

Fostering Inclusion and Social Justice in Physical Education: Learners' Insights for an Equitable Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive and socially just Physical Education (PE) environments are essential for ensuring that all learners—regardless of gender, ability, or socioeconomic background—experience equitable participation. In the Philippines, the Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE) curriculum aims to promote such inclusivity, yet students' firsthand experiences remain underexplored. This study examined learners' perceptions and experiences of inclusion and social justice within the HOPE curriculum at Tanza National Comprehensive High School. It further assessed whether perceptions differed by gender, age, or academic strand. A mixed-methods convergent parallel design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 338

senior high school students through a validated survey, while qualitative insights were gathered from 14 Grade 12 student leaders via semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA, while qualitative data were interpreted through Colaizzi's method. Integration occurred during triangulation. Learners reported high perceptions of inclusion and social justice across indicators, highlighting equal participation, cultural respect, and supportive teacher practices. ANOVA results showed no significant differences across gender, age, or strand. Qualitative findings revealed themes of belonging, peer support, fairness, and positive teacher adaptation, alongside occasional exclusion, subtle biases, and inconsistent accommodations for students with disabilities. The HOPE curriculum was generally perceived as inclusive and socially just, though gaps remain in addressing subtle exclusion and ensuring consistent support for diverse learners. Findings provide evidence-based insights for enhancing teacher training, curriculum implementation, and school-level inclusivity efforts.

Keywords: *Adapted Support, Equitable Participation, Inclusion, Physical Education, Social Justice, Student Voice*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a defining priority in contemporary schooling, grounded in the belief that all learners—regardless of ability, gender identity, cultural background, or socioeconomic status—deserve equitable access to meaningful learning experiences. International frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) have long emphasized the moral and legal imperative of inclusive educational environments. In the Philippines, these commitments are reinforced through national policies such as Republic Act 11650, the

Inclusive Education Act, and the K–12 curriculum reforms, which mandate the removal of barriers that hinder full student participation (Department of Education, 2016). Within this educational landscape, Physical Education (PE) plays a vital role because of its inherently social, interactive, and participatory nature. PE settings are uniquely positioned to either promote or hinder inclusion, making them an important site for examining issues of fairness, belonging, and justice in schools (Ainscow, 2020; Lynch et al., 2022).

Existing research highlights the value of inclusive PE in fostering students' social and emotional development, promoting equitable participation, and enhancing a sense of belonging among diverse learners (Gentile et al., 2023; Nanayakkara, 2021). At the same time, numerous studies indicate that challenges persist. Teachers frequently report limited training in inclusive strategies, gaps in adaptive PE practices, and uncertainty when supporting learners with disabilities (Masongsong et al., 2023; Echavia, 2023). Other scholars note that cultural, gender-based, and socioeconomic factors often shape students' PE experiences, sometimes resulting in stereotyping, marginalization, or unequal opportunities (Aguilar, 2023; Gamutin et al., 2024). Likewise, research on student perspectives suggests that while many PE classrooms strive for fairness, subtle exclusion—particularly in competitive activities—remains a recurring concern (Gerdin, 2024; Marquez et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature, a key research gap persists: much of the existing scholarship focuses on teacher practices, policy frameworks, or curricular analyses, while learners' own voices remain underrepresented. As several authors argue, understanding inclusion requires not only institutional or adult perspectives but also the lived experiences of students who navigate PE environments daily (Tanure Alves et al., 2021; Arroyo-Rojas & Hodge, 2024). In the Philippine context, empirical studies examining student perspectives within the Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE) curriculum remain scarce, even though HOPE is a central component of senior high school learning. This lack of student-centered evidence limits the field's ability to evaluate how inclusive policies translate into classroom reality.

The timeliness of this inquiry is amplified by ongoing educational reforms and global calls for socially just, learner-centered pedagogies. Social Justice Theory emphasizes the need for redistribution of resources, recognition of diverse identities, and representation in decision-making (Fraser, 2005 as cited in Das, 2023). These principles underscore the importance of examining not only what occurs in PE classrooms but also how students interpret their experiences of fairness, participation, and support. Inclusive Education Theory similarly calls for environments that respond to learner diversity through adaptive, flexible, and culturally responsive practices (Ainscow, 2020; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021).

Given this context, the present study investigates learners' perceptions and experiences of inclusion and social justice within the HOPE curriculum at Tanza National Comprehensive High School. By integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from student interviews, the study aims to illuminate how inclusive practices are enacted and experienced in real PE settings. This approach directly addresses the identified research gap by elevating student voice and examining the nuances of inclusion from the learner perspective.

Understanding how students perceive inclusion and social justice in PE is essential for strengthening teacher training, improving curriculum design, and informing school policies that promote equitable participation. Ultimately, this study aims to provide timely, evidence-based insights that contribute to ongoing efforts to create PE environments where all learners feel valued, supported, and empowered to participate fully.

Research Questions

This study aimed to address the following research question: What were the students' perceptions and experiences of inclusion and social justice in the Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE) curriculum at Tanza National Comprehensive High School?

Additionally, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the learners in terms of:
 - 1.1. gender;
 - 1.2. age; and
 - 1.3. academic strand?
2. What are learners' perceptions of inclusion in the HOPE curriculum?
3. What are learners' perceptions of social justice in the HOPE curriculum?
4. Is there a significant difference in learners' perceptions of inclusion in HOPE across demographic groups?
5. Is there a significant difference in learners' perceptions of social justice in HOPE across demographic groups?
6. How do learners describe their most significant experiences related to inclusion and social justice in HOPE?
7. What common themes emerge from the analysis of learners' experiences?
8. Based on the findings, what framework or model can be formulated that shows fostering of inclusion and social justice in HOPE?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods convergent parallel design to investigate learners' perceptions and experiences of inclusion and social justice within the Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE) curriculum. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it allows quantitative and qualitative data to be collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation. This design was chosen to obtain both the breadth of numerical patterns and the depth of personal experiences, thereby strengthening the validity and comprehensiveness of the findings. The study was conducted at Tanza National Comprehensive High School (TNCHS) in Daang Amaya II, Tanza, Cavite, during the Academic Year 2024–2025.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Tanza National Comprehensive High School (TNCHS) in Daang Amaya II, Tanza, Cavite, during the Academic Year 2024–2025.

