This scoping review aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of physical education (PE) literature related to bullying. The review was outlined and guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist. All English-language articles published in peer-reviewed journals that focused on bullying and PE were included. Thematic analysis was used to summarize data extracted from the selected literature. In total, 43 articles conducted in 16 countries were included in this scoping review. Results identified individual-, peer-, school-, and family-level factors that trigger bullying in PE. The impacts of bullying in PE, antibullying strategies and interventions, and summary of future study directions are also discussed. Results from the study highlighted the importance of adopting social ecological perspectives to address bullying behavior and guide antibullying interventions in PE. Physical activities that can potentially promote children’s social emotional learning are also needed to reduce and prevent bullying in PE.

Keywords: social ecological model, social emotional learning, school violence, physical activity

Bullying has long been a considerable concern, with nearly 20% of children in the United States reporting having been exposed to this type of behavior (Stephens et al., 2018). Approximately 14% of public schools indicate that bullying is a frequent discipline problem that detracts from building a positive school culture (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Olweus (1994), a pioneering scholar in the field of bullying, defined bullying as a form of unwanted and repeated physical or verbal aggression and relational harassment due to an imbalance of power between bullies and victims who are not siblings or dating partners. Most scholars have widely applied this particular definition, but others argue that due to the importance of social contexts in which bullying frequently occurs, peer aggression that occurs even once should also be included (Hellström et al., 2021).

Bullying can be either direct or indirect and occurs in all grade levels with incidences peaking in middle school (Espelage et al., 2018). Direct bullying includes physical and verbal aggressions such as hitting, kicking, name-calling, and threatening. In contrast, indirect bullying, also known as social bullying, typically includes aspects of social isolation such as excluding, spreading rumors, and ignoring (Olweus, 1994; Van der Wal et al., 2003). The negative influences of both direct and indirect bullying have been associated with poor academic performance (Juvonen et al., 2011), negative health-related outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, troubled sleep, headache, and fatigue), and high likelihood of leaving school early (Ramya & Kulkarni, 2011). Ultimately, the damaging impacts of bullying may last into adulthood and negatively influence life satisfaction (Wolke et al., 2013).

Although children report being bullied in multiple school settings, including classrooms (Dietrich & Cohen, 2021), locker rooms (O’Connor & Graber, 2014), hallways (Ozada Nazim & Duyan, 2021), playgrounds (Craig et al., 2000), and school physical education (PE) classes (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2020), evidence suggests that children experience greater exposure to bullying behavior in PE classes than other school settings (Stockdale et al., 2002). When bullying occurs in a physical activity setting, such as a PE class, bullied children are more likely to report a lower level of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (Henriksen et al., 2016), decreased physical activity enjoyment, and increased risk of chronic diseases and conditions (Stanley et al., 2013).

PE, typically the only structured physical activity in school, helps students develop knowledge, motor skills, and positive personal and social behavior, and maintain healthy, active lifestyles. As 90% of students with disabilities receive PE with typically developing peers in the United States, the health- and development-related benefits of PE for children with special needs and disabilities were emphasized in increased research (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007; Haegele & Sutherland, 2015). Unfortunately, 28% of students have reported being bullied in PE (Gano-Overway, 2013; Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2020). In PE, children achieve success and encounter failure through a variety of activities; however, some competitive activities can promote bullying (Méndez et al., 2019). Further, teachers’ perceptions and attitudes toward bullying directly determine their responses to bullying incidents. For example, verbal bullying and social bullying may often be ignored by teachers while physical bullying typically receives more attention and is generally addressed when it occurs (O’Connor & Graber, 2014).

Bullying can negatively influence children’s enjoyment and participation in physical activity in PE (Williamson & Sandford, 2018). In addition, evidence suggests that bullying may become a contributing barrier to promoting an active lifestyle in children due to decreased access to physical activity (Méndez et al., 2019). Further, being labeled by peers as “different” can be a significant factor that leads to bullying victimization in PE. In particular, students with disabilities (Scarpa et al., 2012), those who are overweight (Borowiec et al., 2021), and LGBTQ (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) students are more likely to report being bullied in PE (Gill et al., 2010). Moreover, when differences in physical and motor skills are observed, they can become a “weapon” for bullies to hurt children who are not as physically skilled (Bejerot et al., 2013).
In order to provide a safe and engaging learning environment, researchers have focused on investigating strategies and interventions that may prevent bullying in PE. For example, cooperative and adventure games that support children’s proactive behavior can be effective in preventing bullying (O’Connor & Graber, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2017). In these activities, the teacher’s role in the design and structure of class is critical because their goal is to promote children’s social and emotional learning (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2020). In addition, teaching style is also a significant predictor associated with bullying involvement in PE (Montero-Carretero & Cervello, 2020).

While the majority of research has predominately focused on investigating bullying behaviors in classrooms, less is known about incidents in PE settings. To date, only one systematic review has been conducted, and it applied a narrow approach, including only 16 peer-reviewed research studies, to evaluate the associations between PE and school bullying (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2020). Therefore, the current scoping review aimed to generate a more comprehensive overview of PE literature related to bullying.

Methods

Scoping reviews, also referred to as “mapping” reviews, are considered practical methodologies that enable the assessment of emerging evidence for a broad and heterogeneous topic (Munn et al., 2018; Tricco et al., 2016). A scoping review can be conducted to clarify concepts, identify gaps in the existing literature, and make recommendations for future directions (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). To ensure all relevant literature was identified in the present review, the review was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews extension for Scoping Reviews Checklist (Tricco et al., 2018).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

All English-language articles published in peer-reviewed journals that focused on bullying and PE were included. Studies were excluded if they did not meet the following criteria: (a) The conclusions did not consider bullying as the major outcome, (b) data collection focused on other physical activity settings (e.g., summer camps, sports clubs, and adapted PE), and (c) the purpose focused on cyberbullying rather than in-school bullying.

Search Strategy and Study Selection

During data collection, the following six electronic databases were searched: (a) ERIC, (b) Web of Science, (c) PubMed, (d) PsycINFO, (e) SPORTDiscus, and (f) Physical Education Index. From each, all peer-reviewed literature published between January 1, 2000, and March 1, 2022, that met the previously mentioned inclusion criteria were identified. To aid the task, a formula was developed based on combinations of key search terms to identify relevant studies across all databases. Some examples included “bully,” “victim,” “bullied,” “bullying victimization,” “bullying,” “victimization,” or “bully victim,” which were searched in conjunction with PE.

