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Exploring individual interest as a driver of study engagement in foreign folk dance among university students: perspectives from a Philippine higher education

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ABSTRACT

Foreign folk dance plays an important role in preserving cultural heritage and enriching physical education, yet its relationship with students' academic engagement remains insufficiently examined. This study examined the relationship between individual interest in foreign folk dance and study engagement among higher education students in the Philippines. Drawing on Roure's tripartite model of individual interest, the study considered three factors: positive affect and willingness to reengage (PAWR), Stored Utility Value (SUV) and stored attainment value and knowledge-seeking intentions (SAVKSI). Using regression analysis, results revealed that individual interest was significantly associated with study engagement ($p<0.05$). Among the dimensions, SUV showed the strongest positive relationship with engagement, indicating that students demonstrated higher engagement when they perceived long-term value and relevance in learning foreign folk dances. In contrast, PAWR showed a negative relationship with engagement, suggesting that enjoyment alone may not necessarily translate into deeper academic involvement. Meanwhile, SAVKSI was not significantly related to engagement ($p>0.05$), implying that knowledge-seeking intentions may require stronger instructional scaffolding to translate into active participation. These findings highlight the importance of integrating pedagogical strategies that balance affective enjoyment, cultural appreciation and value-oriented learning in dance-based physical education. By addressing an underexplored area in physical education research, this study contributes to the development of culturally responsive and engagement-oriented pedagogies in higher education.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Pedagogy; Individual Interest; Intrinsic Motivation; Physical Education; Student-Centered Instruction

1. INTRODUCTION

'Interest' and *'study engagement'* are pivotal in fostering effective learning and holistic development, particularly in physical education (Otundo & Garn, 2019; Sliwa et al., 2017). Recent studies emphasize that sparking interest in students leads to increased motivation, better physical activity participation, and improved educational outcomes (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2021; Harackiewicz et al., 2016). In physical education, where experiential and active learning is central (Buen et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2023), maintaining students' interests encourages lifelong fitness habits and the development of essential life skills (Liao et al., 2023). Interest-driven activities have been shown to make physical education more meaningful and enjoyable for students (Kurniawan et al., 2021), creating a foundation for long-term engagement and personal growth (Corbin, 2021).

Engagement in physical education also directly contributes to students' mental and physical well-being. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci & Ryan (1985), a widely applied psychological framework, provides valuable insights into how engagement can be fostered. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), motivation arises from fulfilling three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of physical education, providing students with choices in activities (autonomy), ensuring opportunities to improve and succeed (competence), and fostering a sense of belonging through inclusive practices (relatedness) are key drivers of intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 20). Lev-Arey et al. (2024) further stated that, this theoretical lens helps educators design programs encouraging active participation and long-term commitment to physical activity.

Beyond theory, practical applications of SDT principles are increasingly evident in recent research. Studies have demonstrated that gender-neutral, interest-driven activities and improved accessibility to sports facilities enhance engagement and motivation (Ávalos-Ramos et al., 2024; Cerar et al., 2014; Sáez et al., 2021). Additionally, tailored interventions based on SDT principles have proven effective in motivating diverse populations, including students with disabilities or unique needs (Perlman & Piletic, 2012; Saebu et al., 2013), ensuring that engagement in physical education is inclusive and sustainable (Holt et al., 2019; Slemp et al., 2021). This integration of SDT enhances immediate outcomes in physical education and promotes lifelong habits of health and fitness (Springer, 2013).

(De)coding individual interest: Its core definition and significance

Individual interest is a long-lasting psychological orientation toward a specific topic (Schiefele, 2009), subject, or domain characterized by intrinsic motivation and a deep-seated curiosity (Wong et al., 2020). According to Rotgans & Schmidt (2011), it evolves from a temporary situational interest to a more enduring and stable trait that significantly influences a person's engagement and persistence in learning or other activities. Added by Roy et al. (2023), this profoundly personal interest resonates with an individual's experiences, goals, and values, making it highly relevant and meaningful. As a result, individual interest fosters sustained attention, enhanced effort, and positive emotional connections (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2017), such as enjoyment, fulfillment, and satisfaction when engaging with the topic or activity (Roure & Lentillon-Kaestner, 2022).

