

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

A Qualitative Study of Secondary Physical Education Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Japan, South Korea, and the United States

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively explore the themes and factors surrounding secondary PE teachers' job satisfaction and to find similarities and differences in the factors that influence job satisfaction among secondary school physical education (PE) teachers in Japan, South Korea, and the United States. Using a purposive sampling, nine secondary school PE teachers, three in each country, were recruited. A total of five investigators visited each participant's school for an entire day and collected field notes while observing PE sessions. At the end of each class period, each participant reported their job satisfaction on an 11-point visual analog scale, and a semi-structured interview was conducted in their native language. Four primary themes surrounding job satisfaction emerged: 1) student behavior, attitude, & motivations, 2) teacher's workload including their compensation and work-life balance, 3) their relations with coworkers, and 4) administration, funding, & professional development support, among which workload and student behaviors were consistently reported in all three countries. Future research should quantitatively examine, with a larger sample size, the interrelationships of these identified themes impacting overall job satisfaction in secondary PE teachers.

Keywords: *administrative relations; co-worker relations; job satisfaction; physical education; student relations; workload*

INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten to 12-grade (K-12) educators take important roles in youth's growth and development and comprise a large percentage of the entire workforce in a developing country, yet such profession experiences disproportionately high levels of job dissatisfaction and a decrease in job motivation over time (Boe et al., 2008). Particularly in education, Ingersoll et al. (2018) reported rates of attrition (switching positions within the same career or leaving the career altogether) to be 44% of new teachers within the first five years of their career, with primarily reasons being poor compensation, student misbehavior, and lack of administrative support. Per the Wisconsin Budget Project report (2017), school districts in Wisconsin faced extreme teacher shortages, with 46% of openings (1,153 jobs) including physical education teachers. Mousavi et al. (2012) and Dobell et al. (2021) suggests that PE is recognized as an important tool to ensure sufficient physical activity and that PE teachers play an important role in developing students' behaviors, attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to establish a lifelong physical activity. Given the enormous impact physical inactivity has in increased global morbidity, mortality, and health care costs, it is important to find strategies to maintain the quality of PE teaching by recruiting and retaining qualified K-12 Physical Education (PE) teachers in the United States (U.S.) Perhaps, understanding the factors associated with job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is one of keys to decrease the high attrition rate.

Among non-PE teachers, facets that determine teachers' satisfaction have been reported as supported administration, staff collegiality, and positive interactions with students (Merrimack College & EdWeek Research Center, 2022; Platsidou & Agaliotis, 2008; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004; Skaalvik, 2011). Facets related to job dissatisfaction have been reported as low pay, limited resources, large class size, disengaged administration, role overload, and negative interactions with students. In terms of PE, Carson et al. (2016) found that, for the three late career experienced PE teachers, peer support greatly influenced their job satisfaction. Moreover, the participants preferred less

administrative oversight; however, Carson et al. (2016) had noted that this decreased oversight reduced teachers' involvement in administrative decisions. Per Skaalvik (2011), most teachers experienced a considerable number of disruptive behaviors among their students, which directly correlated with work-related stress and emotional exhaustion, leading to higher job dissatisfaction. In terms of the financial aspect of the secondary teaching profession, Certo and Fox (2002) reported that teachers with higher salaries had higher levels of job satisfaction; however, according to Gu (2016), only 38.0% reported high satisfaction with their salary. Based on the literature available, there is evidence related to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among late career teachers. However, it is important to explore earlier career PE teachers whose attrition rates are higher. Challenges and struggles also exist among early career urban PE teachers in that majority of them are White, yet the highest need for teachers are in urban districts where the student population is largely African American and Hispanic (Flory, 2016).

Comparatively to the U.S. teaching profession, high job-related stress among teaching professionals has also been reported in other countries such as Japan and South Korea (Ha et al., 2011; Nagai et al., 2007), yet teachers in these Asian countries tend to stay within the profession relatively longer than those in the U.S. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology-Japan (2021), attrition rate of public school non-retiring teachers working at elementary, middle, and high schools was calculated to be 1.2%. Based on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) report [Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), 2018] on South Korean teachers, they indicated that it is a rare to address attrition rate for teachers in relation to their work-related stress due to their focus on developing teachers who are already in the system instead of trying to attract new teachers. In fact, the only data related to leaving the teaching position for South Korean teachers is whether they are hoping to retire early after spending 20 years in their profession (KEDI, 2012).

A comparative study by Ingersoll (2007) described that individual pursuing to become elementary and secondary public-school teachers in South Korea and Japan are not only required to complete a college degree to obtain a teaching certificate, but they would also be required to pass a quite challenging exam that is regulated by the state or prefecture. Additionally, in South Korea and Japan, teaching is a sought-after profession for its high social status standing; thus, relatively competitive individuals aspire to become teachers and the rate of turnover is very low (Ingersoll, 2007). Entering the teaching profession in the U.S. is relatively easy as compared to other countries (Wang et al., 2003 as cited in Ingersoll, 2007); yet teaching is a relatively complex form of work that requires a multitude of skillset to do well (Ingersoll, 2007) which may potentially lead to decreased job satisfaction.

