

Breaking the Silence: Unveiling Academic and Social Hurdles Faced by Introverted Students in Physical Activities

Article History:

Received: 11 September 2024
First Decision: 29 September 2024
Published: 10 April 2025

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Abstract

This study explored how teacher encouragement and positive reinforcement influenced introverted students' participation in physical education (PE) classes. Through in-depth interviews with Grades 7 to 10 introverted PE students at Division of Cabuyao, Laguna, Philippines, the research delved into the academic and social challenges they faced, particularly on their struggles with social anxiety and discomfort in group settings. Through phenomenological research design, the findings revealed that positive reinforcement, such as praise for small successes, played a crucial role in boosting their confidence, enabling them to engage more actively in PE activities. Moreover, the study highlighted how introverted students, when given leadership roles in smaller, less socially demanding group settings, could overcome their anxiety and contribute meaningfully to class. Hence, by adapting teaching practices to accommodate introverted learners, the study emphasized the importance of creating inclusive environments that help these students break free from their silence and thrive academically and socially in PE classes. The findings ultimately suggested that teacher support and tailored strategies are key to fostering a positive learning atmosphere for all personality types.

Keywords: introverted learners, Physical Education, academic hurdles, social anxiety, physical activities, positive reinforcement



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INTRODUCTION

Physical activity encompasses any bodily movement that engages skeletal muscles and results in energy expenditure where this broad category includes a wide range of activities, from simple movements such as walking or stretching to more vigorous exercises like running or participating in sports. As such, Marquez et al. (2020) emphasized that physical activity can be done during free time, as part of daily tasks like walking to school, or even as part of one's work and it is important for maintaining good health, including heart health, weight control, mental health and overall well-being. Hence, World Health Organization (2024) defines physical activity as both moderate and intense levels of movement that improve health. More so, regular physical activity has been proven to help prevent and manage diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some types of cancer as it can also help lower blood pressure, maintain a healthy weight, and

improve mental health, overall well-being and quality of life. On the same note, regular physical activity and physical education also help improve students' academic performance and protect their health (World Health Organization, 2022).

However, introverted students often face unique challenges when it comes to participating in physical activities. As physical education (PE) is an essential part of students' education to promote physical health and social interaction, introverted students tend to experience heightened anxiety and performance pressure (Stewart, 2019). These students may struggle with group activities, social interactions and public performances that are common in many PE classes and this situation raises important questions about how other PE teachers handle similar challenges and accommodate introverted students. Understanding how different teaching methods and classroom environments can either support or hinder the

participation of introverted students. Hence, this is crucial in creating more inclusive and supportive physical education experiences (Eden et al., 2024).

However, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically focusing on the needs of introverted students in PE classes. Chalkley and Landais (2022) covered the general benefits of physical activity and strategies for teaching. There is limited focus on how PE instructors can adjust their practices to support introverted learners, as these students require different approaches, such as smaller group activities, less competitive environments, or quiet leadership roles to feel more comfortable and engaged. The lack of targeted strategies for these students in PE can prevent them from fully participating and enjoying physical activities, which can have lasting effects on their physical and social development (Sangco, 2022). This gap in research highlighted the need for more attention on how PE teacher can adapt their teaching methods and classroom environments to foster a more inclusive atmosphere for introverted students.

This study aimed in addressing the above stated phenomenon by exploring how PE teachers can better accommodate introverted students. Specifically, the research will investigate how different teaching techniques, classroom structures and support systems can encourage more active participation among introverted students. By examining also the barriers these students faced, such as social anxiety and a lack of confidence, the study seeks to propose strategies that make physical education more accessible and enjoyable for them. The findings from this study could help inform PE practices in schools, ensuring that introverted students are given the opportunity to thrive in physical activities without feeling excluded or overwhelmed.

LITERATURES

Characteristics and Needs of Introverted Learners. Introverted students tend to be inwardly focused, often preferring solitary activities or small group interactions over

larger social gatherings. They typically recharge their energy by spending time alone in quiet spaces, where they can engage in deep reflection and process information in a meaningful way (Shalevska, 2021). In educational settings, introverted students often excel in tasks that require independent thinking and introspection, such as written assignments, reflective activities and solitary studies (Le et al., 2023). Moreover, introverted learners generally prefer environments that value depth in relationships and experiences, focusing on quality rather than quantity in social interactions (Tuovinen et al., 2019). These students may seek solitude or smaller, less socially demanding contexts to optimize their learning, and they often contribute to the learning community in unique ways when allowed to leverage their personal strengths (Wang et al., 2020).

