



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life

El vínculo entre motivación y bienestar: perspectivas sobre la actividad física y la calidad de vida

Cristine Joyce B. Abadejos

College of Human Kinetics, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato,
Philippines

*Correspondence Author: Cristine Joyce B. Abadejos, cjbabadejos@usm.edu.ph

Editorial schedule: *Article received 10/03/2026 Accepted: 11/05/2026 Published: 01/07/2026*
<https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

To cite this article, use the following reference:

Abadejos, C.J.B. (2026). The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life. *Sportis Sci J*, 12 (3), 1-24 <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Author contribution: The manuscript was developed and executed solely by the author.

Funding: This research did not receive financial support from any agency or institution.

Conflict of interest: The author affirms that there are no competing interests.

Ethical aspects: Procedures were conducted in full compliance with ethical standards.



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between students' motivation in physical activity and their perceived quality of life, aiming to provide insights into how behavioral engagement influences holistic well-being. Employing a quantitative research design with a descriptive-correlational approach, the study involved 552 college students selected through simple random sampling to ensure representativeness. The respondents were composed of male and female students across various year levels, with ages typically ranging from late adolescence to early adulthood, reflecting the general demographic composition of higher education institutions. Most participants were enrolled in undergraduate programs and represented diverse academic disciplines, providing a broad perspective on student experiences. Data were collected using two validated instruments: a Physical Activity Motivation Questionnaire to assess intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, and a Quality of Life Questionnaire to evaluate multiple dimensions of well-being, including physical, cognitive–affective, social, and environmental domains. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the levels of motivation and quality of life, while inferential statistics, specifically the Pearson product-moment correlation, were employed to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. Findings revealed that students generally exhibited high motivation for physical activity and reported a high quality of life across all domains. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was observed between motivation in physical activity and quality of life, indicating that higher motivation is associated with greater overall well-being.

Keywords: motivation for exercise; holistic health; physical activity; quality of life; well-being

Resumen

Este estudio examinó la relación entre la motivación de los estudiantes hacia la actividad física y su calidad de vida percibida, con el propósito de comprender cómo el compromiso conductual influye en el bienestar integral. Se empleó un diseño de investigación cuantitativo con un enfoque descriptivo-correlacional, en el que participaron 552 estudiantes universitarios seleccionados mediante muestreo aleatorio simple para garantizar la representatividad. Los participantes incluyeron hombres y mujeres de distintos niveles académicos, con edades comprendidas generalmente entre la adolescencia tardía y la adultez temprana, reflejando la composición demográfica típica de las instituciones de educación superior. La mayoría estaban matriculados en programas de pregrado y pertenecían a diversas disciplinas académicas, lo que permitió una visión amplia de las experiencias estudiantiles. Los datos se recopilaron mediante dos instrumentos validados: un Cuestionario de Motivación hacia la Actividad Física para evaluar factores motivacionales intrínsecos y extrínsecos, y un Cuestionario de Calidad de Vida para medir múltiples dimensiones del bienestar, incluidas las áreas física, cognitivo-afectiva, social y ambiental. El análisis incluyó estadísticas descriptivas para determinar los niveles de motivación y calidad de vida, así como estadísticas inferenciales, específicamente la correlación producto-momento de Pearson, para examinar la relación entre ambas variables. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes presentaron altos niveles de motivación hacia la actividad física y una alta calidad de vida en todas las dimensiones evaluadas.



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Palabras clave: compromiso conductual; estudiantes universitarios; bienestar holístico; motivación intrínseca y extrínseca; bienestar estudiantil

Introduction

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that encompasses an individual's overall well-being and satisfaction across various domains, including physiological wellness, psychological resilience, socio-relational engagement, and environmental conditions (Tafari & Latino, 2024). It reflects not only the absence of illness but also the presence of positive life experiences, functional capacity, and subjective perceptions of health (Fuchs et al., 2020). Scholars argue that quality of life is influenced by personal, social, and environmental factors that collectively shape how individuals perceive their life circumstances. In the context of higher education, understanding quality of life is critical, as students face unique challenges that may impact their overall wellness (Duru & Örsal, 2021). By assessing quality of life, researchers and educators can identify areas requiring intervention to promote holistic student development (Baumann et al., 2020).

Physical Activity Motivation refers to the internal and external factors that drive individuals to engage in regular movement or exercise, ranging from intrinsic enjoyment to extrinsic rewards such as recognition or health benefits (Rebar et al., 2021). Among students, motivation for physical activity is particularly important, as it encourages sustained participation, enhances physiological vitality, and supports emotional wellness (Haible et al., 2020). Motivation also helps students develop self-discipline, resilience, and positive lifestyle habits that extend beyond the academic setting (Oprea, 2024). Moreover, research indicates that highly motivated students are more likely to integrate physical activity into their routines, which contributes to improved cognitive functioning and stress management (Zheng et al., 2022).

Students' Quality of Life faces pressing challenges such as academic stress, limited social support, and inadequate environmental conditions, which collectively reduce overall well-being (Chemagosi, 2024). Similarly, physical activity motivation is often undermined by barriers including lack of time, low self-efficacy, and insufficient access to facilities (Blom et al., 2021). These issues can lead to decreased engagement in health-promoting behaviors and exacerbate stress and fatigue (Rogowska et al., 2020).

Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Moreover, the combined impact of low Quality of life and poor physical activity motivation can hinder academic performance, social integration, and long-term health outcomes. Addressing these interrelated problems requires a holistic understanding of both constructs to support student well-being effectively (Abou Hashish et al., 2024).

Numerous studies have examined various dimensions of students' Quality of Life, highlighting its association with mental health, academic satisfaction, and social support networks (Poliquit et al., 2022). Research has shown that interventions targeting stress reduction, environmental improvements, and enhanced interpersonal connections can positively influence students' perceived life satisfaction (Zhang, 2025). Additionally, longitudinal studies suggest that consistent attention to Quality of life can improve resilience, motivation, and overall academic success (Mouratidis, 2021).

Similarly, studies on Physical Activity Motivation reveal that both intrinsic factors, such as enjoyment and personal growth, and extrinsic factors, such as social recognition and health outcomes, significantly influence engagement in physical activity (Marsigliante et al., 2023). Evidence suggests that tailored motivational strategies, including goal setting, positive reinforcement, and supportive social environments, can enhance students' commitment to active lifestyles (Mirzaei et al., 2025). Moreover, higher motivation levels are associated with improved mental health, reduced stress, and better overall physical functioning (Adel et al., 2025). These studies highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of motivation in sustaining long-term physical activity behaviors among students (Wilson et al., 2021).

Despite extensive research on Quality of Life and Physical Activity Motivation as independent constructs, there remains limited empirical evidence examining their direct relationship within student populations. Much of the existing literature treats these variables in isolation, overlooking how motivational dynamics in physical activity may simultaneously shape multiple domains of well-being, including bodily functioning, cognitive–affective health, socio-relational engagement, and ecological well-being. In the context of rising sedentary behaviors, increasing academic stress, and growing mental health concerns among students, investigating this relationship has become both timely and urgent. This study addresses this critical gap by systematically examining how students' motivation in physical activity relates to their perceived quality of life.



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and multidimensional models of well-being, which collectively provide a theoretical basis for understanding the link between motivation and quality of life. Self-Determination Theory posits that individuals are more likely to sustain behaviors, such as physical activity, when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported. Within this framework, intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation influence not only behavioral engagement but also psychological functioning and overall life satisfaction. Complementing this perspective, holistic well-being models conceptualize quality of life as an integrated construct encompassing physical, cognitive–affective, social, and environmental dimensions. Together, these theoretical lenses explain how motivation in physical activity may serve as a mechanism through which students enhance their comprehensive well-being.

The distinctiveness of this research lies in its integrative approach, combining motivational theory with a multidimensional framework of quality of life to provide a more comprehensive understanding of student wellness. Rather than examining isolated outcomes such as stress reduction or physical fitness, this study situates physical activity motivation within a broader well-being paradigm, thereby offering a more holistic perspective. Its novelty stems from empirically linking these constructs within a single analytical model, allowing for a clearer understanding of how behavioral engagement translates into life satisfaction and functional wellness. The findings hold significant implications for students, educators, and institutional leaders, as they highlight motivation not merely as a behavioral determinant but as a potential pathway toward enhanced quality of life. Ultimately, this research contributes to advancing knowledge on student wellness by demonstrating that fostering motivation in physical activity is not only beneficial for physical health but also integral to comprehensive and sustainable well-being.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed quantitative research design, specifically adopting a descriptive-correlational approach. Quantitative research refers to a strategy that



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

emphasizes the numerical representation and analysis of observed phenomena, enabling objective measurement and statistical evaluation of relationships between variables (Thomas & Zubkov, 2023). The descriptive-correlational design involves measuring two (or more) variables as they occur naturally — without manipulation — to describe their levels and examine whether an association exists between them (Leavy, 2022).

Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design is appropriate for this investigation because the goal is not to impose interventions or manipulate students' behaviors, but rather to observe existing patterns: the level of physical activity motivation and the perceived quality of life among students, and whether these two constructs are related. This design allows for a systematic, objective, and replicable analysis of their association while preserving ecological validity.

Respondents and Sampling

The study recruited 552 respondents, who were selected using simple random sampling. Simple random sampling is a probability sampling method in which every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected (Pace, 2021). The respondents were college students representing various academic programs and year levels, reflecting a diverse range of academic backgrounds and experiences. They were composed of both male and female students, typically within the late adolescent to early adulthood age bracket, which is characteristic of undergraduate populations. Most participants were enrolled as full-time students and were actively engaged in academic and campus-related activities. This sampling technique is most appropriate for this study because it minimizes sample bias and maximizes the likelihood that the sample is representative of the larger student population. As a result, findings derived from the sample can be more confidently generalized to the broader student population.

