

# Sports Psychological Skills and Engagement of College Physical Education Students in Sports Program

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## Abstract

Students sports participation is crucial for their physical, mental, and social development. However, maintaining consistent participation in sports program might be difficult due to a number of psychological factors. The primary purpose of this study aims to see the possible relationship between sports psychological skills and engagement in sports program. It utilized descriptive correlational design using an adapted questionnaire to gather data from college physical education students, who have been selected through simple random sampling. Analysis of results revealed that the sports psychological skills is High which means students are with very good psychological skills. Moreover, students perceive their engagement in sports program as very high. This means that students develop a positive attitude toward physical activity and doing so makes them more likely to engage in physical activities, even outside of PE classes. Students enjoy and feel satisfied with the activities and lessons. Results also declared that there is a significant strong positive correlation between sports psychological skills and students engagement in sports program. A closer look at the result shows that students with very good psychological skills leads to a higher sports engagement. It is then highly recommended to reinforce the activity called sport smart: an individualized performance-based assessment strategy. This involves classroom-based sports training, integrating effective strategies such as mental rehearsal, goal-setting, feedback mechanisms, and understanding of sports fundamentals. By nurturing this strategy, schools can also empower students to excel both on and off the field, which leads to holistic development and enhanced performance.

Keywords: Sports psychological skills; students engagement; sports training

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## 1. Introduction

Sports engagement fuels life and has a profound impact on one's physical, psychological, behavior and social well-being. However, it does not make ends meet as students lack interest contrary to being motivated and inspires, low self-esteem, struggle with anxiety, and inadequate mental preparation. Due to a variety of influencing factors, this led to a change in students' desire, motivation, and drive to continue participating in sports programs (Parihar, 2021). Therefore, there is a need for increased awareness of the benefits of the right psychological skills in sports.

One of the influencing factors that college students often struggle with is the negative body images, leading to a lack of self-esteem and confidence. This condition contributes to an inhibitory effect on their participation in physical activities and sports, which can further exacerbate their negative self-perceptions. This is a concerning issue as physical activity offers numerous benefits, including improved physical and mental health (Ouyang et al., 2020). In the Philippines, there is 19.33 percent of respondents participate in

sports activities (Statista Research Department, 2021), and this is supported by Pokrovskaya et al. (2020), who expressed that there is a decline in students' willingness to participate in sports in school. Unfortunately, physical activities are often neglected and labeled as less important. P.E. practitioners have encountered challenges in motivating students, which ultimately affects their overall well-being. When students feel unsupported and are exposed to a negative environment, their motivation levels decrease, and their attitudes toward sports are negatively impacted.

In Davao City, schools both public and private remain steadfast in its quest for excellence in sports and continue to strengthen the sport development program of the school. From the study of Cagongon and Osorno (2022) students positive experiences at school affect their level of zest, self-efficacy and competence which contribute to an increase participation sports program. Sports anxiety is inevitable and has always been a barrier in participating in sports competition. Yavuz (2019) suggested strategies that students should have cognitive regulation, positive enthusiastic reactions, and positive friendship qualities to have good sport participation confidence. At Holy Cross of Davao College, students are continuously seeking for programs that aligns their interest as this enable their eagerness, willingness, and desire to reach greater heights, particularly in representing the school in various levels of competition, ranging from local to regional, national, and international.

Researchers have been trying to identify the factors that can enhance students' involvement in sports programs. However, until recently, little was known about variable relevant to the influence of students' interest in sports program engagement. Although predictor like sports psychological skills (Bayyat et al., 2021) is found to be essential antecedent, yet focus solely on the academic achievement of students. It is quite noticed by some researchers the driving force behind the guts and reasons for engaging themselves in sports programs. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to determine if sports psychological skills have an influence on improving the engagement of college physical education students in sports programs.

Finally, the Department of Education officials, school heads, teachers, coaches, parents, and students will benefit from these results because of the valuable information about the reinforcement of students' sports participation. The results will generate new insights that contribute to the field of education and provide valuable information for policy-making, guidelines, and strategic innovation to improve sports education in schools.

### *1.1. Statement of the Problem*

The study was conducted to determine the relationship of sports psychological skills and engagement of college physical education students in sports programs in the current School Year of 2023 to 2024. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:

1. What is the level of sports psychological skills of college physical education students in sports program in terms of:

- 1.1 Motivation;
- 1.2 Anxiety Control;
- 1.3 Mental Preparation;
- 1.4 Team Emphasis; and
- 1.5 Concentration?