Sampling Technique

The target population consisted of all senior high school students enrolled in Grades 11 and 12 at TNCHS. For the quantitative phase, 338 students were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation from three academic strands: Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM); Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS); and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Inclusion criteria required that participants be enrolled in the HOPE curriculum and willing to provide informed consent. Students who were absent during data collection or declined participation were excluded. For the qualitative phase, 14 Grade 12 class presidents were selected through purposive sampling. These student leaders were chosen because they were presumed to have broad insight into their class members' collective experiences. All qualitative participants met the inclusion criteria of being enrolled in HOPE and willing to participate in interviews.

Research Instrument/s

The study utilized two primary research instruments. The first was a researcher-made survey questionnaire designed to measure students' perceptions of inclusion and social justice within the HOPE curriculum using a 4-point Likert scale. To ensure clarity, relevance, and content accuracy, the instrument

underwent expert validation by a psychometrician, a learning area specialist, and the school research coordinator. It was subsequently pilot tested to identify and address potential issues before full deployment. Reliability analysis confirmed the instrument's internal consistency, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of at least 0.70. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview guide intended to capture participants' significant experiences related to inclusion and social justice in PE. Like the survey, the interview guide was reviewed and validated by experts and was also pilot tested prior to data collection to ensure its appropriateness, coherence, and effectiveness in eliciting rich qualitative data.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed a chronological and controlled process. After obtaining approvals and securing informed consent (and assent for minors), the researcher administered the quantitative survey during scheduled class periods to ensure maximum participation. Completed surveys were collected and stored securely. Qualitative data were gathered after the survey phase. Individual interviews with the 14 class presidents were conducted in a private setting to ensure comfort and confidentiality. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Throughout data collection, the researcher minimized extraneous influences by standardizing instructions, maintaining neutrality, and ensuring that participants could withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative data were processed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) summarized demographic profiles and perceptions. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tested for significant differences in perceptions across gender, age, and academic strand at a significance level of 0.05. Qualitative data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. This involved reading transcripts, extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, identifying the fundamental structure, and validating findings through member checking. Triangulation was performed to integrate quantitative and qualitative results, strengthening credibility and ensuring comprehensive interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly followed ethical research standards to protect participants' rights, safety, and privacy. All learners participated voluntarily after receiving clear informed consent forms outlining the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Assent and parental consent were secured for minors. Confidentiality was ensured by removing personal identifiers, coding responses, and securely storing all data accessible only to the researcher. During data collection, especially in interviews, care was taken to minimize any psychological discomfort. Participants could skip questions or withdraw at any point, and interviews were conducted respectfully. The researcher monitored emotional cues and paused sessions when needed, offering breaks, withdrawal options, or referrals to guidance or counseling services for additional support. Data integrity was maintained through accurate, unbiased reporting and responsible data management, including secure storage and appropriate disposal. The study also obtained Institutional Ethics Review Board (IERB) approval prior to data collection, ensuring full compliance with institutional and ethical guidelines. Overall, the ethical safeguards in place ensured participant welfare, protected confidentiality, and contributed to a credible and responsible research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Learners

This section presents the learners' demographic profile—gender, age, and academic strand—which provides essential context for interpreting perceptions of inclusion and social justice in the HOPE curriculum.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	124	36.69
Female	192	56.80
Non-binary (LGBTQIA+)	13	3.85
Prefer not to say	9	2.66
TOTAL	338	100

Most respondents were female, followed by males, with a small proportion identifying as non-binary or choosing not to disclose their gender. This gender distribution is relevant to discussions on equity in PE, as inclusive PE practices must account for gender diversity (Lynch et al., 2022; Sanches Neto et al., 2024). The presence of non-binary learners highlights the need for PE environments that respect gender identity and privacy (Gentile et al., 2023; Gamutin et al., 2024).

Table 2. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15–16	69	20.41
17–18	224	66.27
19 or older	45	13.31
TOTAL	338	100

The majority (66.27%) were aged 17–18, typical of senior high school. Younger (15–16) and older (19+) learners were also represented. Age diversity reinforces the need for PE programs responsive to developmental differences (Gentile et al., 2023; Masongsong et al., 2023).

Table 3. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Academic Strand*

Academic Strand	Frequency	Percentage
ABM	87	25.74
HUMSS	169	50.00
STEM	82	24.26
TOTAL	338	100

Half of the respondents came from HUMSS, with ABM and STEM nearly equally represented. Strand representation is important to inclusivity because PE programming must accommodate students with diverse academic orientations (Lynch et al., 2022; Gentile et al., 2023). Variation in interests and learning needs across strands underscores the importance of equitable, engaging PE activities for all students.

