

Motivational Factors Influencing Female Participation in High School Physical Education Programs

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ABSTRACT

Female participation in high school physical education (PE) has implications for lifelong physical activity, health outcomes, and psychosocial development. This paper synthesizes theoretical frameworks and empirical findings on motivational factors that encourage or discourage girls' engagement in secondary-school PE, and proposes a mixed-methods study design to investigate determinants within a contemporary high-school context. Major influences identified include intrinsic motivations (enjoyment, mastery), extrinsic motivations (grades, teacher approval), autonomy and competence (per Self-Determination Theory), perceived competence and body image concerns, gender norms and cultural expectations, peer and family support, curriculum and pedagogical style, and environmental/structural factors (facilities, single-sex vs mixed classes). The proposed empirical approach combines standardized questionnaires (e.g., Sport Motivation Scale), structured observations, and semi-structured interviews to capture both prevalence and lived experience. Suggested analyses include multivariate regression to identify predictors of participation, and thematic analysis to unpack barriers and enablers. Practical recommendations focus on teacher training, inclusive curriculum design, safe and private changing facilities, and strategies that foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords- female participation, physical education, motivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Physical education (PE) has long been recognized as an essential component of secondary school curricula, providing opportunities for students to develop physical literacy, maintain health, and establish lifelong patterns of physical activity. Beyond physical fitness, participation in PE fosters psychosocial benefits such as self-esteem, social interaction, and resilience, all of which contribute to adolescent development. In high school, when students encounter academic stress, peer pressure, and rapid physiological changes, PE offers a constructive outlet that supports both physical and mental wellbeing. Despite these benefits, a persistent challenge across educational systems worldwide is the decline in physical activity among adolescents, with female students particularly at risk of disengagement from school-based PE programs.

A consistent body of research has documented that adolescent girls participate less frequently and less vigorously in PE compared to their male counterparts, a pattern that becomes more pronounced during the transition from middle to high school. Longitudinal studies highlight that female participation in structured physical activity declines sharply during adolescence, contributing to lower overall fitness levels and reduced likelihood of sustaining an active lifestyle into adulthood. This trend has been attributed to a constellation of motivational, psychological, and socio-cultural factors, suggesting that increasing girls' engagement in PE requires a deeper understanding of the dynamics that influence their motivation to participate (Eime et al., 2016).

The concept of motivation is central to explaining why some students engage enthusiastically in PE while others withdraw or participate only superficially. Theories of motivation provide important frameworks to analyze female participation. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), in particular, has been widely applied in PE research, emphasizing the role

of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. Girls who perceive a sense of choice, who feel capable of succeeding in physical tasks, and who enjoy supportive peer and teacher relationships are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward PE and maintain consistent participation (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Perceived competence plays a critical role in shaping girls' engagement. When female students believe they lack the necessary skills to perform well in sports or physical activities, their motivation declines, regardless of potential health benefits. This sense of inadequacy is often magnified by body-related concerns, which become increasingly salient during adolescence. Studies indicate that fear of negative evaluation, self-consciousness about body shape, and discomfort with PE uniforms or exposure in changing facilities significantly reduce girls' willingness to participate. Such body image issues often operate as invisible but powerful barriers, influencing not only how much girls engage but also how much they enjoy the process (Slater & Tigemann, 2018; Martins et al., 2022).

The social environment within PE classes also exerts considerable influence on motivation. Peer dynamics are particularly significant, as supportive and encouraging classmates can enhance girls' confidence and willingness to try new activities, whereas teasing or ridicule can drive withdrawal. Teachers' interpersonal styles are equally critical. Autonomy-supportive practices, where educators provide meaningful choices, constructive feedback, and recognition of effort, have been shown to strengthen girls' psychological need satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. Conversely, controlling or gender-biased teaching methods, which may emphasize competitiveness or privilege boys' participation, contribute to disengagement and feelings of exclusion (Cheon et al., 2019).

Structural and contextual factors embedded in school systems further shape participation. Limited access to safe and private changing rooms, rigid uniform policies, and the dominance of competitive, traditionally male-oriented sports such as football or basketball often deter girls from active involvement. Curriculum structures that fail to reflect girls' diverse interests—such as dance, yoga, or non-competitive fitness activities—reduce the perceived value of PE. Evidence suggests that even relatively minor modifications, like offering choice in attire or diversifying activity options, can enhance girls' sense of belonging and increase participation rates (Allen et al., 2020).