As further mentioned by Schiefele (2009), individual interest is vital in motivating students and enhancing academic outcomes in educational settings. Students who develop a strong interest in a subject are more likely to engage deeply with the material (Herpratiwi & Tohir, 2022), persist in challenging tasks (Rieger et al., 2022), and seek out opportunities for further exploration (Wild, 2023). Positive emotional experiences associated with individual interests create a sense of satisfaction and encourage lifelong learning (Kuo et al., 2024). Therefore, educators can cultivate this interest by aligning instructional content with students' experiences, offering choice and autonomy, and creating a supportive learning environment that nurtures curiosity and enthusiasm.

Roure et al. (2021) identified three key components that define an individual's level of interest: *positive affect and willingness to reengage* (PAWR), *stored utility value* (SUV), and *stored attainment value and knowledge-seeking intentions* (SAVKSI). PAWR describes the emotional satisfaction and enjoyment students experience after participating in a subject, such as physical education courses, which fosters a desire to reengage. This is supported by O'Keefe and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2014), emphasizing that positive experiences with a subject can reignite students' motivation to learn. Meanwhile, SUV refers to the perceived importance of an activity or content based on its relevance to an individual's personal and academic goals. As per Lobo (2024), this can manifest as valuing physical education courses for their contributions to physical health, well-being, and quality of life. The expectancy-value-cost (EVC) approach by Eccles (2005) provides a framework to understand SUV by emphasizing that students' motivation depends on their belief in the activity's usefulness (utility value), their expectation of success, and the perceived costs. In this

context, students who see PE courses as essential for achieving future health and fitness goals are likelier to engage, especially when they believe they can succeed in these activities and the perceived costs are minimal. Lastly, SAVKSI emphasize the personal relevance of a subject, aligning closely with self-schema theory of Markus (1977). This posits that individuals' self-concepts guide their motivation and behavior. Such us from the writings of Kendzierski (1988), when students view PE courses as integral to their self-identity and future aspirations, they are more likely to engage deeply. This alignment between self-schema and personal goals fosters meaningful connections between past experiences, self-awareness, and current learning, enhancing their commitment and interest in the subject.

The dimensions of study engagement for meaningful learning

School engagement is a multidimensional construct integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (Gomes et al., 2023). It comprises three core components: *vigor* (VI), *dedication* (DE), and *absorption* (AB). These elements align closely with the Study Engagement Theory of Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998). As added by Singh et al. (2022), this posits that meaningful engagement arises when students invest their energy, emotions, and cognitive resources into academic activities that they find purposeful and relevant. This theory emphasizes that engagement is not just about compliance or participation but involves a deep, sustained connection to learning tasks (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998).

VI is characterized by students displaying high energy, resilience, and adaptability within the school environment (Lobo, 2024a). As reported by Shao et al. (2024), these students demonstrate a strong drive to participate actively in their academic pursuits and manage challenges effectively. Meanwhile, DE refers to a student's enthusiasm and learning commitment (Snijders et al., 2020). Hudig et al. (2021) mentioned that, students with high levels of dedication are engrossed in their studies, viewing academic tasks as meaningful, significant, and inspiring. Their positive perspective on coursework fosters motivation and a sense of purpose. Lastly, AB involves complete focus and immersion in academic activities (Koob et al., 2021). As stated by Teuber et al. (2021), students experiencing absorption exhibit a unique combination of intense concentration and enjoyment when engaging in school-related tasks, creating a seamless and satisfying flow during learning. Estévez et al. (2021) highlighted that, while each component represents distinct aspects of study engagement, they work synergistically to foster holistic academic involvement and success.

Empirical evidences of individual interest vis-à-vis study engagement in physical education

The relationship between individual interest and study engagement is well-documented in educational literature, particularly in the domain of physical education (Chen & Wang, 2017; Harackiewicz & Knogler, 2017; Roure & Lentillon-Kaestner, 2022). Individual interest, characterized by a stable, long-term disposition toward re-engaging with specific content, is a powerful motivational factor that predicts behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of student engagement (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Kahu et al., 2017). For example, Kahu et al. (2017) found that individual interest acts as both a psychological resource and an emotional catalyst that shapes student engagement in higher education. The longitudinal study of Kahu et al. (2017) emphasized that students' pre-existing interests, when aligned with relevant learning tasks and supported by a positive teaching environment, predict strong cognitive and behavioral engagement.

