



**CURRENT STATUS OF STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT
IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT LY TU TRONG COLLEGE,
HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM**

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Abstract:

Background: Engagement is an important factor in developing a student's performance. Engagement in physical education (PE) studies is a critical element contributing to the training quality of PE, helping students achieve comprehensive physical and mental development. **Methods:** The study targeted 400 first-year students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City who were born in 2004 (18 years old). The article constructed an assessment scale to evaluate the current status of engagement during PE classes, thereby conducting a survey to assess the current situation. **Results:** The study followed three steps: drafting a preliminary questionnaire, seeking the opinions of experts and specialists to refine the initial questionnaire, and checking the reliability of the final questionnaire (Cronbach Alpha). This process identified 17 questionnaire items to assess the current status of engagement during PE classes among students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City. These items represented Intellectual Engagement (5 questions), Cognitive Engagement (5 questions), and Learning Engagement (7 questions). The survey results from 400 students indicated that the current status of engagement (intellectual engagement and learning engagement) was at a normal level, and cognitive engagement was at a positive level. Many aspects, as assessed by the students, were not positively perceived. **Conclusion:** The thoroughly designed questionnaire consisting of 17 items, developed based on scientific principles, evaluates the present level of engagement in PE sessions at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City. Findings indicate that intellectual and learning engagement are at an average level, whereas cognitive engagement is rated positively. However, students' responses suggest that several aspects are not viewed favorably.

Keywords: current situation, engagement, physical education, college students, Ho Chi Minh City

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1. Introduction

Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW, dated November 4, 2013, of the Central Executive Committee on the comprehensive reform of education to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the context of a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration, has affirmed: "*continuously and comprehensively innovate the fundamental elements of education and training, emphasizing the development of learners' abilities; promoting engagement, proactivity, creativity, and practices of what they are taught; eliminating one-way instruction and rote learning. It is necessary to focus on teaching how to learn, how to think, encourage learning autonomy, create a foundation for learners to self-enhance their knowledge, skills in the long term*" [1].

Among the fundamental factors in developing the quality of education, the learner's engagement plays a crucial role. Engagement in learning is a factor that directly influences the academic outcomes of students and the teaching of educators. Learner engagement is a conscious process, perseverance to overcome challenges in learning, as well as motivation, and a positive attitude toward learning. Engagement is an activity that shifts the learner's role from passive to active, from a knowledge recipient to a knowledge seeker to enhance the effectiveness of learning [14].

The academic performance of students is influenced by various factors such as their learning purposes, teaching methods, content, and so on. Learning engagement will determine the quality of a student's learning; to be more specific, high engagement tends to yield the highest academic results. In short, the essence of the learning process is a positive cognitive process, so to truly grasp the essence of human culture, to survive and thrive in the knowledge-based economy, students must have a genuine desire to seek and possess knowledge, a strong determination to overcome challenges and pursue their set goals [2], [4].

PE in schools is an essential component of the national education system. The subject holds a special position in enhancing the students' fitness and stamina, enabling them to meet the standards of future employment along with national industrialization and modernization. Hence, engagement plays a significant role in the quality of PE. It instills in students a profound understanding of the benefits of this subject, creating sustainable enthusiasm and motivation. Students, consequently, are more willing to participate in extracurricular activities and other school-related endeavors [11], [12].

PE is a compulsory subject that not only impacts students' physical fitness but also their mental faculties. Therefore, teaching PE should adhere to general teaching methods, but it also carries its unique characteristics. All activities in the teaching process affect the physical and mental aspects of students. Hence, student engagement in PE classes not only enhances the effectiveness of the lessons but also fosters profound thinking and sustained interest in sports activities, thereby building a habit of playing sports among young people [13].

Engagement helps students not only complete physical activities in the classroom but also fosters a sense of competition in training, creating a vibrant training atmosphere

and promoting mutual assistance in learning. Consequently, it forms and develops self-study groups and training groups. This is an essential motivator for achieving high academic performance and remarkable achievements in school sports [11].