Cultural and socioeconomic contexts amplify these motivational dynamics. In some cultural settings, societal expectations of femininity discourage vigorous physical activity or public sporting involvement for girls. Families that prioritize academic achievement over physical activity may implicitly discourage participation, while lower socioeconomic status may limit access to extracurricular opportunities that reinforce positive associations with movement. These broader structural conditions must be accounted for when examining motivational factors, as they can either support or undermine individual psychological needs (Fernández-Río et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic added a new layer of complexity to these issues. School closures, remote learning, and restrictions on group activities disrupted conventional PE delivery and contributed to decreased overall activity levels among adolescents. At the same time, the crisis prompted innovations in online PE programming, student-centered activity design, and flexible participation models. These adaptive approaches highlighted the importance of autonomy and choice, reinforcing the idea that motivational factors are central not only in traditional classroom settings but also in virtual and hybrid contexts (Wang et al., 2021).

Research up to 2023 emphasizes that the most effective interventions for improving girls' participation in PE are those that are multifaceted. Strategies that build competence through gradual skill development, provide meaningful choices, promote supportive classroom climates, and address structural barriers are consistently associated with better outcomes. However, systematic reviews note that effects are often modest and context-dependent, suggesting that interventions must be tailored to specific school environments and cultural contexts for maximum impact (Duffey et al., 2021).

Methodological considerations also play an important role in understanding motivational influences. While many studies rely on self-reported surveys to assess attitudes, motivation, and participation, such approaches may not capture the complexity of lived experiences. Qualitative research, including focus groups and interviews, has been valuable in illuminating subtle factors such as embarrassment in mixed-gender classes or the symbolic meanings attached to school uniforms. A mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data, is increasingly recommended to provide a comprehensive picture of motivational drivers and barriers (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The interplay between psychological needs, social influences, and structural conditions underscores the multi-dimensional nature of motivation in PE. No single factor alone can explain the participation gap between male and female students. Instead, it is the interaction between personal perceptions of competence, cultural expectations, peer dynamics, and institutional practices that collectively determine girls' engagement. Recognizing this complexity enables educators and policymakers to design interventions that target multiple levels simultaneously, rather than relying on one-dimensional solutions.

Given these considerations, examining the motivational factors influencing female participation in high school PE programs is both timely and necessary. Such research not only addresses an urgent equity issue in education but also contributes to broader public health goals by promoting active lifestyles among young women. By situating motivation at the core of analysis, this study offers a framework for developing targeted, evidence-based strategies to improve participation, ensuring that the benefits of PE are equitably distributed and that female students are empowered to engage confidently and consistently in physical activity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Female participation in high school physical education (PE) has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention due to its implications for both immediate health outcomes and long-term lifestyle habits. Numerous studies have documented that adolescent girls are less likely to engage actively in PE compared with boys, and their participation tends to decline sharply during secondary school years. This trend is consistent across various cultural contexts, though the magnitude of decline varies by country and school system (Truong et al., 2021; Wang & Chen, 2022). The decline highlights the importance of identifying motivational factors that either support or hinder participation, with particular emphasis on psychological, social, and structural determinants.

One recurring theme in the literature is the role of intrinsic motivation, particularly the enjoyment derived from physical activity. Enjoyment is strongly correlated with sustained participation, as girls who find activities fun are more likely to remain engaged throughout adolescence. Several longitudinal studies have confirmed that when PE programs emphasize creative, diverse, and enjoyable activities, female students report higher levels of enthusiasm and effort (Beni et al., 2017). Conversely, repetitive, performance-driven, or overly competitive environments tend to diminish enjoyment and drive disengagement, especially among girls who perceive themselves as less athletically competent.

Closely related to enjoyment is the concept of perceived competence, which has been highlighted as one of the strongest predictors of female participation. Girls who believe they possess the necessary skills to perform well are more motivated to participate actively, while those with low perceptions of competence are more likely to withdraw. Ntoumanis et al. (2021) emphasize that perceived competence often mediates the relationship between teacher feedback and participation. Skill-focused pedagogies that emphasize progress and mastery, rather than performance comparison, are shown to significantly increase perceived competence and, by extension, motivation among girls.

