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Original article

Rupture and Reconstruction of the Sporting Lifeworld During a Military Crisis: Pre-service Physical Education Teachers' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Background: Military crises can disrupt education and physical activity, but less is known about how pre-service physical education teachers experience changes in the embodied, social, and meaningful dimensions of sporting life.

Purpose: This study explored how pre-service physical education teachers experienced disruption to their sporting lifeworld during a recent military crisis and described efforts to reconstruct continuity with sport.

Methods: This qualitative, interpretive study used Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. Participants were 68 pre-service physical education teachers who experienced online delivery of practical courses during the crisis. Data were collected through an online open-ended questionnaire and analyzed through repeated reading, reflexive coding, iterative theme development, and interpretation.

Results: Three interconnected phases were identified: rupture in the sporting lifeworld, living the rupture in body and mind, and reconstruction. Participants described disrupted routines, restricted access to sport spaces, reduced social connection, changes in bodily capacity, and challenges to sporting belonging and identity. They also described using physical activity, social support, psychological self-regulation, and, for some, spirituality to restore continuity and re-engage with sport.

Conclusion: The findings support a process-oriented account of sporting experience under crisis and suggest that crisis-responsive physical education teacher preparation should address embodied, psychological, social, and professional dimensions alongside instructional continuity.

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC

Crisis-responsive physical education programs should support embodied learning, psychological well-being, and social connection. Adaptable movement activities, virtual peer networks, and psychological support may help students maintain their sporting routines and sense of belonging.

WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS

Crises can disrupt physical activity, sporting routines, social relationships, and psychological well-being. However, the lived sporting experiences of pre-service physical education teachers during crises remain insufficiently explored.

HOW THIS STUDY MIGHT AFFECT RESEARCH, PRACTICE OR POLICY

Three interconnected themes emerged: rupture in the sporting lifeworld, living the rupture in body and mind, and reconstruction. Participants described changes in bodily experience, sporting identity, and belonging, alongside efforts to restore continuity through movement, self-regulation, social support, and spirituality.

1. Introduction

Armed conflict, pandemics, and other major crises disrupt more than institutions and material resources. They also alter the ordinary routines, spaces, relationships, and bodily practices through which people organize everyday life. Research on such disruptions has frequently emphasized psychological distress, health outcomes, and changes in physical activity. Less is known about how people experience the interruption of movement practices that are integral to their developing professional identities. This question is particularly relevant to pre-service physical education (PE) teachers, for whom movement is not simply a leisure activity or health behavior but a central element of learning to teach.

Physical education teacher education (PETE) is distinctive because professional learning involves knowing about movement and acquiring knowledge through movement. Practical demonstrations, bodily experimentation, feedback, and interaction with teachers and peers contribute to the development of movement capability and pedagogical confidence. Research on the transition to online PETE during the COVID-19 pandemic documents both the loss of face-to-face opportunities and the emergence of different possibilities for individual practice (Nyberg et al., 2024). These findings suggest that remote instruction is not necessarily devoid of embodied learning; rather, it reorganizes the conditions under which such learning takes place. During a military crisis, when attendance at university, access to training facilities, and co-presence with peers may be disrupted simultaneously, these changes can be especially consequential for how pre-service teachers understand themselves as movers and future educators.

Evidence from Ukraine illustrates the wider effects of armed conflict on health and everyday activity. In a survey analyzing 394 responses, Vorobiova et al., (2024) documented substantial physical and psychological health concerns during the full-scale war. A study following Ukrainian university students across successive academic years also described changes in physical activity and health-related lifestyle practices under pandemic and wartime conditions (Skrypchenko et al., 2025). These studies establish the relevance of crisis-related disruption but offer limited insight into how movement practices are experienced as part of professional becoming. Their findings also should not be taken as evidence that all students respond to conflict in the same way.

