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Preservice Physical Education Teachers' Resistance to Change: The Importance of Occupational Socialization Experiences

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Abstract: (1) Background: The aim of this study was to evaluate preservice Physical Education (PE) teachers' resistance to change during their school practicum based on their occupational orientation profiles (between-subject factors: type of sport experience and role orientation in teaching) after controlling their self-esteem. (2) Methods: 235 preservice PE teachers (male = 118), undergraduate students at the University of Athens, Greece, completed the resistance to change scale and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale online. A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to establish the between-subject factor differences in the four dimensions of the resistance to change scale. (3) Results: The results showed that the preservice PE teachers with experience in individual sports reported higher levels of emotional response during practicum compared to those involved in team sports. No other differences proved statistically significant. The results of the present study should be used as a point of reference for shaping the discussion about the concept of resistance to change in teacher education programs.

Keywords: role orientation; physical education teacher; education; self-esteem; school practicum; higher education programs



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1. Introduction

In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, the field of Physical Education (PE) is constantly adapting to innovative methodologies, societal expectations, and student needs [1]. At the forefront of this change, PE teachers are held responsible for promoting students' holistic development, well-being, and lifelong learning [2]. The path to becoming a PE teacher is multifaceted and influenced by a variety of individual and societal factors, which also include the curriculum and the methods adopted within higher education programs and modules [3]. Preservice PE teachers' preparation during university studies is of major importance, since it influences the way that teaching will be enacted in schools [4,5]. Although there are many theories about 'how one learns to teach', as the issue is multi-dimensional, it is important to develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing preservice PE teachers to perform their work and help promote students' learning.

Subjective theories of teaching are formed through early occupational socialization experiences and, even though they can be altered over time with the accumulation of new university experiences, they influence the way in which novice PE teachers will enter the profession [6]. Usually, most preservice PE teachers have a background in sport, either as athletes and people who engage regularly in different forms of physical activity [7] or as members of families or communities with a sporting profile (i.e., influence from significant others such as coaches, PE teachers, parents, and peers) [8]. Depending on the influences of each context, preservice PE teachers may adopt either a teaching (focus on student-centered outcomes) or a coaching (focus on performance outcomes) role orientation in their own practice [9]. Overall, the organizational structure of PE teacher education

programs exerts an influence on the practices and strategies that future teachers will apply at schools, as well as their willingness to enact change. The occupational socialization of PE teachers has often been analyzed through their acculturation experiences in PE and sport contexts. Within the relevant literature, a PE teacher's or coach's socialization into sport and PE is not examined as a passive process during which an individual adopts the characteristics of either the coaching culture or the teaching profession [9]. Instead, it is a dialectical process during which teachers/coaches can resist socialization and the changes it brings if they do not agree with them or if they feel unprepared [9].

For this reason, in recent years, a growing number of PE teaching and coaching approaches have focused on promoting the positive development of young people [10]. Approaches of this kind focus on the use of learner-centered and inquiry-based curriculum models of instruction, which can have various applications both in individual and team sports [11]. This literature has prompted a re-examination of traditional approaches to instruction in which teachers provide large amounts of feedback and practical demonstrations based upon the assumption that technical execution should be established first. Traditional approaches to PE and sport instruction have often been considered inappropriate for the emphasis they place on skill training without acknowledging how students/athletes may learn by adapting to the constraints of the task, the environment, and the content of instruction [12]. Thus, most Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs recognize the need to acculturate future teachers via knowledge, skills, and methods that adhere to the principles of non-linear pedagogies [12]. Nonlinear pedagogies can inform curriculum design and lesson delivery according to the circumstances of each context (e.g., individual or team sports) and, thus, provide teachers and coaches with tools to effectively meet the demands of each context [13]. This is significant for preservice PE teachers who may experience decreases in their teaching self-efficacy due to the use of inappropriate teaching practices [3]. However, research shows that teacher education courses/programs cannot easily alter future PE teachers' dispositions and beliefs towards practice [9]. In some cases, 'folk pedagogies' [14] continue to dominate PE teaching and coaching, with 'physical education-as-sport-techniques' [15] being still a dominant paradigm [2]. Even though there is a clear need for learning to achieve technical proficiency (especially in individual sports) [13], it is important that all students/athletes experience learning as a whole-person experience [16].