Learners' Perceptions of Inclusion in the HOPE Curriculum

Table 4. *Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Perceptions of Inclusion in the HOPE Curriculum*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation

1. The HOPE curriculum gives all students, no matter their physical ability or gender, the same chance to join in PE activities.	3.66	SA/HP
2. In PE, I feel that all students, no matter their abilities, are encouraged to participate equally in activities and sports.	3.53	SA/HP
3. PE teachers provide the help that students with disabilities or physical limitations need to fully join PE activities.	3.33	SA/HP
4. In PE, students of all abilities and backgrounds work together and support each other in group activities and sports.	3.52	SA/HP
5. In PE, students from different cultural, language, or social backgrounds are treated fairly and included in all activities.	3.57	SA/HP
6. PE teachers adjust activities to make sure all students, including those with disabilities or special needs, can fully join in.	3.46	SA/HP
7. The non-teaching staff (e.g., school staff, administrative personnel, custodians) try to be fair and supportive to all students, no matter their background, abilities, or identity.	3.40	SA/HP
8. There are times when I feel left out of certain PE activities because of my physical ability or background.	2.67	A/MP
9. Overall, I feel that the PE curriculum provides a fair, inclusive environment and helps students feel like they belong, no matter their background or ability.	3.51	SA/HP
TOTAL	3.40	SA/HP
SD	0.275	

1.00 – 1.74 Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Low Perception (VLP); 1.75 – 2.49 Disagree (D)/Low Perception (LP); 2.50 – 3.24 Agree (A)/Moderate Perception (MP); 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/High Perception (HP)

Table 4 summarizes students' perceptions of inclusion in the HOPE curriculum. Overall, learners reported a high perception of inclusion ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.28$), indicating that most felt PE activities were fair, supportive, and accessible. Students strongly agreed that the HOPE curriculum provides equal participation opportunities ($M = 3.66$) and that all learners are encouraged to engage regardless of ability ($M = 3.53$). They also perceived teachers as offering adequate support for students with disabilities ($M = 3.33$) and adapting activities when necessary ($M = 3.46$). Learners likewise viewed peer collaboration positively, reporting that students work together and support one another ($M = 3.52$). Fair treatment across cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds also received high agreement ($M = 3.57$). Support from non-teaching staff was rated positively ($M = 3.40$), aligning with research stating that inclusivity extends beyond classroom teachers (Lynch & Walton-Fisette, 2022). A moderate rating for feeling left out ($M = 2.67$) suggests that some learners experience occasional exclusion due to ability or background, consistent with literature noting persistent barriers for certain students (Masongsong et al., 2023; Haegele et al., 2021). The overall score ($M = 3.51$) reflects strong perceptions of fairness and belonging. These findings support inclusive education principles, emphasizing equitable opportunities, recognition of diverse needs, and collaborative learning environments (Ainscow, 2020; Sanches Neto et al., 2024).

Learners' Perceptions of Social Justice in the HOPE Curriculum

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Perceptions of Social Justice in the HOPE Curriculum

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The HOPE curriculum makes sure that all students, no matter their physical ability or gender, have equal chances to participate in PE activities.	3.64	SA/HP
2. The curriculum makes sure that students from different backgrounds have the same access to resources and opportunities in PE activities.	3.54	SA/HP

3. The PE curriculum gives equal chances for students with disabilities to join physical activities with their classmates.	3.43	SA/HP
4. PE classes respect and value the differences in students' culture, social background, and physical abilities.	3.61	SA/HP
5. In PE, I believe students from different backgrounds (e.g., socio-economic, cultural, gender) are included and given the same chance to do well in physical activities.	3.57	SA/HP
6. PE activities encourage teamwork and cooperation, where students of all abilities (e.g., athletic, cognitive) are equally important in group activities.	3.60	SA/HP
7. The PE curriculum includes students from underrepresented groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities) in physical activities.	3.51	SA/HP
8. PE teachers respect students' cultural, social, or gender backgrounds when planning activities or interacting with them.	3.59	SA/HP
9. I feel that PE teachers notice and celebrate the different skills and abilities that students bring to physical activities.	3.46	SA/HP
10. PE activities are designed so that students from all backgrounds can show their strengths, no matter their physical ability.	3.49	SA/HP
11. In PE, students of all gender identities are treated fairly and given the same opportunities to participate.	3.56	SA/HP
12. PE teachers provide extra help (e.g., modified activities, special equipment) to students who need it to join physical activities.	3.46	SA/HP
13. The resources in PE (e.g., equipment, teacher time) are shared equally among all students, including those with disabilities or fewer resources.	3.41	SA/HP
14. I feel that PE teachers give fair attention to all students, no matter their background or ability.	3.52	SA/HP
15. I have seen unfair treatment in PE based on gender, physical ability, or socio-economic background.	2.65	A/MP
16. I have experienced unfair treatment in PE based on gender, physical ability, or socio-economic background.	2.52	A/MP
17. PE teachers handle situations of bias, exclusion, or unfair treatment in class well.	3.07	A/MP
18. When social justice (e.g., fairness, equal treatment, respect for diversity) is promoted in PE, students feel more motivated to join in.	3.54	SA/HP
19. The PE curriculum helps create a sense of belonging for all students, no matter their background or ability.	3.55	SA/HP
TOTAL	3.41	SA/HP
SD	0.305	

1.00 – 1.74 Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Low Perception (VLP); 1.75 – 2.49 Disagree (D)/Low Perception (LP); 2.50 – 3.24 Agree (A)/Moderate Perception (MP); 3.25 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/High Perception (HP)

Learners reported a high overall perception of social justice in the HOPE curriculum ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.31$). As shown in Table 5, students strongly agreed that the curriculum promotes equal participation ($M = 3.64$), fair access to resources ($M = 3.54$), and inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities ($M = 3.43$). They also perceived that PE classes respect cultural, social, and physical differences ($M = 3.61$) and treat students from diverse backgrounds fairly ($M = 3.57$). High ratings for teamwork and cooperation ($M = 3.60$) and the inclusion of underrepresented groups ($M = 3.51$) further emphasize the curriculum's socially just orientation, supporting existing work on equity-driven PE practices (Lynch et al., 2022; Gentile et al., 2023).

Teacher sensitivity to cultural and gender identities ($M = 3.59$) and recognition of student strengths ($M = 3.46$) were also rated highly, consistent with literature highlighting the role of teachers in promoting

just and affirming learning environments (Masongsong et al., 2023; Sanches Neto et al., 2024). Students agreed that PE activities allow individuals of all backgrounds to demonstrate strengths ($M = 3.49$) and that gender identities are treated fairly ($M = 3.56$). Additional help for students needing modifications ($M = 3.46$) and equitable resource sharing ($M = 3.41$) further reflect inclusive practices aligned with adapted and inclusive PE frameworks (Haegele et al., 2021; SHAPE America, 2021).

