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Exploring health-related misconceptions among prospective teachers

Summary of the PhD dissertation

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This dissertation explores the development and persistence of health misconceptions among future educators, aiming to understand how these false beliefs might influence their attitudes and teaching approaches about health. The study is premised on the understanding that health is a complex, multidimensional concept encompassing not only physical well-being, but also the mental, emotional, social, societal and spiritual dimensions. Despite this holistic understanding, in Hungary, health education in both public education and in the training of future educators remains heavily focused on physical health.

Through a mixed-methods approach – combining qualitative (document- and content analysis) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) methods – the research reveals that health misconceptions often develop at an early age and remain unchallenged through higher education. Many educator students continue to equate health with the absence of illness or believe that physical activity alone ensures good health. Analysis of the current Hungarian National Core Curriculum (NCC 2020) shows that mental and social aspects are underrepresented, and the educator training programs lack the practical tools needed to address and correct these misconceptions.

The findings emphasize the influence of cultural norms, family traditions, and media on students' health perceptions – often outweighing the impact of formal education. The study concludes that the current training of future educators does not adequately prepare these professionals to recognize or counteract these misconceptions. It recommends the inclusion of a dedicated, practice-oriented course on health education and -promotion within educator training. Such reform is essential to support the development of a health-conscious generation and to ensure that educators are equipped to foster holistic health awareness among their future pupils.