After initial selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, the process proceeded with screening the title and abstract of each manuscript. From there, the full-text entries of the remaining studies were reviewed for final selection in accordance with the established criteria. To ensure that no manuscripts were inadvertently omitted, manual searching strategies, including hand searching of key journals (e.g., Journal of Teaching in Physical Education; Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport; Sport, Education and Society; and Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy), were employed. Reference list searches were also conducted to supplement the database searches (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). Finally, all reference search results were exported to EndNote (version x9.3) reference manager for removal of duplicate entries and initial screening. Details related to the process are provided in Figure 1.

Data Charting

The process of data extraction to identify key characteristics of the included articles in a scoping review is referred to as “data charting” (Peters et al., 2015). Forms to aid this process were developed to determine which variables to extract. This assisted in the identification of critical characteristics of included studies. The first data charting results are illustrated alphabetically by author(s) in Table 1. Included are study characteristics and outcome measurements related to (a) author(s) and year of publication, (b) country, (c) research design, (d) bullying measurement, and (e) other measurements. The second set of data charting results, displayed in Table 2, provides an overview of the same studies organized by (a) purpose, (b) participant profile, (c) results, and (d) recommendations for future studies. Data extracted from non-research articles (see Table 3) were organized by (a) author(s) and publication year, (b) country, and (c) summary and key points.

Data Analysis

To summarize the data charting results, five themes were identified after adopting a thematic analysis approach (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005), including the following: (a) study contexts, (b) study designs and the use of theoretical framework, (c) measurement of bullying behavior in PE, (d) summary of key results (e.g., individual-, school-, and family-level factors that trigger bullying in PE; impacts of bullying in PE; antibullying strategies and interventions; summary of future study directions), and (e) nonresearch articles on bullying and PE.

Results

A total of 579 articles were identified through preliminary database searches, and 12 additional articles were included later through manual searches. After removing 165 duplicates, the titles and abstracts of 426 articles were scanned for relevance, and 380 manuscripts not meeting the predetermined criteria were eliminated. The remaining 46 articles were reviewed in full. In total, 43 met the eligibility criteria and were selected for this scoping review (see Figure 1). The selected studies were published between 2005 and 2021 and conducted in 16 counties including the United States (n = 15), Spain (n = 5), the United Kingdom (n = 5), Sweden (n = 3), Canada (n = 3), Ireland (n = 2), Brazil (n = 1), Estonia (n = 1), Italy (n = 1), Korea (n = 1), New Zealand (n = 1), Poland (n = 1), Qatar (n = 1), Singapore (n = 1), Turkey (n = 1), and International (n = 1). There was a noticeable upsurge of manuscripts published in 2013, and 21 of the 43 manuscripts were published in the past 5 years. Table 1 addresses study characteristics and data collection techniques according to whether studies were classified as quantitative/mixed method or qualitative. Table 2 describes purpose, participants, results, and recommendations of all studies listed in alphabetical order. Finally, Table 3 provides a summary and key points of nonresearch articles.
A majority of the selected 34 research studies \((n = 25)\) were conducted across elementary and secondary schools with students ages 9–20 years. Six studies investigated previous K–12 PE experiences in adults ages 18–75 years. While most focused on students’ perceptions and reactions to bullying, three included teachers’ perspectives on bullying in PE.

### Study Designs and the Use of Theoretical Framework

Of the 34 research studies, 20 were quantitative studies, of which two were interventions, that predominantly investigated the factors that influence bullying and its impacts in PE. In addition, 11 qualitative studies aimed to understand different populations of children’s perceptions of bullying in PE. Three studies applied a mixed-method study design. Among these three studies, one quasi-experimental study investigated the effectiveness of yoga-based PE classes on bullying reduction. Another investigated transgender individuals’ and practitioners’ perceptions of potential concerns and issues in PE. Finally, one study focused on exploring students’ perceptions about including students with disabilities in PE. In addition to the research studies, nine nonresearch articles predominately aimed to describe the occurrence of bullying and provide practical strategies to reduce and prevent bullying in PE.

Most research studies \((n = 34)\) did not apply a theoretical framework or conceptual model to support study objectives. Of the seven studies that did, self-determination theory (Hansen et al., 2021; Montero-Carretero et al., 2020; Montero-Carretero & Cervello, 2020; Montero-Carretero et al., 2021), grounded theory (Van Daalen, 2005), the social ecological model (SEM; O’Connor & Graber, 2014), and social cognitive theory (Centeio et al., 2017) were employed.

### Measurement of Bullying Behavior in PE

Among the 23 quantitative and mixed-method studies, a total of 20 different self-reported scales and questionnaires (14 of which have been validated) were used to measure the prevalence of bullying, identify forms of bullying (e.g., physical, verbal, and social), and determine bullying roles (e.g., bullies, victims, bully victims, and bystanders) among children in PE settings. Seven included self-designed questionnaires that asked, on average, four closed-ended questions to measure students’ perceived bullying and victimization in PE (see Table 1). All survey instruments employed in these quantitative studies were originally developed and applied within the field of psychology and not specifically within PE contexts. Among the 11 qualitative studies, observations, individual interviews, and focus groups were the primary data collection techniques used to capture participants’ behaviors and reactions to bullying and investigate participants’ feelings and perceptions toward bullying and antibullying interventions (see Table 1).

### Summary of Key Results

During data analysis, key results from the selected studies were summarized into four thematic categories: (a) individual-, school-, and family-level factors that trigger bullying in PE; (b) impacts of bullying in PE; (c) effective interventions and strategies; and (d) summary of future study directions.