Recent studies confirm that higher education programs must be able to recognize the complexity of instruction and empower future teachers to cope with the difficulties they may encounter during their introduction to the teaching profession [1]. However, it seems that there is lack of relevance between university courses and practicum or microteaching experiences [17], a fact which may negatively affect preservice PE teachers' initial contact with the school reality. Preservice PE teachers' contact with the school classroom usually takes place within the context of pedagogy or teaching courses, which involve both theoretical and practical assignments along with school practicum in various educational grades [18,19]. One of the biggest challenges experienced by preservice PE teachers within these courses is the so-called reality shock [20]. Reality shock [21], the survival phase [22], shattered dreams [23], or transition shock [24] are the terms used in the literature to denote the difficulties or challenges that novice teachers meet during their first experiences of teaching in real classrooms. These challenges are very common for all new teachers, whose expectations or perceptions about the teacher's role and the teaching process seem to clash with the actual challenges and constraints of the classroom, bringing about difficulties in adjustment. Friedman [23] outlines three distinct phases that teachers typically experience during their initial encounter with a classroom's reality: (a) the slump phase, where the idealized concepts of teaching collide with the complexity of the classroom, (b) the exhaustion and fatigue phase, which comes as a result of the rising demands of daily work, and (c) the adjustment phase, where the teacher begins to find balance and adapt to the realities of teaching.

Various factors may reinforce novice teachers' perceived reality shock, such as the unpredictable nature of teaching [25,26], the sharp contrast between theoretical knowledge and practical experience [27], students' heterogeneous needs [28], classroom management issues [29], and unexpected events that require quick decision-making and adaptability [30]. Balancing the need for classroom control with students' autonomy and holistic development can also lead to feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and anxiety. The latter are often the reasons behind preservice teachers shifting to knowledge and practices acquired through their years of apprenticeship in PE and sport [31]. Further, their lack of experience may also reinforce their adherence to safe and established practices [32], making the adoption of new teaching models a difficult task. Even for those preservice teachers who have an affinity and orientation towards teaching and pedagogy, their inability to foster a classroom environment conducive to learning may be the greatest cause of their resistance to change [33].

Resistance to change is a multi-dimensional disposition that includes behavioral, cognitive, and emotional traits, and it refers to the reluctance or opposition that individuals may show when confronted with new ideas, practices, or situations. According to Oreg [34], there are four aspects to an individual's disposition to cope with and embrace change: routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term thinking, and cognitive rigidity. Routine seeking refers to the unwillingness to lose control over established routines and procedures. Usually, individuals who score highly in this trait are uncomfortable with change that disrupts their familiar work patterns. They prefer stability and predictability in their environment and may resist adopting new practices that challenge their existing routines. Emotional reaction refers to the lack of the resilience needed for coping with life stressors and plays a key role in how individuals respond to change [35]. Individuals with lower levels of emotional reaction are more likely to embrace and cope with change effectively, while individuals with higher emotional responses may be more reluctant to change [36]. Short-term thinking is characterized by a desire to prioritize immediate results and an intolerance to effectively handle the stressors of events during an adjustment period. Individuals with high short-term thinking scores tend to resist changes that require patience or long-term planning, even if they know their potential benefits. Cognitive rigidity relates to individuals' dogmatic thought patterns and resistance to considering alternative views or perspectives. Individuals scoring highly in this trait may be less willing or able to adapt to new situations and usually show a resistance to change.