Research conducted in other crises similarly indicates that participation depends on the spaces and social arrangements through which activity is sustained. During COVID-19 restrictions in Austria, activity shifted toward home-based and outdoor settings, while self-reported life satisfaction declined (Jungwirth et al., 2021). The sudden interruption of organized sport also affected established sporting institutions (Ruihley & Li, 2020). Beyond pandemic settings, qualitative research with culturally and linguistically diverse women in Australia identified social and cultural influences on physical activity participation (Caperchione et al., 2011), while refugees receiving group-based physical activity as part of trauma treatment described benefits related to social connection, confidence, and relief from isolation (Nilsson et al., 2019). These populations and circumstances are not directly comparable with pre-service PE teachers during war. Nevertheless, the studies collectively suggest that movement is embedded in social relationships, opportunities, and meanings that may be altered by crisis.

A phenomenological perspective offers a way to examine dimensions of disruption that activity counts, participation rates, and health indicators cannot fully convey. Phenomenological sport scholarship attends to the body as lived and experienced rather than solely as a biological object or an instrument for performance (Allen-Collinson, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2007). Sensory engagement with place, movement, and other people contributes to what physical activity means to participants (Allen-Collinson & Leledaki, 2015). Likewise, bodily pleasure and well-being emerge through the interplay of individual sensation and social context, rather than being reducible to measured health outcomes (Mayoh & Jones, 2015; Wellard, 2012). From this perspective, losing access to familiar movement spaces may change not only what a person can do but also how moving, learning, and belonging are experienced.

These experiences unfold within a lifeworld: the taken-for-granted world of everyday activities, temporal routines, familiar spaces, interpersonal relations, and shared meanings. In sport, a lifeworld is sustained through repeated bodily practices and through the practical coordination of participation with other commitments. Studies of distance running, for example, show how training is woven into routines spanning work, home, and sport (Hockey, 2019). Research on competitive swimming similarly demonstrates that learning and maintaining skilled movement involves situated bodily knowledge, interaction, and adaptation to changing environments (McNarry et al., 2021). Drawing on this literature, the term sporting lifeworld is used here to describe the interconnected experiences of bodily practice, movement-related places, social relations, routines, and belonging through which participation becomes meaningful.

Crisis can disturb the apparent familiarity and continuity of this world. A phenomenological investigation of mental health crises, although concerned with a different kind of event, describes crisis as an embodied experience involving changes in one's sense of self and relationships with others (Roennfeldt et al., 2024). Work on affect and embodiment during wider social crises likewise emphasizes that upheaval is experienced materially and emotionally, not only narrated or institutionally managed (Charalambous et al., 2025). At a societal level, analyses of systemic crises suggest that shared expectations concerning trust, solidarity, and identity can become unsettled (Friedland & Kunelius, 2023). These perspectives do not establish how military conflict affects PE students specifically, but they provide conceptual grounds for asking how the disruption of routine and bodily co-presence may be experienced as a rupture in a sporting lifeworld.

For pre-service PE teachers, such a rupture may also concern emerging professional identity. Their developing sense of themselves as capable movers and educators is ordinarily supported by repeated practice, feedback, and participation in a community of learning. Research on athletic identity illustrates how the interruption of a valued sporting role may unsettle a person's sense of self (Jones et al., 2005), while a broader synthesis emphasizes the ongoing work through which athletes negotiate and reconstruct identities during transitions (Chun et al., 2023). Sport can also connect different elements of life into a meaningful whole (Breivik, 2022; Sosis & Kiper, 2022). Although these studies do not concern military crises in teacher education, they indicate why disruption to movement may carry educational, relational, and existential meanings beyond a temporary reduction in exercise.

Existing research therefore provides two important foundations: crises can reshape opportunities for physical activity, and embodied sporting practices are central to identity,

belonging, and meaning. Studies of online PETE additionally show that the shift away from face-to-face practical learning involves both losses and possible adaptations (Nyberg et al., 2024). What remains less well understood is how pre-service PE teachers experiencing a military crisis make sense of these changes together: the interruption of familiar movement practices, altered relationships to educational and sporting spaces, and efforts to maintain or re-establish continuity. A phenomenological inquiry can examine these experiences without assuming in advance that participants experienced the transition only as loss or that reconstruction necessarily followed a single path.