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**Figure 1** — Study election using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) flow diagram.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Research design</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Other assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso-Rosa et al. (2020)</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Global school-based student health survey(^a)</td>
<td>• None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arufe-Giráldez et al. (2019)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>EV(^a)</td>
<td>• Regular physical activity practice TECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bejerot et al. (2011)</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Self-designed questions</td>
<td>• Attitudes toward PE Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bejerot et al. (2013)</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Self-designed questions</td>
<td>• Questionnaire including self-conception, executive problems, motor, and academic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benítez-Silleró et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>EBIP-Q(^a)</td>
<td>• Neuropsychiatric rating scales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borowiec et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Questions from Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Bullying Scale(^a)</td>
<td>• Soft neurological signs and autistic traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centeio et al. (2017)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Mixed method</td>
<td>Semistructured interviews</td>
<td>• Gross Motor Skill Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gano-Overway (2013)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>UIBS(^a)</td>
<td>• Academic Achievement Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill et al. (2010)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Physical Activity Climate Scale(^a)</td>
<td>• Weight status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hein et al. (2015)</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Modified Aggression Scale(^a)</td>
<td>• Teacher and Classmate Support Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killion et al. (2020)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>School Climate Bullying Survey(^a)</td>
<td>• Validated Stress in Children Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladwig et al. (2018)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Self-designed questions</td>
<td>• Caring Climate Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Mixed method</td>
<td>Self-designed closed- and open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Basic Empathy Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montero-Carretero and Cervelló (2020)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>EBIP-Q(^a)</td>
<td>• CCBS Psychological Need Thwarting Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montero-Carretero et al. (2021)</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>EBIP-Q(^a)</td>
<td>• None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montero-Carretero et al. (2020)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>EBIP-Q(^a)</td>
<td>• Online questionnaire: Retrospective enjoyment of PE, present level of physical activity, and sedentary behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park et al. (2017)</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Aggressive Behavior Scale(^a)</td>
<td>• Online survey including school name, grade, age, gender, and disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) indicates the instrument or scale used in the respective study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Research design</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Other assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Peterson et al. (2012)        | United States | Quantitative | Self-designed, 5-point Likert scale related to hypothetical scenarios | - Demographic and Individual Characteristics Questionnaire  
- Fat Phobia Scale
- Five self-designed questions for intervention preferences |
| Puhl et al. (2013)            | United States | Quantitative | Weight-based victimization 5-point Likert scale | - Self-designed questions for school crime prevention policies and practices (teachers)  
- Self-designed questions regarding school-level affective aspects of school climate, number of friends, and amount of PE time (students) |
| Roman and Taylor (2013)       | United States | Quantitative | Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire | - Schwartz Portrait Values Survey  
- PACES |
| Savucu et al. (2017)          | Turkey    | Quantitative | Bullying Tendency Scale | - None |
| Scarpa et al. (2012)          | Italy     | Quantitative | Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale | - None |
| Williamson and Stanford (2018)| United Kingdom | Mixed method | Self-designed closed- and open-ended questions | - None |

**Table 1 (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Research design</th>
<th>Semistructured interview</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Reflective story assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson and Kehler (2012)</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haegerle et al. (2018)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Haegerle et al. (2017)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansen et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healy et al. (2013)</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills and Croston (2012)</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jachyra (2016)</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mierzwinski and Velija (2020)</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor and Graber (2014)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliveira et al. (2017)</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Daalen (2005)</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. EV = Victimization at School Scale; EBIP-Q = European Bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire; UIBS = University of Illinois Bully Scale; TECA = Cognitive and Affective Empathy Test (Test de Empatía Cognitiva y Afectiva); CCBS = Controlling Coach Behaviors Scale; MD-PASS-PE = Multidimensional Perceived Autonomy Support Scale for Physical Education; EDMCQ-C = Controlling Style Factors of the Empowerment in Sport Questionnaire; BPINES = Basic Psychological Needs in Exercise Scale; CMPE = Self-Determined Motivation for Physical Education Motivation Questionnaire; PE = physical education; EPES-PE = Scale of Perception of Supportive Style in Physical Education; PACES = Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale.*