From a curricular perspective, the most significant difference across the three countries is that the objectives and content of K-12 PE in Japan and South Korea are determined at the national level. In the U.S. in 2013, the Society for Health and Physical Educators in America (SHAPE-America) had re-established a set of national standards and grade-level learning outcomes for PE in K-12 schools to provide guidance for PE teachers to follow in their lesson plans with much flexibility to meet the students' needs. More recent movement has started to favor the profession of health and PE in the U.S. After the U.S. Congress passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in December of 2015, which replaced the No Child Left Behind, the health and PE profession has begun to receive more federal education funding as the subject being recognized as part of each student's "well-rounded education," allowing states and school districts the opportunity to improve school health and PE programs (SHAPE-America, 2016). Even after this shift in the educational system, there still seems to be a high attrition rates of PE teachers. Therefore, the aim of the study was two-fold: 1) to explore factors related to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among PE teachers in the U.S. compared to the two Asian countries where the attrition rates are lower; and 2) to gain insights on preparing in-service teachers, recruiting new teachers, and retaining qualified PE teachers in the U.S.

METHODS

Participants

Using purposive sampling (Patton, 2015), three physical educators from each country of Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. were recruited, for a total of nine secondary PE teachers. Prospective participants were recruited via faculty connections in each respective country, and eligibility was determined via phone or e-mail correspondence. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation in accordance with the University Institutional Review Board. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1.

Study Procedure

Data were collected in the U.S. during March 2017, and data for Japan and South Korea was collected in June and July 2017 at each respective school site (i.e., gym, office, and classroom). Using qualitative research method (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995), researchers spent a total of one day at each school site in the U.S., and two days at each school site in Japan and South Korea: On day 1, researchers observed one full day of participants at their school. During observation, researchers followed the participants throughout their day, writing detailed field notes regarding the activities of the day and their perception of each participant's job satisfaction. Field notes included work activities; interpersonal interactions with students, coworkers, and administration; general observations and items of interest; and the demeanor of the PE teacher throughout the day, including facial, body and/or verbal expressions that may have indicated their job satisfaction.

After each period, researcher presented a blank job satisfaction graphing chart using an 11-point modified pictorial pain scale (see Figure 2), with time on the x-axis and job satisfaction, ranging from complete dissatisfaction (0) to complete satisfaction (10), on the y-axis. Using a modified pain scale, participants indicated their job satisfaction after each class period on a scale from 0-10, with 10 being completely satisfied and 0 being completely dissatisfied. Per Brief and Roberson (1989), a face rating scale is appropriate for determining the disposition of job satisfaction and was used by Carson and colleagues (2016) in their analysis of three late career PE teachers. While Carson and colleagues (2016) have their participants fill out the graph at the end of the day, researchers in this study prompted teachers at the end of each period to capture the instant job satisfaction throughout the day. The use of the scale was explained to each of the participants in their native language.

After completing the observations, participants responded to a 25 to 90 minutes semi-structured interview (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995) in their native language on either the day of the observation or the following day depends on the participants' availability. The questions included such as "Can you describe a typical day as a physical education teacher?", "In what ways are you satisfied with your job?", "In what ways are you dissatisfied with your job?" and after pointing at their completed Figure 2, "Why did you mark the graph this way? What happened at that time?" Audio files of all interviews were recorded on an Olympus digital voice recorder. Transcriptions of the interviews were created by native speakers of the respective interview language residing in the U.S. Transcriptions of the data were then translated into English languages by the same individuals who have completed the transcription process. The authors YO and SB reviewed their transcription and translation once completed.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data were analyzed using categorical aggregation and direct interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). To ensure data trustworthiness, researchers used triangulation suggested by Creswell & Poth (2017) and Patton (2015). Triangulation included 1) direct observation field notes, 2) participants' job satisfaction ratings, and 3) semi-structured interviews. Researchers analyzed the data with a sense of correspondence to understand behavior, response, and context by looking for a pattern (Stake, 1995). All researchers independently reviewed the satisfaction graphs and transcriptions of the interviews to develop emergent themes for each participant, then compared their independent coding to identify common themes across the interviews and derived a consensus coding for these themes.

Table 1. Participant Demographics, Workload, and Additional Duties

Participant*	Country	Age Range (years)	Sex	Years of Teaching	School Level	School Type	Work hours	Number of classes	Additional Duties
Jordan	U.S.	30-40	F	13	High School	Public	6:30am-3:00pm	5	Lifeguarding, hall duty, open doors, coaching
Alex	U.S.	>40	M	18	Middle School	Public	7:30am-3:35pm	7	Lunchroom duty, coaching
Taylor	U.S.	30-40	F	14	High School	Public	7:30am-3:00pm	6	Teach health education, coaching
Bailey	Japan	< 30	F	3	High School	Public	8:00am-5:30pm	3-4	Homeroom teacher
Aaron	Japan	< 30	M	7	Middle School	Public	7:30am-6:30pm	3-6	Supervising club activities
Hudson	Japan	>40	M	25	High School	Private	7:45am-7:00pm	2-4 (Mon-Sat)	Supervising club activities
Chris	South Korea	30-40	M	9	Middle School	Public	8:40am-5:00pm	3-5	Homeroom teacher Coaching for 2 club sports
Riley	South Korea	>40	M	19	High School	Public	8:40am-5:20pm	2-4	None
Sam	South Korea	30-40	F	12	High School	Public	8:40am-5:00pm	3-4	Homeroom teacher

Note. *Participant names were randomly assigned to participants for confidentiality purposes; F = female; M = male

RESULTS

In the data collected from this study, four main themes surrounding job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among physical education teachers emerged (See Figure 1). These included: 1) student behavior, attitude, & motivations, 2) teacher's workload including their compensation and work-life balance, 3) their relations with coworkers, and lastly 4) administration, funding, & professional development support.