However, while introverted students often perform well in independent tasks, traditional, collaborative learning environments present significant challenges. The increased reliance on group work and collaborative discussions in many educational settings may not align with the needs of introverted learners (Tuovinen et al., 2019). Hence, research conducted by Peñeda et al. (2019) highlighted the introverted student may experience difficulties in environments that do not provide sufficient time for processing information, potentially leading to anxiety and disengagement. Furthermore, introverted learners tend to require more time to reflect before responding, and when placed under pressure to participate in quick, group discussions, they may withdraw or contribute less, limiting their engagement (Tuovinen et al., 2019). Consequently, it is important to create a learning environment that accommodates both introverted and extroverted students by recognizing and respecting their differing social and academic needs (Shalevska, 2021).

Challenges in Collaborative Learning Environments. Collaborative learning environments, which emphasize group activities, discussions, and spontaneous participation, present particular challenges for introverted students (Deysolong, 2023).

Specifically, these students often struggle in settings that prioritize social interaction, as such environments do not align with their intrinsic need for solitude and introspection (Lagat and Conception, 2022). The pressure to contribute quickly in dynamic group settings can cause anxiety and hinder introverted learners from fully processing the material before responding. As Deysolong (2023) explained, the fast-paced nature of group discussions and collaborative tasks can be overwhelming for introverted students, who may need additional time to reflect on the material before participating. Consequently, these students often find themselves disengaged or marginalized in group-based activities that do not align with their preferred learning styles. Thus, it is crucial to recognize and address the unique needs of introverted learners to ensure their active participation and academic success in such environments.

In response to these challenges, educators must develop strategies that accommodate introverted students within collaborative learning frameworks. For example, incorporating more flexible structures within group activities, such as offering preparation time or allowing for written contributions, may help introverted learners engage more fully in the learning process (Shalevska, 2021). Additionally, as suggested by Wang et al., (2020), providing opportunities for introverted students to reflect individually before engaging in group discussions may help alleviate some of the anxiety associated with spontaneous participation. Thus, an inclusive approach to teaching that considers the needs of both introverted and extroverted learners can foster a more equitable learning environment and support academic success for all students (Deysolong, 2023).

Inclusive Education and Tailored Teaching Approaches. Inclusive education, which emphasizes providing equal learning opportunities for all students, plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of introverted learners. According to Salcedo and Cabañero (2023), inclusive education ensures that all students, regardless of their personality traits

or learning preferences, are provided with the support necessary to succeed. For introverted students, this can involve creating environments that allow for greater independence and flexibility, such as quiet study spaces or tasks that prioritize individual work over group activities. As Hussein (2024) suggests, educators can promote greater participation and engagement among introverted students by modifying teaching methods and providing opportunities that align with their learning preferences. Customizing instructional approaches for these students can help them feel more comfortable and empowered in their learning environments.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has emphasized the importance of inclusive education through policies such as DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, which stresses the need to accommodate students with diverse learning needs, including those with introverted tendencies (Cabañero, 2023). These policies highlight the necessity for teachers to adjust curriculum materials, teaching strategies, and assessments to better suit the learning preferences of all students. As DepEd Order No. 44 s. 2021 further suggests, educators are required to adapt their teaching to meet the individual learning needs, pace and preferences of students by providing a more individualized and inclusive learning environment, educators can help introverted students overcome barriers to participation and support their academic achievement, ultimately fostering a more equitable educational experience for all learners (Stewart, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study employed a phenomenological approach to gather the necessary data through interviews with physical education (PE) learners. According to McLeod (2024), phenomenology in qualitative research is characterized by a focus in understanding the meaning of lived experience from the perspective of the individual. Thus, the focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of introverted learners with regards to accommodations, teaching

practices, and classroom environments that influence their engagement in PE activities.

Participants of the Study. The study utilized purposive sampling to select 10 participants, consisting of Grades 7 to 10 introverted PE students from the Division of Cabuyao, Laguna, Philippines. Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure the inclusion of students who have relevant experiences or characteristics related to the research focus. According to Etikan et al. (2016), purposive sampling allows for the deliberate selection of individuals who possess specific qualities or experiences that are relevant to the study. The selected students were those who could provide in-depth insights into the challenges and experiences of introverted individuals in physical education activities. By specifically choosing students who fit this criterion, the researcher aimed to gather rich data on how introverted students engage with PE and the barriers they faced in participating. This approach allowed the researcher to gather meaningful and specific responses that directly addressed the research questions.