*Validated instrument.*
### Table 2  Overview of Selected Studies on Bullying and PE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participant profile</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Recommendations for future studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso-Rosa et al. (2020)</td>
<td>• Provide a worldwide perspective of the association between different lifestyle behaviors and bullying victimization in adolescents</td>
<td>273,121 adolescent students&lt;br&gt;Median age = 14 years&lt;br&gt;82 countries</td>
<td>PE attendance associated with bullying</td>
<td>• Explore the role of peer behavior on the relationship between lifestyle and bullying in adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arufe-Giráldez et al. (2019)</td>
<td>• Define and contrast an explanatory model of victimization, empathy, and attitude toward PE&lt;br&gt;• Analyze the existing relationships between variables as a function of engagement with physical activity</td>
<td>2,388 students&lt;br&gt;11–17 years old</td>
<td>Direct, positive relationship between affective and cognitive empathy&lt;br&gt;Positive association between motivational climate and engagement in physical activity&lt;br&gt;Physical activity engagement was correlated with verbal and physical victimization&lt;br&gt;Students who engaged in more sedentary behavior are more likely to be relationally bullied</td>
<td>None reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson and Kehler (2012)</td>
<td>• Understand boys’ experiences of body image concerns in PE classes</td>
<td>Sample size not reported&lt;br&gt;14–17 years old</td>
<td>Participants faced ritual bullying and humiliation because their bodies did not “measure up.”&lt;br&gt;Bullying often happened in school locker rooms and other gym zones</td>
<td>None reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bejerot et al. (2011)</td>
<td>• Explore the relationship between a history of poor motor skills in childhood and bullying victimization</td>
<td>69 university students&lt;br&gt;19–29 years old</td>
<td>36% reported being bullied at least two to three times a month&lt;br&gt;Strong positive correlation between duration of being bullied and frequency of being bullied&lt;br&gt;Performance in PE was a risk factor for being bullied in school&lt;br&gt;Strong correlation between poor performance in PE and longer durations + higher frequencies of victimization</td>
<td>Create prevention programs that identify, protect, and empower vulnerable children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bejerot et al. (2013)</td>
<td>• Investigate the association between poor gross motor skills in childhood with bullying and victimization and its impacts</td>
<td>2,730 adults&lt;br&gt;18–75 years old</td>
<td>Positive correlation between poorer motor skills and duration of bullying&lt;br&gt;Bullies demonstrated average or above-average motor skills&lt;br&gt;Bullying victimization and bullying aggression variables decreased significantly with intervention&lt;br&gt;Cyberbullying victimization decreased with intervention&lt;br&gt;Statistically significant differences existed with greater aggressiveness in boys compared with girls</td>
<td>Utilize more objective measures and a more representative sample of the general population to replicate and further validate the current findings&lt;br&gt;Incorporate more schools and settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benitez-Silero et al. (2021)</td>
<td>• Analyze the effectiveness of a specific intervention to prevent bullying in PE classes in secondary education</td>
<td>764 secondary students&lt;br&gt;12–18 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participant profile</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Recommendations for future studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Borowiec et al. (2021) | Examine the associations between peer support, weight status, gender, age, and becoming the victim or perpetrator of physical, verbal, and social bullying among adolescents in PE lessons | • 2,848 junior high school students  
• 14–16 years old | • Low peer support increased the probability of being the victim of physical, verbal, and social bullying  
• Low peer support increased the probability of becoming a perpetrator of bullying in PE  
• Being overweight increased the likelihood of being a verbal bullying victim  
• Being obese raised the probability of becoming a social bullying victim  
• Boys more often experienced and caused bullying than girls  
• Victims were mainly younger students  
• Perpetrators were often older adolescents | • Incorporate more racial and ethnic diversity as well as variety in region and type of schools to the research model |
| Centeio et al. (2017) | Examine the multilevel influences of a yoga-based intervention on urban, inner-city youth | • 104 elementary students  
• 9.78 ± 1.11 years old | • Significant reduction in stress and bullying behaviors after a 10-week yoga-based program, DKWIO  
• 15% of students bullied others in PE setting  
• 23% students of students bullied others in school environments outside of PE  
• 28% of students reported being bullied in PE  
• 39% of students reported being bullied in school environments outside of PE  
• Perceived caring climate positively predicted prosocial behavior  
• Cognitive empathy negatively predicted antisocial behavior  
• Cognitive empathy mediated the relationship between caring climate and prosocial behavior | • Include a control group and larger sample size, so changes can be attributed directly to the DKWIO program  
• Augment self-reported measures with other assessment methods (e.g., peer nomination or teacher evaluation) or observational frequency counts to explore whether these measures support the findings |
| Gano-Overway (2013) | Explore the relationship between caring climate, empathy, prosocial behaviors, and bullying in PE | • 528 students in sixth to eighth grades  
• 10–15 years old | | |
| Gill et al. (2010) | Investigate LGBT youth’s perceived climate of physical activity settings | • 150 students  
• Eight student teachers  
• 14 interns  
• 27 pride students | • LGB students were more likely to be excluded from physical activity in PE  
• LGBT students were more likely to experience homophobic name-calling and harassment | • None reported |
| Haegele et al. (2017) | Examine the PE experiences of adults with visual impairments who live in a residential school | • Five adults with visual impairments | • Participants perceived that being the only blind student in a group, and differences in academic experiences and appearances contributed to bullying incidents | • None reported |
| Haegele et al. (2018) | Examine the embodied experiences in school-based PE of individuals identifying as female with a visual impairment | • Eight female adults with visual impairments  
• 21–30 years old | • Girls’ perspectives of PE, physical educators’ biased expectations, and negative peer interactions limited girls’ participation in PE | • Examine expectations toward PE participation of individuals who ascribe to multiple identities (e.g., females with visual impairments) from physical educators’ perspectives  
• Identify what may be missing from PE professional preparation that can better inform expectations |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participant profile</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Recommendations for future studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hansen et al. (2021)</td>
<td>• Investigate children with intellectual disabilities’ perceptions of and motivation for physical activity and organized sports</td>
<td>• 12 upper secondary adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities • 16–20 years old</td>
<td>• Participants sometimes felt bullied and afraid of being excluded</td>
<td>• None reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healy et al. (2013)</td>
<td>• Understand the experiences of students with autism in PE</td>
<td>• 12 students with formal diagnoses of autistic disorders • 9–13 years old</td>
<td>• Individual challenges were comprised of physical ability, sensory challenges, and a fear of injury • Peer interactions encapsulated subthemes of initiation of friendship, camaraderie, social comparison, and bullying • Children perceived exclusion when they were being excluded by the teacher or when the activities were too difficult • Instances of victimization in PE identified</td>
<td>• Examine how the experiences of students with autistic spectrum disorders in other areas and in other circumstances could be instructive • Utilize an ethnographic study involving the input of students and support for staff and teachers to fully understand the complexity of inclusive PE and allow for a more in-depth exploration of the experiences of those involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hein et al. (2015)</td>
<td>• Examine students’ perceptions of their teachers’ controlling behaviors and how these perceptions influence their feelings of anger and bullying</td>
<td>• 602 students • 12–16 years old</td>
<td>• Students’ perceptions of the negative conditional regard and intimidation exhibited by the teacher had a significant indirect effect on students’ feelings of anger and bullying behavior</td>
<td>• Focus on randomly selected, stratified samples to permit better inference of findings to the population • Examine the role of observed actual controlling teaching behaviors in PE on corresponding perceived controlling teaching behaviors and maladaptive affective and behavioral outcomes such as feelings of anger and bullying behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills and Croston (2012)</td>
<td>• Understand the context of mixed-gender PE lessons</td>
<td>• 28 eighth-grade girls • 12–13 years old</td>
<td>• The narratives of teasing related by the students in PE were most often linked to ability • Girls evidenced awareness of the ways that normative narratives of masculinity surfaced within PE • The tenacity of privileging boy’s sporting experience continues to be evidenced in girls’ tales of exclusion • Girls evidenced varying attitudes toward mixed-gender PE</td>
<td>• Focus on physical educators’ successes in delivering mixed-gender lessons and their perceptions of “best practice” to identify useful strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jachyra (2016)</td>
<td>• Understand the emerging cultural disaffection/disinterest toward health and PE and increasing attrition rates</td>
<td>• 15 boys • 12–14 years old</td>
<td>• Nondominant boys were more likely to report bullying • Body dissatisfaction, body image preoccupation, and bullying experience are associated with participation in health PE • Derision from teachers dissuades students from actively participating in health and PE</td>
<td>• None reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s) (year of publication)</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Participant profile</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Recommendations for future studies</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Killion et al. (2020)          | • Determine whether students perceived bullying in PE settings  