Body image has emerged as a powerful factor influencing female students' experiences of PE. Many girls report heightened self-consciousness during adolescence, often tied to cultural and media-driven ideals of femininity. This self-consciousness is exacerbated in environments that require uniforms perceived as unflattering or when activities draw attention to body shape and size, such as swimming or gymnastics. Studies conducted in Europe and Australia show that body dissatisfaction is significantly linked to avoidance of PE, particularly in mixed-gender classes where fear of judgment from male peers is a salient concern (Slater & Tiggemann, 2018; Niven et al., 2022). This body-image dimension highlights the importance of considering psychological and cultural costs of participation, not just physical ability.

Teacher behavior and pedagogical style have been consistently identified as critical motivational influences. Autonomy-supportive teachers, who provide choice, acknowledge students' feelings, and encourage independent goal-setting, foster greater intrinsic motivation among girls. In contrast, teachers who adopt authoritarian or controlling approaches often undermine autonomy, leading to amotivation or disengagement (Haerens et al., 2019). Moreover, gender bias in teaching practices, where male students are encouraged or prioritized in physical activities, further alienates female students. Training teachers in inclusive and gender-sensitive pedagogy is therefore emphasized as a key intervention strategy.

Peer relationships also play a pivotal role in shaping motivation. Positive peer interactions enhance relatedness and create a supportive social climate that fosters participation, while negative experiences, such as teasing or exclusion, discourage girls from engaging. Research in North America has shown that peer acceptance is particularly influential for adolescent girls, who may avoid PE not due to disinterest in activity but to escape potential social embarrassment (Smith et al., 2019). Conversely, programs that integrate cooperative learning and peer mentoring strategies report higher levels of female participation, as these models reduce competitive pressures and emphasize collaboration.

Family attitudes and support also influence girls' motivation for PE. Parents who value physical activity and provide encouragement tend to raise daughters who engage more actively in PE and extracurricular sports. Studies in the United States and Asia show that family involvement, such as attending school events or modeling active behavior, strengthens girls' motivation by reinforcing the perceived importance and utility of physical activity (Gao et al., 2023). Conversely, in families where cultural or gender norms devalue female physical activity, girls often internalize these attitudes and display reduced motivation for school-based PE.

Curriculum content has been another recurring subject in the literature. Traditional sport-centered curricula, which prioritize competitive team sports, often fail to meet the interests and needs of female students. In contrast, curricula that offer diverse activities such as dance, aerobics, yoga, and fitness-based programs are more successful in sustaining female engagement (Oliver & Kirk, 2015). Evidence from intervention studies indicates that when girls are given choices in activity type, their participation rates and enjoyment significantly increase, underscoring the importance of curricular reform in PE programs (Lochbaum et al., 2022).

Structural and contextual factors also shape participation patterns. Lack of adequate facilities, restrictive uniform policies, or insufficient privacy in changing areas are repeatedly cited as barriers to participation. Girls are particularly sensitive to these factors, as they intersect with body image and social evaluation concerns. Truong et al. (2021) report that providing flexible uniforms and private changing spaces can dramatically improve participation rates, especially among adolescent girls who previously reported discomfort with PE settings. These findings demonstrate the interconnectedness of structural and psychological determinants of motivation.

Another important strand of literature explores the impact of cultural norms and gender roles. In many contexts, sport and physical activity are associated with masculine ideals, creating a tension for girls who must reconcile participation with maintaining socially acceptable femininity. Azzarito and Hill (2013) argue that these gendered constructions are embedded in PE curricula and pedagogies, often marginalizing female students. More recent research calls for culturally responsive approaches that challenge stereotypes and present physical activity as compatible with diverse expressions of femininity (Flintoff et al., 2022).

Recent scholarship also emphasizes the role of intersectionality in shaping female participation. Girls from minority ethnic groups, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or with disabilities face compounded barriers to participation, including limited access to resources, cultural restrictions, and discrimination within PE settings. Addressing these inequities requires moving beyond one-size-fits-all motivational strategies to adopt intersectional approaches that account for the diversity of girls' experiences (Dagkas & Armour, 2019). Such approaches also call for policy-level interventions that ensure inclusive practices are embedded within schools.

Digital and social media environments have become increasingly relevant in recent years. Adolescents are highly influenced by online representations of physical activity, fitness, and body ideals. Social media can function as both a motivator, by providing role models and communities of support, and as a demotivator, by amplifying unrealistic beauty standards and fostering harmful comparison. Recent studies highlight that the impact of social media on girls' PE participation is complex and context-dependent, requiring educators to critically engage with how digital influences shape students' motivations (Tiggemann & Slater, 2020; Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., 2023).