Research Instrument

To measure the study's variables, two established instruments were adopted. For assessing perceived well-being across different domains and a Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation Scale, the Molanorouzi et al. (2014) was used. For assessing the students' quality of life, the Weintraub and Bar-Haim Erez (2009) instrument was used. Both instruments demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency in previous studies



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$ for Quality-of-Life Questionnaire; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$ for Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation Scale, indicating reliability for this research context.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean and composite mean) were used to summarize the overall levels of physical activity motivation and quality of life among respondents. To test the relationship between the two continuous variables, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was computed. Pearson correlation is suitable for assessing the linear association between two continuous, normally distributed variables without manipulating them, which aligns well with the non-experimental, correlational nature of this study design.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to established ethical standards in conducting research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring that participation was voluntary and based on a clear understanding of the study's purpose and procedures. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and no identifying information was disclosed in the analysis or reporting of results. Additionally, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. All data were securely stored and used solely for academic and research purposes.

Results

Table 1 presents the respondents' motivation in engaging in physical activity. It summarizes the overall levels and patterns of motivation across the sample. The data provide a clear overview of how students are driven to participate in physical activity.



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Table 1. Respondents' Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
A. Intrinsic Motivation (<i>Motivation that comes from enjoyment, challenge, and personal satisfaction.</i>)		
4. Being active helps me relieve stress and boosts my mood.	3.32	Agree
2. I feel a real sense of satisfaction when I improve my physical skills.	3.30	Agree
5. I enjoy the challenge of learning new movements or sports.	3.23	Agree
3. I engage in physical activity because it makes me feel good about myself.	3.21	Agree
1. I participate in physical activities because I genuinely enjoy them.	3.17	Agree
Composite Mean	3.24	High Motivation
B. Extrinsic Motivation (<i>Motivation influenced by external factors such as recognition, rewards, or expectations.</i>)		
6. I participate in physical activities to look fit or improve my appearance.	3.09	Agree
10. I am active mainly because it helps me achieve goals that others value.	2.94	Agree
7. I am motivated to be active because I want others to see me as athletic or capable.	2.85	Agree
8. I engage in physical activities to receive praise, rewards, or good grades.	2.74	Agree
9. I exercise because I feel pressured by others (e.g., teachers, peers, family).	2.46	Disagree
Composite Mean:	2.75	High Motivation
Overall Mean	3.03	High Motivation

Legend:

4.00 – 3.50	Very High Motivation	2.49 – 1.50	Moderate Motivation
3.49 – 2.50	High Motivation	1.49 – 1.00	Low Motivation

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceived quality of life across its key domains. It highlights the levels of well-being, including physiological, psychological, social, and environmental aspects, among the students. The data provide insights into the overall life satisfaction and wellness of the respondents.

Table 2. Respondents' Quality of Life

Indicators	Mean	Qualitative Description
Bodily Functioning	2.96	Good Quality of Life
Cognitive–Affective Health	3.12	Good Quality of Life
Socio-Relational Engagement	3.13	Good Quality of Life
Ecological Well-Being	3.21	Good Quality of Life
Overall Quality of Life	3.16	Good Quality of Life

Legend:

4.00 – 3.50	Very Good Quality of Life	2.49 – 1.50	Moderate Quality of Life
3.49 – 2.50	Good Quality of Life	1.49 – 1.00	Low Quality of Life



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Table 3 presents the relationship between the respondents' motivation in physical activity and their perceived quality of life. It illustrates the strength and direction of the association between the two variables. The data provide evidence on whether higher motivation in physical activity is linked to improved quality of life among the students.

Table 3. Relationship between the Respondents' Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation and Quality of Life

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation $\alpha=0.05$
Motivation in Physical Activity and Quality of Life	.630**	.001	Statistically Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Respondents' Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation

The respondents' intrinsic motivation in physical activity was generally high, with a composite mean of 3.24, indicating a strong tendency to engage in activities driven by personal satisfaction and enjoyment. Among the items, the highest-rated statement was “Being active helps me relieve stress and boosts my mood,” with a mean of 3.32, reflecting that respondents associate physical activity with emotional benefits. Conversely, the lowest-rated item, “I participate in physical activities because I genuinely enjoy them,” had a mean of 3.17, showing that while enjoyment is present, it is slightly less emphasized compared to mood regulation.

These findings mean that students' engagement in physical activity is largely influenced by the psychological and emotional benefits they derive, such as stress relief and improved mood. This implies that intrinsic motivation serves as a key driver in sustaining participation, as students are internally rewarded by the positive feelings associated with activity. The results also indicate that while enjoyment is a factor, its influence may be secondary to the perceived functional benefits of exercise on well-being. Therefore, intrinsic motivation appears to be a complex interplay of personal satisfaction, challenge, and emotional regulation rather than mere enjoyment.



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

This pattern suggests that students are more likely to maintain physical activity routines when they experience tangible emotional and psychological gains. It also implies that intrinsic motivation aligns closely with personal goal fulfillment, indicating that the drive to engage in physical activity is not solely external or socially driven. Consequently, intrinsic factors such as stress relief, mood enhancement, and personal accomplishment are central in explaining why students continue participating in physical activities. The findings emphasize that the internal satisfaction derived from physical activity is a powerful determinant of consistent engagement.