In the Philippine context, recent local studies affirm these theoretical propositions. Lobo & Dimalanta (2024) demonstrated that individual interest, across all three of its factors positively predicts school engagement, regardless of sex or institutional affiliation. Similarly, Lobo et al. (2023) found a consistent pattern among over 11,000 higher education students, indicating that individual interest significantly influences academic engagement in PE. These results align with broader evidence from Garn et al. (2011), who reported that when PE content reflects student interests, motivation and engagement significantly increase. Likewise, Lobo et al. (2023) surveyed 2,178 undergraduates from two public state universities and found consistent associations between individual interest and university engagement, with no significant demographic variations. Also, Bautista et al. (2023) analyzed responses from 1,294 students enrolled in PE courses at a Philippine state university and confirmed that individual interest and its dimensions were significant predictors of school engagement. Moreover, in a predictive-correlational study of PE students in Bukidnon, Philippines, Quering & Guillena (2025) found that individual interest and optimism significantly predicted student engagement, accounting for 56% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.560$). The findings of Quering & Guillena (2025) reinforce the cross-cultural validity of individual interest as a core psychological driver of student engagement in physical education. Both local and global, these findings converge on a central conclusion that individual interest when fostered through culturally relevant, emotionally supportive, and autonomy-enhancing educational environments can be a powerful catalyst for deep and sustainable engagement in physical education.

Drawing on the tripartite model of individual interest proposed by Roure et al. (2021); grounded in Hidi & Renninger (2006) four-phase model of interest development, this study

conceptualizes individual interest as comprising three interrelated factors (PAWR, SUV and SAVKSI). These components represent the affective, instrumental, and identity-based value students attach to a subject and are theoretically positioned to predict sustained academic engagement. These components represent the affective, instrumental, and identity-based values students attach to a subject and are theoretically positioned to predict sustained academic engagement. While these dimensions have been explored in more general educational and PE contexts, their specific role within culturally embedded physical education activities such as foreign folk dance remains significantly underexplored. To date, only a handful of empirical studies have examined how individual interest functions in dance-based or heritage-related PE courses, particularly in non-Western, developing educational settings like the Philippines. This notable scarcity presents a critical gap in both motivation theory and curriculum design for inclusive physical education. Addressing this gap, the present study hypothesizes that the three dimensions of individual interest will significantly predict student engagement within the context of foreign folk dance instruction. In this regard, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H_1: Study engagement can be predicted by individual interest and its three factors:

H_{1a}: positive affect and willingness to reengage

H_{1b}: stored-utility value

H_{1c}: stored-attainment value and knowledge seeking intentions

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

The study participants were purposively selected undergraduate students enrolled in Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness 3 (PATH-Fit 3), where international/foreign folk dance is included in the syllabus during the 1st Semester of the Academic Year 2023-2024 from a selected public higher education institution in the Philippines. These students typically attend class for two hours per week as part of their coursework. Respondents were selected through *purposive sampling* method, a non-random technique designed to choose individuals with specific characteristics to gather the most relevant and insightful data. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, a carefully defined selection criterion was established for the survey participants:

1. A student currently enrolled from the selected university of the present study;
2. Currently enrolled in the dance class under the PATH-Fit 3 course; and

3. From various sex and/or gender identity.

In order to determine the target sample size for the present study, the R*aosoft Sample Size Calculator* was used. Based on a total estimated population of 500 students enrolled in PATH-FIT 3, the target sample size is 218 (CL: 95%, MOE: 5%). A total of 330 responses were retrieved after the data collection phase. After data cleansing, 222 responses were accepted for data analysis, corresponding to an 67.27% response rate. Table 1 illustrates the gender distribution of the respondents, showing that the majority are heterosexual women (54.1%), followed by heterosexual men (41.9%), with a smaller proportion identifying as LGBTQIAP+ members (4.1%).