2. What is the level of engagement of college physical education students in sports program in terms of:

- 2.1 Enthusiasm;
- 2.2 Vigor;
- 2.4 Confidence; and
- 2.4 Dedication?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the sports psychological skills and engagement of college physical education students in sports program?

### *1.2. Hypotheses*

The hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant relationship between sports psychological skills and engagement of college physical education students in sports program.

### *1.3. Review of Related Literature*

This section presented the review literature and studies after the researchers' thorough and in-depth search. To aid in better comprehension of the study, the review presented several variables such as sports psychological skills and students' engagement in sports programs, and indicators in order. The inclusion of these variables serves to enhance the understanding of the study.

#### *Sports Psychological Skills*

Students with a strong mindset can overcome performance hurdles like anxiety and fear of failure by developing psychological skills essential for positive sports engagement. These skills, including confidence, goal-setting, and concentration, foster practical thinking, optimal performance, and mental toughness, enabling students to confidently navigate challenges during sports activities for success both on and off the field. Participating in sports exposes students to stressful environments, underscoring the importance of developing psychological skills and mindfulness. These techniques enhance performance by teaching individuals to regulate thinking and strategize before sports engagement, fostering confidence, goal-setting, concentration, and mental toughness to handle unexpected situations (Foster & Chow, 2020).

Motivation has a significant impact on sports participation, and it is indeed the most frequently studied in the context of sports. From the study by Ponseti et al. (2019) stated that motivation enables students to be determined and are interested to participate in sports activities. One of the motivations is the encouragement from the environment. Sometimes, students lack ideas about their potential, and the people surrounding them are the ones who notice it and push them to explore more of themselves. There are two types of motivations, one is intrinsic, which represents the behavior or student's personal mechanism to push themselves to limit and, through self-efficacy, enable them to carry any circumstances in sports participation. In external motivation, seeking encouragement is one of its signs, and through external controlled reward increases their interest in sports as they want to win the game and to have feelings of pride in themselves.

In the study of Simonsmeier et al. (2020) states that imagery is a popular and well-regarded sport psychology strategy for improving performance, mental abilities, and injury recovery. Students are able to think in advance in their participation in sports programs, they can adjust themselves and set goals as imagery

improves motor performance, motivational results, and emotional outcomes considerably. Imagery mixed with physical practice was more successful than physical exercise alone, demonstrating that imagery and physical practice have distinct impacts. The intensity of imagery training has been shown to be positively related to imagery efficacy.

#### *Students Engagement in Sports Program*

Fear of disappointment, lack of interest, lack of desire, and lack of responsibility have all been identified as contributing causes to students' lack of motivation in the previous 10 years (Nickolauson, 2021). Educators figure out how to get students involved, interested, and enthusiastic about their schooling. For starters, students' involvement is strongly tied to their sense of belonging. Second, a student's general sense of belonging and participation has a direct influence on academic performance. It has been shown that when students learn qualities or character taught via sport, such as responsibility, collaboration, and overcoming difficulties or problems and failure, they build stronger self-esteem and better mental health which is good in the improvement of their academic performance (Kukoda, 2022).

Mistakes are a natural part of participating in sports, particularly for students who are new to school sports activities. As beginners, making mistakes can be an unpleasant experience, causing students to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future, which can lead to reduced confidence. According to Toktas and Bas (2019), having self-confidence is crucial regardless of the circumstances. It's important to students to keep overcoming the challenges that come their way and to strive for continuous improvement, which can enhance their perception and increase engagement. In addition, the feeling of confidence can empower students to perform at a high level, which can positively impact their dedication to sports.

Having a positive mindset is crucial for students when approaching competition. They should see each game not just as a contest, but as an opportunity to challenge themselves and expand their capabilities. With this attitude, they can focus on their performance, identify areas for improvement, and set goals to progress. This approach creates a cycle of continuous improvement, as they can apply what they learn from each competition to their practices, leading to better performance in the next competition. This process of growth can benefit them not only in sports but also in life. Therefore, maintaining a positive attitude and viewing each competition as a chance to learn and grow is important (Larkin & Bruen, 2021).