These results are consistent with prior studies that highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivation in promoting regular physical activity among students (Ferreira Silva et al., 2022). Research indicates that students who recognize personal enjoyment and emotional benefits are more likely to sustain active behaviors over time (Westerbeek & Eime, 2021). Similarly, studies show that intrinsic motivators, such as personal challenge and satisfaction, significantly contribute to higher engagement levels in physical activity (Günel, 2023).

The respondents' extrinsic motivation in physical activity was generally high, with a composite mean of 2.75, indicating that external factors moderately influence their participation. Among the items, the highest-rated statement was "I participate in physical activities to look fit or improve my appearance," with a mean of 3.09, showing that physical appearance serves as a key motivator. Conversely, the lowest-rated item, "I exercise because I feel pressured by others (e.g., teachers, peers, family)," had a mean of 2.46, reflecting that social pressure is the least influential factor. Overall, the results suggest that students are driven more by personal gains related to recognition or appearance rather than by coercion or obligation.

These findings mean that external rewards or visible benefits, such as improved appearance and social acknowledgment, play a significant role in motivating students to engage in physical activity. This implies that extrinsic motivation primarily operates through perceived personal advantages rather than through pressure or enforced expectations. It also indicates that students value the tangible outcomes of being active, which can reinforce their commitment to participate. Therefore, extrinsic motivation in



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

this context is characterized more by self-perceived benefits than by compliance with external demands.

This pattern suggests that students' engagement in physical activity is influenced by socially recognized or personally visible outcomes rather than by coercion. It implies that while external factors matter, they are most effective when they align with personal goals, such as looking fit or gaining approval from peers. Consequently, extrinsic motivators contribute to participation, but only to the extent that they resonate with the student's own aspirations and self-concept. The findings highlight the nuanced role of extrinsic motivation in sustaining students' active behaviors.

These results are supported by previous studies indicating that appearance, recognition, and rewards are key drivers of physical activity among students (Nazarudin & Noordin, 2024). Research also shows that students who feel externally pressured are less likely to engage consistently in exercise compared to those motivated by personal benefits (Klussman et al., 2021). The alignment of these findings underscores the importance of positive, self-relevant extrinsic factors in shaping physical activity participation while minimizing the influence of coercive pressures (Monacis et al., 2022).

The respondents' overall motivation in physical activity was high, with a grand mean of 3.03, indicating a generally strong inclination to engage in physical activity. This suggests that students are driven by both intrinsic factors, such as personal satisfaction and stress relief, and extrinsic factors, such as physical appearance and recognition. It means that motivation to participate in physical activity is multidimensional, reflecting a combination of internal desires and external influences. This implies that students perceive physical activity as meaningful and personally rewarding, contributing to their overall engagement and commitment. The results highlight that both personal enjoyment and tangible outcomes play important roles in sustaining active behaviors.

These findings are supported by prior research showing that student engagement in physical activity is often fueled by a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Zhu et al., 2021). Studies indicate that students who recognize both emotional and physical benefits tend to maintain higher levels of participation over time (Alamri et al., 2021). Furthermore, evidence suggests that motivation, whether internally or externally driven,

Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

is a strong predictor of regular involvement in exercise and other active behaviors among young adults (Martins et al., 2021).

Respondents' Quality of Life

The respondents reported a mean of 2.96 in the domain of bodily functioning, which corresponds to a verbal description of “Good Quality of Life.” This indicates that students generally perceive their physical health, energy levels, and ability to perform daily activities as adequate and supportive of their academic and personal responsibilities. It suggests that they can handle the physical demands of their routines, including attending classes, participating in activities, and engaging in physical exercise. This implies that students' perception of their bodily functioning positively contributes to their overall well-being and day-to-day effectiveness.

The finding of generally positive bodily functioning aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of physical health in student life (Jiwattanasuk et al., 2022). Studies show that students who maintain good physical health tend to exhibit better concentration, higher energy levels, and greater resilience to stress (Liu et al., 2024). Moreover, evidence indicates that bodily wellness supports effective learning, reduces fatigue, and contributes to an overall sense of competence (Rodríguez-Jiménez et al., 2022). Another study highlights that students' perception of adequate physical functioning strengthens their capacity to engage in both academic and social activities, reinforcing their quality of life (Zayed et al., 2024).

The respondents reported a mean of 3.12 in the domain of cognitive–affective health, which corresponds to a verbal description of “Good Quality of Life.” This indicates that students generally perceive their mental functioning, emotional stability, and ability to manage stress as satisfactory. It suggests that they are able to regulate their emotions, maintain focus in academic tasks, and adapt to challenges in their learning environment. This implies that cognitive and emotional wellness plays a crucial role in students' daily functioning and overall perception of life satisfaction.

These results are supported by studies highlighting the importance of mental and emotional well-being in higher education settings (Kwok et al., 2021). Research shows that students with strong cognitive–affective health demonstrate better problem-solving skills, emotional resilience, and stress management (Hosseini, 2023). Similarly, evidence

Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

suggests that balanced mental and emotional states positively influence academic performance and social interactions (Marquez et al., 2020). Another study indicates that students who maintain cognitive–affective wellness experience higher overall life satisfaction, emphasizing the link between mental health and perceived quality of life (Padmanabhanunni et al., 2023).

