



## Student motivation and perceived outcomes in undergraduate physical education electives: A study from Keralam, India

Praveen Thariyan<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Binu George Varghese<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, St Dominic's College, Kanjirapally, Kerala, India

<sup>2</sup> Director & Dean, Professor, School of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, India

Corresponding Author: Praveen Thariyan

### Abstract

This research examines the factors that influence college students' enrollment in an open course in Physical Education (PE) and their overall perceptions of its effectiveness after completing it. The sample consisted of 675 students across the four universities in Keralam, India, who took this elective; the data for this study were collected through a pre-course survey. The two most frequently given reasons for taking this elective course were a passion for sports (44.3%) and the belief that the subject matter would be relevant to them (37.1%). The pre-course survey indicated that 51.6% of students had high expectations for learning new health-related concepts. After the course was completed, 99.5% of students agreed they learned a lot, and 97.8% found the course goals clear. Also noteworthy was that 90.8% of students would recommend this course to others, and 95.3% rated their overall experience as "Excellent" or "Good". Key findings from the analysis of the data suggest that, while students begin this course with a high level of intrinsic motivation, the course's success results from well-defined course objectives, relevant course content at appropriate skill levels, and an overall focus on holistic health. Based on these findings, it is recommended that a theoretical-practical balance be maintained in future courses and that lifestyle modification be emphasized as an essential component. Approval of this recommendation is strongly supported by student feedback.

**Keywords:** Physical Education, Elective Course, Student Motivation, Course Evaluation, Higher Education, Student Perception, Health Education

### Introduction

Higher education today places greater emphasis on students' holistic well-being than ever before, alongside intellectual growth. PE (Physical Education) classes at the university level differ from previous levels; they serve a very specific and necessary purpose in promoting wellness over a lifetime while addressing the sedentary lifestyles of many people in our society (Sallis *et al.*, 2012) [5]. PE classes provide balance for students engaged in rigorous academics by reducing stress, increasing mental clarity, and creating healthy habits at a crucial time in their lives.

When providing elective course choices like this alongside traditional PE classes, both types of courses pose different challenges for students who choose them. One aspect of the popularity and effectiveness of an elective course is how well it connects with students, as well as how it competes for attention. Lastly, how well will the proposed curriculum meet the varying levels of student interest while providing value beyond the letter grade assigned (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000)? [1]

To determine which factors make a physical education course valuable and desirable to students, it is important to analyze students' perspectives. Therefore, this study will evaluate 675 student responses about their experiences, from anticipation before taking an elective physical education course through reflection after completing the course, through two phases: The first phase examines the factors that influenced a student's decision to take a physical education elective by looking at their motivations and expectations prior to taking the course. The second phase of the study will analyze the student's experience after taking

the course by comparing their comments on the learning outcomes and the relevance of the course material, as well as their overall satisfaction, with their anticipated outcomes. Comparing these two phases of the study will allow us to evaluate what students wanted to gain as well as which factors, such as teaching methods or variety of activities and environments in the classroom, may have contributed to providing the students with a positive and rewarding experience (Lumpkin & Favor, 2012) [2]

This article combines the two viewpoints to explain why students make certain choices about which classes to take and what constitutes an enjoyable experience in an elective physical education class. By using student feedback, this study will provide educators with actionable recommendations to improve courses, change how they teach, and create an environment that delivers meaningful value. In addition to the knowledge gained from the course, these values include positive attitudes toward physical activity, skills in physical activity, and motivation to be physically active throughout their life. This study also seeks to answer: What motivates students to enroll in a PE elective, and how do their pre-course expectations align with post-course outcomes?

### Methodology

The survey analysed 675 students (300 male & 375 female) enrolled in physical education elective courses at different colleges affiliated to four universities in the state of Keralam (Mahatma Gandhi, Kerala, Calicut, and Kannur) during the academic year 2025-26. All participants were between 20 and 22 years old. Data were collected through an online

questionnaire created using Google Forms. Before the course, data were collected on students' backgrounds, reasons for choosing the course, prior interest in sports, and expectations for the course.