Table 1. Distribution of the participants based on sex and/or gender identity

Variable	Items	*n*(%)
Sex and/or Gender Identity	Heterosexual men	93(41.9%)
	Heterosexual women	120(54.1%)
	LGBTQIAP+ members	9(4.1%)
	Total	222(100%)

2.2. Instruments

The survey questionnaire consisted of three main sections. The first section gathered demographic information, specifically sex and/or gender identity. The second section featured the Students' Individual Interest in Physical Education Questionnaire developed by Roure et al. (2021). This 14-item instrument assesses individual interest through three theoretically grounded subscales: PAWR, SUV and SAVKSI. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The third section included the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-9S), adapted by Carmona-Halty et al. (2019). Although originally derived from a workplace context, the UWES-9S has been widely validated for educational applications, measuring engagement in academic activities across three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. In this study, it was specifically applied to the academic experience of participating in foreign folk dance topics in PATH-Fit 3. Items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 ("Never") to 6 ("Always"), and a composite engagement score was used for analysis. Table 2 presents the normality estimates, bivariate correlations, and reliability statistics of the study variables. All constructs were found to be within acceptable normal distribution thresholds (skewness and kurtosis between –2 and +2), suggesting that the data meet assumptions of normality. Bivariate correlations revealed that all constructs were significantly interrelated ($p < .001$), and internal consistency values (Cronbach's α) ranged from .81 to .94, indicating high reliability across all scales.

Table 2. Normality estimates, bivariate correlation and reliability assessments

Variables	Mean ± SD	Skew	Kurt	1	2	3	4
PAWR	3.27 ± .77	.035	-.344	(.81)			
SUV	3.13 ± .90	-.096	-.604	.79**	(.89)		
SAVKSI	3.67 ± 1.01	-.741	-.213	.75**	.69**	(.94)	
UWES	4.29 ± .64	-.136	.520	.19**	.41**	.16**	(.82)

Note: *Mean and Standard Deviation are presented as Mean ± SD.*
***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
Legend: PAWR- Positive affect and willingness to reengage; SUV- Stored utility value; SAVKSI- Stored attainment-value and knowledge seeking intentions; UWES- Engagement as adapted from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for students.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights, privacy, and well-being of all participants. Ethical approval was granted by the Local Research Committee of Bulacan State University - College of Sports, Exercise, and Recreation (BulSU-CSER) with protocol number CSER-CRDU-2025-008, and the study was classified as exempt from full ethical review. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Ethical considerations were guided by institutional research protocols and APA ethical standards, ensuring data protection, anonymity, and responsible dissemination of findings. No physical, psychological, or social risks were posed to participants, and all procedures complied with ethical research standards in human behavioral studies.

2.4. Statistical Analyses

To examine the direct influence of individual interest and its three factors (PAWR, SUV, and SAVKSI) on study engagement, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics [version]. This statistical technique was selected because it allows for the simultaneous assessment of multiple predictor variables and determines the strength and statistical significance of each factor's contribution to study engagement. The analysis provided insight into which dimensions of individual interest were the strongest predictors of study engagement, thereby helping to identify key factors associated with student motivation in the context of foreign folk dance education. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS

Table 3 represents the findings on the multiple regression analysis performed. Based on the analyzed data, it was observed that individual interest positively predicts study engagement [$F(3, 218) = 20.211$, $p < .001$].

Table 3. Direct influence of individual interest and its three factors on study engagement in foreign folk dance

Hypothesis	Paths	β	R^2	F	t-value	p value	Decision
H_1	INDINT → UWES	-	.218	20.211	-	<.001	Accepted
H_{1a}	PAWR → UWES	-.246	-	-	-2.678	.008	Accepted
H_{1b}	SUV → UWES	.071	-	-	7.107	<.001	Accepted
H_{1c}	SAVKSI → UWES	-.070	-	-	-1.191	.235	Rejected

Note: *Significance is at p <.05.*
Legend: INDINT- Individual interest, PAWR- Positive affect and willingness to reengage, SUV- Stored utility value, SAVKSI- Stored attainment value and knowledge seeking intentions, ENG- Study engagement

The model's R^2 value of .218 indicates that 21.8% of the variance in study engagement can be explained by individual interest. The findings suggest that individual interest significantly influences study engagement in foreign folk dance. This means that students who find personal value and motivation in folk dance are more likely to engage deeply in learning. Furthermore, this level of explained variance is considered meaningful in the context of behavioral and educational research. However, it also suggests that additional external variables may influence engagement. These may include instructional strategies, cultural relevance, peer dynamics, or prior exposure to dance. These may be possible factors not captured by the current model but relevant in physical education contexts. Consequently, these findings support H_1. Lastly, before interpreting the specific predictive power of each factor, multicollinearity diagnostics were examined. All predictors had tolerance values of > 0.10 and VIF scores < 5 (PAWR: VIF = 3.402; SUV: VIF = 2.833; SAVKSI: VIF = 2.410), indicating no serious multicollinearity concerns. Thus, the regression coefficients may be interpreted with confidence.