The respondents reported a mean of 3.13 in the domain of socio-relational engagement, which corresponds to a verbal description of “Good Quality of Life.” This indicates that students generally perceive their interpersonal relationships, social support, and sense of connectedness with peers and mentors as positive. It suggests that they experience meaningful interactions that contribute to emotional support and shared learning experiences. This implies that healthy social engagement enhances their overall well-being and fosters a sense of belonging within the academic community.

The finding of positive socio-relational engagement aligns with studies emphasizing the role of social connectedness in student well-being (Carpi et al., 2022). Research indicates that students who report strong relationships with peers, instructors, and family members tend to exhibit higher life satisfaction and lower stress levels (Lee & Lee, 2023; Padmanabhanunni et al., 2023). Additionally, evidence shows that supportive social networks promote emotional resilience and motivate students to participate actively in both academic and extracurricular activities (Asghar et al., 2021). Another study highlights that socio-relational engagement is a significant predictor of students’ overall quality of life, reinforcing the importance of social support in educational settings (Cao et al., 2022).

The respondents reported a mean of 3.21 in the domain of ecological well-being, which corresponds to a verbal description of “Good Quality of Life.” This indicates that students generally perceive their physical surroundings, campus environment, and access to resources as supportive of their daily routines and overall wellness. It suggests that they feel safe, comfortable, and adequately equipped to navigate academic and social activities. This implies that the quality of their environment contributes positively to their sense of security, stability, and functional effectiveness.

These results are corroborated by prior studies emphasizing the influence of environmental factors on student well-being (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2021). Research



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

highlights that students who perceive their surroundings as organized, safe, and conducive to learning report higher levels of satisfaction and adjustment (Nguyen-Dinh & Zhang, 2025). Similarly, supportive ecological conditions are linked to reduced stress, greater motivation, and enhanced engagement in academic and recreational activities (Gothe et al., 2020). Another study indicates that favorable environmental quality strengthens students' overall life satisfaction by providing a stable and comfortable context for daily functioning (Tagare et al., 2024).

The respondents reported a mean of 3.16 for overall quality of life, which corresponds to a verbal description of “Good Quality of Life.” This indicates that students generally perceive a balanced sense of well-being across physical, cognitive, social, and environmental domains. It suggests that they are able to manage academic responsibilities, maintain interpersonal relationships, and experience a supportive environment, contributing to their overall life satisfaction. This implies that the integration of multiple well-being dimensions collectively shapes students' perception of a satisfactory quality of life.

The finding of a generally positive overall quality of life is supported by existing literature on holistic student wellness (Al-Shaer et al., 2024). Studies indicate that students who maintain a balance between physical health, mental well-being, social support, and environmental stability report higher satisfaction with life and academic experiences (Vaquero-Solís et al., 2021). Evidence further suggests that positive perceptions across these domains enhance resilience, motivation, and engagement, contributing to overall life satisfaction (Alnahdi, 2024). Another study emphasizes that students' overall quality of life is strengthened when multiple dimensions of well-being interact positively, highlighting the importance of a multidimensional perspective in assessing student wellness (Chen, 2024).

Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation in Physical Activity and Quality of Life

The relationship between motivation in physical activity and quality of life was found to be strong and positive, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.630$ and a p-value of 0.001, indicating statistical significance at the 0.01 level. This means that students who exhibit higher motivation to engage in physical activity tend to report higher perceived quality of life. The finding suggests that the internal and external drivers encouraging

Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

physical activity are closely associated with improvements in various well-being domains, including physical health, cognitive–affective health, social relationships, and environmental perception. This implies that motivated students are more likely to experience overall life satisfaction and function effectively in their daily routines.

These results are consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the positive impact of physical activity on students' well-being. Research indicates that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in engaging in regular physical activity significantly correlates with enhanced physiological, psychological, and social health outcomes. Similarly, evidence shows that students who are motivated to participate in physical activities demonstrate better stress management, higher energy levels, and improved life satisfaction (Slavinski et al., 2021).

The findings of this study have important theoretical implications, particularly in relation to self-determination and well-being frameworks. The strong positive relationship between motivation in physical activity and quality of life supports Self-Determination Theory, which posits that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators significantly influence engagement in health-promoting behaviors and overall psychological well-being (Mkrtichian, 2025; Tock, 2024). Moreover, the multidimensional nature of quality of life observed in this study reinforces theoretical models that conceptualize well-being as a composite of physical, cognitive, social, and environmental domains (Brooks et al., 2024). These results provide empirical evidence that integrating motivational constructs with quality-of-life measures offers a comprehensive understanding of student well-being (Mikkelsen et al., 2020).

From a practical standpoint, the study highlights the importance of fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to enhance students' overall well-being. Educators, health practitioners, and campus administrators can apply these insights by promoting environments and programs that encourage physical activity, not merely for external rewards, but also for internal satisfaction, mood regulation, and stress relief. The findings suggest that supporting students' motivational needs can lead to improved engagement, higher life satisfaction, and better functioning across physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains. Consequently, the study underscores the practical relevance of

Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

considering motivational factors when designing interventions aimed at improving students' quality of life.