Research Instrument. Using a pre-designed set of semi-structured questions, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect the necessary information from the participants and address the study's research problems.

Data Collection Procedure. The data collection procedure for this study involved several systematic steps to ensure the gathering of meaningful and relevant data from the participants. Initially, the researcher sought approval from the school administration at the Division of Cabuyao in Laguna to conduct the study with Grades 7 to 10 PE students. To comply with the ethical protocol of employing minor participants, the researcher also sought the consent of their respective parents. Hence, consent forms were distributed to and collected from the parents with corresponding signatures indicating their conformity in the participation of their children with the study. Once approval were obtained, participants were selected using purposive sampling. After the selection of participants, the researcher

arranged an individual, one-on-one interview with each student. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that key research questions were addressed. A set of open-ended questions was developed to explore students' experiences, challenges, and barriers in participating with physical activities during PE classes. These questions aimed to capture their personal perceptions, feelings and specific difficulties they faced as introverted students in a typically extroverted classroom environment.

The interviews were conducted in a quiet, private setting to ensure that the students felt comfortable and could express themselves openly. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, ensuring that their responses were accurately captured. The researcher transcribed the recordings for analysis.

Data Analysis. The audio-recorded interviews of the participants were transcribed verbatim, and transcriptions were then examined in detail. The data analysis for this study followed a thematic analysis approach, which is commonly used in qualitative research – to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher then initially immersed himself with the data by reading through the transcripts multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the students' responses. The analysis focused in identifying recurring themes and patterns related to the challenges introverted students faced in engaging with PE activities, as well as on the strategies or supports that helped them improve their participation. This process allowed for the extraction of detailed and meaningful insights from the data, aligning with the study's design.

The analysis process involved a few key steps. First, the researcher identified initial codes by highlighting relevant excerpts of the interview data that were aligned with the research questions (Hillier, 2022). These codes were then organized into broader themes based on commonalities in the students' experiences and perspectives. The emerging themes were

reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflect the core patterns present in the data. This iterative process of coding and theme development helped to highlight key challenges introverted students faced in participating in PE activities, such as social anxiety, lack of confidence, and discomfort in group settings (Mishra & Drey, 2022).

Next, the researcher connected these themes to existing literature on introverted students' experiences in physical education. Tuovinen et al., (2019) have shown that introverted students tend to feel overwhelmed in collaborative and high-energy environments, which could contribute to their selective participation in PE activities. Additionally, the analysis highlighted the importance of individual and smaller group activities in accommodating introverted students, as these environments allow for more comfort and less anxiety (Deysolong, 2023).

The findings from the thematic analysis were used to suggest strategies for improving the PE experiences of introverted students, including offering more individualized physical activities, fostering a supportive environment, and providing opportunities for quiet leadership roles. This analysis aligns with the work of Braun and Clarke (2013), who emphasize the importance of inclusive education and adapting teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with introverted traits.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed several important themes related to the experiences of introverted students in physical education (PE) classes. With the employment of thematic analysis in analyzing the data extracted from the interview, the following key themes emerged: 1) social anxiety and discomfort in group settings; 2) preference for individual activities; 3) the need for supportive peer relationships; 4) the importance of quiet leadership roles; 5) barriers to communication with peers and teachers; 6) role of teacher understanding and adaptability, and, 7) teacher encouragement and positive reinforcement.

These findings align with previous researches that highlighted the challenges faced by introverted students in more socially demanding environments, such as PE classes (Matildo & Dagondon, 2020).

The participants' experiences, with participant codes labeled as IL PE 1 (Introverted Learner 1 in Physical Education) to IL PE 10 (Introverted Learner 10 in Physical Education) were analyzed with responses providing insights into how the lesson on accommodating introverted students in PE was delivered. These reflections highlighted the strategies PE teachers used to engage introverted students and address their unique challenges in class. The responses reveal how the teachers tailored activities to create a supportive and inclusive environment for these students, applying the coping strategies discussed during the lesson. This process underscores the importance of professional development and effective teaching methods that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in PE, ensuring that both students and teachers are better equipped to navigate the complexities of diverse learning styles.

Theme 1. Social Anxiety and Discomfort in Group Settings. Social anxiety and discomfort in group settings are common challenges for introverted students in physical education (PE) classes. Many introverted learners report the feeling of overwhelmed and self-conscious in large, noisy groups, which can lead to a reluctance to participate in team-based activities or any activity that requires significant interaction with others (Kazerounian, 2017). This anxiety often results in selective participation, where introverted students may withdraw from certain tasks or avoid engaging in collaborative exercises altogether.