In the context of PE teaching, preservice teachers' role orientation, either as teaching-focused or as coaching-focused, plays a crucial role in shaping their willingness or readiness to adapt to new situations that may require change [37]. Teaching and coaching orientations can be described as ranging along a continuum of highly teaching to highly coaching [38], and, usually, teachers who are equally interested in both teaching and coaching can see themselves in the middle of this continuum. Preservice PE teachers who develop a high teaching orientation during their undergraduate studies are more comfortable with making adjustments and changes in alignment with classroom instances, as opposed to coaching-orientated teachers who prioritize performance and skill development without being willing to make adjustments or changes [9].

The situation becomes even more complex if one examines PE teachers' role orientation along with their acculturation experiences in different sport contexts. For example, individual sport contexts may involve engagement in one-on-one interactions and individualized learning experiences, while team sport contexts may require individual adjustment and collaboration towards shared goals. In each case, collaboration skills, leadership style, or adaptability to change may be handled differently and, consequently, affect the strategies that future PE teachers will adopt within the classroom.

Both in individual and in team sports, positive acculturation experiences are associated with higher levels of self-esteem, which, when brought to the classroom context, may influence teachers' mood and willingness to respond to challenges [37]. Self-esteem is an attribute that reflects an individual's emotional evaluation of the self, along with the

ability to cope with difficult or stressful situations. As a measure of psychological resilience, self-esteem predicts individuals' willingness to accept changes [39], and, for this reason, it is directly related to effective teaching [40]. Self-esteem, along with other individual traits and attributes (e.g., optimism and access to social support and resources) [41], provides those affordances needed to solve problems and navigate successfully within demanding experiences and life events. Research shows that positive self-esteem is connected to an individual's ability to apply changes in their routine easily and show a positive mindset [42]. Since self-esteem is based on individuals' past successes and/or failures in carrying out allocated tasks [43], it becomes critical for the successful implementation of the changes needed when someone engages in new experiences. Within PE, the self-regulatory mechanisms inherent to the view that a teacher holds about his/her efficacy to cope with classroom practices will help them think and feel in favor of the changes occurring in everyday classroom reality [3]. In the case of our study, such a mindset can prove very beneficial when preservice PE teachers encounter the reality shock of school practice. This can be further supported by research showing that novice teachers' reaction to the classroom reality shock is determined by their levels of self-efficacy in teaching [44].

Consistent with the growing interest in the development of teacher education programs that could prepare undergraduates to effectively promote holistic student development, support their pedagogical upbringing, and facilitate the adoption of healthy habits and attitudes, the present study sought to understand preservice PE teachers' resistance to change during their school practicum by grounding the analysis on their sport and teaching profiles and their self-esteem levels. We believe that it is rather timely to examine the ways that preservice PE teachers' socialization experiences in and through PE and sport may influence their willingness to adopt educational changes. Numerous studies exist stressing the importance of optimizing PE teachers' attitudes and skills to fluently manage any changes or challenges during teaching and remain consistent with the scope of PE (i.e., deep learning, health promotion, quality teaching and assessment, etc.) [45–48]. Studies of this kind address the need to support teachers in their effort to cope with changes and/or frustration that may occur during practice so that they can provide quality and meaningful instruction [49]. Until today, however, very little was known about preservice PE teachers' resistance to change during their shift to the school context. We believe that such an understanding is essential for improving the quality of university programs and practices.

Based on the above, the aim of the present study was to evaluate preservice PE teachers' resistance to change during their school practicum, based on their sport and instructional profiles, as well as their levels of self-esteem. Our basic research questions were the following:

- (a) Are there differences in the measure of resistance to change between preservice PE teachers who are engaged in different types of sport, after controlling for their self-esteem?
- (b) Are there differences in the measure of resistance to change between preservice PE teachers with different occupational orientation, after controlling for their self-esteem?