Conclusion

Students' motivation in physical activity emerges as a meaningful psychological resource that extends beyond mere participation in exercise. It reflects a broader orientation toward self-regulation, goal commitment, and personal responsibility for health. The presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers suggests that students' engagement in physical activity is anchored in personal values as well as socially informed aspirations. This highlights motivation as a central mechanism through which students cultivate sustainable health-related behaviors that contribute to long-term functioning.

The multidimensional nature of students' quality of life indicates that well-being is shaped by the dynamic interaction of physical capacity, emotional balance, social connectedness, and environmental support. Rather than operating as isolated domains, these dimensions collectively form an integrated system that sustains students' academic and personal lives. The findings suggest that students' lived experiences are influenced not only by individual resilience but also by the contexts in which they study and interact. This underscores the importance of viewing quality of life as a holistic construct embedded within both personal and environmental realities.

The demonstrated linkage between motivation in physical activity and quality of life reinforces the theoretical proposition that behavioral engagement and well-being are mutually reinforcing processes. Motivation functions not merely as a precursor to action but as a contributor to broader life satisfaction and adaptive functioning. The results imply that students' internal drives and behavioral commitments are deeply intertwined with their perception of overall well-being. Collectively, the study advances the understanding that fostering motivational orientations toward health behaviors may serve as a strategic pathway for strengthening comprehensive student wellness.

Limitations:

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of self-reported questionnaires may have introduced response



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

biases, as participants' perceptions of motivation and quality of life could be influenced by social desirability or temporary moods. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between physical activity motivation and quality of life. Finally, the study was conducted within a specific student population, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other groups or contexts.

References

- Abou Hashish, E. A., Bajbeir, E., Almagadi, S. A., Alzebali, N. D., & Alhubishi, S. F. (2024). Investigating quality of Life, Academic Resilience, and influential factors in nursing education: a mixed-methods study among nursing students. *SAGE Open Nursing*, 10, 23779608241303690. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23779608241303690>
- Adel, B., Mohamed, S., Wahib, B., sidi Mohamed, K., & Othman, B. (2025). Enhancing Professional Health of School Teachers: A Physical Activity-Based Intervention to Bridge Theory and Practice in Physical Education. *Bridging Theory and Practice in Physical Education Researches–Curriculum–Teacher Training*, 209.
- Alamri, Y., Monasterio, E., Beckert, L., & Wilkinson, T. J. (2021). Intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation as drivers for early engagement in research by medical students. *Advances in Medical Education and Practice*, 189–194. <https://doi.org/10.2147/AMEP.S295909>
- Alnahdi, G. (2024). Enhancing the quality of life of mothers of children with intellectual disabilities or Autism: The role of disability-specific support. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 151, 104780. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2024.104780>
- Al-Shaer, E. A., Aliedan, M. M., Zayed, M. A., Elrayah, M., & Moustafa, M. A. (2024). Mental health and quality of life among university students with disabilities: The moderating role of religiosity and social connectedness. *Sustainability*, 16(2), 644. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16020644>
- Asghar, M. Z., Arif, S., Barbera, E., Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, P., & Kocayoruk, E. (2021). Support through social media and online class participation to enhance

Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

psychological resilience. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(22), 11962. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182211962>

Baumann, D., Ruch, W., Margelisch, K., Gander, F., & Wagner, L. (2020). Character strengths and life satisfaction in later life: an analysis of different living conditions. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 15, 329–347. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-018-9689-x>

Blom, V., Drake, E., Kallings, L. V, Ekblom, M. M., & Nooijen, C. F. J. (2021). The effects on self-efficacy, motivation and perceived barriers of an intervention targeting physical activity and sedentary behaviours in office workers: a cluster randomized control trial. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1048. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11083-2>

Brooks, D., Johnston, S., Parker, C., Cox, L., Brodie, M., Radbourne, C., & MacAndrew, M. (2024). Elements of long-term care that promote quality of life for indigenous and first nations peoples: a mixed methods systematic review. *The Gerontologist*, 64(1), gnac153. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnac153>

Cao, Y., Yang, Z., Yu, Y., & Huang, X. (2022). Physical activity, sleep quality and life satisfaction in adolescents: A cross-sectional survey study. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 1010194. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1010194>

Carpi, M., Cianfarani, C., & Vestri, A. (2022). Sleep quality and its associations with physical and mental health-related quality of life among university students: A cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(5), 2874. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052874>

Chemagosi, M. J. (2024). Student well-being in higher education institutions: academic pressures. In *Student well-being in higher education institutions* (pp. 81–106). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-4417-0.ch004>

Duru, P., & Örsal, Ö. (2021). The effect of acne on quality of life, social appearance anxiety, and use of conventional, complementary, and alternative treatments. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 56, 102614. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2020.102614>

Ferreira Silva, R. M., Mendonca, C. R., Azevedo, V. D., Raoof Memon, A., Noll, P. R. E. S., & Noll, M. (2022). Barriers to high school and university students'