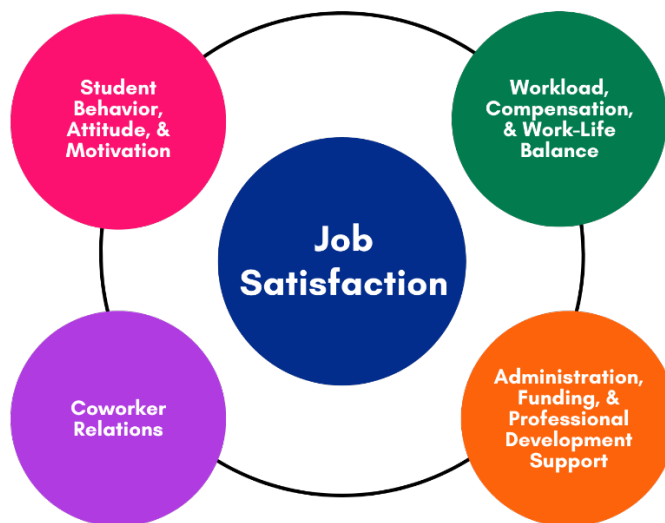


Figure 1. Four Main Themes Surrounding Job Satisfaction Among Physical Education Teachers

Student Behavior, Attitude, & Motivations

Relationship with their students, which included students' behavior, attitude, and motivations, was the single greatest theme across the three countries. There was a general agreement among teachers from all three countries that students' positive behaviors and motivation to be active and putting efforts in the activity positively affected their job satisfaction. We saw a Japanese teacher rated his job satisfaction as being 10 (highest satisfaction rating; see Figure 2) at 2pm because of his students' behavior and attitude in his golf class. In addition to the behavior and attitude, teachers also indicated higher job satisfaction when he saw high motivation and caring minds towards other peer students (*e.g.*, sportsmanship, See Table 2).

Teachers also shared their job dissatisfaction in relations to students' behavioral issues including students not taking good care of equipment, not wanting to sweat or ruin their makeup (most stated in South Korea), not wearing proper gym attire or uniform, and bullying or behavioral issues. Additionally, teachers in both Japan and South Korea shared their frustration when students were not paying attention to instructions and engaging in off tasks. Both Bailey (5 at 12pm) & Aaron (6 at 10am) from Japan rated lower job satisfaction (see Figure 2) due to students' lack of motivation.

Riley from South Korea rated 4 at 11 am due to his students' attitude and behaviors. Based on our observation with field note, some students sitting out and a small group of students playing non-PE related games. A few female students came in school uniform skirt with throw blankets around their waist which is not appropriate athletic attire for PE. He added that "After the class, my job satisfaction went up [to 7] since the stress on the students is gone." (*Riley, South Korea, Male High School Teacher*).

Workload, Compensation and Work-Life Balance

Workload was the most common theme related to their job dissatisfaction discussed by teachers from all three countries. Workload included number of classes taught as well as any job duties, such as lifeguarding or hallway supervision. All three counties had different teaching schedules. Refer to Table 1 for workload for each participant. When we asked to describe a typical week as a PE teacher, Jordan said that her job satisfaction graph as being low (5 points; See Figure 2) at 10am due to no support staff available in her integrated class where she would need at least one support staff for her student with visual impairment (see Table 2).

Coaching was not part of their teaching job, but there is an expectation for PE teachers from school to take that additional responsibility. Taylor spoke about previous year's struggles and trying to balance all components in their life (see Table 2). Similar to Coaching responsibility in U.S., all teachers in Japan supervised a club activity that meets after school. Aaron and Hudson said they get home around 7:00 pm after supervising club activities. The clubs meet before and after school, in some cases, also on weekends. When we asked if they felt like they were sacrificing areas of their personal lives, Hudson responded, "I feel that every day". Hudson, in particular, is working from Monday through Saturday, and said that "I have no days to rest." and added that, "Some of the teachers have been questioning the balance between their workload and salary." (*Japan, Male High School Teacher*).

Japanese and South Korean teachers taught between 2 to 5 (South Korea) or 6 (Japan) PE classes during the day along with being a homeroom teacher (i.e., a teacher who is in charge of a subgroup of students in a specific grade regardless of the subject they teach; the students report to their assigned classroom at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day for school announcements. They are called “tan-nin” in Japanese and “danim” in Korean). Homeroom teacher duty was common in both Japan and South Korea. Homeroom teachers begin and end the day with their homeroom students. They take care of a group of students regarding their overall academic performances and behavioral issues. Both Chris and Sam from South Korea were homeroom teachers. They expressed dissatisfaction of being homeroom teachers. When we asked Sam to reflect on why she rated her job satisfaction as 5 for both at 9am and 3pm, she related this to her duty as a homeroom teacher (See Table 2). Similar to other teachers, Chris also brought up the issues of sacrificing his own personal time due to his workload (See Table 2).

