

FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 17th January 2026 Accepted: 22nd January 2026 Published: 02nd February 2026</p>	<p>Student engagement in Physical Education (PE) is a critical determinant of both short-term participation and long-term physical activity habits. Student engagement in PE is multidimensional, comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components that contribute to learning outcomes and health benefits. A wide body of research highlights a range of influences on student engagement, including instructional practices, teacher support, psychological needs, social context, and curriculum design. This paper focuses on key factors that influence students' engagement in PE classes.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Student engagement, Physical Education, active participation</i></p>	

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Introduction:

Student engagement in class is the key indicator of educational quality, predicting not only academic and motor skill outcomes but also attitudes toward physical activity across the lifespan. Engagement of students in physical education (PE) class reveals their active participation in class activities, emotional investment in learning experiences, and cognitively acquisition of skills and deliberate thinking. It is very important for physical educators to understand the influencers of student's class engagement in order to design effective PE experiences and promote lifelong physical activity. Research in this field is deal with primarily in motivational theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which underscores the satisfaction of psychological needs as prerequisites for intrinsic motivation and involvement in learning contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Standage et al., as discussed in Vasconcellos et al., 2019). Self-Determination Theory postulates that fulfillment of basic psychological needs viz. autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential for intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes engagement in educational settings. Autonomy is students' experiences of volition and choice in learning tasks, competence means perceived effectiveness and skill mastery, and relatedness reflects to feelings of connection with peers and teachers (Ryan & Deci, 2017, as described in Vasconcellos et al., 2019). These psychological needs have been repeatedly linked to engagement outcomes in PE research, providing a unifying framework for understanding diverse engagement determinants. IN this study researcher highlights different influencing factors which are most probably effects on student's involvement or engagement in physical education class.

Objective of the Study:

To examine factors affecting student engagement in the physical education class in context of instructional practices, teacher Support, curriculum design, psychological needs of students, social and environmental context is the main objective of the present study.

Factors Influencing Student's Engagement in Physical Education:**1. Instructional Practices and Teacher Support:**

Many researchers demonstrate that teacher behaviors and instructional practices are among the strongest predictors of student engagement in PE. Teacher autonomy support, structure during activity, and relatedness support are positively associated with students' behavioral and emotional engagement. Observational studies show that in comparison with controlling or passive teaching styles; need-supportive teaching practices that offer choices, provide clear structure and create a supportive climate and predict higher student engagement. (Guo et al., 2025; Moreno et al., 2025; Standage et al., as cited in Vasconcellos et al., 2019).

Guo and colleagues (2025) found that teacher autonomy and relatedness support were significantly related to student engagement through the mediating role of autonomous motivation and self-efficacy among college PE students. Competence support indirectly contributed via self-efficacy, highlighting the complexity of instructional influences on engagement.

2. Psychological Needs and Motivation:

Psychological need satisfaction is a key determinant of student's engagement (Standage et al., 2005; Cox & Williams, 2008). Both experimental and correlational studies confirm that students who perceive higher autonomy, competence, and relatedness exhibit stronger engagement behaviors in PE (Standage et al.,

2005); Cox & Williams, 2008). For example, research on secondary school students revealed that autonomy support and task-involving motivational climates (Cheon et al., 2012; Hagger et al., 2009) were positively associated with psychological need satisfaction and self-determined motivation, which in turn predicted engagement and physical activity levels during PE classes (Standage et al., 2005; Hagger et al., 2009).

Similarly, longitudinal research indicates that autonomy support from both teachers and parents enhances emotional engagement, mediated by constructs such as self-acceptance and self-efficacy (Jang et al., 2016; Hagger et al., 2009). This suggests that the influence of psychological needs extends beyond classroom context to include familial support.

3. Curriculum Design and Class Structure:

Curriculum elements and how instructional time is allocated also affect engagement of students. Research using systematic observation and student questionnaires has shown that emphasis on skill practice is positively associated with engagement (Rink, 2010; Silverman & Mercier, 2015; Chen et al., 2017), whereas inactive or unstructured instruction correlates with reduced engagement (Siedentop et al., 2020). The effect is particularly pronounced among students with lower perceived competence, indicating the need for balanced curriculum designs that promote mastery experiences. (Rink, 2010; Chen et al., 2017)

4. Social and Environmental Contexts:

Social influences such as peer support and classroom climate contribute meaningfully to engagement of students in class (Standage et al., 2005; Cox & Williams, 2008). Studies based on motivational climate research show that a task-involving peer climate emphasizing cooperation (Ames, 1992; Ntoumanis, 2001) and personal improvement positively predicts basic psychological needs and enjoyment during physical activity (Standage et al., 2005; Cox & Williams, 2008). This highlights the role of peers in reinforcing or undermining student motivation and engagement in PE settings.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that student's engagement in Physical Education class is influenced by an inter-play of instructional practices, psychological needs, social environments, and curriculum design. This suggests that, physical educators aiming to enhance engagement should prioritize need-supportive teaching methods, cultivate motivational climates that foster autonomy and relatedness, integrate structured skill-based learning, and leverage positive peer interactions. Future research should explore longitudinal and intervention studies across diverse cultural contexts to further refine strategies that promote sustained engagement in PE.

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