Moderate scores were observed for witnessed unfair treatment ($M = 2.65$), personal experiences of unfairness ($M = 2.52$), and teachers' handling of bias ($M = 3.07$). These results mirror prior findings noting that despite strong inclusive intentions, subtle biases and inconsistencies still occur in PE settings (Tanure Alves et al., 2021; van Doodewaard & Knoppers, 2022).

Overall, the results indicate that learners view the HOPE curriculum as largely socially just, characterized by fairness, respect for diversity, and supportive instructional practices. At the same time, moderate reports of unfair treatment point to areas where social justice efforts can be strengthened, affirming the literature that inclusion requires continuous, deliberate improvement (Durden-Myers, 2022).

Significant Difference in Learners' Perceptions of Inclusion in HOPE when Grouped according to their Demographic Profile

ANOVA was used to determine whether perceptions of inclusion differed across gender, age, and academic strand. Results show no statistically significant differences in any demographic category, indicating that learners generally share similar perceptions of inclusion in the HOPE curriculum.

Table 6. *Analysis of Variance on the Perceptions of Inclusion in the HOPE Curriculum Based on Respondents' Gender*

Groups	Mean	df	P-value	F	F crit	Decision
Male	3.41	337	0.933156	0.144509	2.631649	Failed to Reject Ho
Female	3.40					
Non-binary (LGBTQIA+)	3.45					
Prefer not to say	3.36					

Table 6 shows mean scores for males ($M = 3.41$), females ($M = 3.40$), non-binary learners ($M = 3.45$), and those who preferred not to disclose gender ($M = 3.36$). The p -value = 0.933156 exceeds the 0.05 threshold, and the F value (0.144509) is lower than F_{crit} (2.631649), indicating no significant difference in perceptions across gender groups. These findings reflect Social Justice Theory and Inclusive Education Theory, which stress equal opportunities regardless of gender (Lynch et al., 2022; Sanches Neto et al., 2024).

Table 7. *Analysis of Variance on the Perceptions of Inclusion in the HOPE Curriculum Based on Age of Respondents*

Groups	Mean	df	P-value	F	F crit	Decision
15-16	3.37	337	0.467327	0.762455	3.022682	Failed to Reject Ho
17-18	3.38					
19 or older	3.46					

Table 7 indicates mean scores of 3.37 (ages 15–16), 3.38 (ages 17–18), and 3.46 (ages 19+). The p -value = 0.467327 and $F = 0.762455$, which is below $F_{crit} = 3.022682$, confirm no significant age-based differences in inclusion perceptions. This supports literature noting that inclusive PE must meet the developmental needs of all age groups (Ainscow, 2020; Lynch et al., 2022).

Table 8. *Analysis of Variance on the Perceptions of Inclusion in the HOPE Curriculum Based on Respondents' Academic Strand*

Groups	Mean	df	P-value	F	F crit	Decision
ABM	3.44	337	0.419653	0.870583	3.022682	Failed to Reject Ho
HUMSS	3.40					
STEM	3.37					

Table 8 shows similar mean scores across strands—ABM (3.44), HUMSS (3.40), and STEM (3.37). With a p -value = 0.419653 and an F value (0.870583) below F_{crit} (3.022682), the results confirm no significant difference across academic strands. This aligns with the principle that inclusivity should apply equally regardless of academic orientation (Lynch et al., 2022; Ainscow, 2020). Across gender, age, and academic strand, all p -values exceed 0.05 and all F values fall below their corresponding F_{crit} values. This indicates that the HOPE curriculum is perceived as equally inclusive by learners from all demographic groups, reflecting consistent implementation of fairness and equitable participation in PE.

Significant Difference in Learners' Perceptions of Social Justice in HOPE when Grouped according to their Demographic Profile

ANOVA was used to determine whether learners' perceptions of social justice differed across gender, age, and academic strand. Results show that no statistically significant differences exist for any demographic group, indicating that students generally share similar views of social justice in the HOPE curriculum.

Table 9. *Analysis of Variance on the Perceptions of Social Justice in the HOPE Curriculum Based on Respondents' Gender*

Variables	Mean	df	P-value	F	F crit	Decision
Male	3.43	337	0.307026	1.207364	2.631649	Failed to Reject Ho
Female	3.39					
Non-binary (LGBTQIA+)	3.53					
Prefer not to say	3.26					

As shown in Table 9, mean scores for males ($M = 3.43$), females ($M = 3.39$), non-binary respondents ($M = 3.53$), and those who preferred not to say ($M = 3.26$) were comparable. The p -value = 0.307026 and $F = 1.207364$, which is lower than $F_{crit} = 2.631649$, confirm that gender does not significantly influence social justice perceptions. This aligns with social justice and inclusive education principles emphasizing equal treatment regardless of gender (Lynch et al., 2022; Sanches Neto et al., 2024).

Table 10. *Analysis of Variance on the Perceptions of Social Justice in the HOPE Curriculum Based on Respondents' Age*

Groups	Mean	df	P-value	F	F crit	Decision
15-16	3.34	337	0.091703	2.406321	3.022682	Failed to Reject Ho
17-18	3.41					
19 or older	3.50					

Table 10 shows mean scores of 3.34 (ages 15–16), 3.41 (ages 17–18), and 3.50 (ages 19+). With $p\text{-value} = 0.091703$ and $F = 2.406321$, which is below $F_{crit} = 3.022682$, there is no significant difference in social justice perceptions based on age. These findings support the notion that social justice in PE should accommodate learners of all developmental stages (Ainscow, 2020; Lynch et al., 2022).