• Determine whether bullying had adverse effects on athletic performance | • 138 high school students | • Students reported being bullied in PE settings 34.8% of the time compared to 10.6% of the time in regular school settings  
• Being bullied was associated with gender, ethnicity, and performance in PE | • Examine how bullying occurs among middle school students |
| Ladwig et al. (2018)           | • Examine the associations between memories of enjoyment or nonenjoyment of PE and present-day (adult) attitudes, intentions, physical activity, and sedentary behavior | • 1,028 adults  
• 18–45 years old | • 17% of participants indicated bullying as one of the memories negatively associated with physical activity, attitude, intention, and sedentary behavior in adulthood | • None reported |
| Li et al. (2021)               | • Explore students’ perspectives of including students with physical disabilities in PE in Singapore | • 219 elementary and secondary students  
• 11–15 years old | • 13.7% of participants indicated that children with disabilities should not be included in PE due to bullying and injury | • Include older participants  
• Investigate participants’ perceptions of integrating children with disabilities in PE |
| Mierzwinski and Velija (2020)  | • Understand power relations within male PE classes | • Four male, secondary physical educators  
• 5–13 years of teaching experience | • Young males’ and teachers’ views on bullying were shaped by personal experiences and social constraints  
• There was a culture of silence surrounding bullying, and both teachers and young males drew reference to an unwillingness to report bullying  
• Factors that influence bullying frequency in PE included the space of the changing rooms, levels of teacher provision, and behavioral norms within this context | • Focus on the complexities of peer relations and individual civilizing processes changing teacher and pupil relations in PE  
• Focus on the expectations of young people and teachers to respond to peer and teacher conflict in the context of PE  
• Focus on the role of shame in educational settings as a form of social control, and the identity formation and role of “We-” and “I-” identities in young people’s educational experiences  
• Replicate the analysis of the model presented using longitudinal designs |
| Montero-Carretero et al. (2020)| • Test a predictor model of bullying behaviors based on the PE teacher’s supportive style, the students’ satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and self-determined motivation | • 608 students from first, second, and sixth grades  
• 12.49 ± 0.98 years old | • Positive prediction occurred among the autonomy-supportive style and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and self-determined motivation toward PE  
• Positive basic psychological needs and self-determined motivation toward PE negatively predict bullying perpetration and bullying victimization  
• Controlling teaching styles were inversely related to autonomy-supportive teaching styles | • Include teachers’ perceptions of students’ behaviors  
• Explore the effect that training programs in teaching styles might have on reducing bullying behaviors |
| Montero-Carretero and Cervelló (2020) | • Analyze the association between student-perceived teaching styles’ power, students’ resilience, and the emergence of bullying behaviors in PE | • 537 students  
• 11–15 years old | • Bullying was positively predicted by students’ perceptions of more controlling teaching styles and negatively predicted by a greater perception of an autonomy-supportive teaching style  
• Victimization was negatively predicted by greater resilience  
• Perceptions of autonomy negatively predicted victimization  
• Resilience was a mediating factor |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) and year of publication</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participant profile</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Recommendations for future studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Montero-Carretero et al. (2021)  | • Examine the effects of a Judo program on bullying reduction and prosocial behavior improvement | • 79 students  
• 11.13 ± 0.52 years old | • Significant changes with moderate to high effect sizes in basic psychological needs, motivation, tolerance–respect, moral identity, and bullying | • Increase the sample size  
• Examine the effects beyond the duration of the program |
| O’Connor and Graber (2014)      | • Investigate perceptions students and teachers have about bullying in PE  
• Explore perceptions students have about peer support and adult role models including teachers and family members in relation to bullying in PE  
• Determine in what PE environments bullying behaviors are occurring | • Four physical educators ages 32–52 years old with up to 24 years of teaching experiences  
• 24 sixth-grade students ages 10–12 years old | • Adults acculturate students to support a bullying climate by providing mixed information regarding social interactions, ignoring nonphysical instances of bullying, and promoting inappropriate curricular selections  
• Individual differences such as appearance, body size, physical ability, and personal attire ignited most episodes of harassment in PE  
• Students may not always report instances of bullying to those in authority because of fear  
• Students may not stand up for bullied friends because of fear  
• Students may feel unsafe in certain PE locations (e.g., a locker room) | • Focus on examining the effectiveness of different interventions in eliminating bullying in PE environments |
| Oliveira et al. (2017)          | • Examine the effects of cooperative games on reducing bullying in PE classes | • 240 elementary students  
• 9.89 ± 0.42 years old | • Interventions of cooperative games reduced physical and verbal bullying as well as physical and verbal aggression | • Identify whether the perceived behavioral changes are noticed in other spheres of the learner’s life such as the classroom, in other school subjects, in family life, and with peers of the same age in other out-of-school settings |
| Park et al. (2017)              | • Investigate the longitudinal influence of PE classes, extracurricular sports activities, and leisure satisfaction on aggressive behavior among adolescents | • 2,647 students | • Adolescents’ aggressive behavior significantly changed with age. Significant gender-based differences occurred in the level of and changes in aggressive behavior over time  
• Participation in extracurricular sports activities, leisure satisfaction, and female adolescents’ participation in extracurricular sports activities had a significant effect on the aggression slope | • Utilize an autoregressive model or a cross-lagged model to identify more precise causal relationships |
| Peterson et al. (2012)          | • Assess physical educators’ responses to weight-related victims and bullying  
• Examine participants’ characteristics that may influence reactions | • 162 secondary PE teachers and sport coaches  
• 43.7 years old | • Participants were more likely to intervene when victims were female and overweight  
• Female participants reported a greater likelihood of intervening if the victim was overweight | • Examine physical educators’ and coaches’ reactions to overweight and nonoverweight students of diverse racial or ethnic groups  
• Examine reactions to cross-gender bullying in the context of weight-based victimization |
| Puhl et al. (2013)              | • Assess and understand youth preferred weight-based bullying interventions | • 361 students  
• 15.79 ± 1.28 years old | • 64% of the participants reported previous experiences of weight-based victimization  
• 44% of the victims desired intervention from physical educators/coaches | • Research the effectiveness of different forms of intervention to reduce weight-based teasing and bullying |
### Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participant profile</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Recommendations for future studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Roman and Taylor (2013)        | • Examine the relationship between bullying victimization and physical activity  
                                 |                     | • Significant negative association occurred between bullying victimization and frequency of PE  
                                 |                     | • Students who reported being bullied were less likely to report engaging in physical activity more than 1 day/week  
                                 |                     | • Students were more likely to report more days in PE in schools that implemented random bag, desk, and locker checks  
                                 |                     | • Focus on research related to improvements in school culture and climate |
| Savucu et al. (2017)           | • Investigate the association between bullying tendencies and the number of students taking PE and sports courses  
                                 | • 613 secondary students | • Significant levels of difference found between total bullying tendency scores of students by gender, the number PE, and sports courses and students’ family incomes  
                                 |                     | • Moderate negative relationship found between total value scores and total bullying tendency scores of students  
                                 |                     | • None reported |
| Scarpa et al. (2012)            | • Examine relations between peer victimization and physical activity enjoyment during PE  
                                 | • 395 seventh-grade students  
                                 | • Verbal victimization and total victimization scores were negatively associated with all enjoyment scales  
                                 |                     | • Examine the negative influence of peer victimization during sport practice on enjoyment of physical activity in a larger and more representative sample  
                                 | 12–13 years         | • Utilize other instruments |
| Van Daalen (2005)              | • Explore why girls’ enrollment in PE was dwindling once compulsory credits were achieved  
                                 | • Five students who dropped PE after ninth grade  
                                 | • PE was a source of constant shaming related to athletic ability for many girls  
                                 |                     | • Explore the lived experience of girls who do not drop PE to understand what contributes to their decision to persist  
                                 | 15–17 years old     | • Investigate boys’ experiences in PE |
| Williamson and Stanford (2018) | • Investigate transgender individuals’ experiences in PE  
                                 | • 14 adults  
                                 | • Participants felt isolated and perceived PE as an “unsafe” place where bullying was promoted  
                                 |                     | • Investigate the views of policy makers  
                                 | • 18–50 years old   | • Utilize a larger sample size |