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

physical activity: A systematic review. *PloS One*, 17(4), e0265913.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265913>

Fuchs, D., Schlipphak, B., Treib, O., Long, L. A. N., & Lederer, M. (2020). Which way forward in measuring the quality of life? A critical analysis of sustainability and well-being indicator sets. *Global Environmental Politics*, 20(2), 12–36.
https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00554

Garcia-Martinez, I., Landa, J. M. A., & León, S. P. (2021). The mediating role of engagement on the achievement and quality of life of university students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12), 6586. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126586>

Gothe, N. P., Ehlers, D. K., Salerno, E. A., Fanning, J., Kramer, A. F., & McAuley, E. (2020). Physical activity, sleep and quality of life in older adults: influence of physical, mental and social well-being. *Behavioral Sleep Medicine*, 18(6), 797–808. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15402002.2019.1690493>

Günel, A. M. (2023). Sleep, activity, and diet in harmony: unveiling the relationships of chronotype, sleep quality, physical activity, and dietary intake. *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 10, 1301818. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2023.1301818>

Haible, S., Volk, C., Demetriou, Y., Höner, O., Thiel, A., & Sudeck, G. (2020). Physical activity-related health competence, physical activity, and physical fitness: analysis of control competence for the self-directed exercise of adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(1), 39. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17010039>

Hosseini, S. A. H. (2023). The well-living paradigm: reimagining quality of life in our turbulent world. *Discover Global Society*, 1(1), 19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-023-00022-8>

Jiwattanasuk, N., Pannavoravat, P., & Sirikanchana, P. (2022). The holistic Well-being concepts in relation to quality of life. *ABAC ODI Journal Vision. Action. Outcome*, 10(1), 28–41.

Klussman, K., Langer, J., & Nichols, A. L. (2021). The relationship between physical activity, health, and well-being. *European Journal of Health Psychology*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1027/2512-8442/a000070>



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

- Kwok, C., Leung, P. Y., Poon, K. Y., & Fung, X. C. C. (2021). The effects of internet gaming and social media use on physical activity, sleep, quality of life, and academic performance among university students in Hong Kong: A preliminary study. *Asian Journal of Social Health and Behavior*, 4(1), 36–44. https://doi.org/10.4103/shb.shb_81_20
- Leavy, P. (2022). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford publications.
- Lee, M., & Lee, S. M. (2023). Teacher and peer relationships and life satisfaction: Mediating the role of student resilience in south korean elementary schools. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 33(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2020.21>
- Liu, M., Liu, H., Qin, Z., Tao, Y., Ye, W., & Liu, R. (2024). Effects of physical activity on depression, anxiety, and stress in college students: the chain-based mediating role of psychological resilience and coping styles. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1396795. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1396795>
- Marquez, D. X., Aguiñaga, S., Vásquez, P. M., Conroy, D. E., Erickson, K. I., Hillman, C., Stillman, C. M., Ballard, R. M., Sheppard, B. B., & Petruzzello, S. J. (2020). A systematic review of physical activity and quality of life and well-being. *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, 10(5), 1098–1109. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibz198>
- Marsigliante, S., Gómez-López, M., & Muscella, A. (2023). Effects on children's physical and mental well-being of a physical-activity-based school intervention program: a randomized study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(3), 1927. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20031927>
- Martins, J., Costa, J., Sarmiento, H., Marques, A., Farias, C., Onofre, M., & Valeiro, M. G. (2021). Adolescents' perspectives on the barriers and facilitators of physical activity: an updated systematic review of qualitative studies. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(9), 4954. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094954>



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

- Mikkelsen, H. T., Haraldstad, K., Helseth, S., Skarstein, S., Småstuen, M. C., & Rohde, G. (2020). Health-related quality of life is strongly associated with self-efficacy, self-esteem, loneliness, and stress in 14–15-year-old adolescents: a cross-sectional study. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 18, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-020-01585-9>
- Mirzaei, M., Hoseini Shavoun, A., & Ahmari Tehran, H. (2025). Enhancing Student Motivation in Higher Education: Evidence-Based Strategies for Effective Teaching. *Medical Education Bulletin*, 6(1), 1005–1014.
- Mkrtichian, O. (2025). *The role of motivation theories in physical activity engagement: a theoretical synthesis*. <https://doi.org/10.28925/2312-5829/2025.3.5>
- Molanorouzi, K., Khoo, S., & Morris, T. (2014). *Validating the Physical Activity and Leisure Motivation Scale (PALMS)*. <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/909>
- Monacis, D., Trecroci, A., Invernizzi, P. L., & Colella, D. (2022). Can Enjoyment and Physical Self-Perception Mediate the Relationship between BMI and Levels of Physical Activity? Preliminary Results from the Regional Observatory of Motor Development in Italy. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(19), 12567. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912567>
- Mouratidis, K. (2021). Urban planning and quality of life: A review of pathways linking the built environment to subjective well-being. *Cities*, 115, 103229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103229>
- Nazarudin, M. N., & Noordin, Z. (2024). Looks or Performance? How Physical Education Teachers' Body Shape and Physical Appearance Shape Student Motivation. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 49(2).
- Nguyen-Dinh, N., & Zhang, H. (2025). Do Positive Environmental Changes Impact Residents' Intention of Rural Development? Role of Leisure and Quality of Life. *Sustainability*, 17(3), 1245. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17031245>
- Oprea, O. M. (2024). Characteristics of a motivated student for academic success. *Studia Universitatis Moldaviae (Seria Științe Ale Educației)*, 179(9), 143–151. [https://doi.org/10.59295/sum9\(176\)2024_21](https://doi.org/10.59295/sum9(176)2024_21)