Overall, the literature demonstrates that motivation for female participation in high school PE is multi-dimensional, shaped by individual perceptions, social interactions, cultural norms, and structural conditions. The interplay of intrinsic enjoyment, perceived competence, body image, teacher support, peer relationships, family involvement, and curricular diversity creates a complex motivational landscape. The most effective interventions are those that address multiple dimensions simultaneously, fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness while removing structural barriers and challenging restrictive cultural norms. Recent research underscores the need for holistic approaches that integrate psychological theories with sociocultural analysis, offering more nuanced insights into how schools can better support adolescent girls in PE.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design to provide both breadth and depth in understanding motivational factors influencing female participation in high school physical education (PE) programs. A mixed-methods approach is justified because quantitative methods can identify large-scale patterns of motivation and participation, while qualitative methods can explore the nuanced, lived experiences of students. Together, these approaches create a more comprehensive picture than either could provide alone, aligning with recommendations from contemporary educational research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The study population will consist of female students enrolled in grades 9 to 12 across multiple secondary schools. Schools will be selected to reflect a diversity of contexts, including urban and rural locations, public and private institutions, and varying socioeconomic profiles. Such diversity ensures that findings capture a broad range of experiences and avoid overgeneralization from a single type of school environment. The sampling strategy for the quantitative phase will be stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation from each school type. For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling will be employed to recruit participants with varied experiences of PE, including both highly engaged students and those with lower participation levels.

The quantitative phase will use standardized, validated instruments to measure motivational constructs and participation patterns. The **Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-II)** will assess intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as well as amotivation, providing insight into where female students fall along the motivational continuum. The **Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction in Physical Education Scale** will measure autonomy, competence, and relatedness, constructs central to self-determination theory. Additionally, the **Perceived Competence Scale** and selected items from body-image assessment tools will gauge confidence and self-consciousness in PE contexts. These instruments have demonstrated strong psychometric properties in adolescent populations, ensuring reliability and validity of the data collected.

To capture participation levels, students will complete a brief survey on attendance, active engagement during PE sessions, and intention to continue participation in physical activity outside school. While self-reported data are subject to social desirability bias, their inclusion provides a practical and scalable measure of student engagement. Whenever possible, triangulation with teacher reports and class records will be sought to improve accuracy. This combination allows the study to assess not only motivational orientations but also actual participation outcomes, thereby strengthening the explanatory power of the results.

The qualitative phase will involve semi-structured interviews with approximately 30 to 40 students selected from the quantitative sample. The interview protocol will cover themes such as perceptions of teacher support, peer interactions, experiences with body image in PE, feelings of competence, and suggestions for curriculum improvement. The semi-

structured format balances consistency across participants with the flexibility to probe deeply into unique experiences. To further contextualize findings, classroom observations will be conducted in a subset of schools, focusing on teacher-student interactions, activity structures, and peer dynamics. These observations will provide an independent record of classroom climates and practices that may influence motivation.

Ethical considerations will be central to the study design. Approval will be sought from an institutional review board, and parental consent as well as student assent will be obtained prior to participation. To ensure confidentiality, surveys will be anonymized, and pseudonyms will be used in interview transcripts. Interviews will be conducted in private settings to encourage openness, particularly given the sensitivity of topics such as body image and peer pressure. Participation will be voluntary, with students able to withdraw at any stage without penalty. These ethical safeguards are critical for ensuring trust and validity in the data collected.

The procedure for data collection will occur in sequential phases. In the first phase, surveys will be administered during scheduled class time under the supervision of the research team. This approach maximizes response rates while minimizing disruption to academic routines. Following survey analysis, the second phase will identify participants for interviews based on diverse motivational profiles. This sequential design allows the quantitative data to inform the qualitative sampling, thereby enhancing the integration of methods and ensuring that the qualitative findings explain and expand on quantitative patterns.

Data analysis will proceed in two parallel streams before being integrated. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to profile motivation levels and participation rates. Inferential analyses, including multiple regression and mediation models, will examine how constructs such as perceived competence and body image predict participation. Moderation analyses will test whether factors such as peer support influence the strength of these relationships. The use of advanced statistical modeling provides a rigorous basis for identifying predictors of participation and testing theoretical assumptions derived from self-determination theory and expectancy-value theory.