Notably, it was uncovered that SUV positively predicts UWES ($\beta = .071$, $t = 7.107$, $p <.001$), in which it turns out to be the strongest predictor of UWES. The strong predictive power of SUV suggests that students engage more in foreign folk dance when they recognize its long-term benefits, such as physical fitness, motor skill development, and cultural appreciation. This highlights the need for educators to integrate dance as a physical activity and foster holistic well-being in physical education. In this, H_{1b} has been supported. Interestingly, it was unraveled that PAWR negatively predicts UWES ($\beta = -.246$, $t = -2.678$, $p = .008$). This suggests that as enjoyment and willingness to

participate increase, study engagement may decrease if learning is not perceived as meaningful. This implies that students who view foreign folk dances primarily as a recreational activity may lack motivation for deeper academic engagement, highlighting the need for educators to integrate structured learning strategies alongside enjoyment. Therefore, H_{1a} has been accepted. On the other hand, SAVKSI did not predict UWES (β = -.246, t = -2.678, p = .008). This infers that having knowledge-seeking intentions alone does not directly lead to study engagement in foreign folk dance. Moreover, without a strong perceived value or emotional connection, students may not actively apply their learning despite their interest in acquiring knowledge. Thus, H_{1c} has been rejected.

4. DISCUSSION

Foreign folk dance is often perceived as a recreational and cultural activity (Rokka et al., 2015), yet its potential as an academic discipline within physical education remains underexplored. The findings of this study reveal a complex interplay between individual interest and study engagement. These challenges conventional assumptions about what truly drives student involvement in dance learning. While individual interest significantly predicts engagement (Bautista et al., 2023; Lobo, 2024b; Lobo, Martin, et al., 2023; Lobo, Peralta, et al., 2023; Lobo & Dimalanta, 2024), its underlying components exert differentiated effects. SUV emerged as the strongest predictor of study engagement, underscoring the importance of perceived long-term value in sustaining academic commitment (Broeren et al., 2024). In contrast, PAWR negatively influenced engagement, suggesting that enjoyment alone may not lead to deep learning (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2020). Meanwhile, SAVKSI did not significantly predict engagement, indicating that the intention to acquire knowledge does not always translate into active participation. These findings have critical implications for physical education, dance pedagogy, and motivation theories, necessitating a shift from surface-level enjoyment to structured, value-driven engagement. These patterns must also be viewed within the cultural lens of Filipino higher education, where students often associate dance with social enjoyment, community celebration, and festival performance (Lobo, 2023, 2024c; Pastera, 2024; Patterson et al., 2018). In this context, foreign folk dances may be perceived as novel or even detached from personal heritage, unless educators explicitly scaffold their cultural and academic value.

The pleasure trap: why enjoyment alone may decrease engagement

It is widely believed that enjoyment enhances engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985), yet this study contradicts that notion by revealing that PAWR negatively predicts study engagement. This aligns with Sansone & Smith (2000), which posits that when students engage in an activity purely for

enjoyment, they may lack the cognitive investment necessary for deep learning. Hidi & Renninger (2006) Model of Interest Development further explains that situational interest (triggered by enjoyment) must evolve into individual interest (sustained by deeper meaning) to foster engagement. In foreign folk dance, students who view dance as a purely recreational activity may enjoy participation but disengage from its theoretical and technical aspects, such as cultural analysis, movement deconstruction, and historical research. This aligns with situational interest theory (Chen et al., 1999), which suggests that interest triggered by fun or novelty does not necessarily sustain long-term engagement unless it evolves into a deeper, more personally meaningful connection (Chen et al., 1999). Similarly, Garn et al. (2011) research in physical education suggests that when activities are framed solely as entertainment, students may lack persistence in skill mastery, conceptual learning, and reflective engagement (Garn et al., 2011). Ames (1992) further emphasizes that task structures and goal orientations influence engagement. This argues that students are more likely to persist when learning environments integrate enjoyment and meaningful academic challenges (Ames, 1992). This underscores the need for educators to balance enjoyment with structured academic frameworks that foster both affective engagement and cognitive investment (Alam & Mohanty, 2024; Barkela et al., 2023). As Chen & Wang (2017) have stated, by integrating strategies that enhance personal relevance, encourage goal setting, and promote reflective learning, educators can transform surface-level enjoyment into sustained, meaningful engagement in folk dance education (Chen & Wang, 2017).