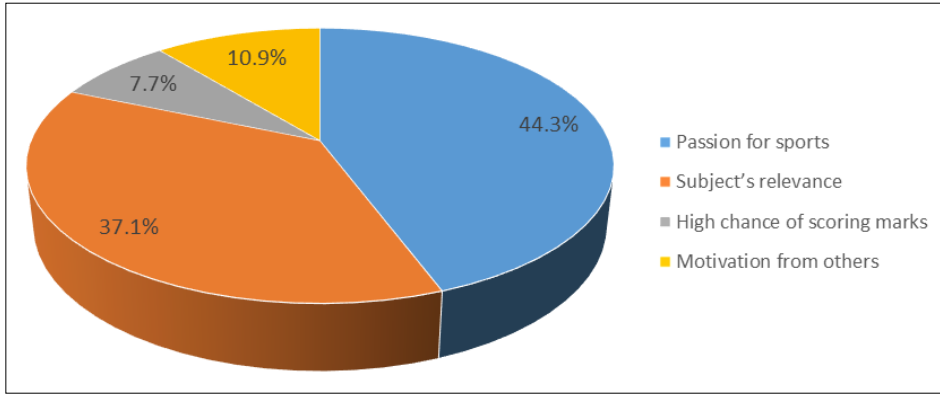
After completing a six-month course, the post-course results are measured by the learning outcomes, how clear students' goals were, how relevant they found the content, how engaging it was, and their overall satisfaction. The study used a Likert scale (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and multiple-choice questions. The data is

presented as percentages and focuses on the main trends in student responses before and after the course.

**Results & Analysis**

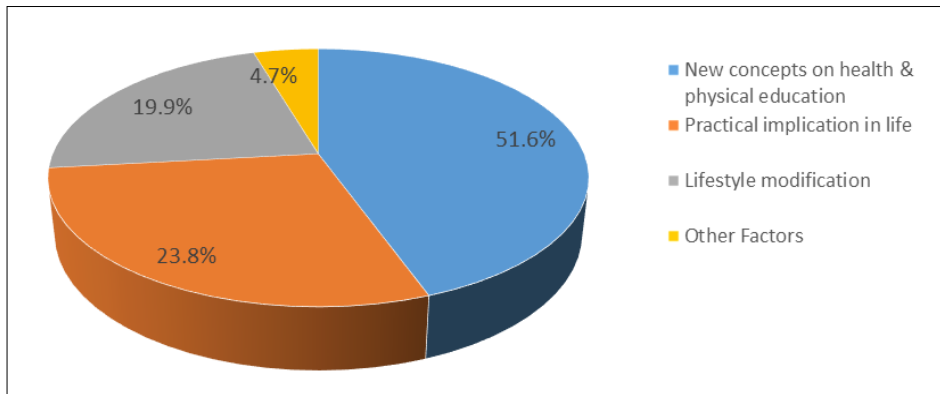
**1. Pre-Course Profile and Motivations**

The main reasons students chose the course were a passion for sports (44.3%) and the subject's relevance (37.1%). Only 7.7% chose it for a high chance of scoring marks, suggesting most students were motivated by genuine interest rather than just grades.



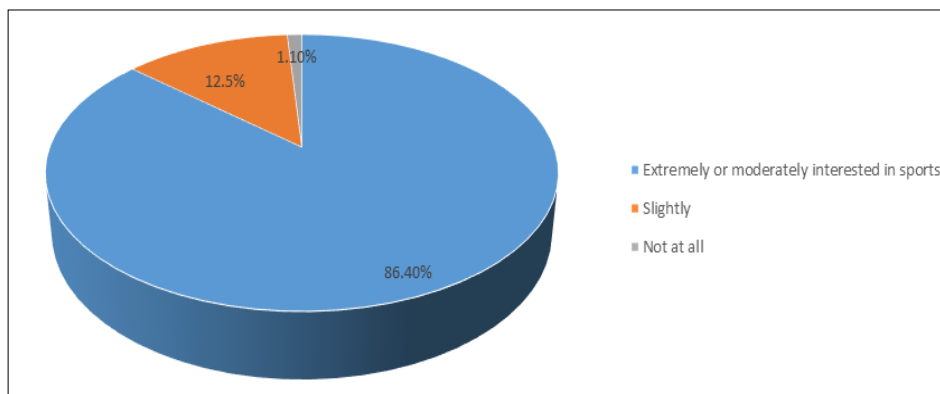
**Fig 1:** Showing the reason to select the course

Expectations: Over half (51.6%) expected to gain "New concepts on health & physical education." Combined expectations for "Practical implication in life" (23.8%) and "Lifestyle modification" (19.9%) show that 95.3% of students anticipated applied, personal benefits.