Note. DKWIO = Danialle Karmanos’ Work It Out; LGB = lesbian, gay, and bisexual; LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender; PE = physical education.
experiences, especially among children with disabilities who getting injured were barriers that contributed to negative PE victimization in PE, and a lack of physical ability and fears of poor motor skills were associated with increased vulnerability to victimization in PE (Kruger et al., 2013). Two studies, between individual-level factors and bullying in PE. Two studies, Fuller et al. (2013) Ireland and Mierzwinski et al. (2014) United Kingdom explained how gender, specific places such as changing rooms, and relational power influence bullying in physical education.

Table 3 Overview of Nonresearch Articles on Bullying and Physical Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year of publication)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Summary and key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bentz-Sillerio et al. (2021)</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Presented research on bullying and physical education and what educational interventions can be implemented in physical education to reduce bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller et al. (2013)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Discussed what physical educators can do to prevent bullying in classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibbone and Manson (2010)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Discussed how physical educators can contribute to a climate that can prevent bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mierzwinski et al. (2019)</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Utilized figural sociological perspectives to discuss why bullying in physical education is a “social justice” issue among young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potenza et al. (2014)</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>Discussed the benefits of teaching self-defense in physical education and its potential to raise awareness about bullying and prevent threatening situations from escalating into something severe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rees (2010)</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Discussed why bullying occurs in physical education (e.g., lack of awareness of bullying) for physical educators to facilitate heroism and reduce bullying incidents in their classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenos et al. (2014)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Discussed the key components/idea of encouraging heroism such as caring, trustworthiness, respect, citizenship, fairness, and responsibility.</td>
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Individual-, Peer-, School-, and Family-Level Factors That Trigger Bullying in PE

Individual-Level Factors. Studies discussed the association between individual-level factors and bullying in PE. Two studies, in particular, conducted by Bejerot et al. (2011, 2013) revealed that poor motor skills were associated with increased vulnerability to victimization in PE, and a lack of physical ability and fears of getting injured were barriers that contributed to negative PE experiences, especially among children with disabilities who may be more vulnerable to bullying (Bejerot et al., 2011; Healy et al., 2013).

In terms of performance in PE, sporting skills and athletic ability were the leading factors impacting girls’ PE experiences. Bullying was especially reported during competitions and forced games such as basketball, rounders, and more adventurous activities in mixed-gender settings where negative experiences can be heightened due to teasing and social exclusion by peers (Hills & Croston, 2012; Van Daalen, 2005).

Relatedly, children reported being bullied and harassed by peers and teachers in PE when they perceived individual differences such as gender identity, gender expression, body weight, and body image (e.g., shape and size). In particular, boys showed
greater aggressive behaviors than girls, and children who were dissatisfied with their appearance and weight status experienced more bullying than their peers (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012; Jachyra, 2016; O’Connor & Graber, 2014; Park et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2012; Puhl et al., 2013; Van Daalen, 2005). Similarly, LGBTQ students faced consistent homophobic name-calling and perceived PE as an unsafe place where they were isolated and bullied (Gill et al., 2010; Williamson & Sandford, 2018). In one study, age was also associated with bullying involvement, in that younger children were more likely to become the victims, and bullies were usually older (Borowiec et al., 2021).

With limited resources for providing inclusive PE, children with disabilities were seen as a vulnerable population that can be more easily targeted in traditional PE settings. More specifically, children with developmental disorders (e.g., attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder), autism spectrum disorders, visual and health impairments (Haegele et al., 2017, 2018), and intellectual disabilities (Hansen et al., 2021) have a higher likelihood of experiencing negative peer interactions. Many of these students reported difficulties getting along with peers and being bullied by other students.

Peer-Level Factors. Five studies examined the relationship between peers and bullying involvement. Students who perceived lower levels of peer support were more likely to be physically, verbally, and socially bullied, or even become perpetrators of bullying in PE (Borowiec et al., 2021). Victims often encountered barriers, including being excluded from activities and experiencing negative peer interactions (Haegele et al., 2018; Healy et al., 2013). In total, 13.7% of peer participants expressed concerns about including children with disabilities in their PE classes (Li et al., 2021). Without peer assistance, bystanders are less likely to intervene in bullying by confronting the bullies. (O’Connor & Graber, 2014).

School-Level Factors. Climate in PE also influences the prevalence of bullying and victimization. For example, three studies examined the influence of teaching style on bullying frequency in PE and found that an autonomy-supportive style of classroom management, where children are given more choices to perform an exercise, was favored by students. Bullying perpetration and victimization were also reduced. Conversely, a controlling style of classroom management was linked with more bullying incidents in PE (Montero-Carretero et al., 2020; Montero-Carretero & Cervelló, 2020). Further, bullying behavior may be promoted when teachers use intimidation (e.g., verbal abuse, shouting, physical punishment, humiliating and belittling behavior, and personal attacks) or provide less attention and support (Hein et al., 2015).

In relation to the role of teachers, Peterson et al. (2012) found they were more likely to intervene in bullying incidents when victims are female and overweight. Overweight male victims were more vulnerable to being ignored by their teachers when bullying occurred. Unfortunately, treatment of vulnerable groups (e.g., overweight students and LGBTQ) and lack of intervention by physical educators when nonphysical bullying occurs leads to a negative learning climate. Further, students may fear embarrassment if they report bullying episodes to teachers and are less likely to report incidents due to the potential to be bullied again (Mierzwinski & Velija, 2020; O’Connor & Graber., 2014; Peterson et al., 2012).