For many Filipino students, dance has traditionally been experienced through communal events such as “sayawan,” barangay fiestas, or school performances, where enjoyment is prioritized over technical rigor or reflective learning (Artazo et al., 2024; Villones, 2020). This cultural orientation toward dance as a recreational or celebratory activity may explain why affective enjoyment alone is insufficient to sustain academic engagement. Educators in the Philippine context must therefore shift students’ perspectives by framing foreign folk dances not just as performance-based tasks, but as academic opportunities for cultural analysis and cross-cultural understanding (Lobo, 2023).

Stored utility value: The key to meaningful engagement

In contrast to PAWR, SUV emerged as the strongest predictor of study engagement, reinforcing Eccles & Wigfield (2002) Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), which argues that students engage more when they perceive an activity as valuable and relevant to their personal or professional goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This finding aligns with motor learning and skill acquisition

research, demonstrating that students who recognize the real-world applications of physical activities tend to persist longer and invest more effort (Chen & Ennis, 2004). For foreign folk dance, students who perceive it as beneficial for physical fitness, cultural heritage, and personal growth are more likely to engage deeply. Previous studies in culturally responsive pedagogy highlight that students' academic motivation increases when they understand how traditional dances contribute to identity formation, intercultural competence, and physical literacy (Banks, 2015; Lobo, 2024c; Pacadaljen, 2024). This suggests that educators must explicitly communicate the broader relevance of folk dance, linking it to lifelong health benefits, cognitive development, and social well-being (Chappell et al., 2021). In the Philippine setting, where collectivist values and family pride often drive academic motivation (Aruta et al., 2019), students may be more responsive to foreign folk dance when they see its utility in promoting cultural competence, wellness, and social capital. Emphasizing how dance education contributes to national identity formation and community leadership may further strengthen its perceived value among Filipino learners (Lobo, 2023).

The knowledge-seeking paradox: Why intentions do not always lead to action

An unexpected finding was that SAVKSI did not significantly predict study engagement, suggesting that intending to seek knowledge does not guarantee active participation. This contradicts the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which suggests that intrinsic motivation drives learning behaviors, yet it aligns with volitional control research (Corno, 2013), which argues that motivation alone is insufficient without structured support and cognitive strategies. This finding resonates with studies in self-regulated learning, which suggest that students who express curiosity but lack study strategies or external reinforcement may struggle to translate interest into engagement (Zimmerman, 2002). In dance education, research has shown that students require scaffolded learning experiences (e.g., guided discovery, reflective practice, imagery and structured peer critiques) to transform passive interest into actionable learning (Ang et al., 2021; Mosston & Ashworth, 2002; Roberts, 2019).

Revolutionizing dance pedagogy: A call for transformative teaching

These findings challenge the traditional "fun-first" approach in dance education and highlight the necessity of value-driven, evidence-based engagement strategies. Simply making foreign folk dance enjoyable is insufficient; educators must create learning environments where students connect emotionally, cognitively, and practically with the subject matter. Based on the findings, teachers should implement the following to revolutionize dance pedagogy:

Reframing enjoyment as a tool for learning

Fun should not be the end goal but a gateway to deeper engagement. According to Mainwaring & Krasnow (2010); Richmond & Bird (2020), dance educators must explicitly integrate reflective practices that connect enjoyment to cultural exploration, technical mastery, and critical analysis. Enjoyment can be leveraged to build emotional engagement, but only when it is connected to reflective and structured tasks. For example, teachers can have students journal about their emotional reactions to specific dances and then analyze how these feelings relate to the historical or cultural origins of the form. In the Filipino classroom context, this could include integrating local reflections, such as linking the meaning of a foreign folk dance to Filipino cultural expressions (e.g., comparing polka with local *tinikling* or *cariñosa*), to help students personalize and internalize the learning experience. By doing so, educators create an affective bridge between enjoyment and cognition, transforming fleeting fun into long-term engagement.