#### *Sports Engagement Reinforcement through Psychological Skills*

Developing a positive attitude toward physical activity and sports is crucial, with Physical Education (PE) playing a vital role in promoting active lifestyles. Students should understand the importance of PE and how it can benefit their daily lives. Doing so makes them more likely to engage in physical activities in the future, even outside of PE classes. Adolescents must enjoy and feel satisfied with their PE lessons. Satisfaction is critical in determining how students perceive the value and usefulness of PE and their intention to remain physically active outside of school. If they experience boredom or dissatisfaction, it can negatively affect their engagement in physical activities outside of school (Quero et al, 2023).

Additionally, from the study conducted by Camiré and Trudel (2013) stated that Psychological Skills Training (PST) is very important and this comprehensive approach involves the use of various strategies and techniques designed to develop and improve students interest in participating sports and learn how to assess, monitor, and adjust their thoughts and feelings, which can significantly impact their performance. Leadership, goal-setting, self-awareness, and visualization are psychological skills. Leadership skills students become effective team players. Goal-setting skills enable students to set achievable targets and work towards

achieving them. Self-awareness skills enable students to identify areas for improvement and visualization skills enable them to create positive mental images of their success. Yet, with the right guidance and support, students can develop these skills and achieve their full potential on and off the field.

Motivation has always been one of the most significant elements that does not only enables students to participate in physical activities but it also determines the success of an athlete in sports. However, lack of motivation can lead athletes dropping out of sports. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors that drive motivation and work towards creating an environment that fosters and sustains it (Orbach, 2023). In the same manner, students with goal orientation focus on achieving goals for self-fulfilment in sports and leads to engage more in physical activities (Li & Tsai, 2020). Students with a win orientation always have a drive to win the game and tend to avoid losing, and they evaluate their own performance (Tusak et al., 2022). Win and goal orientations are essential factors influencing an individual's decisions and behavior in physical activity and sports.

#### *1.4. Theoretical Framework*

This study is anchored on the theory of Self-Determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theory claimed that having an open awareness can be particularly helpful in making choices that align with one's needs, values, and interests. In the context of this study, when people are fully aware of their choices and choose those that align with their needs, values, and interests, they are more likely to experience fulfilment, especially regarding their psychological needs. This, in turn, can lead to better regulation of their behavior.

Furthermore, as cited by Elferink-Gemser (2002), the credibility of the impact of sports psychological skills can be dealt with by five indicators, which are motivation, anxiety control, mental preparation, team emphasis, and concentration. Lastly, the study's dependent variable is the student's engagement in sports programs, and the indicators are confidence, dedication, enthusiasm, and vigor (Lonsdale et al., 2007). These indicators highly influence the relationship between sports psychological skills and students' engagement in sports programs.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

The study was conducted in a distinguished private tertiary and non-sectarian school in the division of Davao City, Region XI. This school brag a well-established sports program and have achieved commendable success in various sports competitions, raising the bar for athletic excellence in the region. The sample consisted of 100 college physical education students from any year levels.

### *2.2. Procedures*

This study utilized a non-experimental quantitative research design and a descriptive correlational approach to determine the relationship between sports psychological skills and students' engagement in sports program. A two-part questionnaire was utilized to gather data for the study. In sports psychological skills, a modified version of the Psychological Skills Inventory for Sport Questionnaire (PSISQ) was used, and a modified version of the Athlete Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) for students' engagement. These questionnaires underwent validation from the experts. Further, researchers adhere to the principles of transparency, legitimate purpose, privacy and confidentiality of the information and proportionality in the collection, retention, and processing of personal information based on the Data Privacy Act of 2012. No

names of individuals, entities, or corporations will be revealed or mentioned. The data gathered from the online survey were handled only by the researchers and appropriately disposed after the study was completed to protect privacy. Once all the data had been gathered, the researchers employed a statistical analysis method, including weighted mean and Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ). These statistical techniques help identify the strength of the relationship between them.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This chapter represented the analysis and interpretations of the data gathered. Discussions were presented categorically based on the sequence of the statement of the problem. Relevant related literature was used to discuss and support the findings.