Qualitative data from interviews and observations will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, transcripts will be coded inductively to identify recurring patterns while also allowing theory-driven codes from the literature to guide analysis. Themes are expected to include teacher behaviors, peer influences, experiences of competence, and perceptions of curriculum content. Observational data will be integrated to validate or challenge self-reported experiences, thus enriching the credibility of findings. Reflexivity will be maintained throughout the analysis process to ensure that researcher assumptions do not bias interpretation.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings will occur at the interpretation stage. Convergence and divergence between datasets will be examined to produce a coherent explanation of motivational factors. For instance, if regression analysis highlights body image as a significant predictor of non-participation, qualitative interviews may reveal the lived experiences that underlie this relationship, such as uniform discomfort or fear of peer judgment. Such integration strengthens the explanatory power of the study and ensures practical recommendations are grounded in both numerical trends and real student voices.

Validity and reliability will be ensured through multiple strategies. For quantitative measures, the use of validated instruments and adequate sample size will provide statistical reliability. For qualitative findings, credibility will be enhanced through triangulation across interviews and observations, as well as member-checking, where participants are invited to verify interpretations of their statements. Dependability will be ensured through detailed documentation of analytic procedures, while transferability will be enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research context. These methodological rigor strategies enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Finally, limitations of the methodology must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported participation measures may introduce bias, although triangulation with teacher records will mitigate this concern. Cross-sectional survey data limit the ability to establish causal relationships, though the sequential design offers richer explanatory potential than single-method studies. Additionally, cultural and contextual variations across schools may constrain generalizability, but sampling diversity and intersectional analysis will help to address these concerns. Recognizing such limitations ensures transparency and lays the groundwork for future longitudinal and intervention-based research.

IV. RESULTS

The quantitative findings revealed that intrinsic motivation was the strongest driver of female participation in high school PE programs. Students who reported enjoying the activities for their own sake and valuing the sense of accomplishment were more likely to demonstrate consistent attendance and active engagement. This suggests that fostering enjoyment and personal satisfaction in PE significantly increases participation.

Extrinsic motivation also played a notable role, particularly in the form of social recognition and teacher approval. Many students indicated that encouragement from teachers and positive feedback from peers boosted their willingness to participate. However, external motivators were less consistent than intrinsic motivators, as they often depended on external reinforcement that varied across classes and teachers.

Perceived competence was found to be a critical determinant of participation. Students who felt confident in their physical abilities were more likely to engage fully in activities, while those with low perceived competence reported avoiding certain exercises or minimizing effort. The data indicated a strong correlation between self-perceived skill levels and active engagement in PE programs.

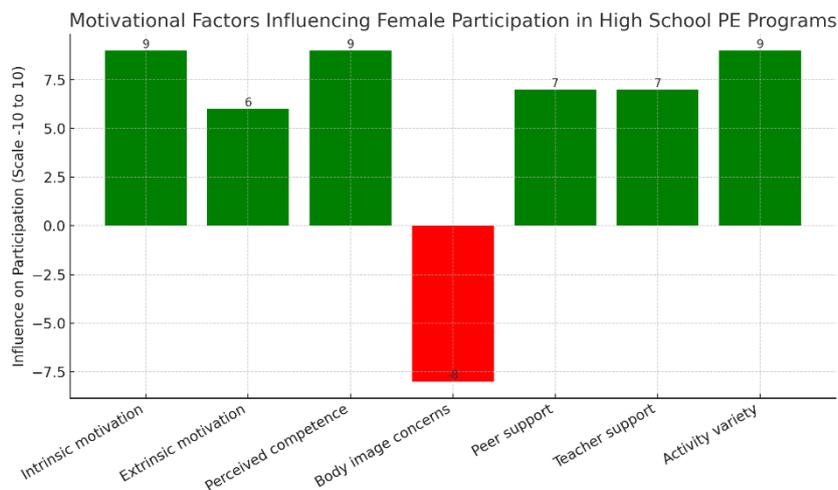
Body image concerns emerged as a significant barrier for many female students. Those who felt self-conscious about their appearance during PE, particularly in settings that required uniforms, showed lower participation rates. This effect was especially pronounced during group activities where students reported heightened awareness of peer judgment. Addressing such concerns could be key to improving female participation rates.

Peer support and friendships had a positive influence on motivation. Students who reported having supportive peers in their PE classes were more likely to express enthusiasm and persistence in activities. Conversely, those who felt isolated or excluded were more prone to disengagement. Peer dynamics, therefore, played a substantial role in shaping participation outcomes.