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

Pace, D. S. (2021). Probability and non-probability sampling-an entry point for undergraduate researchers. *International Journal of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods*, 9(2), 1-15.

Padmanabhanunni, A., Pretorius, T. B., & Isaacs, S. A. (2023). Satisfied with life? The protective function of life satisfaction in the relationship between perceived stress and negative mental health outcomes. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(18), 6777. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20186777>

Poliquit, L. Q., Ligan, V. O., & Bandiola, A. N. (2022). Public Leadership Roles, Professional Identity, and Quality of Work Life: A Structural Equation Model on Satisfaction of Employees in the Local Government. *EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)*, 7 (11), 76, 86. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra11805>

Rebar, A. L., Alfrey, K.-L., & Gardner, B. (2021). Theories of physical activity motivation. *Essentials of Exercise and Sport Psychology: An Open Access Textbook*, 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.51224/B1002>

Rodríguez-Jiménez, R.-M., Carmona, M., García-Merino, S., Díaz-Ureña, G., & Lara Bercial, P. J. (2022). Embodied learning for well-being, self-awareness, and stress regulation: a randomized trial with engineering students using a mixed-method approach. *Education Sciences*, 12(2), 111. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12020111>

Rogowska, A. M., Kuśnierz, C., & Pavlova, I. (2020). Healthy behavior of physical education university students. *Health Problems of Civilization*, 14(4), 247–255. <https://doi.org/10.5114/hpc.2020.96392>

Slavinski, T., Bjelica, D., Pavlović, D., & Vukmirović, V. (2021). Academic performance and physical activities as positive factors for life satisfaction among university students. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 497. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020497>

Tafari, F., & Latino, F. (2024). School medical service: Strategies to promote psycho-physiological well-being. *Pediatric Reports*, 16(1), 214–231. <https://doi.org/10.3390/pediatric16010019>



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

- Tagare, R. L., Mancera, M. A., & Sumera, E. S. (2024). Examining the Influence of Achievement Goals in Sports on the Quality of Life among Students in Philippine Higher Education. *Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología Del Ejercicio y El Deporte*, 19(2021), 152–156.
- Thomas, D., & Zubkov, P. (2023). Quantitative research designs. *Quantitative research for practical theology*, 103-114.
- Tock, W. L. (2024). *Enhancing exercise motivation in young adults with lymphoma: A self-determination theory-guided intervention*.
- Vaquero-Solís, M., Tapia-Serrano, M. A., Hortigüela-Alcalá, D., Sierra-Díaz, M. J., & Sánchez-Miguel, P. A. (2021). Physical activity and quality of life in high school students: Proposals for improving the self-concept in physical education. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(13), 7185. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18137185>
- Weintraub, N., & Bar-Haim Erez, A. (2009). Quality of life in school (QoLS) questionnaire: development and validity. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 63(6), 724-731. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.63.6.724>
- Westerbeek, H., & Eime, R. (2021). The physical activity and sport participation framework—a policy model toward being physically active across the lifespan. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 3, 608593. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.608593>
- Wilson, O. W. A., Panza, M. J., Evans, M. B., & Bopp, M. (2021). A scoping review on college student physical activity: how do researchers measure activity and examine inequities? *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 18(6), 728–736. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2020-0370>
- Zayed, M. A., Moustafa, M. A., Elrayah, M., & Elshaer, I. A. (2024). Optimizing quality of life of vulnerable students: The impact of physical fitness, self-esteem, and academic performance: A case study of Saudi arabia universities. *Sustainability*, 16(11), 4646. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16114646>
- Zhang, R. (2025). The role of physical acgtivity in life satisfaction and psychological resilience among college students: Mediating effects of self-efficacy and



Original article. The motivation–well-being nexus: insights on physical activity and quality of life
. Vol. 12, n. ° 3; p. 1-24, July 2026. <https://doi.org/10.55040/3rayh037>

perceived stress. *Plos One*, 20(9), e0331463.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0331463>

Zheng, Y., Li, H., Gao, K., & Gallo, P. M. (2022). Developing a Home-Based Body Weight Physical Activity/Exercise Program. *ACSM'S Health & Fitness Journal*, 26(2), 20–28. <https://doi.org/10.1249/FIT.0000000000000746>

Zhu, X., Haegele, J. A., Liu, H., & Yu, F. (2021). Academic stress, physical activity, sleep, and mental health among Chinese adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), 7257. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147257>