#### *Level of Sports Psychological Skills of College Physical Education Students.*

**Table 1.** Summary of the Level of Sports Psychological Skills of College Physical Education Students.

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Motivation	4.33	Very High
Anxiety Control	4.06	High
Mental Preparation	4.17	High
Team Emphasis	4.07	High
Concentration	3.88	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>High</b>

In particular, among the five indicators of sports psychological skills of college physical education students, respondents perceived that motivation was the highest indicator, with a mean score of 4.33, and interpreted as *Very High*. This means that the students have excellent psychological skills. The result implies that students want to succeed in sports. The result validates the finding of Ozdemir (2021), who noted that students who have high expectations of success tend to be highly motivated individuals who take pride in their work and strive to bring out the best in themselves and their peers. They understand that success is not something that can be achieved overnight but rather a result of consistent effort and dedication.

Next in the rank is the mental preparation indicator, with a mean score of 4.17, interpreted as *High*. This means that the students have very good psychological skills. The result implies that the students rehearse their performance in their heads before they perform. The result supports the study of Williams (2019), which mentioned that mental rehearsal is a powerful technique that involves visualizing oneself performing a skill, and this is known to enhance the skill being practiced, leading to improved execution and proficiency. Additionally, mental rehearsal can help build self-confidence and incorporating mental rehearsal into one's training regimen can be an effective way to support skill development and boost overall performance. Moreover, the team emphasis indicator is next to the rank with a mean percentage of 4.07 and is interpreted as *High*. This means that the students have very good psychological skills. From the result, it also infers that the respondents think that team spirit is very important. The result supports the study by Ballan (2023), which mentioned that team spirit is rooted in the idea of unity and a shared purpose. In sports, this often translates to a common goal of winning the game or championship. By aligning team's efforts and working towards a common goal, teams can harness collective energy and achieve remarkable outcomes.

Next in the rank is the anxiety control indicator, with a mean score of 4.06, interpreted as *High*. This means that the students have very good psychological skills. The result implies that the students are often panic-struck during those last few moments before they begin their performance. The result supports the findings of Swaim (2022), who pointed out that sports performance anxiety is a prevalent phenomenon that can detrimentally affect students' performance in sports and cause a range of physiological symptoms. Individuals experiencing sports performance anxiety may exhibit physical manifestations, such as heightened heart rate and hand tremors, before sports activity, which can further heighten their anxiety. Students must recognize these symptoms and implement strategies to alleviate their anxiety, such as deep breathing exercises, visualization techniques, and cognitive-behavioral therapy. This can optimize students' performance and help them achieve their goals.

The concentration indicator is the lowest indicator, with a mean percentage of 3.88, interpreted as *High*. This means that the students have very good psychological skills. The result also infers that the respondents think that they often have trouble concentrating during their performance. The result supports the study of Strength (2020), which mentioned that trainers and coaches are becoming increasingly aware that they must use tools derived from sports psychology to increase their athlete's selective attention and concentration. Training these qualities will not only help to improve athletic performance but also decrease the anxiety and doubt felt when an athlete loses control. As presented in Table 1, the level of sports psychological skills garnered an overall mean of 4.10 and was interpreted as high. This indicates that the level of psychological skills in sports is at a high level. The study by Foster & Chow (2020) enunciated that participating in sports can expose students to highly stressful training and competition environments, making it important to develop psychological skills and mindfulness. These techniques help to enhance sports performance by teaching individuals to regulate their thinking and develop strategies to enhance their abilities before participating in a sport.

#### *Level of College Physical Education Students Engagement*

**Table 2.** Summary of the Level of College Physical Education Students Engagement.

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Enthusiasm	4.41	Very High
Vigor	4.38	Very High
Confidence	4.27	Very High
Dedication	4.33	Very High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Among the indicators of students' engagement, the respondents perceived enthusiasm as the highest indicator, with a mean percentage of 4.41, and interpreted as Very High. This means that the students are in excellent engagement. The result also infers that the respondents enjoy their sport. Based on this result, M. & M. (2023) stated that sport is enjoyable and can help you combat anxiety, and in general, it will make you happier and more content with life. Sporting activities are enjoyable, in contrast to working out in a gym. The magic of playing sports is that you are excited, thrilled, and motivated to continue playing even when exhausted. Playing sports is one of the best ways to boost your confidence, interest and work out muscles properly.