Accordingly, the present study explores how pre-service PE teachers experienced disruption to their sporting lifeworld during a military crisis and how they understood their attempts to sustain, adapt, or reconstruct involvement in sport and movement. It asks how changes to bodily practice and social environments were lived and interpreted, and how these experiences intersected with participants' emerging identities as PE teachers. Rather than treating the sporting lifeworld as a fixed backdrop, the study approaches it as an evolving field of embodied, relational, and professional meaning under conditions of crisis.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

This qualitative study was situated within an interpretivist paradigm and examined how pre-service physical education teachers made sense of changes to physical activity and sport during a military crisis. Rather than treating these experiences as fixed or directly measurable states, the study approached them as meanings constructed within particular embodied, social, and educational circumstances. Phenomenological concepts of embodiment and the lifeworld informed the research question and interpretation; however, the study did not adopt a formal phenomenological methodology. The analytic method was reflexive thematic analysis.

The study followed the reflexive thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Subsequent methodological discussions by Braun and Clarke (2019) and Braun and Clarke (2021a) informed the treatment of researcher subjectivity and analytic quality. This approach was appropriate for examining patterned meanings across written accounts while retaining sensitivity to individual experiences. The concepts of disruption, embodied experience, and the reconstruction of sporting life served as sensitizing ideas rather than as a predetermined coding framework. Themes were developed through engagement with the data rather than treated as categories waiting to be discovered.

2.2. Participants

The study included 68 pre-service physical education teachers enrolled at Farhangian University. Participants were recruited through criterion-based purposive sampling. Eligibility required (a) current enrollment in a physical education teacher education program, (b) enrollment in at least one practice-based course during the semester affected by the crisis, and (c) completion of that course through emergency remote instruction rather than face-to-face practical teaching. The sample comprised 36 women (52.9%) and 32 men (47.1%), aged 18–26 years. Most participants were aged 21–23 years (n = 42, 61.8%) and were enrolled in semesters 3–4 (n = 32, 47.1%) or 5–6 (n = 24, 35.3%). All participants reported at least one year of organized sport participation and had undertaken practical coursework involving different sports. Their primary sport specializations were not systematically recorded. Participant characteristics are summarized in Table 1; these variables were used to describe the sample rather than to define quantitative comparison groups.

Table 1. Participant and sport-related characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Sex	Female	36	52.9
	Male	32	47.1
Age group (year)	18–20	22	32.4
	21–23	42	61.8
	24–26	4	5.9
Academic semester	1–2	9	13.2
	3–4	32	47.1
	5–6	24	35.3
	7–8	3	4.4
Academic program	PETE	68	100.0
Athlete status	Athlete	68	100.0
Organized sport participation	≥1 year	68	100.0

Note. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and may not total 100.0. All participants were enrolled in physical education teacher education and reported at least one year of organized sport participation. Primary sport specialization was not systematically recorded.

Reflexive thematic analysis does not require a universal numerical saturation threshold. The dataset was judged appropriate for exploring a range of experiential meanings across participants; nevertheless, the depth of analysis was necessarily bounded by the length and content of the written responses. The sample included participants reporting different levels of crisis exposure, from residence in locations affected by repeated bombardment to areas experiencing warnings or limited direct threats and locations relatively distant from active hostilities. These accounts were used to contextualize participants' experiences, not to conduct formal comparisons according to exposure level.

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using an online questionnaire containing demographic questions and 20 researcher-developed open-ended items concerning practical instruction and physical activity during the crisis. The present analysis drew on seven items relevant to the research question. These addressed (a) changes in physical activity following restrictions on university and sport facilities, (b) perceived changes in physical condition and bodily activation, (c) emotional and everyday-life consequences of separation from sport settings, (d) perceived continuity or disruption of sporting identity, (e) efforts to re-establish engagement with physical activity and sport, (f) perceived resources supporting those efforts, and (g) changes in the personal meaning of sport during the crisis.

The items invited free-text accounts rather than responses on standardized rating scales. The parent questionnaire also covered emergency remote delivery of practical motor-skill instruction and the development of professional teaching identity. Those topics were treated as distinct research questions and were not included in the present thematic analysis. Accordingly, the analysis concerns the seven specified items rather than the complete set of 20 questions. No psychometric scores were generated from the qualitative responses.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected from 28 February to 8 April 2026, during a

period of military conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States. Eligible students received a link to the questionnaire through internal university communication channels. The information provided before the questionnaire explained the study purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the option to leave individual questions unanswered. After giving informed consent, participants completed the survey online.