Table 11. *Analysis of Variance on the Perceptions of Social Justice in the HOPE Curriculum Based on Respondents' Academic Strand*

Groups	Mean	df	P-value	F	F crit	Decision
ABM	3.41	337	0.356776	1.033825	3.022682	Failed to Reject H_0
HUMSS	3.43					
STEM	3.35					

Table 11 shows nearly identical perceptions across strands—ABM ($M = 3.41$), HUMSS ($M = 3.43$), and STEM ($M = 3.35$). With a $p\text{-value} = 0.356776$ and $F = 1.033825$ below $F_{crit} = 3.022682$, there is no significant difference in social justice perceptions by strand. This is consistent with the expectation that inclusive PE should support learners across all academic pathways (Ainscow, 2020; Lynch et al., 2022). Across gender, age, and academic strand, all $p\text{-values}$ exceed 0.05 and all F values fall below their corresponding critical values. This indicates that learners perceive the HOPE curriculum as socially just regardless of demographic characteristics, reflecting consistent implementation of fairness, respect for diversity, and equitable participation within the PE program.

Learners' Significant Experiences Related to Inclusion and Social Justice in HOPE

Participant 1 – Klarisse. Klarisse described PE as enjoyable, fair, and consistently inclusive. They noted that lessons were engaging and that teachers ensured students' needs were considered before activities. They also emphasized the supportive role of peers in maintaining fairness.

Verbatim statements include: "*Nagkaroon ng chance lahat na sumali doon sa hatawcompre,*" "*Wala namang activities na naramdaman kong na-left out ako,*" and "*Tinutulungan nila yung students... kung may health problems sila.*"

Their responses reflect strong equitable participation aligned with Inclusive Education Theory, which emphasizes supportive learning environments (Ainscow, 2020). They also reinforce findings that fairness and cooperation promote belonging in PE (Lynch et al., 2022). Their experiences indicate effective implementation of inclusive practices within HOPE.

Participant 2 – Mika. Mika described PE as helpful for health and social development but also shared experiences of exclusion as a transfer student. They highlighted moments where classmates dismissed their input and recalled witnessing bullying. Despite this, they valued cultural learning and accommodations for students with unique needs.

Verbatim statements include: "*They sometimes disregard your opinions... it drains your confidence,*" "*My classmate is autistic... my other classmates bullied him,*" and "*It helps you shape your talents better and learn from others' talents.*"

Their narrative reflects emotional and social barriers common in PE, supporting research on inequities experienced by new students and neurodiverse peers (Haegele et al., 2021). They also align with literature underscoring the need for stronger teacher intervention to disrupt harmful peer behaviors (Masongsong et al., 2023). Mika's experience underscores gaps in social justice implementation within PE.

Participant 3 – Will. Will reported highly positive and inclusive PE experiences, feeling consistently welcomed in all activities. They appreciated teacher support, particularly for learners with special needs. They also emphasized fairness among classmates.

Verbatim statements include: *“I feel included in every activity,” “Our PE adviser is very supportive,”* and *“Everyone is given fair scores for their hard work.”*

Their account aligns with Ainscow’s (2020) argument that inclusive teaching ensures full participation for diverse learners. It also reflects Social Justice Theory’s principles of fair representation and equal opportunities (Fraser, 2005, as cited by Das, 2023). Will’s experience suggests that HOPE effectively fosters inclusive participation.

Participant 4 – Charley. Charley described PE as enjoyable and engaging but noted moments of uneven fairness. They observed that students with weaker athletic skills were sometimes overlooked. They mentioned variability in teacher support for students with special needs.

Verbatim statements include: *“May estudyanteng hindi pinipili sa grupo dahil mahina sa sports,” “May mga PE teacher na nag-aadjust ng aktibidad,”* and *“Nagkakasundo ang mga estudyante sa pamamagitan ng teamwork.”*

Their responses reflect ability-based inequities frequently documented in PE settings (Lynch et al., 2022). They also emphasize the need for consistent adaptive instruction, consistent with Inclusive Education Theory (Ainscow, 2020). These insights highlight areas for strengthening equitable practices.

Participant 5 – Ralph. Ralph emphasized fairness, teamwork, and open communication as central to their PE experiences. They appreciated how teachers and guidance personnel addressed concerns. They believed fairness increased student motivation.

Verbatim statements include: *“PE taught me teamwork without neglecting fairness,” “They’re open enough to listen on both sides,”* and *“Students will be actively engaged... when protected by fairness.”*

Their reflections align with Social Justice Theory’s focus on equal treatment and representation (Fraser, 2005 as cited in Das, 2023). They also support research linking fairness to student engagement and participation (Lynch et al., 2022). Ralph’s experience underscores the motivational power of equitable PE environments.

Participant 6 – Brent. Brent described PE as inclusive, noting that teachers regularly adapt activities for different abilities. They felt consistently included but saw less skilled students occasionally excluded or teased. They valued supportive peer interactions.

Verbatim statements include: *“There hasn’t been a time where I felt left out,” “Students with less skill were sometimes teased,”* and *“Teachers adapt activities to suit different abilities.”*

Their experiences support findings that teacher adjustments enhance inclusion (Ainscow, 2020). However, peer-based exclusion reflects documented challenges in ability-diverse PE settings (Lynch & Walton-Fisette, 2022). Brent’s insights point to the need for stronger peer awareness interventions.

Participant 7 – Shuvee. Shuvee enjoyed PE and consistently felt included, often taking leadership roles. They perceived the environment as fair and emphasized equal rights to participate. They highlighted the importance of teamwork for inclusion.

Verbatim statements include: *“Lahat tayo may iba’t ibang kakayahan,” “Nagkakaroong teamwork ang lahat,”* and *“Everyone has the right to join activities.”*

Their perspective aligns with inclusive, cooperative PE approaches that promote belonging (Gentile et al., 2023). They also reflect Social Justice Theory’s emphasis on equal opportunity (Fraser, 2005 as cited in Das, 2023). Shuvee’s experiences illustrate effective peer collaboration in HOPE.