Next to the rank is the indicator vigor, with a mean score of 4.38, interpreted as Very High. It means that the students are with excellent engagement. The result implies that the students feel mentally alert when



they participate in their sport. The result validates the finding of Eather et al. (2023), who noted that participating in sports is a constructive way for students to maintain good mental health. Students who engage in physical activities regularly tend to experience lower levels of stress and anxiety, while also feeling more mentally alert than those who don't participate in sports. This could be attributed to the release of endorphins during physical activity, which help alleviate stress and improve mood. Therefore, engaging in sports can be a productive way for students to take care of their mental health, and stay sharp and focused.

The third is the dedication indicator, with a mean score of 4.33, interpreted as Very High. It means that the students are with excellent engagement. The result shows that the students want to work hard to achieve their goals in sports. The result supports the study of Manalo (2023), who pointed out that many students are motivated to achieve their goals in sports and are willing to put in the hard work and dedication to succeed. In addition, students involved in sports tend to develop strong self-discipline, which translates into a strong work ethic and a desire to succeed in all aspects of their lives. Hence, it is clear that students who engage in sports are likely to be dedicated and committed to achieving their goals, both on and off the field.

Finally, the last rank indicator is confidence, with a mean score of 4.27, interpreted as Very High. It means that the students are with excellent engagement. The result shows that the students believe they are capable of accomplishing their goals in sports. The result infers the study of Martins et al. (2017), who said that students who believe in their capability to achieve their goals in sports show better performance and greater success. Encouraging them a sense of self-confidence can lead to greater determination which can ultimately help them reach their full potential in sports. Our coaches and teachers can support students develop their confidence by providing them with opportunities to set their goals, recognize their accomplishments, and give feedback on their progress. Thus, empowering our students helps them to achieve their goals and become the best versions of themselves in sports and beyond.

As presented in Table 2, the level of college physical education students engagement garnered an overall mean of 4.35 and interpreted as Very High. This indicates that the level of students' engagement is at very high level. From the study of Quero et al, (2023) enunciated that developing a positive attitude toward physical activity and sports is crucial as physical activities or PE plays a vital role in promoting active lifestyles. Students should understand the importance of PE and how it can benefit their daily lives. Doing so makes them more likely to engage in physical activities in the future, even outside of PE classes. Students must enjoy and feel satisfied with their PE activities and lessons.

*Significant Relationship between the Sports Psychological Skills and Engagement of College Physical Education Students in Sports Program*

**Table 3.** Significant Relationship between the Sports Psychological Skills and Engagement of College Physical Education Students in Sports Program.

Variable	r- value	p- value	Decision on H <sub>0</sub>	Interpretation
Sports Psychological Skills	.499	.000	Reject	There is a significant strong positive correlation
Engagement				

<0.05 level of significances



Table 3 represents the test of the relationship between sports psychological skills and engagement of college physical education students in sports program. The results show that there is a significant high relationship ( $r=0.499$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) between sports psychological skills and engagement of college physical education students at a  $<0.05$  level of significance. This means that the level of sports psychological skills is directly proportional to the level of engagement in sports program. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected based on the result of the study.

This study is substantiated by Foster and Chow (2020), who pointed out that there is a significant relationship between sports psychological skills and engagement in sports program. The study found that individuals who possess strong psychological skills tend to be more engaged in sports programs. These skills not only improve athletes' performance but also promote their well-being and improve personal growth. Consequently, coaches and trainers must integrate psychological skills training into their sports programs to help athletes achieve their full potential and enjoy their sports experience.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of this study showed the relationship of sports psychological skills and engagement among college physical education students in sports programs. The study revealed that college physical education students exhibit excellent sports psychological skills, which include high levels of motivation, anxiety control, mental preparation, team emphasis, and concentration. These skills are linked to their excellent engagement levels, particularly in enthusiasm, vigor, confidence, and dedication. The findings align with previous research that highlights the positive impact of high expectations and consistent effort on student motivation and success. Encouraging self-confidence among students has been shown to enhance determination and performance, which emphasizes the significance of psychological factors in sports participation.

#### 5. Recommendation

The study stresses the need for teachers, coaches, and school officials to open more opportunities like sports training, specifically the activity called Sport Smart, an individualized performance-based assessment strategy. This involves classroom-based sports training to develop students' skills in sports, integrating effective strategies such as mental rehearsal, goal-setting, feedback mechanisms, and understanding of sports fundamentals. By nurturing this strategy and promoting a supportive environment for students to thrive, schools can also empower students to excel both on and off the field, which leads to holistic development and enhances their performance.

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