

Importance and Feasibility Beliefs about Need-Supportive Teaching Strategies: A Person-Centered Approach among Physical Education Teachers

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Abstract

According to the self-determination theory, students' motivation can be fostered through a need-supportive teaching style in which teachers facilitate students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Existing evidence suggests that the implementation of a need-supportive methodology can be affected by how important and feasible teachers find the strategies characterizing a need-supportive intervention. Using a person-centered approach, this study examines which configurations of the importance and feasibility beliefs about need-supportive strategies emerged among physical education (PE) teachers, and which resulting profiles yielded the most adaptive patterns of students' needs satisfaction. A total of 245 PE teachers and 4790 students taught by them completed validated questionnaires. Four profiles were retained in the cluster analysis. Results showed that students taught by teachers who perceived need-supportive strategies both important and feasible, exhibited the most adaptive patterns. Findings also suggested that awareness of the relevance of carrying out need-supportive strategies (important belief) might not be as important as feeling confident enough to successfully implement such strategies (feasibility belief). These results support the significant role of teachers' beliefs on their professional practice and, in turn, on their students' psychological outcomes. Furthermore, the findings have interesting implications to be considered in the design and development of teacher training programs.

Keywords: autonomy support; basic psychological needs; cluster analysis; teachers' profiles; self-determination theory