Participant 8 – Esnyr. Esnyr described PE as fun and supportive, feeling consistently included in activities. They noted that teachers and peers fostered fairness but also observed occasional exclusion of less skilled students. They recommended more teamwork-oriented activities.

Verbatim statements include: *“Everyone gets a chance to join,” “My classmates are supportive,”* and *“Sometimes less skilled students are left out.”*

Their insights align with Ainscow’s (2020) call for adaptive teaching to ensure full participation. They also reinforce the role of teamwork in reducing exclusion (Sanches Neto et al., 2024). Esnyr’s reflections highlight strengths and improvement areas in HOPE.

Participant 9 – Bianca. Bianca appreciated PE but felt activities were sometimes too paper-based. They consistently felt included and supported by teachers. They valued equal participation during whole-school events.

Verbatim statements include: *“Everyone gets a chance to join,” “Hataw Compre was the best example for participation,”* and *“The teacher gives equal treatment to all students.”*

Their responses support calls for more active, differentiated PE activities (Durdin-Myers, 2022). They also align with Inclusive Education Theory, which emphasizes equitable access across diverse abilities (Ainscow, 2020). Bianca’s insights highlight the need for more physically engaging tasks.

Participant 10 – AZ. AZ described mixed experiences, feeling included at times but excluded during skill-intensive activities. They observed favoritism in team sports and uneven teacher support. They recommended more adaptive strategies and role rotation.

Verbatim statements include: *“Some activities favored skilled students,” “Teachers modify activities but support varies,”* and *“More adaptive approaches would help ensure inclusion.”*

Their insights support research showing competitive PE can disadvantage less athletic learners (Haegele et al., 2021). They also highlight the need for fairness-oriented instructional design (Lynch et al., 2022). AZ’s reflections emphasize inconsistencies in inclusive practice.

Participant 11 – Xyriel. Xyriel enjoyed PE but often felt excluded due to skill differences in team sports. They appreciated teacher support but still found some activities inaccessible. They recommended more adaptive exercises.

Verbatim statements include: *“I don’t always feel included,” “Some students have more opportunities,”* and *“Activities should accommodate all students.”*

Their experiences reflect the marginalization of less skilled learners, supporting calls for adaptive PE approaches (Ortlinghaus, 2024). They also reinforce the need for differentiated, flexible activities (Ainscow, 2020). Xyriel’s narrative highlights persistent ability-related inequities.

Participant 12 – Kira. Kira, a learner with visual impairment, felt supported by teachers and peers and consistently included in activities. They appreciated safety reminders and accommodations. They emphasized respect, unity, and acceptance.

Verbatim statements include: *“Superrr thankful isa po ako sa may disability,” “Lahat included kahit ano ka,”* and *“Unity... lahat belong.”*

Their reflections align strongly with disability-inclusive PE research advocating adaptive and safe participation (Haegele et al., 2021). They also support Inclusive Education Theory’s focus on responsive, individualized support (Ainscow, 2020). Kira’s experiences highlight the positive impact of meaningful accommodations.

Participant 13 – Ashley. Ashley enjoyed PE but felt excluded in sports-focused activities due to limited athletic ability. They witnessed discrimination against students with disabilities and noted that

accommodations, while helpful, were sometimes insufficient. They recommended more cooperative and adaptive activities.

Verbatim statements include: *“I was laughed at,” “Students with disabilities were pushed to the side,”* and *“Accommodations are not enough.”*

Their narrative aligns with research documenting marginalization in PE for less athletic learners (Lynch & Walton-Fisette, 2022). They also highlights the need for stronger adaptive support and teacher vigilance (Masongsong et al., 2023). Ashley’s account underscores gaps in equitable practice.

Participant 14 – River. River described PE as collaborative, enjoyable, and engaging. They observed fairness overall but noted occasional biases and financial-based exclusion among peers. They valued teacher support and recommended more teamwork-oriented activities.

Verbatim statements include: *“PE activities bring your classes together,” “Some students are disregarded due to financial struggles,”* and *“Teachers work on solutions to provide fair treatment.”*

Their reflections align with literature showing PE’s potential to foster teamwork and social connection (Sanches Neto et al., 2024). They also reinforce the need for equity across socioeconomic differences (Durdin-Myers, 2022). River’s insights highlight both strengths and ongoing challenges in promoting social justice in PE.

Emerging Themes from Learners’ Significant Experiences

Table 12. *Thematic Map*

Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Being open-minded towards all cultures and genders is necessary for an inclusive PE environment. PE teachers promote fairness by creating inclusive environments where everyone, regardless of gender or background, has an equal opportunity to participate in activities, fostering teamwork and respect.	Gender-Neutral Practices	Equitable Participation
Fairness and social justice create a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable participating, regardless of skill level. While fairness is generally practiced, some activities still favor more athletic students, reducing inclusivity.	Fairness in Competitive Activities	
PE teachers provide crucial support to students with disabilities or special needs, ensuring their comfort and safety during activities. PE teachers should offer modified activities and additional encouragement for hesitant students, ensuring full participation.	Modifications for Students with Disabilities	Adaptive Support
Positive perception of the lessons, with a desire for more interactive content to make the learning experience more enjoyable for students. Extending PE class hours would allow students to enjoy the subject more and benefit from its stress-relieving nature.	Professional Development for Teachers	