Questionnaire completion took approximately 25–55 minutes. The number of responses to each of the seven analyzed items varied from 57 to 65 because participants could omit questions. Written, asynchronous responses enabled participants to describe their experiences without an interviewer present, but the format precluded probing, clarification, and follow-up on emerging ideas. Names and contact details were not requested, and the responses were handled without direct personal identifiers for analysis.

Participation was described as voluntary, with no academic consequences for nonparticipation or discontinuation. Because the questionnaire did not collect direct identifiers, the scope for withdrawing a response after submission could not be assumed; any withdrawal procedure must be reported in accordance with the arrangements actually available to participants.

2.5. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Analysis followed the six-phase approach to reflexive thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, coding, initial theme development, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the analytic account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The recursive and interpretive nature of these phases was informed by Braun and Clarke (2019b). Both researchers repeatedly read the responses to the seven selected questions before and during coding, attending to differences as well as recurring patterns in participants' accounts.

Codes were developed through close, predominantly inductive engagement with the written material. The phenomenologically informed ideas of embodiment and lifeworld supported interpretation without functioning as fixed coding categories. Both researchers took part in coding and theme development. Rather than producing separate coding sets for subsequent consensus scoring, they discussed emerging interpretations throughout the analysis, returned to relevant extracts when different readings arose, and used these discussions to examine the assumptions shaping their interpretations.

Candidate themes were revisited in relation to the coded extracts and the broader dataset, and were subsequently refined, combined, or set aside when they did not adequately convey a coherent pattern of meaning. The analysis focused on how participants described interruptions to movement practices and sport-related relationships, how bodily and emotional experiences were situated within the crisis, and how they attempted to re-establish continuity with sport. These focal concerns guided the analytic account but were not treated as a predetermined requirement that the final themes conform to three separate categories.

2.5.1. Reflexivity and Analytic Quality

Analytic quality was approached through sustained engagement with participants' accounts, a coherent relationship among the research question, interpretivist assumptions, analytic practices, and claims, and transparency about the development of themes. The researchers kept a record of interpretive decisions and the reasons for refining theme boundaries. Recurring engagement with the original written responses helped ensure that interpretations remained connected to the data, while detailed contextual and participant information was provided to help readers judge transferability. Within reflexive thematic analysis, researcher subjectivity was treated as a resource requiring scrutiny rather than a source of error that could be eliminated through inter-rater agreement (Braun & Clarke, 2021a).

Researcher positionality was especially relevant because one researcher had previously taught the women in the sample, whereas the male participants belonged to the same academic group but had not been taught directly by that researcher. This difference in educational proximity may have shaped participants' willingness to disclose experiences and the researchers' interpretations of them. Both researchers therefore considered their institutional relationships and disciplinary perspectives in reflexive discussions and revisited participants' written accounts when questioning interpretations informed by familiarity with the setting. These procedures support interpretive transparency but do not remove the possibility of social-desirability or power-related effects.

3. Results

Reflexive thematic analysis generated three interconnected themes: (1) rupture in the sporting lifeworld, (2) living the rupture in body and mind, and (3) reconstructing continuity with sport. Together, the themes describe how participants made sense of disrupted sporting routines, perceived bodily changes, weakened social connections, and efforts to preserve or reconfigure their engagement with sport. The themes are presented separately for analytic clarity, but they were not experienced as fixed, mutually exclusive, or necessarily sequential stages. Table 2 summarizes their interpretive content, and Figure 1 illustrates their interrelationships within the broader context of the military crisis. The term sporting lifeworld is used here as an interpretive concept rather than as a phrase attributed to participants.

3.1. Rupture in the Sporting Lifeworld

For participants, interruption of sport extended beyond reduced opportunities to exercise. Familiar sporting routines were embedded in university facilities, clubs, shared practice, and regular contact with peers and instructors. When these settings became inaccessible, participants described the disruption as affecting the organization of their days, their experience of physical capacity, and their sense of belonging to a sporting community.