2. Materials and Methods

A total of 235 preservice PE teachers (118 male), undergraduate students at the University of Athens, Greece, participated in this study. The participants were eligible to participate in this study based on their availability and consent, as well as their practicum placement in a primary education context during the period of the study. During the fall semester of 2022–2023, the participants were enrolled in a sport pedagogy teaching module (six ECTS credits), which included theoretical courses, microteaching exercises, and school practicum (fifth semester of a four year 240 ECTS Bachelor Program in Physical Education and Sport Science). The curriculum of this module introduced the preservice teachers to the principles of instructional design, in alignment with students' educational needs and developmental levels. The practicum experiences involved teaching in pairs in primary

education settings (two-month period) under the supervision and support of cooperating, in-service PE teachers.

Throughout the module, compulsory attendance and course assignments were required, and the participants had to log onto online e-classes to access supplementary material, upload their practicum program planning, communicate with the university supervisors, and keep track of their module progress. The research carried out within this study was approved by our university's Bioethics and Research Ethics Committee (No. 1425/21-11-2022). Prior to data collection, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

For our purposes, two self-report questionnaires were used to assess the variables of the study: (a) the resistance to change scale [34] and (b) the Rosenberg self-esteem scale [50]. The resistance to change scale consists of four factors—routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term thinking, and cognitive rigidity—which assess the concept of resistance to change with 17 items. A six-point Likert-type scale is used, with one = strongly disagree and six = strongly agree. The responses for each factor are summed to create cumulative scores, according to the instruments' guidelines. The indicative questions were as follows: *"I prefer having a stable routine to experiencing changes in my life"*, *"If I were to be informed that there's going to be a significant change regarding the way things are done at work, I would probably feel stressed"*, *"Changing plans seems like a real hassle to me"*, and *"I don't change my mind easily"*. The scale has so far been used in recent surveys in our country yielding proven reliability indicators [51]. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is the most commonly used measure of self-esteem, with considerable evidence supporting its validity [52]. It consists of 10 questions with statements such as *"I feel that I have a number of good qualities"* or *"I take a positive attitude toward myself"*. In both scales, all the items were adjusted so that they referred to the preservice teachers' experiences of teaching during school practicum.

Following an initial invitation, the participants received an online link to complete both the questionnaires and a questionnaire with individual characteristics such as gender, age, the type of sport they were involved in at the time of the study (team or individual), and their role orientation in their practicum (moderately coaching, strongly coaching, moderately teaching, or strongly teaching). Concerning their previous sport involvement, the participants had to choose their main type of sport regardless of whether they had been involved in both types of sports at some point in their life. For our research purposes, all the participants completed one question regarding their role orientation based on the notion that teaching and coaching likely lie along a continuum from a highly teaching- to a highly coaching-oriented attitude. This question had four possible answers concerning orientation: strong teaching, moderate teaching, moderate coaching, and strong coaching. The participation in this study was voluntary and the confidentiality of responses was ensured.

The statistical analysis was conducted with the use of the statistical package SPSS 26.0 (IBM SPSS, IBM, Armonk, NY, USA). Data cleaning included an inspection for missing values, distribution of entries, and potential outliers. No missing values, univariate or multivariate outliers were observed [53]. The data were analyzed using descriptive (mean, SD, standard error) and inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA)). The MANCOVA enables the evaluation of the effect of independent variables on more than one dependent variable through statistically controlling external variables [53]. The between-subjects' factors of (a) type of sport (two levels) and (b) occupational orientation (four levels) were tested for differences in the four factors of the resistance to change scale, using self-efficacy as a covariate. The standard assumptions required for the MANCOVA were tested. The results on Box's M test did not prove significant, and the Wilks L criterion was reported. Given the significant overall MANCOVA, the specific differences among the variables and groups were investigated with ANCOVA analyses and post hoc comparisons.

3. Results

The descriptive statistics concerning the participants' responses in the four dimensions of the resistance to change scale, after controlling their self-esteem in teaching, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the type of sport and role orientation groups in the resistance to change scores.