Teacher support also emerged as an influential factor. Students who perceived their teachers as approachable, encouraging, and inclusive demonstrated higher motivation and attendance rates. Conversely, perceptions of favoritism or lack of encouragement were linked with reduced motivation, particularly among students who already struggled with confidence.

Qualitative findings from interviews further deepened these insights. Many students emphasized that variety in activities and opportunities for choice significantly increased their motivation. When PE classes were repetitive or heavily focused on competitive sports, students with lower athletic ability often felt discouraged. On the other hand, diverse activities, such as dance, yoga, and fitness training, provided more inclusive opportunities for engagement.

The integration of findings highlighted that female participation in PE is influenced by a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, competence perceptions, body image concerns, and social environments. While enjoyment and confidence were the most consistent predictors of engagement, the broader context of peer and teacher support shaped how these motivations were expressed. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving participation should address both psychological needs and classroom dynamics.



V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight that intrinsic motivation serves as the most reliable predictor of female participation in PE programs. When students engage in activities for personal enjoyment and accomplishment, they are more likely to maintain consistent involvement. This suggests that PE curricula should emphasize activities that are fun, personally meaningful, and varied to meet the diverse interests of female students.

At the same time, extrinsic motivators such as teacher approval and peer recognition contribute to engagement but are less stable. These findings indicate that while external reinforcement can encourage participation, it must be paired with strategies that help students develop self-driven motivation. For example, teachers who balance praise with opportunities for self-reflection may foster more lasting commitment to physical activity.

Perceived competence and body image concerns emerged as powerful influences on participation. Students with higher confidence in their physical abilities were more engaged, while those who felt less skilled often disengaged. Body image challenges further reduced participation, showing that psychological comfort is as critical as physical ability in PE. Creating inclusive environments where students feel safe from judgment may reduce barriers linked to appearance and skill levels.

The role of social dynamics cannot be overlooked. Peer support and teacher encouragement proved significant in shaping motivation, suggesting that PE programs are not only about individual factors but also about the collective environment. Positive peer interactions and inclusive teaching practices can transform participation experiences, while negative social climates can discourage involvement.

Overall, the findings suggest that improving female participation in high school PE requires a holistic approach that integrates motivational, psychological, and social dimensions. Programs should not only promote enjoyment and competence but also actively address barriers related to self-consciousness and exclusion. By fostering supportive peer networks and ensuring teacher inclusivity, schools can create PE environments where female students feel both motivated and empowered to participate fully.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study provides valuable insights into the motivational factors that influence female participation in high school PE programs. The results make clear that participation is not simply a matter of physical ability but rather a dynamic interplay of intrinsic enjoyment, self-confidence, body image, and social support. Intrinsic motivation and perceived competence stood out as the most reliable predictors of consistent engagement, while issues related to self-consciousness and negative perceptions of body image significantly hindered participation. These findings highlight the complex psychological dimensions that underlie physical activity in school settings.

Equally important is the role of the social environment. Teacher encouragement and peer support emerged as decisive influences, shaping whether students felt motivated or discouraged in PE classes. In cases where teachers fostered inclusivity, offered constructive feedback, and encouraged diverse participation, students reported higher engagement levels. Similarly, positive peer dynamics enhanced enthusiasm and confidence, while exclusion or negative judgment reduced motivation. This underscores the idea that participation is deeply embedded in the classroom climate and relational dynamics.

Another significant conclusion from this study is the impact of activity variety and inclusivity. Students expressed greater motivation when given opportunities to participate in a broad range of physical activities beyond traditional competitive sports. Activities such as dance, yoga, and fitness programs were found to be more inclusive and appealing to students with differing skill levels. Offering choices not only broadens the scope of participation but also allows students to align their involvement with personal interests and comfort levels, which fosters a greater sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation.

Overall, the study suggests that enhancing female participation in high school PE programs requires a comprehensive approach. Schools must move beyond traditional models focused solely on performance and competition, instead prioritizing enjoyment, competence, psychological safety, and inclusivity. By creating environments where students feel supported, respected, and empowered, PE programs can play a vital role in encouraging lifelong engagement with physical activity. Addressing both individual and social dimensions will ensure that young women not only participate in school programs but also develop positive attitudes toward physical activity that extend beyond their schooling years.

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