The pressure of introverted students to interact in highly social and physically demanding environments, such as PE, exacerbates their discomfort, making it difficult for them to focus on the activity itself. Instead, they may find more solace and greater engagement in individual exercises or smaller group activities, where they feel less visible and can avoid the stress of

large social interactions. This challenge underscores the importance of creating PE environments that reduce anxiety by offering a variety of activity types and accommodating different personality traits (Boonekamp et al., 2020). The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Nakakaramdam ako ng kaba kapag kailangang magtrabaho sa malalaking grupo sa P.E. dahil ang lahat ay nakatingin at ayokong maging sentro ng atensyon". [Trans: I feel nervous when I have to work in large groups in P.E. because everyone is looking at me, and I don't want to be the center of attention].
IL PE 2

"Mas gusto ko ang mga aktibidad na mag-isa lang ako o kasama ang isa o dalawang tao. Mas komportable ako at nakakapag-focus nang hindi maraming tao sa paligid". [Trans: I prefer activities where I'm alone or with just one or two people. I feel more comfortable and can focus better without many people around].
IL PE 5

"Minsan mahirap sumali dahil ang ingay at ang daming nagsasalita ay nagdudulot ng kaba. Sana mas maraming tahimik na aktibidad kung saan hindi ko kailangang makipag-interact sa lahat". [Trans: Sometimes it's hard to join because the noise and all the talking make me anxious. I wish there were more quiet activities where I don't have to interact with everyone].
IL PE 6

These students often struggle with the pressure to engage in highly social environments, making it difficult for them to participate fully in activities. Therefore, offering a variety of activities that cater to different personality types, such as individual exercises and smaller group settings, can reduce anxiety and help introverted students feel more comfortable and engaged in P.E. (Monteiro et al., 2021).

Creating a more inclusive environment in PE can significantly benefit introverted students by

acknowledging their unique needs solely by integrating more individualized activities and minimizing the pressure of large group interactions. Educators can foster a supportive atmosphere where introverted students feel more confident and willing to participate (Freeman-Green et al., 2023). This approach not only helps introverted learners but also promotes a more engaging and inclusive PE environment for all students.

Theme 2. Preference for Individual Activities. Introverted students in physical education (PE) classes often exhibit a preference for individual activities rather than engaging in group-based exercises. This preference arises from their inclination to seek solitude and minimize social interaction, allowing them to focus on personal performance without the pressure of interacting within larger groups. For introverted learners, the ability to engage in tasks that involve fewer social demands helps to alleviate the anxiety or discomfort associated with group dynamics (Ren & Evans, 2020). The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Mas gusto ko po yung mga gawain na mag-isa lang ako, kasi hindi ko kayang magtrabaho o makipaglaro sa mga maraming tao. Madali akong nakakaramdam ng kaba at hiya". [Trans: I prefer activities where I can do it alone because I find it hard to work or play with a lot of people. I easily feel nervous and shy].
IL PE 6

"Kapag maraming tao, nakakaramdam ako ng pressure at nahihirapan akong mag-concentrate sa laro. Mas gusto ko po yung mga simple at tahimik na Gawain". [Trans: When there are a lot of people, I feel pressured and struggle to concentrate on the game. I prefer simpler and quieter activities].
IL PE 9

"Mas nakakaramdam ako ng komportable kapag nag-iisa lang ako o kasama ang mga kaibigan ko sa maliit na grupo. Hindi ko po kaya yung maglaro sa harap ng maraming tao". [Trans: I feel more comfortable when I'm alone or

with my close friends in a small group. I can't handle playing in front of a large group of people]. IL PE 10

Truly, the preference for individual activities highlights the importance of designing PE programs that accommodate a range of learning styles, including the preferences of introverted students by incorporating more solo-focused tasks within the curriculum, teachers can ensure that introverted learners can participate actively and confidently, while reducing the social pressures often present in group activities (Colquitt et al., 2017).

In conclusion, recognizing and addressing the preference of introverted students for individual-focused activities in PE is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Educators should consider diversifying teaching methods to accommodate the varying needs of all students, ensuring that introverted learners are given the opportunity to thrive in physical education settings (Colquitt et al., 2017).