Group	Emotional Reaction		Short-Term Thinking		Routine Seeking		Cognitive Rigidity	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Individual Sports	13.970	0.332	10.521	0.310	14.851	0.311	12.908	0.239
Team Sports	12.759	0.369	9.962	0.345	15.639	0.346	12.587	0.265
High Coaching	12.310	0.473	10.054	0.442	14.573	0.444	12.756	0.340
Moderate Coaching	14.006	0.575	10.709	0.537	15.615	0.539	13.379	0.414
Moderate Teaching	14.241	0.468	10.669	0.438	15.862	0.439	12.688	0.337
High Teaching	12.899	0.474	9.534	0.443	14.929	0.445	12.166	0.341

A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to examine the effect of the type of sport and professional orientation on the four dimensions of resistance to change during school practicum, with self-efficacy being used as a covariate. The results indicated a significant effect of the type of sport on the combined variables of resistance to change, after controlling the teachers' self-esteem [$F(4, 226) = 3.089, p < 0.05$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.948$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.052$]. The post hoc analyses demonstrated that the individual sports' participants reported statistically significant higher levels of emotional reaction than the team sports' ones ($p < 0.05$).

In terms of the short-term thinking dimension, the findings indicate that the participants involved in individual sports showed higher levels of short-term thinking compared to those involved in team sports, although the difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The cognitive rigidity scores, as indicators of the resistance to change in established beliefs and thought patterns, did not seem to differ between the individual sports' participants and the team sports' ones. In the dimension of routine seeking, the results showed a marginal but non-significant difference between the participants engaged in different types of sports. Those involved in individual sports showed lower levels of routine seeking compared to the team sports' participants.

Concerning the role orientation, the differences between the teaching- and coaching-oriented groups of participants in their resistance to change were not statistically significant ($p = 0.08$) after controlling their self-efficacy. The MANCOVA results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. MANCOVA for pairwise comparisons for the type of sport and role orientation after controlling self-esteem.

Factor	Wilk's Lambda	F	p	η^2
Type of Sport	0.948	3.089	0.017 *	0.052
Role Orientation	0.920	1.604	0.086	0.028
Self-esteem	0.882	7.533	<0.001	0.118

* $p < 0.05$.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate preservice PE teachers' resistance to change, based on their occupational orientation profiles (type of sport experience and role orientation in teaching) after controlling for their self-efficacy in teaching during practicum. The findings revealed that the type of early sport involvement (individual or team) influenced the preservice PE teachers' resistance to change during practicum. Particularly, the partici-

pants with athletic experience in individual sports tended to experience higher emotional reactions and demonstrate greater short-term thinking in response to change compared to those who had athletic experience in team sports. There was also evidence of differences in cognitive rigidity and routine seeking among the two groups, although this difference was not statistically significant in the present study. Role orientation (teaching or coaching) did not appear to have a significant effect on the resistance to change in this study ($p = 0.08$). The findings are discussed in the following paragraphs, in relation to relevant studies.

As mentioned above, the participants with an individual sports' profile showed higher levels of emotional reaction during practicum, compared to the team sports' ones. This finding could be attributed to the solitary nature of individual sports, which comes into contrast with the collaborative and dynamic nature of PE classroom environments (i.e., crowded PE courts, use of equipment, multiple groups of students moving in the same space, etc.). Studies show that individual sport athletes must regulate their route within sport by themselves, as there is no group for sharing thoughts, efforts, and outcomes [54,55]. This can lead to higher levels of anxiety and can adversely affect their emotional reactions to success and failure. Indeed, athletes with experience in individual sports may feel more emotionally exposed as they are in the spotlight and their personal reactions are often more salient and directly linked to their performance [56]. Individual sport athletes are required to reach a level of competence via hours spent in 'higher level preparation', which is focused on error reduction and intense personal goal-setting [57]. Based on relevant research, [58], experiences of this kind may put pressure on players/athletes and negatively influence their emotional state. This element may cause them greater stress during their 'exposure' to new and unforeseen situations, especially when their goals are not met [59]. Within the school environment, anxiety, excitement, and frustration may be often experienced due to teachers' inability to meet the goals that have been set [60]. This situation can be even more difficult for novice teachers who, as athletes, have learned to hyper-focus on goals and outcomes [20,61]. Given the critical role of teachers' PE and sport acculturation experiences in determining behavior and effort, a closer look at the specificities of each type of sport can be quite informative for designing university programs that can support their initiation to the principles of instruction [21].