3.1.1. Disruption of Training Routines

The sudden closure of university facilities and sport clubs removed the places and structures around which regular training had been organized. Although some participants attempted exercise at home or outdoors, these alternatives were not always experienced as equivalent to their usual practice. One participant described the immediate loss of access: "Everything was closed, and I could not do any sport." The account conveys the practical abruptness of the interruption, while other responses suggested that an altered training environment could not fully reproduce the social and instructional conditions of sport.

3.1.2. Perceived Changes in Bodily Capacity

Participants described becoming less fit, tiring sooner, feeling physically stiff, or perceiving changes in muscular condition and

body weight. One wrote, "I became completely inactive and my muscles wasted away." Such statements indicate how participants experienced changes in their bodies; they should not be taken as objectively measured changes in muscle mass or physical fitness. The perceived distance between their familiar sporting bodies and their bodies during the crisis formed an important dimension of the rupture.

3.1.3. Disruption of Sporting Relationship

For many, university and club environments were spaces of interaction, encouragement, and shared participation. The removal of these spaces disrupted both training and the relationships that had helped sustain it. As one participant explained, "Being in the sport environment and being with university friends gave me more motivation to be active, but now all of that was reduced." Sporting participation therefore appeared as a relational practice rather than an exclusively individual activity.

3.1.4. Unsettling of Sporting Identity

Some participants connected the loss of familiar routines and relationships to how they understood themselves. One reflected, "When the clubs were closed, I realized that without sport a void forms in my identity that nothing can fill." This account suggests that sport could function as part of the participant's sense of self, making the disruption meaningful beyond the immediate inability to train. These four dimensions—routine, bodily experience, relationships, and identity—were intertwined rather than independent consequences of facility closure.

3.2. Living the Rupture in Body and Mind

The second theme concerns how participants experienced the disruption in bodily and emotional terms. Descriptions of diminished activity and perceived physical decline frequently appeared alongside accounts of low motivation, disrupted concentration, sadness, boredom, or apprehension. Participants did not consistently separate bodily changes from their emotional experience of the crisis.

3.2.1. Embodied Depletion

Some respondents described familiar activities as requiring more effort or reported noticing a decline in what they believed their bodies could do. One participant stated, "The loss of physical fitness was completely evident." Rather than demonstrating physiological deterioration, the quotation captures the salience of perceived change for an individual whose routine had previously included organized sport.

3.2.2. Emotional and Motivational Strain

Participants described reduced energy, boredom, irritability, disrupted sleep, and diminished motivation. For one respondent, the absence of sport was closely linked to mood: "Without sport, I felt depressed, bored, and unmotivated." This wording is treated as a participant's description of subjective experience, not as evidence of a diagnosed depressive disorder. Accounts of emotional strain also occurred within the wider uncertainty of military conflict, making it inappropriate to attribute these responses solely to reduced physical activity.

3.2.3. Concerns Extending Beyond Sport

Participants' worries included their families, people in their communities, and the country's future. One person stated, "More than myself, I was worried about the lives of my family and the people of my country." Such accounts show that sporting disruption took place within an emotionally demanding social context. Participants were simultaneously responding to the loss of sporting routines and to wider concerns about safety, responsibility, and collective well-being. These experiences illustrate an entanglement of bodily, emotional, and social concerns without establishing causal relationships among them.

3.3. Reconstructing Continuity with Sport

The third theme describes participants' efforts to retain or rebuild a sense of continuity with sport despite changed circumstances. Reconstruction did not necessarily mean returning to pre-crisis routines. Instead, participants described partial, improvised, and sometimes temporary ways of reconnecting with movement, others, and the meanings they associated with sport.

3.3.1. Adapted Movement Practices

Home-based exercise, walking, hiking, stretching, bodyweight exercises, and the use of available outdoor spaces appeared as practical alternatives to organized training. One participant explained, "I tried to train at home in any way possible so that I would not lose my physical fitness." Another wrote, "I tried to maintain my activity through walking and outdoor exercise." These accounts suggest attempts to preserve physical engagement despite the limitations of available facilities; they do not establish that the alternatives fully replaced participants' previous training.

3.3.2. Psychological Self-Regulation

Some participants attempted to manage uncertainty by limiting exposure to crisis-related news, reading, studying, listening to music, meditating, writing, or organizing their daily activities. One respondent described combining information management with routine: "I followed the news less and tried to keep my mind occupied with studying and exercise." These practices were described as ways of maintaining psychological steadiness and daily structure rather than as standardized interventions with demonstrated effects.