PE teachers also expressed concern about not being prepared to use pedagogical approaches and strategies. Preservice teachers face greater challenges because they have less experience and are expected to create an inclusive and positive environment to intervene in cases of bullying in their classes (Mierzwinski & Velija., 2020; O’Connor & Graber., 2014; Peterson et al., 2012). Finally, three studies reinforced the importance of physical educators’ presence and strict class rules in preventing bullying because specific gym zones, including locker rooms and changing rooms, were viewed as the most frequent places that bullying occurs (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

Family-Level Factors. In a study by O’Connor and Graber (2014), parents were defined as “messengers of bullying” that shaped children’s attitudes and behavior toward their peers and their responses to bullying. For example, children demonstrated more positive behaviors when their parents told them to treat classmates with kindness and more aggressive behaviors when they felt bullied at home or were told by parents to respond aggressively. In addition, one study found that family income was indirectly linked with bullying involvement (Savucu et al., 2017).

Impacts of Bullying in PE

Approximately 28% of middle school students (n = 528) indicated they were bullied during their PE class (Gano-Overway, 2013). The severe impacts of bullying in PE environments were discussed in six studies. For example, bullying contributed to less enjoyment of physical activity and decreased the desire to participate in PE (O’Connor & Graber, 2014; Scarpa et al., 2012). Children who were bullied by their peers were less likely to engage in physical activities in PE (Jachyra, 2016). This can lead to decreases in PE attendance, and children who were chronically exposed to bullying behavior were at a higher risk of dropping out of PE (Roman & Taylor, 2013; Van Daalen, 2005). Ladwig et al. (2018) surveyed 1,028 participants in United States aged 18–45 years and found that individuals who had negative memories of PE, with incidents of bullying, find physical activities unpleasant and harmful. Those experiences predict less intention to participate in physical activities during their adulthood, resulting in more sedentary time (Ladwig et al., 2018).

Antibullying Strategies and Interventions

Research related to antibullying strategies and interventions, especially pertaining to PE settings, is limited. One study found that children who regularly participated in physical activity during PE were less likely to be involved in verbal and physical bullying (Arufe-Giraldez et al., 2019). Similarly, two studies investigating the influence of PE attendance on bullying involvement found that the more hours or days students participated in PE, the less likely they were to experience bullying (Roman & Taylor, 2013; Savucu et al., 2017).

Creating a caring climate, increasing children’s awareness of bullying behaviors, and promoting children’s social and emotional learning decreased incidents of bullying. For example, a recent study demonstrated the effectiveness of a PE intervention program on reducing bullying victimization and aggression among 764 secondary school students in Italy. A variety of activities such as cooperative games and motor games emphasizing behaviors such as empathy were adapted to PE. They were also designed to develop students’ awareness of bullying. Psychosocial contents, such as knowledge of bullying, the roles of victim and bullying, knowledge and expression of basic emotions, importance of the
social group, collaborative work, self-esteem, empathy, self-control, resilience, and discrimination, were addressed throughout the intervention (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021).

Similarly, the ability of cooperative games to reduce all forms of bullying was observed among 240 elementary students over a 3-month PE intervention where cooperative games were used as the exclusive pedagogical content (Oliveira et al., 2017). Physical activity-based interventions such as yoga and judo also appeared effective in reducing and preventing bullying when implemented in PE. For example, stress and bullying behaviors were significantly reduced among 104 elementary students (82% African American) who participated in a 10-week yoga intervention during PE (Centeio et al., 2017). Similarly, children who participated in 5-week (10 sessions) judo-centered PE classes also showed significant positive changes in moral identity and bullying behaviors (Montero-Carretero et al., 2021).

**Summary of Future Study Directions**

The majority of research studies provided specific directions on study design for future research. Specific suggestions included (a) utilizing larger sample sizes (Scarpa et al., 2012), (b) selecting participants randomly (Hein et al., 2015), (c) diversifying populations in terms of ethnicity and weight status (Borowiec et al., 2021), (d) collecting longitudinal data (Montero-Carretero et al., 2020), (e) employing a control group (e.g., intervention study; Centeio et al., 2017), (f) selecting assessment methods, including peer nomination and teacher evaluation to measure perceived bullying behaviors (Gano-Overway, 2013), and (g) collecting data from both children’s and teacher’s perspectives (Haugen, 2016; Hills & Croston, 2012; Li et al., 2021; Montero-Carretero & Cervello, 2020; Van Daalen, 2005).

Adopting curriculum models such as adventure education and the Teaching for Personal Social Responsibility model may be potentially effective approaches to reducing and preventing bullying in PE contexts (O’Connor & Graber, 2014). In addition, researchers need to consider school climate and peer relationships when designing antibullying interventions for PE (Alfonso-Rosa et al., 2020; Mierzwinski & Velija, 2020; Roman & Taylor, 2013). Ultimately, the effectiveness of the interventions should be addressed and examined outside of the school setting (e.g., at home and with friends) for purposes of determining whether transfer occurs (Oliveira et al., 2017; O’Connor & Graber, 2014).

**Nonresearch Articles on Bullying and PE**

A total of nine nonresearch articles met the eligibility criteria and were included in the current scoping review. See Table 3 for a brief summary.

All nonresearch articles focused almost exclusively on understanding the factors that influence bullying in PE and provided practical strategies to create an inclusive environment to reduce and prevent bullying. Strategies included (a) applying cooperative learning methodologies (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021; Gibbone & Manson, 2010), (b) involving peers (Fuller et al., 2013; Healy et al., 2013), (c) involving parents (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021), (d) encouraging heroism (Wenos et al., 2014), (e) applying proactive pedagogical models such as Teaching for Personal Social Responsibility (Rees, 2010), and (f) teaching activities like self-defense (Potenza et al., 2014).

Bullying triggers in PE were also identified. These included (a) gender (Mierzwinski et al., 2019), (b) power differences (Hand, 2016), (c) lack of awareness of bullying (Wenos et al., 2014), and (d) nature of traditional sport units in PE (Rees, 2010). Finally, the teacher’s role in managing bullying in PE and the necessity to intervene were also emphasized in almost all the nonresearch articles.

**Discussion**

This scoping review provided an overview of PE studies related to bullying. Self-reported surveys from other fields have been adopted to measure bullying prevalence and identify bullying roles in PE. To date, all the measurement instruments in PE have been adapted from psychological frameworks that assess bullying behavior in classrooms (Thomas et al., 2015; Vivolo-Kantor et al., 2014). PE, however, differs from classroom instruction in many ways, and existing surveys/scales traditionally used in classroom settings to measure bullying behaviors in PE may have limitations in relation to examining all forms of bullying that may occur in this unique setting. For example, physical bullying, such as using equipment to hit or beat others, may not be reported since specific behaviors that are unique to PE may not have been included on existing surveys/scales (Hamburger et al., 2011). Therefore, a validated instrument that can measure bullying in a physical activity setting could shed new light on bullying and lead to more effective interventions.