Theme 3. Need for Supportive Peer Relationships. Supportive peer relationships are crucial for introverted students, especially in physical education (PE) settings, as they provide emotional comfort and social security during activities. Introverted students tend to feel more at ease and are more likely to participate when they have a trusted friend or peer to support them in PE activities (Gowing, 2019). These relationships help mitigate feelings of isolation and social anxiety, promoting a more inclusive and less stressful environment for these learners. The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Mas komportable akong mag-ehersisyo kapag may kasama akong kaibigan, kasi nawawala yung kaba ko. Kung mag-isa ako, parang masyado akong iniisip ng ibang tao at nakakastress. Pero kapag kasama ko ang kaibigan ko, nagiging masaya at magaan yung pakiramdam ko, kaya mas nakakaya ko mag-participate sa mga aktibidad". [Trans: I feel more

comfortable exercising when I'm with a friend because it helps lessen my nervousness. When I'm alone, I feel like people are watching me, and it becomes stressful. But when I'm with a friend, I feel happy and at ease, which makes it easier for me to participate in the activities]. IL PE 7

"Kapag may kasamang kaibigan, hindi ko masyadong nararamdaman yung kaba ko sa harap ng ibang tao. Para sa akin, mas nakakagaan ng loob yung may kasama ka sa mga physical activities, lalo na kung hindi ako komportable sa mga malalaking grupo. Mas madali ko din nakukuha yung mga instructions kapag may nag-aalalay sa akin". [Trans: When I'm with a friend, I don't feel as nervous in front of others. For me, having someone with me during physical activities helps calm my nerves, especially if I'm not comfortable in large groups. I also find it easier to follow instructions when I have someone supporting me]. IL PE 8

"Ayoko mag-isa sa mga activities, mas gusto ko yung may kasama akong kaibigan para mas madali. Nakatutulong kasi sila na hindi ko maramdaman na naiiba ako o na hindi ko kaya yung activity. Pag may kasama, nararamdaman kong may makakausap ako at hindi ako mag-isa sa mga challenges". [Trans: I don't like being alone in activities; I prefer having a friend with me because it's easier. They help me feel like I'm not different or incapable of doing the activity. When I have someone with me, I feel like I have someone to talk to and I'm not alone in facing challenges] IL PE 9

Fostering positive peer relationships in PE classes has significant implications for introverted students. When educators encourage groupings that allow for emotional support among students, introverted learners are more likely to overcome their reluctance to participate in physical activities. As Gowing

(2019) suggests, the presence of a supportive peer can reduce the anxiety that often hinders participation, leading to greater engagement and enjoyment of P.E. classes. Thus, P.E. teachers can play a critical role in creating opportunities for students to form meaningful connections with their peers, thereby improving both social and academic outcomes. In conclusion, supportive peer relationships are essential in helping introverted students feel comfortable and engaged in P.E. activities. By fostering environments that encourage collaboration and trust, educators can enhance the participation and well-being of introverted learners, ensuring they are not left behind in the physical education curriculum. As highlighted by Gowing (2019), the role of peers in promoting social and emotional support is invaluable in creating inclusive and effective learning environments.

Theme 4. Importance of Quiet Leadership Roles.

Introverted students often demonstrate leadership qualities in more subtle, less visible ways, particularly when they are offered opportunities for quiet leadership roles. These roles allow introverted individuals to guide and assist others without the pressure of being the center of attention, which aligns with their preference for more reflective and personal forms of engagement (Rozentals, 2024). In physical education (PE) classes, where extroverted personalities often dominate, introverted students may find it challenging to participate in traditional leadership roles, such as captaining teams or leading group activities. The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Mas gusto ko po kasi yung mga gawain na hindi masyadong magulo at malalaking grupo. Pag ako po ay may pagkakataon na mag-lead ng maliit na grupo o magtulong-tulong sa mga kklase, mas komportable ako at mas nagiging produktibo. Hindi ko po kasi kaya ang pressure na mag-lead sa harap ng maraming tao, kaya't mas nagiging masaya at epektibo ako sa mga ganitong setup". [Trans: I prefer activities that are not too chaotic and

involve large groups. When I have the chance to lead a small group or collaborate with my classmates, I feel more comfortable and become more productive. I can't handle the pressure of leading in front of many people, so I am much happier and more effective in these kinds of setups]. IL PE 6

"Sa klase po namin, may mga pagkakataon na binibigyan kami ng pagkakataon na mag-lead, ngunit hindi ako kailanman naging komportable sa mga ganitong sitwasyon. Mas gusto ko yung mga pagkakataon na nag-aassist ako sa mga kklase ko nang hindi ako ang sentro ng atensyon. Ang pagiging lider sa harap ng lahat ay nakakapagbigay ng takot sa akin, pero kapag natutulungan ko sila sa likod ng mga eksena, nararamdaman ko na mas may halaga ako sa grupo". [Trans: In our class, there are times when we are given the chance to lead, but I have never felt comfortable in such situations. I prefer opportunities where I assist my classmates without being the center of attention. Being a leader in front of everyone makes me feel scared, but when I help behind the scenes, I feel that I am more valuable to the group]. IL PE 5