Most teachers were dissatisfied with their pay, especially when considering their salary in relationship to their workload. Those who expressed satisfaction had either been in their position for many years or compared their salary to their pay in a different field (i.e., Hudson and Riley). Salary raises in Japan and South Korea were annual and tiered based on work experience. In the U.S., the teachers interviewed had received raises this year, but indicated they had been on a pay freeze for 6 to 8.5 years. Across the board, teachers indicated their raises only accounted for a pay increase of a few hundred dollars. However, most expressed satisfaction for the health benefits of being physically active in their job, and Jordan, a U.S. teacher expressed excitement in getting “a wonderful retirement plan”.

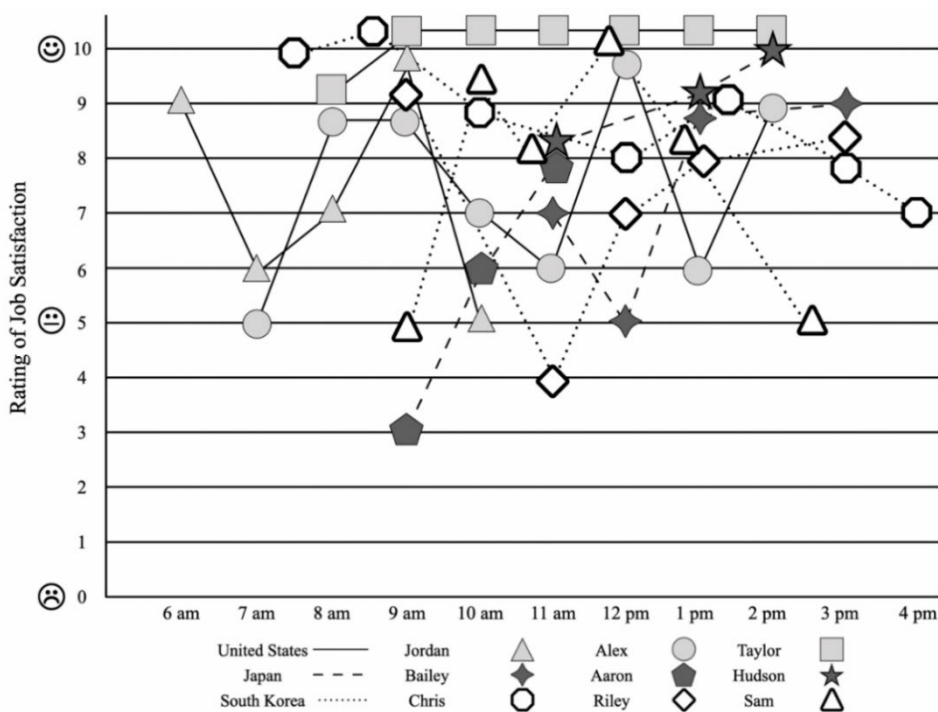


Figure 2. Single-Day Job Satisfaction Rating of the Nine Participants

Coworker Relations

Coworker was the third most discussed theme in this study. Coworkers were determined to be other teachers that they work with in the school. Participants distinguished their coworkers by two different groups: 1) PE teachers in the same department and 2) non-PE teachers. Generally, participants in this study were satisfied with their PE coworkers, but not with non-PE coworkers. U.S. teachers mentioned that they are highly satisfied with their PE coworkers. Jordan spoke of her department calling them her “second family” (see Table 2). Both Japanese teachers and South Korean teachers expressed that “meeting good colleague” is important for their job satisfaction (see Table 2). Japanese teachers also had the highest satisfaction expressed over PE coworkers. Aaron talked about how he team teach with his coworkers at their school, “it has been very productive and efficient”. Based on the observation through field notes, Aaron seemed efficient in teaching swimming lessons with another teacher by taking turns to lead and be responsible for the whole class alternatively. South Korean teacher Sam spoke about the flexibility and openness of her department coworker when she requested a unit that was not their specialty.

Participants in U.S. and South Korea expressed their dissatisfaction based on disrespectful behaviors from their non-PE coworkers. In the U.S., Jordan talked about disrespectful behavior from non-departmental coworker who came into the gym during her class time, without asking, to teach a science class (see Table 2). Riley from South Korea also shared his frustration with disrespectful comments from non-PE teachers towards PE teachers (see Table 2).

Administration, Funding, & Professional Development Support

The last common theme related to the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction that we saw was on teachers' relationship with administrative staffs and administrative support for teaching. Administration was defined as administrators in the building the teachers worked at, such as principals and vice principals as well as the school district, board office, and government. Teachers from the three countries reported that their administrative members were supportive and seemed to understand what teachers need (see Table 2). Both Japanese and South Korea teachers also shared their job satisfaction in relations to how their principals accept new ideas.