**Fig 2:** Showing the students' expectations of the course

A large majority (86.4%) said they were either extremely or moderately interested in sports. Also, 87.1% had participated in sports competitions, ranging from recreational (32.6%) to higher levels, indicating that most students were already involved in physical activity.



**Fig 3:** Students interest in sports

Most students heard about the course from their peers, especially senior students (45%), and from teachers (29.2%).

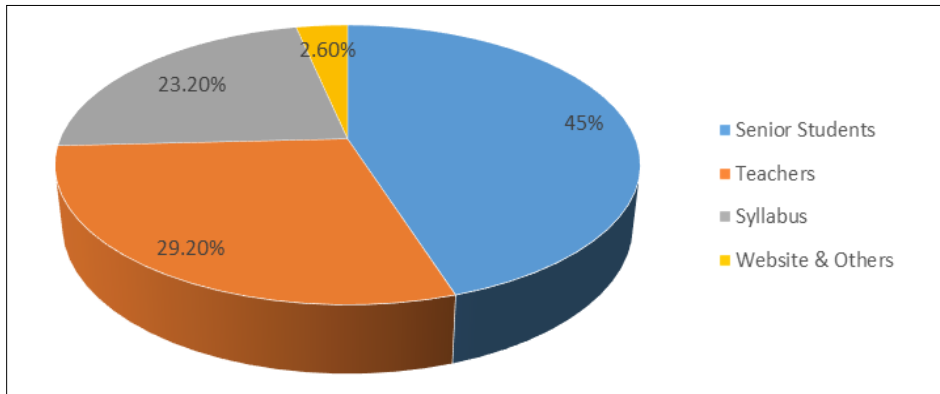


Fig 4: Primary sources of information about the course

**3.2. Post-Course Feedback and Learning Outcomes**

**Feedback was exceptionally positive across all measured dimensions:** Learning & Goals: An overwhelming 99.5% (Agree/Strongly Agree) reported learning a lot. Similarly, 99.2% found the course goals clear, and 97.9% believed these goals were achieved to a significant extent.

**Content & Delivery:** 97.6% found topics relevant to their overall development, and 97.4% agreed the course was stimulating. The appropriateness of topics (99.2%) and the pitch of information (99.5%) were nearly unanimously endorsed.

**Meeting Expectations & Health Focus:** 93.2% felt the course met their expectations. A remarkable 99.5% agreed they were encouraged to think about a healthy lifestyle, highlighting a key successful outcome.

The percentage of respondents who say they learned something new and that was not available to them through any other program is very high at 98.4%. Most respondents

report high satisfaction with the program and would like to participate in more experiential learning opportunities.

**3.3. Content Preferences and Satisfaction Overall**

**Most Popular Topic:** The “all topics” topic was the most popular among those selected (30.1%), followed by fitness (17.2%) and health (14.6%), indicating broad appeal for the content.

**Least Popular Topic:** Most respondents (62.1%) selected “nothing” when asked what they liked least about the courses. Among those who identified specific content areas, the contentious topics of “Tournaments & Fixtures” (13.3%) and yoga (12.3%) were the least popular.

**Students' rating of the course:** The majority of students (54.8%) rated their overall experience as "Excellent," and an additional 40.5% rated it as "Good." Combined, this means that over 95% of students had a favorable view of the course, with very few rating it as "Average" (3.7%) or below.