3.3.3. Social Reconnection

Relationships with family, friends, classmates, and instructors remained important resources, even when face-to-face sporting contact was restricted. Some participants referred to virtual groups as a means of preserving connection. As one explained, "Friends and virtual sport groups made me feel that I was not completely away from sport." Here, continuity was sustained partly through relationships and a sense of membership rather than through participation in conventional sport settings alone.

3.3.4. Spiritual Resources

A smaller number of accounts described prayer, reading the Quran, and trust in God as sources of reassurance. One participant wrote, "Reading the Quran and praying gave me greater peace." These accounts suggest that faith formed part of the coping resources available to some individuals, but not a uniform response across the sample.

3.3.5. Renewed Meanings of Sport

Some participants came to describe sport as a way of finding respite, preserving hope, or recovering a sense of ordinary life. One stated, "When I exercised, my mind moved away from the war situation and I felt calmer." Another recognized the personal

importance of sporting participation through its absence: "When the clubs were closed, I finally understood how important sport is in my life." In these accounts, sport was not merely an activity to resume; it became a resource through which participants attempted to sustain a meaningful relationship with their bodies, other people, and everyday life.

Across the themes, continuity was described as something negotiated under constraint rather than simply restored. Rupture, embodied and emotional responses, and attempts at reconstruction were overlapping aspects of participants' experiences. The thematic map therefore depicts relations among interpretive themes, not a universal chronology or a demonstrated causal process.

Table 2. Thematic Map and Three-Phase Process of Sporting Experience During the Military Crisis

Theme	Interpretive focus	Illustrative meaning patterns
Rupture in the sporting lifeworld	Interruption of familiar practices and relations	Disrupted training routines; perceived change in bodily capacity; weakened sporting relationships; unsettled sporting identity
Living the rupture in body and mind	Interwoven bodily, emotional, and collective concerns	Perceived physical depletion; low motivation and emotional strain; worries about family, safety, and collective well-being
Reconstructing continuity with sport	Negotiating meaningful participation under changed conditions	Adapted movement; self-regulation; social and virtual reconnection; spiritual resources for some; renewed meanings of sport

Note. Themes are interpretive patterns rather than chronological phases, fixed categories, or counts of participants. Crisis conditions provide the shared context for all three themes.