In terms of funding and resources, U.S. teachers expressed dissatisfaction for both funding and resources whereas South Korean and Japanese teachers were satisfied with their available funding and resources. Taylor from the U.S. described their equipment as "old and outdated" and "breaking and ragged" while another participant, Alex, hesitantly described their equipment as "adequate" for their budget. Jordan spoke about an external grant that they needed to write to get resources and said "it would be nice if we could have more" when asked about resources. She added that "I got a grant I bought 33 heart rate monitors and did it with my strength and conditioning class... It took me probably 2 months to write the grant... there's just so much paperwork and process that a lot of times you just get weighed down" (U.S. Female High school Teacher).

Hudson from Japan stated, "a wide range of PE-related instruments and resources are available here" (*Japan, Male High school Teacher*). One thing to note here is that Hudson's school is a private school where they have more funding to support such equipment for classes. On the other hand, Aaron indicated that "if it is under [\$100], they can get new resources" (*Japan, Male Middle school Teacher*). He expressed that he is pretty satisfied about the amount of funding he would get.

There were noticeable differences in funding availability to South Korean teachers compared to U.S. and Japanese teachers. South Korean teachers received funding ranging from \$4,000 to \$30,000 per year. Riley believed they have more resources compared to other schools [in South Korea] and added that they receive about [\$30,000] a year; but still noted as a "reduced budget" (*Riley, South Korea, Male High school Teacher*).

With respect to professional development opportunities, all teachers attend professional development when it is offered by their administration. However, the common theme is that they don't get support such as time off and funding resources to attend the subject specific professional development unless they were given grant or funding. Taylor from U.S. explained that their school district nurse received the funding for health and PE to go to conferences; however, they would have to find their own funding as the grant cycle was ending. Getting time off for attending conventions depends on the school districts and principals in U.S.

Just like U.S. teachers, Japanese and South Korean teachers attend professional development training run by the Ministry of Education without additional cost, but they generally do not get funding support on professional development outside of what administration offers such as the national and local state level PE and health educator's convention and continuing education (see Table 2). Sam, a South Korean teacher, shared with us that she was part of a PE professional learning community, As such, much for the expenses related to professional development activities were covered by the individual teachers.

Table 2. Participants' Quotes by Themes of Job Satisfaction Extracted from the Interviews

Participants' Pseudonym, Country, Sex, & School	Job Satisfaction Related to Student Behavior, Attitude, and Motivations
Jordan , U.S., Female High school Teacher	<i>"The kids are just, they're fun and they're wanting to be active, I just, you know, I get to teach, I don't have to worry about behaviors. And so, my semester has been lovely... My adapted (PE) kids keep me humble and keep me laughing."</i>
Hudson , Japan, Male High school Teacher	<i>"The class consists of a small number of high school seniors who love playing golf. Regardless of golf abilities, they are always eager to practice playing golf."</i>
Chris , South Korea, Male Middle school Teacher	<i>"I feel rewarded as a PE teacher when students exercise with high motivation, when they improve their motor skills, or when they show care for the others."</i>
Job Dissatisfaction Related to Student Behavior, Attitude, and Motivations	
Jordan , U.S., Female High school Teacher	<i>"you're not doing what it is, you've got a million kids that are like 'you suck', 'I don't like you', 'why do I have to do this'. Um it, it, it wears on ya."</i>
Bailey , Japan, Female High school Teacher	<i>"my instructions appeared to be not clear to my students. Also, I was little irritated by their lack of physical performance during the class... They did not show their best in today's class."</i>
Riley , South Korea, Male High school Teacher	<i>"The biggest stressor is students. If they are not paying attention in the class, I get a lot of stress... I was worried today about the first class [at 11am] because they do not have good class attitudes... In the case of today, since their final evaluation was over and there was nothing that I can hold the students accountable. I was feeling a little bit upset because there were few students who were acting on their own way."</i>

Table 2. Participants' Quotes by Themes of Job Satisfaction Extracted from the Interviews (continued...)