Hence, it can be seen that in PE engagement is a crucial factor that directly influences the learning outcomes of the subject and the physical and mental development of students. Student engagement in PE learning is the act of actively and voluntarily participating in physical activities, manifested through students' attitudes, behaviors, and learning outcomes. With positive engagement, students can make significant progress in both their academic studies and physical health [12], [13]. Therefore, in PE, student engagement is considered a fundamental factor that directly determines the effectiveness of learning

It is more notable to know that PE has distinctive characteristics compared to other subjects. While other subjects use societal knowledge as tools to develop intellectual capabilities, PE subject uses tools (including physical exercises and sports) to impact the bodies of learners with the aim of enhancing their physical fitness. Therefore, if learners themselves do not engage and do not have direction for their participation, all efforts become meaningless. As a result, engagement in PE is a vital component that needs attention and enhancement. To do it efficiently, there should be close coordination among educational institutions, families, and students.

2. Material & Methods

2.1 Participants

The participants are first-year students at Ly Tu Trong College, Ho Chi Minh City, who were admitted in 2022. They were all born in 2004 and are 18 years old. The total number of first-year students is 2,113. The sample size of the study is $N = 2,113$, with a confidence level of 95%, and a standard error of $\pm 5\%$, resulting in a selected sample size is 336 students. Based on the number of departments of the college (28 departments), the distribution of gender within each department, and the number of PE classes in the 2022-2023 academic year, 400 students from four departments (Industrial Electricity, Small and Medium Business Management, Graphic Design, and English Language) are chosen for the study using convenient and judgmental sampling methods.

The survey regarding the assessment of the quantitative scale's reliability and of the criteria used to measure the engagement in PE classes at the college involved 400 students.

The criteria were built based on the consultant of five experts, specialists, and PE faculty members in Ho Chi Minh City, including Ly Tu Trong College and the University of PE and Sports, Ho Chi Minh City.

2.2 Methods

The study has employed the following methods:

- **Document reference:** Relevant scientific documents and research materials were synthesized to establish a theoretical foundation, formulate scientific hypotheses, define objectives, and validate the results during and after the experiment process.
- **Interview:** Interviews were conducted to leverage the expertise of a highly qualified team of experts, and experienced managers, using various forms such as structured interviews, roundtable discussions, and direct consultation. This method was used to gather opinions and experiential information to select content and evaluation criteria.
- **Survey:** Questionnaires were delivered to the students and experts to obtain their opinions regarding student engagement in PE classes at Ly Tu Trong College, Ho Chi Minh City.

In the study, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized to assess the degree of various items. To provide a basis for evaluation based on each level, the paper established the following conventions:

Regarding the value of the interval = (Maximum – Minimum)/n = (5 – 1)/5 = 0.8.

Conventions for measurement levels were as follows:

- 1.80: Level 1 (Extremely negative, Completely disagree, Very difficult)
- 1.81 – 2.60: Level 2 (Negative, Disagree, Difficult)
- 2.61 – 3.40: Level 3 (Neutral)
- 3.41 – 4.20: Level 4 (Positive, Agree, Favorable)
- 4.21 – 5.00: Level 5 (Extremely positive, Completely agree, Very favorable)

2.3 Data Analysis

The data in the research was coded and processed using the SPSS software for Windows, version 20.0, which included Internal Consistent Reliability Analysis (Factor analysis and Cronbach Alpha calculation with SPSS) and Descriptive Statistical Analysis.

3. Results

To evaluate the current status of student engagement during PE classes among students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City, the research was conducted in two phases including determining the criteria for assessing student engagement during PE classes and assessing their real-life engagement during PE classes based on the proposed criteria.