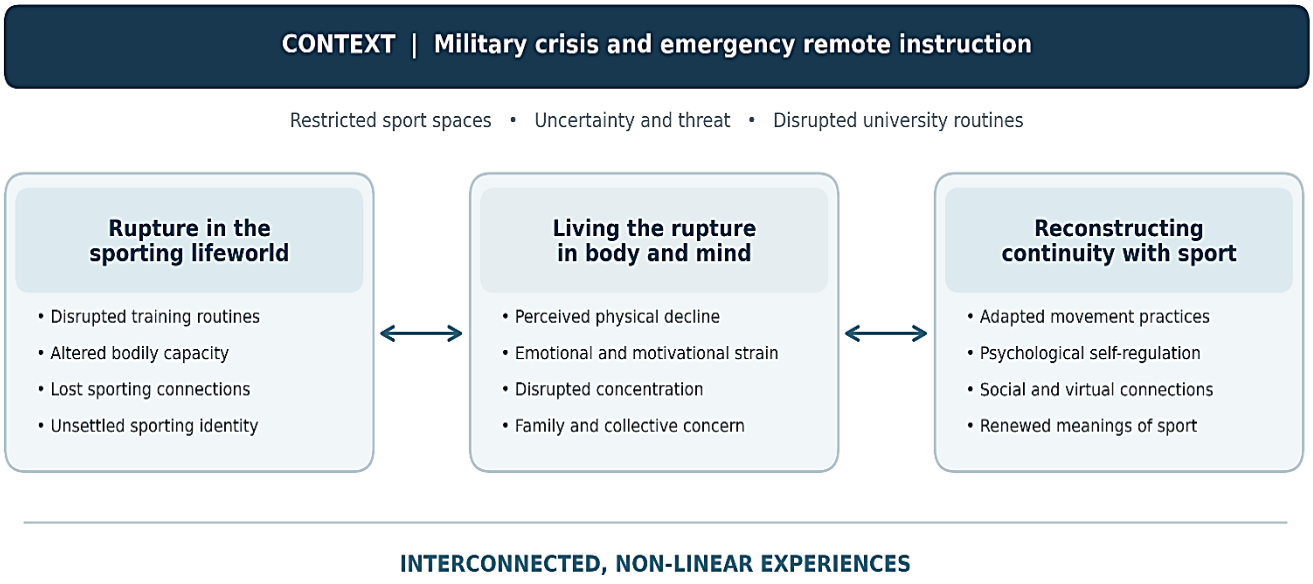


Figure 1. Interconnected Themes in the Sporting Lifeworld During a Military Crisis

Note. The figure represents interconnected patterns identified through reflexive thematic analysis. The double-headed arrows indicate interpretive relationships, not a required sequence, causal effects, or a tested process model.

4. Discussion

This study examined how pre-service physical education teachers made sense of disruptions to their sporting lifeworld during a military crisis and described efforts to maintain or re-establish their relationship with sport. Reflexive thematic analysis generated three interrelated themes: rupture in the sporting lifeworld, living the rupture in body and mind, and reconstructing continuity with sport. Together, these themes illuminate how changes in access to sport spaces and everyday routines were experienced alongside perceived bodily changes, emotional strain, altered social relationships, and questions of sporting identity. They also show how participants described drawing on movement, psychological strategies, social support, and, in some cases, spiritual practices to sustain meaningful connections with sport. These themes are interpretive dimensions of the same crisis experience, rather than verified chronological stages that every participant passed through.

The first theme suggests that the consequences of disrupted sporting participation extended beyond reduced exercise opportunities. Participants described university facilities, clubs, habitual training schedules, and peers as interconnected conditions that had previously made sport a familiar part of everyday life. Their loss was therefore experienced as a disturbance of bodily routines, shared spaces, social belonging, and, for some, a valued sense of self. This

interpretation is consistent with phenomenologically informed accounts of sporting embodiment and the lifeworld, which locate the meaning of movement within situated bodily and relational experiences (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Mayoh & Jones, 2015). Research on endurance runners similarly demonstrates how sporting routines are woven into transitions between work, home, and training (Hockey, 2019). The present findings extend this perspective to an educational setting in which access to the places and relationships sustaining bodily practice was abruptly constrained. The contribution lies less in establishing that routines were interrupted than in showing how participants connected disruption across spatial, corporeal, relational, and identity-related aspects of sporting life.

The second theme highlights the difficulty of separating bodily experience from psychological experience in participants' narratives. Perceived declines in fitness, increased fatigue, and reduced opportunities for movement were described alongside diminished motivation, low mood, difficulty concentrating, and worry. Such accounts are compatible with phenomenological understandings of crisis as an experience affecting one's embodied sense of self and everyday possibilities (Roennfeldt et al., 2024). Importantly, however, the wider military context was present in these accounts: participants also expressed concern for family members, communities, and the country's future. Their emotional responses should not be attributed solely to separation from sport. Nor should references to sadness or feeling depressed be interpreted as evidence of clinically diagnosed mental disorders. What the data support is a situated account of bodily and emotional disturbance in which disrupted sport participation and exposure to a wider crisis were experienced together.

The third theme concerns attempts to recover a sense of continuity, often through modest and improvised forms of activity. Walking, home-based exercise, stretching, and outdoor movement helped some participants remain connected to bodily practice even when their normal training environments were unavailable. Others described reducing exposure to distressing news, structuring daily activities, relying on relatives and peers, or maintaining contact through virtual sport groups. Spiritual practices were meaningful for some participants but were not described as a universal response. Previous qualitative research has discussed creative movement as a resource for women coping with difficult life experiences (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010), while a research synthesis suggests that exercise may support everyday stress coping in non-clinical populations (Sharon-David & Tenenbaum, 2017). These studies offer contextual parallels, not direct evidence that the strategies reported here were effective interventions. The present participants described perceived resources and meanings; the study did not assess changes in psychological symptoms or test the effectiveness of particular coping approaches.