Participants' Pseudonym, Country, Sex, & School	Job Dissatisfaction Related to Workload, Compensation and Work-Life Balance
Jordan , U.S., Female High school Teacher	<i>"We have 36-38 student [per] class. Um so unfortunately, we are bombarded with too many kids in our class and we're kind of teaching our workload...Third hour is 9-10am, it's my integrated class. I have only 4 students that are integrated into a regular ed class. And we try to treat them exactly like um, the other students with the support of me. Um, having [a support staff] is huge right now because I have a girl that is very visually impaired and [student] has to be 1 on 1, so when [a support staff] is not here, it is hard to man myself, I don't have a support staff in that class as of now. ... Uh, It's just, it's a lot of work."</i>
Taylor , U.S., Female High school Teacher	<i>"Two babies at home, trying to coach, teach and commute, it just all adds up...I'm-I coach JV right now. The district really promotes – encourages is a better word – PE teachers to coach. It's almost mandatory. I was spending more time with other people's kids than I was with my own and. It's for some people; it's not for me. I can't do the Mom thing"</i>
Hudson , Japan, Male High school Teacher	<i>"I have no days to rest...Some of the teachers have been questioning the balance between their workload and salary."</i>
Sam , South Korea, Female High school Teacher	<i>"The homeroom teacher has a lot of responsibilities...So many people do not want to be a homeroom teacher...There is only [\$100] per month as an extra pay for being a homeroom teacher...I do not want to do it, but I have to do it...At 9 am, I am busy with morning assembly and first class and my homeroom students are very hard. There are many students who cannot concentrate and are distracted. It is hard psychologically burdensome to make them concentrate in the class. My homeroom class is the hardest...They talk a lot of words like 'why are we doing this?' or 'I do not want to do this'."</i>
Chris , South Korea, Male Middle school Teacher	<i>"I have classes of 20 hours per week, and do homeroom teaching tasks and administrative work, it overloads workload. There is a lack of time for professional development and communication with colleagues. If we want to do the work properly, we must sacrifice our personal time"</i>
Jordan , U.S. Female High school Teacher	<i>"I am very blessed with the department that I enjoy being with. They truly are your second family, I mean, I spend more time with my work family than I do with my home family sometimes. We work really well together, we have fun, we enjoy each other, and we support each other. I think that's a huge environment to have"</i>
Aaron , Japan, Male Middle school Teacher	<i>"It is so important to have good people that you really like to work with" and later said "our group here really, really works well together"</i>
Chris , South Korea, Male Middle school Teacher	<i>"This part is important. The ties with other physical education teachers, the teachers' interests towards physical education lessons, their capabilities, whether I have something new to learn from them, and whether they are active and sharing information. Such things affect the satisfaction. I think it is important to meet good colleagues. It is acceptable here...The interactions with coworkers is very positive for me."</i>
Job Dissatisfaction with Non-Physical Education Coworkers	
Jordan , U.S. Female High school Teacher	<i>"We stick up for our space. It's like no, you aren't going to bring in your physics class to shoot baskets just because my volleyball class can move off to the side...that becomes a little uncomfortable (laughs) you have to have some uncomfortable conversations and they may not always agree"</i>
Riley , South Korea, Male High school Teacher	<i>"I get upset when I hear the thoughts from other non-PE co-workers such as PE teachers are uneducated, or that we cannot complete other roles well etc."</i>
Job Satisfaction with Administrator	
Jordan , U.S. Female High school Teacher	<i>"I have a very good relationship with administration. I think that the only time that I see them (laugh) is during the beginning of the year and end of the year. One of the vice principals was our athletic director and he was an old PE (teacher) so you know he kinda gets our world and appreciates our world which is nice"</i>

Aaron, Japan, Male Middle school Teacher

"This school is good at accepting new ideas"

Sam, South Korea, Female High school Teacher

"Our principal is always okay about trying something. She is very positive about experiencing various activities for students. I am satisfied with our principal as well as other teachers"

Job Dissatisfaction with Funding & Professional Development Support

Jordan, U.S. Female High school Teacher

"We don't get time off for our conventions, we'd love to go to [conference], we'd loved to do you know those, but no one is gonna pay for that. Our special education conference um, she has paid for [coworker] and I to go twice, which was really nice. But it was just cause nobody else wanted to go and she's like "You have \$240 bucks, you guys wanna go?" and we're like "Yes!" (chuckles) but that's just kinda sometimes on a whim that you get offered"

Aaron, Japan, Male Middle school Teacher

"It is all on me. The school does not reimburse any needed fees [for going to professional development seminars]"

Sam, South Korea, Female High school Teacher

"PE teachers gather here and do research meetings...There is no support from the school since I go there voluntarily. I personally pay for the membership fee"

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore the themes and factors surrounding secondary PE teachers' job satisfaction and to find similarities and differences in the factors that influence job satisfaction between the U.S. and two Asian countries (i.e., Japan and South Korea) via direct observation of classes and in-person interviews. From the analyses, the study found four primary themes for job satisfactions: 1) student behavior, attitude, and motivation, 2) workload, compensation, and work-life balance, 3) co-worker relations, 4) administration, funding, & professional development support (See Figure 1).

With respect to student relations, all nine teachers reported higher satisfaction with their job when students presented positive behaviors, attitudes, higher motivation to learn, and following instructions. More specifically, when their students showed motivation for being physically active and giving effort in the class, they indicated a feeling of greater job satisfaction. They also shared similar job dissatisfaction when their students were disrespectful to teachers and showing unwillingness to participate in the class. In a comparative study by Dismore et al. (2006) on Japanese and English students' view on PE, participants from both countries reported PE contributes to health and fitness, preparation for sports competitions and lifelong activity. Students' attitudes and motivations to engage in PE lessons may improve if health and fitness mattered to them, which remains to be a challenge and continual efforts are made in the U.S. (Dismore et al., 2006).

In the interview from the U.S. teachers, we have noticed that students with special needs keep them humble and bring them laughter. This is a difference between the U.S. and the two Asian countries with respect to societal perspective on issues related to inclusion of students with disabilities in a learning environment. During our observation at one of the schools in Japan, we noticed that there was one student who was receiving an individualized instruction from the rest of the class on swimming with a special education teacher alongside this student. Our interview questions, however, did not include items specific to adapted PE; therefore, it would be of our interest to explore the perceptions and job satisfaction of Japanese and South Korean PE teachers on inclusion of students with special needs especially PE can provide students with a unique setting that allows for meaningful interactions between students and potentially improve attitudes towards other learners by implementing inclusive PE (Gaintza & Castro, 2020). More recent examination of teaching context and professional socialization among pre-service and early career PE teachers indicated that there should also be strategies in place for communities of practice (Kern et al., 2019) and cultivating and orienting pre-service teachers in PE teacher education programs to better prepare them to be in a diverse workforce (Flory, 2016; Richards et al., 2019).