Compared to individual sports, team sports involve many opportunities for social interaction, support, and interaction with different people (e.g., coaches, teammates, referees, etc.) This social network can provide emotional support and a sharing of coping strategies, which can alleviate stresses and anxiety in difficult situations [62]. The group dynamic in team sports encourages the development of certain coping mechanisms which may include teamwork, communication, and joint problem-solving [63]. Several studies suggest that social support from others can also help athletes address their levels of anxiety or their negative emotional reactions [64,65]. In this sense, preservice PE teachers with a team sports' profile are more prepared to share responsibility (e.g., with other teachers or students) and, thus, handle success and failure as a collective experience, which alleviates negative feelings or perceptions about teaching. This could potentially lead to better resilience in *reality shock* situations [66,67], such as the reality shock of the PE classroom.

Another finding of this study, though a non-significant one, was that preservice PE teachers with experience in individual sports demonstrated higher levels of short-term thinking compared to the team sports' ones. Particularly, the individual sports' athletes showed a tendency to focus on immediate outcomes during practicum rather than on adopting a strategic or long-term perspective. Engaging in individual sports involves making quick and autonomous decisions amidst conditions of one-to-one competition, which can encourage a form of short-term tactical thinking [68]. Transferring such a mindset to a classroom environment means focusing on immediate outcomes, such as improved performance or classroom organization [69]. Research suggests that a mindset of this kind can hinder PE teachers' ability to adapt to the dynamically evolving nature of educational processes, potentially leading to resistance when faced with the complexity of classroom dynamics [70]. The situation may be even more demanding for coaching-

oriented preservice teachers who are more inclined to short-term thinking (compared to their teaching-oriented colleagues), based on their low career commitment to teaching and their lack of interest in supporting high-quality school physical education programs [71].

Team sports typically require athletes to think strategically about how their actions will influence the actions of their teammates or their opponents as a group, something which could encourage more long-term, strategic thinking [72]. This form of thinking is linked to a more collective and long-term perspective, which potentially makes them slower to react to different events or circumstances [73]. In this sense, PE teachers who have a background as individual sports' athletes may focus on discrete and autonomous classroom events and apply a short-term focus in the preparation of instruction. Adversely, PE teachers with a team sports' profile may approach instruction more strategically as a series of inter-related events that need a long-term perspective to be organized and effectively handled [74]. We believe that both short- and long-term thinking are very consequential to the planning and designing of instruction and need to be understood as processes that may be adopted depending on each classroom's goals and expected learning outcomes. However, based on the complex nature of PE teaching [1], we argue that a long-term perspective is required to capture the dynamics of classroom instruction and facilitate the embracement of learners' change as growth. Thus, teacher education modules and units need to create more opportunities for novice teachers to effectively bridge research/theory-practice and make decisions concerning the constraints or the affordances that need to be considered when adopting short or long forms of planning [1,2,11,12].

The above arguments can also be supported by the fact that the participants in individual sports showed higher levels of cognitive rigidity and lower levels of routine seeking compared to those in team sports (although these differences were not statistically significant in our study). Regarding cognitive rigidity, it is evident from the literature that team sports generally require athletes to coordinate with various teammates while adapting to the unpredictable actions of the opponents [74]. These experiences may stimulate strategic problem-solving and promote cognitive flexibility in the adoption of different roles and duties [72,75]. Such attributes are pivotal in teaching since they encourage creativity and perspective taking [76]. This may not be the situation in individual sports, where the focus may be more on reinforcing specific strategies and skills, contributing to cognitive rigidity [77]. Within education, cognitive rigidity leaves little room for changes or modifications to established conditions and is more likely to sustain negative experiences related to reality shock [78,79].