Considered together, the themes suggest that sporting continuity is not reducible to maintaining exercise volume. For these participants, remaining connected to sport also involved preserving a bodily routine, a social relationship, an accessible activity space, or a sense of personal meaning. Reconstruction did not necessarily follow rupture in a uniform sequence; experiences of loss and efforts at adjustment could coexist, and participants' accounts varied in the resources available to them. The thematic map should therefore be read as an interpretive account of interconnected experiences rather than as a causal pathway or a longitudinal model. In this sense, the study adds a lifeworld-oriented perspective to research that often reports crisis-related changes in activity levels, psychological outcomes, or coping practices as separate domains.

The educational context gives these findings particular relevance. Pre-service physical education teachers learn in settings where bodily demonstration, observation, feedback, and participation with others are important components of professional preparation. Studies of teacher professional identity underscore that identity develops in relation to perceived expertise and professional experience (Beijaard et al., 2000), and research on physical education teacher education has examined the challenges of digitally mediated practical learning (Nyberg et al., 2024). Related work on athletic identity suggests that critical life events may prompt reconsideration of how individuals understand themselves through sport (Chun et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the present analysis focused principally on the sporting lifeworld rather than directly measuring changes in professional teaching identity. Consequently, any implications for the development of teacher identity are theoretically relevant but should be treated as propositions for future research rather than as outcomes demonstrated by these data.

The findings offer several cautious implications for educational practice during disruption. Where circumstances and safety permit, teacher educators could provide adaptable, low-resource movement tasks that preserve opportunities for active engagement rather than relying exclusively on passive online instruction. Structured opportunities for peer interaction may also help sustain the relational aspects of sporting participation when shared physical spaces are unavailable. Students reporting substantial distress should have access to appropriate psychological support, without assuming that their difficulties arise only from interruptions to physical activity. Finally, inviting students to reflect on the changing meanings of sport may help educators understand how practical instruction, social belonging, and professional aspirations are experienced under crisis conditions. These recommendations are grounded in participants' descriptions and existing educational reasoning; their feasibility and effectiveness were not evaluated in this study.

Several limitations qualify the interpretation. First, written responses to an online questionnaire did not allow follow-up questions, probing, or clarification of ambiguous experiences, and the depth of the accounts varied. Second, participants were recruited voluntarily from one university; their experiences may not represent those of pre-service teachers in other institutions or settings. Third, responses to the seven analyzed questions were not available for every participant, potentially affecting the breadth of experiences represented across themes. Fourth, exposure to the military crisis varied, while the cross-sectional design did not capture how experiences changed over time. Fifth, the existing educational relationship between one researcher and some participants may have influenced what

respondents felt comfortable disclosing, despite the anonymous data-collection format. Finally, the wider questionnaire was designed for several related research questions; the present analysis offers an interpretation of a specific subset of open-ended responses rather than a comprehensive account of all dimensions of educational disruption. Future research could combine in-depth interviews with repeated assessments across different institutions and examine how sporting participation, embodied experience, and professional identity evolve as educational conditions change.

5. Conclusions

The experiences reported by pre-service physical education teachers during a military crisis extended beyond interruptions to exercise or practical instruction. Participants described disturbances in the everyday relationships among bodily activity, familiar routines, shared spaces, social belonging, and sporting identity, together with efforts to sustain or renew meaningful connections with sport. The three interrelated themes—rupture in the sporting lifeworld, living the rupture in body and mind, and reconstructing continuity with sport—offer an interpretive account of how these experiences were connected in participants' narratives. They should not be understood as a fixed sequence or as evidence of causal effects. For physical education teacher preparation, the findings highlight the potential importance of adaptable opportunities for movement, peer connection, responsive psychological support, and attention to the meanings students attach to bodily practice during periods of crisis.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

F.D.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Project administration.
M.A.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Declaration of competing interest

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Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing:

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used OpenAI's ChatGPT for language editing, improving clarity, and assisting with the organization and formatting of the manuscript in accordance with the journal's requirements. The tool was not used to generate original research data or conduct the study's scientific analysis. Following the use of this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the manuscript and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and content of the published article.

Data availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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