A similarity we have found related to workload and work-life balance across the three countries was that workload increased due to coaching responsibility added onto a normal teaching responsibility. Although teachers in the U.S. typically have a separate job contract to coach club or varsity sports, our participants have indicated they feel as it was expected for them to take on this role. In Japan, coaching responsibility is embedded into a teaching contract, whereas in South Korea, club sports are embedded within normal teaching hours. Regardless, coaching responsibility has an influence on teachers' perception of workload, especially when the coaching responsibilities occur on weekends, early mornings, and/or late evenings. These findings were consistent with Conley and You (2009) studies on higher workload and additional job duties negatively impacting their job satisfaction. In addition to coaching duty, teachers occasionally substitute for other teachers' responsibility. In our study, one U.S. teacher (i.e., Taylor) was teaching Spanish class during our observation although she was uncomfortable with the subject. Ingersoll (2007) refer this to "out-of-field" teaching as a problem that negatively affects the quality of teaching, potentially having some adverse effects on teacher's job satisfaction.

In terms of co-worker relations, You and Conley (2015) illustrated in their study the five workplace predictors of intent to leave with three psychological mediators (i.e., job satisfaction, work commitment, and career commitment) that influenced the associations between the workplace predictors and intent to leave. In their illustration, the *teacher team efficacy* factor was a significant predictor for job satisfaction among novice (five years or less), mid-career (6-10 years), and veteran (11+ years) teachers in the U.S. More specifically, collegial work relations that would allow teachers to sense that they are part of a strong community would improve job satisfaction that

would lead to lower intentions to leave (You & Conley, 2015). Our findings were similar in that, when teachers felt as if their work (i.e., PE) was valued by their co-workers and their principals, they reported as having higher job satisfaction. Perhaps, there still is a residual nuance of lack of respect and value for PE from students and coworkers today.

Back in the 1970s, PE and school sports had been viewed as a “non-cognitive” subject, such that engagement in physical activity had little or no educational benefit (Bailey et al., 2009). There has been research providing evidence on not only the physical benefits of PE, but also the cognitive, social, and affective benefits that PE can offer to the students and the educational systems. More specifically, research has provided evidence that PE can foster development of social skills such as cooperation, teamwork, empathy, and a sense of personal responsibility (Ennis, 1999; Wright et al., 2004 cited in Bailey et al., 2009). As such, there needs to be a credible evaluation of the direct benefits of PE on social behaviors of students. As suggested by Bailey et al. (2009), long-term studies that capture mediators of the association between school-based physical activity and academic performance are necessary to provide evidence as an advocacy tool for quality physical education.

Consistent with previous research, job satisfaction is significantly influenced by administrative support (You & Conley, 2015). The shared characteristic of supportive principals was “open to new suggestions and ideas.” One of the distinctive themes that was different among three countries was funding. While all participants expressed the importance of funding to deliver effective PE, there were obvious differences in the amounts of funding across the three countries. U.S. teachers were generally dissatisfied with their funding and resources compared to South Korean and Japanese teachers. South Korean PE teachers in this study were getting funded ranging from \$4,000 to \$30,000 from school and government. South Korean teachers were generally satisfied with the amount of funding. One of U.S. teachers, Jordan, mentioned that she had to write an external grant proposal to fund heart rate monitors for her classes. The other U.S. teachers mentioned their equipment as either (hesitantly saying) adequate or old and outdated. Although there is an effort with funding PE programs in the U.S. with Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA), our participants did not seem to notice a difference. This is an area of further exploration in the next couple of years how ESSA has impacted physical educators’ job satisfaction.

It is our interest to note that, one of the subjects in Japan (i.e., Aaron), when asked about budget and funding provided by the school to purchase equipment necessary for teaching, did not seem to be dissatisfied by the relatively small amount of funding (i.e., approximately \$100 each year). To explore this difference in perceptions on administrative support in the form of funding, we have related our findings to Lee et al. (2017) that revealed 6 first-order dimensions of job satisfaction and their influence on turnover intention among early-career employees. Through a structural equation modeling, they found that ‘personal growth’s influence’ was the highest followed by ‘salary and welfare.’ It may be that having a greater opportunity for personal growth in a job setting leads to higher job satisfaction, at least in the early-career stage. Additionally, Gil-Flores (2017) explained that sources of job satisfaction were more intrinsic to teaching, which partly explained our finding on one of the Japanese teachers who did not express dissatisfaction in the amount of funding that was available to him to purchase PE equipment. Perhaps, it is more important for the administrators to provide encouraging feedback to secondary teachers to improve their perceived self-efficacy in teaching that would then intrinsically elevate job satisfaction.