Emphasizing the real-world relevance of folk dance

Since SUV was the strongest predictor of engagement, teachers should emphasize its significance in physical fitness, social interaction, and historical continuity (Adolfo et al., 2023; Lobo, 2023). Expectancy-Value Theory supports this by stating that students are more likely to engage with tasks they find useful. Teachers can use discussion prompts, mini-research tasks, or interdisciplinary tie-ins to emphasize how dance relates to health literacy, cultural heritage, and even future careers in the arts or fitness. According to Rhodes (2006), Puspitaloka et al. (2024) and Vexler et al. (2024), research-based learning projects such as investigating the origins of a dance form, analyzing its social impact, or designing fitness routines inspired by folk movements can help students see broader applications. In the Philippine setting, these activities also resonate with national goals of cultivating cultural pride, lifelong wellness, and civic engagement.

Bridging knowledge-seeking with actionable learning

The non-significance of SAVKSI suggests that students require structured opportunities to transform curiosity into meaningful academic engagement. Payne & Costas (2021); Yin & Liu (2022); Rothmund (2023) argue that motivation without strategic scaffolding often leads to passive participation. Therefore, educators must incorporate self-regulated learning techniques that channel students' interest into action (Muwonge et al., 2020). Examples include movement analysis worksheets, student-led choreography with critique sessions, or guided goal-setting assignments where learners design their own mini-performance goals. These strategies not only make knowledge-seeking visible but also reinforce agency, planning, and critical reflection. In Filipino classrooms,

where group-based and collaborative learning is highly valued, such student-centered approaches may also enhance peer accountability and collective ownership of learning.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the relationship between individual interest and study engagement in foreign folk dances among higher education students in the Philippines, addressing a critical gap in physical education research. The findings revealed that individual interest significantly influences study engagement, though its components exert distinct effects. Stored-utility value emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting that students engage more when they recognize the academic, cultural, and physical benefits of foreign folk dances. Conversely, positive affect and willingness to reengage is negatively associated with engagement, suggesting that enjoyment alone does not necessarily foster deep academic involvement. The non-significant relationship of stored-attainment value and knowledge-seeking intentions with engagement further suggests that merely intending to acquire knowledge is insufficient unless paired with structured support and practical application. These findings emphasize the need for physical education programs to integrate folk dance instruction with reflective, goal-oriented learning strategies that enhance both engagement and the cultural-academic value of dance education.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations that present opportunities for future inquiry. The use of self-report questionnaires may have introduced response bias, as students' perceived engagement may not fully capture their actual participation and depth of learning. Future research should incorporate qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into how students engage with foreign folk dances in academic settings. Additionally, as the study was conducted within a single higher education context in the Philippines, further research should examine how varying cultural backgrounds, instructional approaches, and social influences shape engagement. Longitudinal designs could also be employed to assess how individual interest and engagement evolve over time, and to evaluate the impact of innovative pedagogical interventions such as immersive cultural experiences, technology-enhanced dance learning, and interdisciplinary projects. Given the global emphasis on preserving and promoting cultural heritage through education, these findings provide timely and practical insights for enhancing physical education curricula. Lastly, this ensures that foreign folk dances are not only enjoyed but meaningfully understood as academic and cultural disciplines.

5.1. Contribution of Philippine studies in the global discourse

The findings of this study not only advance local understanding of student engagement in Physical Education but also contribute to the broader global discourse on culturally responsive pedagogy and motivation. As foreign folk dance continues to be integrated into international curricula, there is an urgent need to contextualize student engagement within distinct cultural realities. This study provides a unique lens from the Global South, where collectivist values, community-based learning and indigenous performance traditions intersect with academic learning outcomes. By validating the differentiated predictive power of individual interest factors in a non-Western setting, the research supports the expansion of motivation theory (i.e., Self-Determination Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory) beyond Western-centric frameworks. It also underscores the importance of designing PE programs that honor cultural identity while fostering academic rigor, which is an imperative echoed in UNESCO's calls for culturally inclusive education. Moreover, the study's emphasis on reflective, interdisciplinary, and student-centered strategies for dance instruction contributes a replicable model for institutions worldwide seeking to elevate traditional and foreign cultural forms into meaningful academic content. In doing so, this research repositions the Philippine experience not as peripheral, but as central to the evolving conversation on decolonizing curricula, democratizing movement education, and sustaining cultural heritage through higher education.

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All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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