PE helps students develop their talents and learn from others while discovering different cultures, traditions, and ways of thinking. Bullying occurred in PE when a classmate with autism was targeted due to his differences. Incorporating more diverse activities in PE designed to meet the needs of different abilities and interests, emphasizes participation rather than competition.	Culturally Relevant Activities	Cultural and Socio-Economic Inclusivity
Non-teaching staff are instrumental in providing support by ensuring the school environment is safe and welcoming for all students.	Socio-Economic Support	
Collaborative activities in PE bring happiness and create memorable experiences for students. A supportive and welcoming environment in PE ensures no one feels excluded, as classmates and teachers foster inclusivity.	Peer Support and Mentoring	Collaborative Engagement
PE is enjoyable because it provides opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. PE teacher ensures inclusivity by allowing everyone to participate and enjoy the class regardless of their skills, fostering a positive and equitable environment.	Teacher-Student Collaboration	

Theme 1: Equitable Participation. The theme of Equitable Participation reflects students' experiences of being given fair opportunities to join PE activities regardless of gender, ability level, or background. Many learners described PE as a space where participation was shared and no one was intentionally excluded, though some noted inconsistencies in competitive tasks. Students highlighted that fairness depended on both teacher practices and peer openness to working with diverse classmates.

Verbatim statements describing this theme include: "*Nagkaroon ng chance lahat na sumali sa Hataw Compre,*" "*Lahat tayo may iba't ibang kakayahan at may karapatang sumali,*" and "*May estudyanteng hindi pinipili dahil mahina sa sports.*"

This theme aligns with research emphasizing gender-neutral and ability-inclusive PE environments (Lynch & Walton-Fisette, 2022). It also reflects findings that competitive structures can unintentionally disadvantage less skilled learners (Haegele et al., 2021). Equitable participation therefore demonstrates the need for intentionally designed activities that allow all students meaningful access to PE, consistent with social-justice-oriented approaches.

Theme 2: Adaptive Support. Adaptive Support captures students' experiences with PE teachers modifying activities, expectations, and equipment to accommodate diverse needs, including disabilities and health-related limitations. Learners highlighted how teacher adjustments helped them feel safe and capable, while also noting gaps when adaptations were insufficient or inconsistent. Many recognized the value of teachers checking health conditions, offering alternative tasks, and creating inclusive modifications.

Verbatim excerpts include: "*Tinutulungan nila yung students before activities kung may health problems,*" "*Teachers adapt activities to suit different abilities,*" and "*Support is enough... but sometimes kulang kapag mahirap ang activity.*"

This theme reflects Inclusive Education Theory, which promotes differentiated support responsive to student needs (Ainscow, 2020). It also aligns with research showing that adaptive PE increases

participation and belonging among learners with disabilities (Haegele et al., 2021). These insights support calls for ongoing teacher training to strengthen adaptive strategies in PE (Sanches Neto et al., 2024).

Theme 3: Cultural and Socioeconomic Inclusivity. The theme of Cultural and Socioeconomic Inclusivity centers on students' experiences of fairness and respect regardless of cultural background, language, or financial status. Participants described positive interactions across diverse identity groups, though some noted exclusion linked to socioeconomic limitations or cultural misunderstandings. Students emphasized the importance of culturally relevant activities and supportive non-teaching staff in promoting belonging.

Verbatim statements include: *"Nagkakasundo ang mga estudyante mula sa iba't ibang cultural backgrounds," "Some students are disregarded due to financial struggles,"* and *"Everyone is treated fairly regardless of background."*

These experiences align with research highlighting culturally responsive PE and the need for inclusive practices that honor diverse identities (Gentile et al., 2023). Literature also emphasizes socioeconomic barriers that affect access to resources, requiring whole-school support systems (Lynch & Walton-Fisette, 2022). This theme underscores the importance of broad, community-supported approaches to inclusive PE.

Theme 4: Collaborative Engagement. Collaborative Engagement reflects how students rely on supportive peer interactions and positive teacher-student relationships to feel included in PE activities. Learners shared that teamwork, encouragement, and shared roles allowed them to participate confidently, while teacher responsiveness helped resolve issues of fairness or exclusion. Collaboration emerged as a key factor in building motivation and a sense of belonging.

Verbatim statements include: *"Teamwork helps everyone feel included," "Kapag patas ang trato mas motivated kami sumali,"* and *"PE teachers address unfairness by promoting inclusivity."*

This theme aligns with evidence that peer mentoring and cooperative learning enhance social connection and engagement (Sanches Neto et al., 2024). It also reflects the crucial role of teacher-student collaboration in shaping equitable classroom climates (Ortlinghaus, 2024). Overall, collaborative engagement supports research showing that inclusion is strengthened when learning environments foster empathy, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

Framework that Shows Fostering of Inclusion and Social Justice in HOPE



Figure 1. The Inclusive Social Justice Model for HOPE

The Inclusive Social Justice Model for HOPE is a framework developed from the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings, grounded in learners' perceptions and lived experiences of inclusion and social justice within the Health Optimizing Physical Education (HOPE) curriculum. The model integrates empirical evidence—such as high overall learner ratings for inclusion ($M = 3.40$) and social justice ($M = 3.41$)—with rich qualitative accounts of fairness, peer support, adaptive practices, and challenges such as bias and occasional exclusion. It is also informed by Social Justice Theory and Inclusive Education Theory, both of which emphasize equity, representation, and the removal of systemic barriers to full participation. The framework is structured around four interrelated pillars: Equitable Participation, Adaptive Support, Cultural and Socioeconomic Inclusivity, and Collaborative Engagement. Together, these pillars address gender equity, disability inclusion, cultural representation, socioeconomic barriers, and relational interconnectedness in the PE environment. Equitable Participation centers on creating opportunities for all learners—regardless of gender, skill level, or physical ability—to engage fully in PE activities. This pillar integrates the sub-components of gender-neutral practices and fairness in competitive contexts, ensuring that no student is advantaged or marginalized because of identity or physical capability. Gender-neutral practices require PE lessons to avoid reinforcing stereotypes and instead use inclusive language, roles, and activity designs that allow learners of all gender identities to participate authentically. Likewise, fairness in competitive activities is addressed by adjusting game rules, forming mixed-ability teams, and integrating non-competitive or cooperative formats so students of varying abilities meaningfully engage in PE. These sub-components reflect the importance of designing activities that equalize opportunity and reduce structural biases (Lynch & Walton-Fisette, 2022; Gentile et al., 2023).