From a curricular standpoint, the obvious difference between the U.S. and the two Asian Countries was the existence of the national standards for PE in both South Korea and Japan (Ingersoll, 2007). Then a question might be on whether having a set of national standards facilitate student learning and achievement of physical fitness/healthy lifestyle. The answer to this question certainly is not simple. Centralized governance over school curriculum in South Korea and Japan is only possible in countries that favor collectivism vs. individualism, as indicated in Kim et al. (1990). Japan scores significantly low on the individualism scale, which puts low emphasis on equity (Kim et al., 1990). In a diverse country like the U.S., not placing an emphasis on equity in an educational setting is problematic. Additionally, the benefits of not having centralized governance in the U.S. is that it allows educators to have more flexibility to adapt to individual needs; thus, supporting the idea of equity in education. Perhaps what we can learn from this comparative observation is that the teacher evaluation procedure in the U.S. must include teachers’ efforts into creating an inclusive environment for all students and providing modified opportunities for students at all levels to engage in the kind of physical activities that would benefit them in the long run.

In the comparative study by Nakamura (2003) on the educational aspirations between Japan and South Korea, it is regarded as them having the same educational systems, such that there is a great social importance attached to university entrance examinations. Entering nationally renowned universities is socially highly regarded to which many students aim to enter, and if not admitted, they would take one or two full years to retake the entry examination. Once admitted, it is expected that they continue to pursue the degree that they had initially claimed. In terms of professional training requirements, in the U.S., there is an entryway to the education profession as a post-baccalaureate one-year teacher-preparation program; whereas, in Japan and South Korea, candidates are required to obtain a government-issued certificate or license certifying that a candidate has completed required professional preparation and training (Ingersoll, 2007). The examinations to obtain a license and position to teach a certain subject are difficult to pass the first time. For this reason, the occupation of teaching is highly regarded, and its social status is generally high in Japan and South Korea (Ingersoll, 2007). Unfortunately, in the U.S., teaching occupation has been characterized as non-competitive relative to other occupations and has been regarded as a less desirable line of work. Each state in the U.S. has their own requirement for licensing educators. For instance, the state of Wisconsin recently removed the requirement for completing the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) as of July 1, 2020. Especially with teacher shortage in the U.S., there have been changes in the licensing procedure of teachers, and some school districts offer teaching positions to candidates without having teaching licensures with a contingency to acquire them within a couple years of their employment. Not only is the quality of teaching is questioned, it makes it challenging for those teachers to work on obtaining teaching licensures on top of their teaching responsibilities.

The limitations of this study were that our participants also had a wide range of teaching experiences (i.e., 3-25 years). Additionally, although the interviews in Japan and South Korea were done in each country’s native language, the interview was transcribed in Japanese and Korean, then translated into English. Nuances in participants’ answers might have gotten lost in translation. This type of qualitative study is warranted targeting a specific group (i.e., early career) of PE teachers with a larger sample size to better understand the factors that may lead to poor job satisfaction and high attrition rate.

CONCLUSION

The four themes that were emerged from our data that influenced job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among PE teachers between Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. were 1) student behavior, attitude, and motivation, 2) workload, compensation, and work-life balance, 3) co-worker relations, 4) administration, funding, & professional development support. Unique difference existed in the perspectives that PE had towards the amount of the financial support that they received, such that, South Korean teachers received the most amount of funding, and all three teachers seemed satisfied with their administrative support. Similar to South Korea, Japanese PE teachers were satisfied with their funding support despite the small amount of monetary support. On the other hand, U.S. teachers were actively looking for external funding to support their PE programs and seemed dissatisfied with their current funding situation.

In this study, our participants' teaching experiences were in wide-range from early career to late career. Given 44% of new teachers in U.S. leave the profession within the first 5 years of their teaching career (Ingersoll et al., 2018), and the percentage of teachers leaving the profession has steadily increased since 1988 (Goldring et al., 2014). There is the specific need to focus independently on the earlier career (pre-service to first five years) PE teachers to better understand the gap that exists between their expectations for their profession from pre-service learning phase to early-career phase (e.g., realization of additional job duties and responsibilities). Based on Locke (1976 as cited in Ulricksen, 1996)'s definition of job satisfaction, it may also be helpful to educate pre-service teachers on additional duties and responsibilities outside of teaching that come with the profession. As we voice the concerns of the secondary PE teachers of the U.S., it is best to not only re-examine the amount of workload, duties, and responsibilities, but to also re-visit the evaluation procedure to encompass the areas that provide a sense of reward. In our context, it is especially recommended for the administrators to recognize the effort that is put in by each teacher to create an equitable PE learning environment that allows all students of all levels to feel part of the activity engaged during class. When there are professional development opportunities that are in line with projected professional goals, teachers in early career stage should be encouraged and supported by their principals and the district in which they serve. In terms of building a collegial work environment, as suggested by You and Conley (2015), perhaps implementing a mentoring program between the veteran teachers and early-career teachers may improve team efficacy that would lead to increased job satisfaction and reduced intention to leave among secondary teachers.

At last, it is warranted to examine the changes in administrative support, including funding, for the discipline after the implementation of ESSA in 2015 that replaced the No Child Left Behind. It brings hope that health and PE is now recognized as part of the "well-rounded education" in the U.S.; our next step is to communicate the empirical benefits of this very important academic subject to all educators for PE to be perceived as valuable and important part of growth and development of the youth today.

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