3.1 Determining the Criteria for Assessing Student Engagement during PE Classes

This study proceeded to evaluate the current status of student engagement during PE classes among students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City through a questionnaire encompassing the constituent factors of student engagement, including intellectual engagement, cognitive engagement, and learning engagement. Then, the study continued to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The procedure was divided into the following three steps:

Step 1: Drafting a Preliminary Questionnaire

The research study has developed a preliminary questionnaire and sought input from five experts who are sports specialists, educational administrators, and instructors to assess the structure, format, and content of the questionnaire items. Their feedback was aimed at refining the questionnaire designed to evaluate the current status of engagement during PE classes among students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City. The results revealed the following:

- 1 out of 5 experts recommended adjustments to certain terms in two survey items.
- 1 out of 5 experts proposed removing one item and modifying two survey items.
- 1 out of 5 experts suggested adding one item and modifying one survey item.
- 1 out of 5 experts recommended modifications to three survey items.
- 1 out of 5 experts recommended modifications to three survey items.

Step 2: Adjusting the questionnaire scale and determine the response format

Based on the above results, the research revised some items to align with the initial questionnaire. Data processing was carried out using SPSS 20.0 software. The questionnaire template for assessing the current status of student engagement in PE classes of students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City consists of three sections with 18 survey items.

○ **Determining the Response Format**

The research applied a 5-level Likert scale to survey 400 students from Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City. The responses were numbered from 1 to 5, with the content related to the current status of student engagement in PE classes at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City.

Step 3: Assessing the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha

To accurately evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, the research conducted a test on the three sections with 18 survey items with Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The results of the Cronbach's Alpha test for the 18 survey items showed that the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was bigger than 0.6. More particular, there were 17 survey items with corrected item-total correlations greater than the acceptable standard (>0.3), while one survey item had a correlation coefficient with a total score lower than 0.3 and was therefore excluded.

After all, the research identified 17 suitable survey items on assessing the current status of student engagement in PE classes of students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City, including:

○ **Intellectual Engagement (5 items)**

- Willingly participate in answering teacher's questions, provide additional answers, and exchange opinions with classmates,
- Memorize the movements and perform them effectively,

- Think critically and ask for detailed explanations of unclear issues (exercises, movements),
 - Engage in associative thinking, compare and contrast the issues found in the lesson,
 - Actively apply prior knowledge and skills flexibly to new exercises.
- **Cognitive Engagement (5 items)**
- Improve students' physical health,
 - Enhance students' motor skills,
 - Encourage students to develop regular physical exercise habits,
 - Guide students toward healthy activities and keep them away from social vices,
 - Serve as a means of social communication.
- **Learning Engagement (7 items)**
- Attentively listen to the teachers' guidance,
 - Enthusiastically participate in all forms of learning activities (expressing opinions, taking notes, participating in group games, etc.),
 - Demonstrate determination in handling challenges and completing assigned tasks and exercises,
 - Grasp the lesson, have good retention, and effectively perform the taught exercises and movements,
 - Be self-motivated and actively practice outside of class,
 - Attend classes regularly,
 - Take the exams seriously.

○ **Assessing student engagement during PE classes based on the proposed criteria**
The study surveyed 400 students at Ly Tu Trong College, Ho Chi Minh City, using a comprehensive questionnaire. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Student Engagement in PE Classes at Ly Tu Trong College, Ho Chi Minh City

No.	Student engagement	Results	
		\bar{X}	S
Intellectual engagement		2.70	
1	Willingly participate in answering teacher's questions, provide additional answers, and exchange opinions with classmates	2.64	0.479
2	Memorize the movements and perform them effectively	2.93	0.689
3	Think critically and ask for detailed explanations of unclear issues (exercises, movements)	2.81	0.657
4	Engage in associative thinking, compare and contrast the issues found in the lesson	2.56	0.63
5	Actively apply prior knowledge and skills flexibly to new exercises	2.55	0.59
Cognitive engagement		3.50	
6	Enhance students' motor skills	3.55	0.498
7	Encourage students to develop regular physical exercise habits	3.60	0.491