Adaptive Support focuses on modifying the PE environment to accommodate students with diverse physical, cognitive, sensory, and emotional needs. This pillar is supported by two critical sub-components: modifications for students with disabilities and professional development for teachers. Modifications may include adjusting the intensity of activities, providing alternative roles, using adapted equipment such as lighter balls or visual markers, or allowing students to complete parallel performance tasks when full participation is unsafe. Teacher preparation is likewise essential, as educators must be trained in adaptive PE strategies, disability awareness, and inclusive pedagogical decision-making so that they can deliver equitable support consistently. Adaptive Support aligns with Inclusive Education Theory, which underscores the educator's responsibility to address individual needs and remove barriers that inhibit participation (Ainscow, 2020; Nanayakkara, 2021). Fraser's (2005, as cited in Das, 2023) principle of resource redistribution further reinforces the need for targeted support to uphold educational justice.

Cultural and Socioeconomic Inclusivity ensures that learners' cultural identities and economic circumstances do not hinder their ability to participate and feel respected in PE. The sub-components here include culturally relevant activities and socioeconomic support, both of which affirm the importance of representation and accessibility. Culturally relevant activities integrate games, sports, and practices that reflect the cultural diversity of students, helping them develop pride in their identities and broaden their understanding of others. Socioeconomic inclusivity addresses structural barriers by ensuring that essential materials—such as uniforms, shoes, or specialized equipment—are provided or subsidized so no learner is excluded due to financial constraints. This pillar is firmly supported by literature acknowledging that cultural competence and resource accessibility are essential in creating equitable and identity-affirming PE environments (Durden-Myers, 2022; Sanches Neto et al., 2024).

Collaborative Engagement underscores the importance of relational support through positive peer interactions and strong teacher–student partnerships. Its sub-components—peer support and mentoring, and teacher–student collaboration—highlight how social dynamics drive inclusion and belonging in PE. Peer support allows learners to work together across skill levels, promoting empathy, shared responsibility, and emotional safety. Teacher–student collaboration involves educators actively seeking learner input, offering consistent feedback, and helping resolve issues of unfairness or conflict. When teachers and students

co-construct the learning environment, PE becomes a community space rather than a performance-oriented one. Research reinforces that collaborative climates enhance motivation, increase engagement, and reduce exclusion, especially for marginalized students (Lynch et al., 2022; Gentile et al., 2023). Together, these four pillars form a comprehensive and evidence-driven model that strengthens inclusion and social justice within the HOPE curriculum. Because the model is grounded in both numerical data and lived student narratives, it reflects the real conditions of PE classrooms and addresses the structural, relational, and pedagogical inequalities observed in practice. As such, the Inclusive Social Justice Model for HOPE offers a practical and theoretically sound guide for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers committed to fostering equitable, culturally responsive, and socially just physical education for all learners. Evidence from the study strongly validates the model. Quantitative findings show consistently high ratings for equal opportunity, cultural fairness, teacher sensitivity, and teamwork—indicators that map directly onto the four pillars. Qualitative data reinforce these results, revealing students' appreciation for adaptive teaching, supportive peer relationships, and inclusive cultural practices while also identifying gaps such as inconsistent accommodations and occasional bias. These triangulated insights confirm the need for a structured framework that can strengthen existing strengths while addressing persistent inequities, a concern echoed in literature documenting policy-practice gaps in PE (Masongsong et al., 2023; Haegele et al., 2021; van Doodewaard & Knoppers, 2022). Overall, the Inclusive Social Justice Model for HOPE provides a comprehensive, evidence-based guide for improving PE by promoting fairness, representation, and meaningful participation for all learners. It is designed to support teachers, administrators, and policymakers in embedding inclusion and social justice throughout PE instruction and school culture, ensuring that every student—regardless of gender, ability, background, or socioeconomic status—has equitable opportunities to thrive.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that although learners differed in gender, age, and academic strand, these demographic factors did not significantly influence their perceptions of inclusion and social justice within the HOPE curriculum. Students consistently reported that PE activities generally provided equal opportunities for participation, reflecting an inclusive environment across demographic groups. Findings also show that most learners felt a sense of belonging in HOPE, particularly during group and cooperative activities. However, some students—especially those with lower skill levels or special needs—reported occasional experiences of exclusion, highlighting areas where implementation of inclusivity could be strengthened. The majority of students perceived the HOPE curriculum as fair and socially just, noting equal treatment and respect for diversity. Nevertheless, issues such as skill-based favoritism, marginal biases, and uneven participation in competitive tasks indicate that social justice in PE still requires improvement. Both inclusion and social justice perceptions revealed no significant differences across gender, age, and academic strands, suggesting that learners from diverse backgrounds experienced HOPE similarly and viewed it as largely equitable. Learners' qualitative experiences further emphasized the value of engaging lessons, fairness, teacher support, and peer collaboration. Students highlighted the importance of modifications for those with disabilities, the need for fair treatment in competitive activities, and the positive influence of supportive non-teaching staff. Overall, students recognized the strengths of the HOPE curriculum in promoting inclusion and social justice but also identified clear areas for enhancement, especially regarding gender equity, consistent accommodations, and reducing bias toward skill differences. From the triangulated findings, the Inclusive Social Justice Model for HOPE was developed. This model underscores fair participation, adaptive support for diverse learners, cultural and socioeconomic inclusivity, and collaborative engagement. It provides a comprehensive, evidence-based framework that can guide

improvements in HOPE to better align the curriculum with the principles of social justice and inclusive education.

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