"Nakita ko na po na mas maganda ang kinalabasan ng mga gawain kapag may pagkakataon ang bawat isa na mag-contribute, hindi kailangan maging leader sa harap ng lahat. Mas magaan ang pakiramdam ko kapag ang mga lider ay may mahinahong paraan ng pamumuno. Ang pagiging leader sa harap ng maraming tao ay may pressure at hindi ko yun kaya, pero kapag may chance na magtulongan at mag-lead sa maliliit na sitwasyon, mas nagiging masaya at epektibo kami bilang grupo". [Trans: I noticed that activities turn out better when everyone has the chance to contribute, and it's not necessary to be the leader in front of everyone. I feel lighter when the leaders have a calm

approach to leadership. Being a leader in front of many people brings pressure, and I can't handle that, but when there's an opportunity to collaborate and lead in smaller situations, we become happier and more effective as a group]. **IL P 9**

The responses of the participants emphasizing the inclusion of quiet leadership roles in PE classes can significantly impact introverted students' engagement and self-esteem. Such roles, which might include supporting peers during activities, organizing materials, or assisting teachers, provide introverted students with opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills without the anxiety that may come from more public, extroverted forms of leadership (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Offering these types of leadership opportunities allows introverted students to contribute in ways that align with their strengths, which can lead to improved participation and increased confidence in PE activities. This also reflects the need for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students with diverse personality traits.

Further, quiet leadership roles are crucial for the development and inclusion of introverted students in PE classes by providing these students with opportunities to lead in ways that match their personality traits, educators can help them feel valued and capable. Such adaptations not only support introverted students' participation but also contribute to a more inclusive and balanced learning environment.

Theme 5. Barriers to Communication with Peers and Teachers. Introverted students often face barriers to communication with peers and teachers in physical education (PE) classes. These students may struggle to express themselves in group activities, feeling overwhelmed by the social demands or finding it difficult to engage in verbal interactions. This can lead to isolation and under participation in class, affecting their overall learning experience (Deysoling, 2023). The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Minsan, nahihirapan akong magsalita sa harap ng maraming tao, lalo na kung kailangan ko pang magpakitang gilás. Mas gusto ko yung maliit na grupo lang o kaya yung mag-isa, dahil doon, mas nararamdaman kong komportable ako. Hindi ko kasi gusto yung pakiramdam na lahat ay nakatingin sa akin. Mas nakakapag-concentrate ako sa task kapag hindi ako pinapansin ng maram". [Trans: Sometimes, I find it hard to speak in front of many people, especially if I need to show off. I prefer being in a small group or alone because I feel more comfortable in those settings. I don't like the feeling of everyone looking at me. I can concentrate better on the task when I'm not being watched by so many people]. **IL PE 3**

"Kung may kaibigan akong kasama sa activity, mas magaan at masaya. Tinutulungan niya akong magpahayag ng sarili ko at tinutulungan din ako sa mga bagay na nahihirapan akong gawin. Kapag magkasama kami, hindi ko nararamdaman yung kaba o takot sa mga mata ng iba. Kaya, mas madali akong makisali at maging aktibo". [Trans: When I have a friend with me during activities, it feels lighter and more fun. They help me express myself and assist me with things I find difficult. When we are together, I don't feel the nervousness or fear of other people's eyes on me. Because of this, it's easier for me to join in and be active]. **IL PE 5**

"Mas gusto ko yung mga lider na tahimik at hindi kailangan palaging magsalita. Nakikita ko kasi na may respeto sila sa mga opinyon ng iba, at hindi nila pinipilit na magpakita ng lakas o magpalakas. Sa ganitong paraan, nakakaramdam ako ng respeto at natututo akong makinig. Pag ang lider ay tahimik, nararamdaman kong mas magaan ang trabaho at hindi ako pressured". [I prefer leaders who are quiet and don't always have to speak. I see that they respect the opinions of others and don't try to show off or

appear dominant. In this way, I feel respect for them, and I learn to listen. When a leader is quiet, I feel that the work becomes lighter and I'm not pressured]. **IL PE 7**

To address these communication challenges, teachers should use strategies that create an inclusive environment, such as offering non-verbal communication options or small group discussions. Providing a safe space for introverted students to express themselves helps improve their participation and confidence in PE classes (Ashikuzzaman, 2023). These accommodations encourage active engagement and support on their social and emotional development.