Although the impacts of bullying in a general school setting (e.g., classroom) have been extensively documented in previous studies (Hase et al., 2015; Saarento et al., 2015), the consequences of bullying can be more severe in PE due to the physical nature of the learning environment. In addition, activities like competitive sports may be associated with higher levels of bullying than noncompetitive activities like yoga or cooperative games. In other words, children’s aggression may be promoted by sports competitions (Méndez et al., 2019; Nery et al., 2019).

Findings from this review document that bullying in PE negatively impacts children’s physical activity participation, desire, and enjoyment of physical activity while placing children at a higher risk of dropping out. The lasting impacts of decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy related to participating in physical activity can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle in adulthood (Hills et al., 2007), and an inactive lifestyle is associated with obesity and public health concerns (Leech et al., 2014). Accordingly, bullying incidents in PE need to be addressed (Mierzwinski & Velija, 2020; O’Connor & Graber, 2014).

To better manage bullying and provide strategies to prevent bullying in PE, understanding the triggers of bullying in PE is necessary. The current review categorized influences of bullying behavior into (a) individual-level factors, (b) peer-level factors, (c) school-level factors, and (d) family-level factors. While gender, body weight, and body image have been suggested as leading individual factors of bullying in PE, studies indicated that motor skill level can mediate the association between those individual-level factors and bullying in PE because victimization often occurs in lesser-skilled students who are girls and overweight or obese students (see reviews by Iossi Silva et al., 2013; Van Geel et al., 2014). A sizable representation of minoritized and marginalized students (e.g., those who are racially and ethnically minoritized, children with disabilities, and sexualized and gendered populations), especially children with disabilities, are also impacted by these same skill-related factors and more likely to be targeted as victims (Pinquart, 2017). Conversely, children with disabilities may act as bullies and report greater perpetration than peers without disabilities (Rose & Gage, 2017). When adapted PE for students...
with special needs is not provided, PE might be a class that these children quit or avoid (Haegele et al., 2018).

The role of peers in preventing bullying has been addressed in non-PE classroom studies not addressed in this review. Specifically, students who have fewer friends and receive low peer support are more exposed to victimization in PE. Evidence suggests that bystanders’ defending and supporting behaviors are important to reduce the psychological impacts of bullying such as depression and decreased self-esteem among middle and high school students (Evans et al., 2019). Successful non-PE classroom peer interventions have focused on improving bystanders’ empathy toward victims, fostering peer relationships, and introducing strategies to support vulnerable populations (Gaffney et al., 2019). Examining whether similar peer interventions can influence children’s behavior in PE is needed.

PE is one of the exclusive places in school settings where learning positive social skills should be integrated into daily lessons. Unfortunately, nearly one third of students reported being bullied in PE (Killion et al., 2020). The current review emphasized the critical role physical educators play in addressing and preventing bullying. It has been suggested in the general education literature that some teaching styles (namely, autonomy supportive) can positively impact the learning environment and meet students’ basic psychological needs whereby decreasing instances of bullying and victimization in family and at school (Varsamis et al., 2021). Occupational socialization theory suggests that teaching styles align with teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, reactions, and use of strategies to prevent bullying. As such, instructional styles might vary based on teachers’ own K–12 PE experiences as a student, educational backgrounds, and teaching experience (Craig et al., 2011; Maynes & Mottonen, 2017). Because teachers, especially preservice teachers, expressed concerns about creating a positive climate when bullying occurs, the need for PE Teacher Education programs to prepare candidates with bullying-related knowledge and antibullying interventions is essential (Lester et al., 2018; Van Verseveld et al., 2021) and so is continued professional development.

Implementing cooperative games and increasing children’s awareness of bullying were helpful strategies for creating a friendly, inclusive environment. The effects of cooperative games on bullying reduction and prevention are not surprising. Previous evidence has suggested that peer relations, affective and cognitive empathy, and social skills can be promoted through this type of learning, which can directly reduce bullying (Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2019). Promoting students’ social emotional learning while teaching interventions to reduce and prevent bullying seems to be a promising approach that can be addressed in PE curriculum models (Espelage et al., 2015). Considering these strategies alongside family-level factors, such as parenting styles, might determine how children perceive and react to bullying. Constructing interventions that promote positive behaviors and encourage students to implement learning outcomes in other settings outside of school (such as at home) is also encouraged (Mulvey et al., 2019).

In relation to theoretical frameworks, some studies have applied SEM to establish a deeper understanding of bullying dynamics in classrooms or within a general school context (Espelage et al., 2018). Given that children’s behavior is influenced by their social environment (family, peers, and the school), it is essential to address bullying through the lens of the SEM (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Only one study, however, has been conducted that used the SEM model to investigate children’s bullying behaviors in PE (O’Connor & Graber, 2014). Further studies that adopt this theoretical framework to guide antibullying interventions in PE are warranted.

Although there has been a notable increase in interest in international research related to bullying in PE (over 50% of the relevant studies described here were published in the past few years), only one intervention study was conducted in the United States (Gano-Overway, 2013). Of particular importance would be conducting studies that examine effective antibullying interventions in PE, and more research needs to take place in K–12 schools in the United States.

To our knowledge, this is the first scoping review of research conducted on bullying in PE. The review, however, is limited to studies that were accessible in full text and published in English, exposing the risk of omitting studies conducted in other countries that could have transfer implications. Another limitation is the lack of quality assessment of the included articles. This scoping review, however, aimed only to identify all possible research that has been conducted on bullying and PE, not necessarily to assess the quality of these selected works. Considerations of quality must be made before applying these findings to schools, PE settings, or physical activity interventions among children and vulnerable populations (e.g., children with disabilities and LGBTQ population).

Overall, this study provides important information to investigators who wish to study bullying and highlights the significance of developing interventions that will reduce its emergence and create a more welcoming learning environment, one which has the potential to lead to lifelong engagement in physical activity and adaptation of a healthy lifestyle. It provides an overview of those studies conducted and highlights where future study is warranted.

Acknowledgments

The procedures used in this research were reviewed and approved by relevant institutional review boards prior to the initiation of research activities. This research was conducted without the support of funding.

References