8	Guide students toward healthy activities and keep them away from social vices	3.43	0.496
9	Serve as a means of social communication	3.55	0.498
10	Enhance students' motor skills	3.38	0.487
Learning engagement		2.68	
11	Attentively listen to the teachers' guidance	2.57	0.496
12	Enthusiastically participate in all forms of learning activities (expressing opinions, taking notes, participating in group games, etc.)	2.52	0.5
13	Demonstrate determination in handling challenges and completing assigned tasks and exercises	2.43	0.496
14	Grasp the lesson, have good retention, and effectively perform the taught exercises and movements	2.66	0.659
15	Be self-motivated and actively practice outside of class	2.38	0.486
16	Attend classes regularly	3.29	0.709
17	Take the exams seriously	2.91	0.742

The data in Table 1 reveals the following:

Intellectual engagement obtains an average score of 2.70 (neutral). Among the items, "Memorize the movements and perform them effectively" receives the highest score of 2.93 (neutral), while "Actively apply prior knowledge and skills flexibly to new exercises" has the lowest score of 2.55 (Negative). The item "Engage in associative thinking, compare and contrast the issues found in the lesson" is also rated negatively, while the remaining two items are rated neutral.

Cognitive engagement obtains an average score of 3.50 (positive). Among the items, "Enhance students' motor skills" receives the highest score of 3.60 (positive), while "Serve as a means of social communication" receives the lowest score of 3.38 (neutral). The other three items are rated positively.

Learning engagement obtains an average score of 2.68 (neutral). Among the items, "Attend classes regularly" receives the highest score of 3.29 (neutral), while "Be self-motivated and actively practice outside of class" receives the lowest score of 2.38 (Negative). Three remaining items are rated as negative, while the other two items are rated as neutral.

4. Discussion

Student engagement is assessed based on three aspects regarding intellectual engagement, cognitive engagement, and learning engagement [3]:

Intellectual engagement plays a fundamental role. It is believed that when students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they can use their strengths intentionally and mitigate or eliminate their weaknesses. Therefore, high awareness is likely to enhance students' confidence and proactivity in their practices and self-improvement. To do it, it cannot fail to mention the pivotal role of a teacher who influences not only student awareness of PE's significance but also student affective states to enhance their interest in PE [5], [9].

Cognitive engagement is formed and executed during students' perceptions. Many factors influence the quality of teaching and learning activities, with motivation being considered a direct factor [4]. It is not hard to see the fact that reluctant learning behaviors often stem from inappropriate learning motivation. Hence, when a learner develops appropriate learning motivation, they tend to better engage in learning. In other words, establishing the right learning motivation for learners is essential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning practices. To do so, it requires addressing the causes of demotivating students in PE classes [4], involving the assumption of PE as an unimportant subject, in confidence due to poor physical fitness, and low awareness of PE's benefits.

Learning engagement is an individual engagement that is directed toward solving learning problems to achieve learning goals [7]. PE is a compulsory subject taught in every school and educational institution in the country. The subject significantly contributes to achieving educational goals by enhancing students' character and abilities. It empowers them to take responsibility for their health, families, and communities. Hence, it is undeniable that a holistic approach always underscores the interconnection between physical development and overall well-being. The approach emphasizes that good health is the cornerstone for intellectual and emotional growth, as highlighted earlier. Consequently, individuals are urged to prioritize physical health through consistent exercise and a balanced lifestyle. As in PE classes, students are expected to exhibit self-discipline and proactivity, which extends to cultivating a routine of regular physical exercise and sports training for personal well-being. When they do it, they will gradually become more attentive to their learning activities, engaging in research to explore new knowledge horizons and apply what they are taught to real-life situations [16].

5. Conclusions

The current state of student engagement in PE classes among students at Ly Tu Trong College in Ho Chi Minh City has been assessed based on 17 evaluation items, encompassing Intellectual engagement (5 items), Cognitive engagement (5 items), and Learning engagement (7 items).

The finding indicates that student engagement, particularly in terms of intellectual and learning engagement, falls within the neutral range. While positive perception is observed in cognitive engagement, there are several aspects where students' evaluations are not as positive.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Nguyen Manh Phuong has been a physical education lecturer at Department Physical Education, Ly Tu Trong College of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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