cleanliness is a femininity; and so most girls could not be comfortable in such playgrounds during P.E classes. Moreover, in a situation where there were no provisions for bathing after the P.E classes. Boys were not normally bothered with cleanliness or taking showers because masculinities and femininities always contrast and contradict. In summary, the environment in which the pedagogy of P.E takes place involves more than the play grounds and courts and other facilities such as swimming pools and equipment of all sorts including ropes, balls, cones, etc. but the other learners and the teachers as well. The relations between the last two form the major reasons as to why gender relations form part of the environment, the social environment in particular. The masculinities and femininities, poor equipment and facilities make P.E classes problematic because they create a hostile class environment as masculinities and femininities compete and contradict in dusty /muddy unlevelled playgrounds.

The girls and the boys that do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity suffer rejection and harassment from the other learners and sometimes from teachers

### **Conclusion**

The issue of equipment and facilities in Ugandan schools in particular was and is wanting because many schools lack the necessary equipment and facilities, which affects the social environment as well and so making the P.E class environment critical. The P.E Class environment in the Primary Schools in Central Uganda was gendered and not gender responsive to both the teachers and the pupils, more so in the co-educational schools. The physical environment was inadequate with poor insufficient facilities and equipment as the findings show. Most of the playgrounds were rough and unlevelled, dusty in a dry season and muddy in a rainy one rendering the grounds uncomfortable and dangerous especially to the girls and the women teachers whom society expects to remain clean despite the changes in the environment. Therefore, the P.E physical class environment was more hostile to the girls than the boys and the teachers.

The social environment was not any better with teachers complaining about lack of support from the school administrators and fellow teachers; pupils too complaining about school administrators' not providing equipment and facilities; and teachers harassing, beating and segregating the pupils during the P.E classes. Boys also accused teachers of favoring girls and being unfair to them when they go wrong. The girls also accused teachers and boys of abusing, harassing and calling them names, and boys sometimes kicking, tripping and pushing them. Small /and young boys accused the big boys of taking their improvised equipment, beating, harassing and making their life difficult. Boys that did not conform to ideal forms of masculinity suffered too during P.E classes especially in the co-educational schools because they were harassed by the 'big boys' and the girls as well. Generally, boys and the teachers dominated the girls; and with inadequate equipment, poor facilities, hegemonic masculinities, and sports prowess, it was more problematic in the co-educational schools. Moreover, the pupils would abuse and fight each other especially the boys. The poor gender relations in the P.E classes and inadequate /lack of facilities and equipment made the class environment most of the time hostile and not exciting. However, the primary three teachers did not have more complaints about their classes as compared to those of primary six, for example the elder boys and girls had more issues of socio – cultural gender relations, even with their teachers.

### **Recommendations**

Since this study was on the class environment of P.E in primary schools in central Uganda, it can as well extend to ordinary level secondary school in P.E classes here in Uganda and in areas like dance. That is to say, that this research can also extend to other subjects especially those that were originally for boys especially the natural sciences, mathematics and others especially those that were purely for girls.

It is important that teachers are much aware of the policies that affect them and their work. I therefore recommend that the Ministry of Education and Sports should reach out to the schools and sensitize administrators and their teachers about the policy aspects that concern them. This can be done through circulars or seminars where questions can be asked and answered.

There is also need for the policy makers /ministry of Education and curriculum developers to distinguish between P.E and sports or school sport so that the pupils and their teachers do not take P.E and Sports to be synonymous. It is dangerous for the two, P.E and Sports to be taken as one because then the educational values and objectives of P.E disappear. The critical and

enduring focus in P.E is on a child, a learner, which is never the case with sports. Sports is for the interested and those who know the game.

Teachers need to know why and how to encourage the girls, and the boys who do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity right from the teacher training colleges. Then all learners can get good and enriching experiences in the P.E classes. The overall impact would be a motivating good class environment for P.E with improved class gender relations, better learning experiences, skills, empowerment and enjoyment of the P.E classes.

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