In conclusion, overcoming communication barriers is key to ensuring introverted students feel included and supported in PE. Solely, by fostering an environment where various communication methods are encouraged, teachers can help these students thrive and fully participate in physical activities (Kapur, 2019).

Theme 6. Role of Teacher Understanding and Adaptability. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting introverted students in Physical Education (P.E.), especially by understanding their unique needs and adapting their teaching methods. Providing quiet leadership roles allows introverted students to contribute confidently without the pressure of being in the spotlight, enhancing their participation in activities (Medina-Villanueva et al., 2025). The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Mas gusto ko po na mag-lead sa maliit na grupo kaysa sa harapan ng maraming tao. Mas komportable ako kapag hindi ako masyadong nakikita at naririnig. Kapag ako po ang namumuno sa maliit na grupo, mas nakakapag-focus ako sa kung paano ko matutulungan ang mga miyembro at magbigay ng mga ideya nang hindi kinakailangang magsalita ng malakas o magpokus sa atensyon ng iba". [Trans: I

prefer to lead in a small group rather than in front of many people. I feel more comfortable when I'm not too visible and audible. When I'm leading a small group, I can focus more on how to help the members and provide ideas without having to speak loudly or focus on gaining the attention of others]. **IL PE 6**

*"Nahihirapan po ako kapag kailangan kong magsalita o mag-lead sa harap ng buong klase. Gusto ko po yung mga pagkakataon na makakatulong ako nang hindi ako ang sentro ng atensyon. Kapag ako po ay pinili para mag-lead sa mas malalaking grupo, naiisip ko na baka magkamali ako, at nagiging sanhi ito ng labis na kaba at takot". [Trans: I struggle when I have to speak or lead in front of the whole class. I prefer opportunities where I can help without being the center of attention. When I am chosen to lead in larger groups, I start to worry that I might make a mistake, which causes excessive anxiety and fear]. **IL PE 1***

*"Mas okay po sa akin kapag may mga leadership roles na hindi masyadong mataas ang visibility ko. Gusto ko po ng responsibilidad, pero hindi po yung nakakaramdam ako ng sobrang pressure. Kapag ako po ay inaatasan na mag-lead sa mga maliliit na gawain, mas natututo ako at natutulungan ko ang iba nang hindi ko nararamdaman na ako lang ang tinututokang pansin". [Trans: I prefer leadership roles where my visibility isn't too high. I like responsibility, but not when I feel too much pressure. When I'm tasked to lead smaller tasks, I learn more and help others without feeling like I'm the only one being focused on]. **IL PE 7***

Truly, by recognizing and adapting to the needs of introverted learners, teachers create an inclusive environment that promotes engagement and a sense of belonging. Quiet leadership roles allow introverted students to lead in a way that suits their temperament,

improving their involvement in PE and fostering positive peer relationships (Stewart, 2019).

Lastly, teachers who adapt their methods to accommodate introverted students, including offering quiet leadership opportunities, help create a more inclusive and supportive PE environment. This approach not only benefits introverted students but enhances the classroom experience for all learners (Freeman-Green et al., 2023).

Theme 7. Teacher Encouragement and Positive Reinforcement. Teacher encouragement and positive reinforcement are crucial in supporting introverted students in physical education (PE) classes. Introverted students often struggle with leadership roles in large groups, so positive reinforcement can help build their confidence and engagement in class. Teachers' supportive actions can empower these students to take on leadership roles that align with their comfort levels (Tuovinen et al., 2020). The following are some of the participants' experiences:

"Sa tingin ko, mas magaan ang pakiramdam ko kapag binibigyan ako ng guro ng papuri o kahit simpleng pagbati. Malaking tulong ito sa akin para maging mas kumpiyansa at magsimula akong makilahok sa mga aktibidad, kahit na hindi ako komportable sa harap ng maraming tao. Kung walang encouragement mula sa guro, baka hindi ko natutunan ang maging lider kahit sa maliliit na grupo". [Trans: I feel lighter when my teacher gives me praise or even just a simple compliment. This helps me become more confident and start participating in activities, even when I'm uncomfortable in front of many people. Without encouragement from the teacher, I may not have learned to take on leadership roles, even in small groups]. IL PE 2