In their routine seeking, individuals with individual sport experiences appear to have more control over their training environment and competitive situations [77]. This may lead them to seek less routine as they can control and adjust their actions directly without having to coordinate with others. Conversely, team athletes need to adapt to a group routine and coordinate with others, which may make them more routine-oriented [80,81]. Routine in teaching cannot always be enacted due to the rapidly evolving nature of the classroom environment [11,12,82]. Even though PE teachers need a structured routine to safeguard their teaching effectiveness, it is important that this routine leaves space for the inspection of the constantly changing classroom conditions and for the diverse student needs [2,14–16]. In this sense, PE teachers need to adopt teaching approaches that provide structure without limiting cognitive flexibility. PE teaching models such as the Teaching Games for Understanding model [83], the Cooperative Learning model [84], or the Sport Education model [85] are specifically suitable for this purpose, since they promote learner autonomy by merging instructional approaches with the dynamics of the classroom context.

Concerning the participants' role orientation, our results showed that the resistance to change did not vary between the preservice teachers with a high/moderate teaching/coaching orientation. This may suggest that the reality shock of preservice PE teachers remains equally strong for all, regardless of their expectations concerning goal attainment and classroom management. Based on relevant studies, a wider range of factors such as personal beliefs [86], socialization experiences in PE and sport [87], years of apprentice-

ship in education [88], and professional experience [89] significantly influence a teacher's predisposition to accept or manage uncertainty and the complex nature of teaching reality. Therefore, it is expected that the levels of resistance to change would differ because of a combination of factors related to teachers' role orientation. Thus, future studies need to examine this issue in more depth.

Overall, the results of the present study were interpreted in relation to the participants' self-esteem. From the findings, it was found that self-esteem, as a covariate, held a central role in shaping the final results ($p < 0.001$). The relative literature suggests that the presence of a covariate in the MANCOVA analysis enhances the accuracy of the results [53]. Resistance to change has been studied by many disciplines and appears to be influenced by self-esteem. In the case of PE teaching, self-esteem has a central role since a teacher with higher levels of self-esteem may show higher levels of adaptability, emotional resilience, and long-term thinking about their performance and effectiveness [3,90]. The above qualities are rather important for helping preservice PE teachers effectively address the anxiety that they may experience during their transition from the university to the school context. Research has shown that preservice PE teachers who can interpret their emotional or cognitive responses in relation to both the characteristics of their context and their personal knowledge or skills are more effective in implementing instruction during their practicum placements [3]. Therefore, it is important for university programs to encourage novice teachers to critically reflect on their efficacy and instructional abilities via offering systematic and regular teaching practice experience [5,91]. Experiences of this kind can encourage preservice teachers' self-esteem and help reduce possible negative emotional responses or reactions during the reality shock phase of their practicum [44].

5. Conclusions

The present study examined preservice PE teachers' resistance to change based on the type of sport they engage with, their role orientation in teaching, and their levels of self-esteem during practicum as the between-subject factors shaping their occupational orientation experiences. The results showed that preservice PE teachers with experience in individual sports reported higher levels of emotional response during practicum compared to those involved in team sports. Although none of the other dimensions of resistance to change appeared to significantly differ statistically, we found that resistance to change among new teachers is an important area for future investigation. A thorough understanding of the factors that may influence future teachers' willingness to adapt with self-esteem to the evolving dynamics of classroom environments is needed as part of the design of teacher education programs.