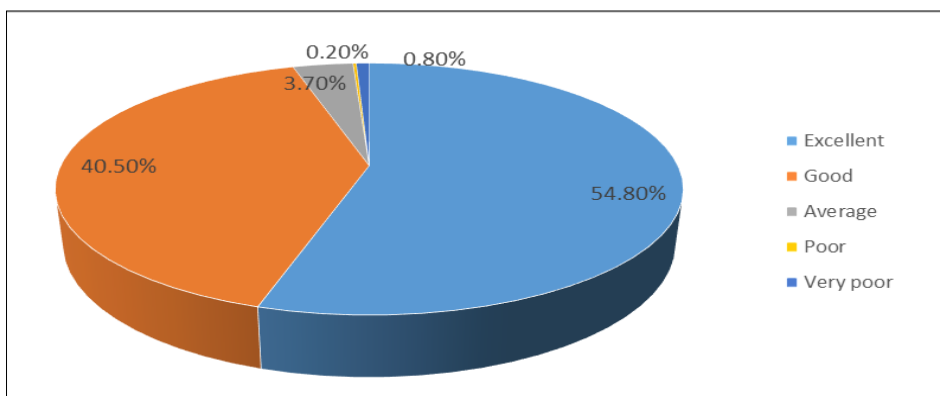


Fig 5: The students' rating of the course

**Discussion**

The data show that an elective physical education course is successful. Students generally choose an elective course based on a previously established interest and the perceived relevance of the course to their lives, not on the ease of earning a good grade. Students who choose an elective course based on interest receive instruction in an organized, clear, relevant, and well-delivered manner.

There is a connection between self-determination theory and the assigned readings: when a student's need for relevance

aligns with the course content (Ryan & Deci, 2000) [4], intrinsic motivation will occur.

The results of the goal clarity and goal mastery items indicate that the teachers communicated the course learning objectives and implemented them in a well-defined manner, providing students with clear outcomes. The most frequently reported item by students was that the course exceeded their first need (99.5%) by providing information that helped them improve their health and gave them the knowledge they needed to make healthier lifestyle choices.

A large number of students place strong emphasis on practical application, aligning with the value placed on experiential learning, as indicated in the literature. Studies have concluded that experiential methods will be the most effective way to engage students in physical education (Prusak *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Over 60% of the students selected no topics as their least favourite, and approximately 30% selected all topics as their most favourite, further demonstrating the course's success in terms of choice and material balance. The slightly lower level of agreement (93.2%) for fulfilling students' expectations of course content, compared with >97% agreement with other rating items, further suggests that there were likely minor gaps between students' initial, broad expectations and the actual course content as delivered. The difference here provides an area for future refinement. The preference against "Tournaments & Fixture" might reflect a student preference for active, participatory content over theoretical or managerial aspects of sport.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The physical education open course was very successful in attracting intrinsically motivated students and provided an educational experience that exceeded their expectations, fostering health awareness and giving them applicable knowledge to help them reach their goals. The strengths of the course include a clear structure, well-pitched content, and an emphasis on personal application to physical health. Recommendations are made on the study on how to improve the physical education elective course:

**Maintain core strengths:** Continue to focus on lifestyle modification, health concepts, and other topics that draw students to the course and help them achieve good outcomes.

**Enhance practical modules:** Ensure practical sessions and offer sufficient variety so that each session has an obvious connection between the information learned in theory and its application in practice.

**Review specific topics:** Consider new ways to deliver the content or context of "Tournaments & Fixture" and "Yoga," as these were the least popular among students' choices.

**Set up peer-advocate programs:** Since older students were the primary source of information on how to succeed, younger students learn from older students' experiences, encouraging them to enroll in the course.

**Longitudinal study:** Future studies should look at how the course continues to affect long-term behavior; this could involve monitoring long-term physical activity and lifestyle decisions.

### References

1. Ferrer-Caja E, Weiss MR. Predictors of intrinsic motivation among adolescent students in physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*,2000;71(3):267–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2000.10608907>
2. Lumpkin A, Favor J. Comparing the academic performance of student-athletes and general students in a physical education teacher education program. *The Physical Educator*,2012;69(3):256-270.

3. Prusak KA, Treasure DC, Darst PW, Pangrazi RP. The effects of choice on the motivation of adolescent girls in physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*,2004;23(1):19–29. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.23.1.19>
4. Ryan RM, Deci EL. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*,2000;55(1):68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
5. Sallis JF, McKenzie TL, Beets MW, Beighle A, Erwin H, Lee S. Physical education's role in public health: Steps forward and backward over 20 years and hope for the future. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*,2012;83(2):125–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2012.10599842>