"Ang mga positibong salita ng guro ay nagbibigay sa akin ng lakas ng loob na sumubok ng mga bagong bagay. Kapag naririnig ko na pinapansin nila ang mga

maliit kong tagumpay, mas nagiging motivated akong magpatuloy at makilahok sa mga aktibidad na madalas akong nag-aalangan". [Trans: The positive words from my teacher give me the courage to try new things. When I hear them notice my small successes, I feel more motivated to continue and participate in activities I usually hesitate to join]. IL PE 4

"Ang pag-papuri mula sa guro ay parang nagpapaalala sa akin na kahit introvert ako, may silbi ako sa grupo. Kung wala ang encouragement ng guro, baka hindi ko pa naisip na mag-take ng leadership role, kahit na mas gusto ko na mas maliit na grupo". [Trans: The praise from the teacher reminds me that even though I'm an introvert, I still have a role in the group. Without the teacher's encouragement, I might not have considered taking a leadership role, even though I prefer smaller groups]. IL PE 8

Truly, when teachers offer praise and recognition, introverted students are more likely to feel valued and encouraged to participate. This positive feedback can motivate them to take on quieter leadership roles, such as guiding small groups or organizing tasks. Adapting teaching methods to include reinforcement helps create an inclusive and supportive environment that meets the needs of all students, including introverts (Tuovinen et al., 2020).

In conclusion, positive reinforcement from teachers is key to empowering introverted students to engage and take on leadership roles in PE. Hence, by fostering an atmosphere of encouragement, teachers can enhance students' participation and build their self-esteem, leading to greater success in physical education (Stewart, 2019).

Overall, the findings suggest that in order to better support introverted students in PE classes, educators should consider creating more inclusive environments by offering a

balance of individual and group activities, fostering supportive peer relationships, and providing opportunities for quiet leadership. These strategies can help alleviate the anxiety introverted students experience in P.E. and encourage greater participation. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of adapting teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of all learners, particularly those who may struggle in traditional, extrovert-oriented classroom settings (Van Geel et al., 2023).

Conclusion. The study revealed that encouragement and positive reinforcement from teachers play a significant role in empowering introverted students. As expressed in the responses, when teachers provide praise, even for small accomplishments, it boosts the students' confidence and encourages them to engage in activities they would otherwise avoid. This recognition not only helps introverted students feel more comfortable but also motivates them to participate in both group and individual tasks. Without such support, introverted students might feel invisible or disconnected, which would hinder their ability to fully contribute to class activities and leadership roles.

Furthermore, positive reinforcement does more than increasing participation as it also encourages introverted students to take on leadership roles within smaller groups. The subtle acknowledgment from teachers helps these students realize their value and potential in social and academic settings, promoting both their personal growth and development. This highlighted the importance of creating a supportive and encouraging classroom environment where every student, regardless of personality type, feels empowered to step up and contribute.

Recommendations. Based on the findings of the study, it is clear that introverted students face unique challenges in physical education (PE) classes, such as social anxiety and discomfort in group settings. These challenges can hinder their participation and engagement in activities. However, the study also reveals that with proper support and encouragement, introverted

students can thrive in physical education settings. Therefore, the following recommendations are designed to address these challenges and create an environment that fosters confidence, inclusion, and active participation among introverted learners:

1. Teachers should consistently offer praise and acknowledgment for the efforts and progress of introverted students, particularly in small successes. This helps build their confidence and encourages active participation in physical activities. Praise, whether verbal or non-verbal, can create a safe environment for students to engage in class without feeling overwhelmed.
2. Recognizing that introverted students may thrive in smaller, more intimate settings, educators can offer leadership opportunities in these settings. This could involve assigning tasks where students can take charge within a smaller group, providing them with a sense of responsibility while minimizing the social pressure of large group dynamics.
3. Teachers should design activities that cater to diverse personality types, ensuring that introverted students feel comfortable and included. Activities that balance individual and group work, while allowing students to contribute according to their preferences, can reduce anxiety and increase participation.
4. Teachers should be proactive in creating an environment where students can seek emotional and social support. This may include peer mentoring programs or providing students with opportunities to bond with classmates in low-pressure situations. Ensuring that introverted students have a support network in class can help alleviate feelings of isolation and boost their overall sense of belonging.

Acknowledgment. The researcher would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Division of Cabuyao in Laguna, Philippines for their invaluable support throughout the conduct of

this study. Their unwavering encouragement, active participation, and insightful contributions were instrumental in shaping the direction of the research and enhancing the overall quality of this work. The collaboration of both students and faculty significantly enriched the findings, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by introverted students in physical education. Their commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment greatly influenced the research process, and for that, the research is truly grateful.

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