For this purpose, learner-centered and inquiry-based approaches to instruction need to be adopted within the PETE curriculum, both for individual and team sport courses and units. Approaches of this kind involve a shift from knowledge transmission to the facilitation of active learning and, thus, are consistent with theories of learning that support complexity and openness as avenues to quality and meaningful instruction [11,12]. It is important that future PE teachers not only learn the content of sports or practice (content knowledge), but also 'learn how to learn' through reflection, questioning, and dialogue-oriented learning [1]. There is a wide acceptance that learner-centered and inquiry-based approaches enhance undergraduate students' self-efficacy to focus on the core pedagogical features of instruction [15,16] and create possibilities for promoting positive learning outcomes and experiences for their students as early as their practicum placements [3]. The learning experiences provided through these approaches could also contribute towards future teachers' social, moral, and personal development and, thus, create paths and human-centered approaches to university teaching and learning [1,2].

Therefore, we believe that it would be worthwhile to conduct an evaluation of future PE teachers' profiles (e.g., sport, years of involvement in sport, role orientation, self-efficacy, etc.) at the time of their admission into higher education programs. Even though they may have positive experiences as athletes in different types of sport, they may

not be ready to adopt a learner-oriented profile for addressing the needs of diverse learners and classrooms. Depending on their acculturation experiences, novice teachers may need mentoring support to overcome barriers concerning teaching and learning in PE and sport [53]. Thus, it has been recommended that constructivist-oriented pedagogies need to be integrated within university programs as approaches that position teacher educators as partners to preservice teachers' learning and help them critically reflect on their value orientations and beliefs and the ways in which these may positively or negatively relate to their classroom experiences [92]. Based on this information, supporting structures could be developed within university programs (e.g., occupational counselling services, peer mentoring support, resources for lesson planning and classroom management, strategies for connecting with parents and colleagues, etc.). Such structures could help PE teachers effectively cope and manage the reality shock during their early stages in schools. In addition, relevant teaching methods could be implemented as part of higher education curricula to enhance preservice PE teachers' long-term thinking and cognitive flexibility with the aim of empowering them to effectively navigate within-school contexts.

This research is not without limitations. First, our analysis is limited to participants located in one country, and, thus, the results cannot be generalized to other countries with PETE programs. Second, due to our cross-sectional design, our findings limit any assertions regarding causality among the variables studied. Future longitudinal research designs would provide more information on this subject. Finally, the use of other measures related to teachers' resistance to change (e.g., psychological, social, cognitive) and variables concerning their individual characteristics (e.g., gender, economic status, etc.) could bring more details to our topic of investigation. Future research could further explore additional factors related to preservice PE teachers' resistance to change, such as personality traits, learning styles, social and emotional attributes, etc. Furthermore, a longitudinal study that could track potential changes in their resistance to change overtime (e.g., during their bachelor studies or after the completion of a series of pedagogical courses) could provide further insights and help shape relevant interventions. By implementing targeted interventions, educational institutions could better prepare preservice PE teachers to cope with the classroom reality shock, develop resilience, and adopt a human-centered teaching mindset which could bring value to classroom contexts. Such a change could promote teacher and student well-being and further contribute to educational changes in PE favoring students, teachers, and their families.

6. Practical Implications

The results of this study carry implications for PETE programs and, especially, for preservice PE teachers' practicum. Cooperating PE teachers in schools and university supervisors could provide mentoring support to novice teachers during practicum by considering both their self-efficacy profiles and their attitudes towards change, either in classroom management issues or in issues related to instruction and within classroom relations. By examining these parameters together with their mentors or supervisors, preservice teachers will have the opportunity to receive feedback not only about the teaching process, but also about their attitudes towards and conceptions about instruction. This will help them manage the emotional impact of teaching and handle with openness their students' needs and strengths. This study has shown that, depending on their sports' profile, role orientation, and self-efficacy, preservice teachers may address changes in classroom demands differently. Considering that PE and sport are important avenues for young peoples' holistic development, we suggest that PETE programs should provide frequent opportunities for preservice teachers to receive progressive support during their transition to schools. This implies changes in the curriculum of university programs, so that future PE teachers are supported in managing the changes needed to move from theory/research to classroom practice effectively.

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