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Original Article

Dynamics of Learning Engagement: A Study of Perceptual Factors and Their Role in Motivational Activity Development

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Abstract. Learning engagement occurs when a student is emotionally engaged and behaves effectively in the learning process. This study explored the factors that are affecting learning engagement from the perspective of tertiary students at a University Institution in Santiago City, Isabela, Philippines. The study employed descriptive research and recruited 487 tertiary students via stratified random sampling. Findings revealed that "sufficient knowledge and information of the professor about the subject", "active presence in class", and "a large number of students in the classroom" were the most important among the factors that influence learning engagement. On the other hand, "monotonous teaching," "drowsiness in the classroom," and "noise pollution" are the identified factors that negatively influence learning engagement. Furthermore, the study elucidates that students do not relate the factors influencing learning engagement to their General Weighted Average (GWA). This study focused on recognizing the importance of learning engagement among tertiary students preparing for their profession. It proposed motivational activities as a basis for designing effective strategies for improving students' engagement in their education.

Keywords: *Learning engagement; Motivational activity; Perceptual factors.*

Some of the important perceptual factors highlighted with respect to engagement and perception-formation are self-efficacy, attitudes, and psychological resilience, which also influence the level of engagement possible for students in college. Student engagement in learning is indeed considered an important aspect of educational success, especially in higher education. When students engage behaviorally, emotionally, or cognitively, it enhances their academic experience (Wong et al., 2023).

It is evidenced in part by the learner's engagement that the educational setting as the evidence points, primarily determines educational outcomes. Therefore, understanding the interrelated components of learning engagement becomes important for improving the learning environment and creating the conditions for higher-level learning outcomes. These variations may reflect the extent to which tertiary students engage in the learning process,

influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors, as noted by Zhang et al. (2023) and Ginting (2021), include personal characteristics, motivation, intellectual pressure, and past experience. Some of these factors, such as classroom, air, type, light, social atmosphere, temperature, and facilities, indicate external factors (Yuliana, 2023). Besides that, it has been reported that instructor support tends to positively affect student engagement and attainment across hundreds of studies (Boatman, 2016). On this end, Ghasemi et al. (2020) reiterate that it is about time to investigate the most effective teaching approaches that will support and motivate students toward continued academic engagement, and to propose a better series of teaching practices that create the setting to retain and strengthen academic engagement. However, according to the researcher, teachers' attitudes may also significantly contribute to the extent to which students disengage from learning (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2022). Further, the same study found that when teachers were enthusiastic about their subject, students were, in turn, more enthusiastic about the topics. Significantly, the teacher's attitude directly influences learners' perspectives.

Previous studies have highlighted the connection between motivation, engagement, and academic performance. Intrinsic motivation, for instance, plays a key role in fostering emotional engagement, while factors such as self-regulation and financial support can help students navigate academic challenges more effectively (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023; Boatman & Long, 2016). According to Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, greater engagement in learning activities is linked to higher academic achievement. Similarly, Brallier (2020) emphasized that active engagement, when combined with motivation and personal effort, significantly contributes to students' academic success, highlighting the importance of both internal and external supports in shaping learning outcomes.

One relationship that has become increasingly important to examine in the context of blended learning is the interplay between intrinsic motivation, psychological capital, and emotional engagement in influencing academic performance. Blended learning, widely implemented over the past year, provides students with multiple instructional streams that stimulate engagement and support diverse learning needs. Additionally, factors such as long-term motivation and academic performance are closely linked to students' psychological and social well-being, highlighting the importance of both internal and external influences on learning outcomes (Yuliana, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

Students who concentrated and engaged with the instructional experience indicated that the classroom environment influenced their levels of engagement, which was maintained with minimal distractions (Thompson et al., 2019). Overcrowded classes are another barrier to achieving full student participation. Overcrowded classrooms do not provide conditions for students to interact with their teachers, making personalized attention difficult, thereby lowering their engagement in learning, according to Abusaad et al. (2015). The classroom environment itself does not motivate students to learn actively during instruction. As a result, finding professional models and increasing their impact on education, as well as teaching positive and constructive strategies, all help reinforce and promote good approaches to dealing with inadequate educational environments (Landingin et al., 2023).

This research endeavors to conduct the study at the University of La Salette, where the particular context is critical due to the institution's charter in holistic education, and to present the most up-to-date pedagogical strategies that feature inclusion and blended learning. In this way, as an institution of higher education in region 2, it provides a conducive environment for understanding the perceptual factors affecting learning engagement and for optimizing motivational activities to enhance student engagement. Also, understanding these dynamics within the university's contextualized cultural and academic environment will inform evidence-based interventions that support students' success.

Specifically, the study explored the factors affecting the learning engagement of the tertiary students at the University of La Salette, Inc., to propose motivational activities to increase the learning engagement of the tertiary students and to identify if there is a relationship between factors on the learning engagement and the academic performance of the tertiary students.

Theoretical Background

The endpoint of this theory is tied to the Student Engagement model put forth by Dr. Alexander Astin (1984), which aims to harness improvements in motivation, participation, and commitment that students are expected to

develop toward education, and ideally to improve learning outcomes with them. Student Engagement Theory (Student Involvement Theory) emphasizes directives and techniques to inspire students' enthusiasm for academic learning inside and outside the classroom.

Using theory to study the criticality of level dimension in the framework in relation to students' involvement in student ability to engage in the learning process. Following Astin's theory of student involvement, students' learning and development depend on the quality and quantity of such contact and involvement during their college experience. Thus, the more such participation and interaction take place outside formal classes, the greater the likelihood that students will learn more from their education and be much better able to participate in classes or lectures. Such a premise is relevant to educational practice and improved interventions to better student concentration and overall performance in learning.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design. This approach is well-suited to examining current levels of learning engagement and identifying the factors that influence it, providing insights that can help create a more supportive and effective learning environment for university students.

Research Participants

The participants included in this study were 487 tertiary students selected by stratified random sampling. The Inclusion criteria for this study were enrollment in the 1st semester of the academic year 2024-2025 as regular students and willingness to participate.

Research Instrument

A validated survey questionnaire developed by Rahiminia et al. (2020) served as the primary data collection tool, with a reliability coefficient of 0.77 (Cronbach's alpha). The questionnaire was organized into two main sections: demographic information and factors affecting learning engagement. The engagement factors were further divided into three categories: professor-related (11 items), student-related (11 items), and environmental factors (3 items). Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 – Totally Effective, 1 – Very Effective, 2 – Moderately Effective, 3 – Slightly Effective, to 4 – Ineffective, with a maximum score of 4 for each item.

Data Gathering Procedure

A survey was distributed to 487 tertiary students following approval from the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Institution. Data collection took place from October 10 to November 10, 2024. The study adhered to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of responses, and maintaining transparency about the research's purpose throughout data collection.

Data Analysis

The data collected from participants were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and weighted mean, were used to summarize the responses. To examine the relationships among the three factors (professor-related, student-related, and environmental) and students' GWA, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in this study included voluntary participation, secure data storage, and the participants' right to withdraw at any time. The study strictly adhered to ethical standards and data privacy regulations, ensuring that sensitive information, such as participants' identities, remained accessible only to the researcher. This careful and systematic approach not only protected the participants but also allowed for the collection of reliable, evidence-based insights into the factors affecting student engagement, contributing valuable findings to inform educational strategies.

Results and Discussion

Perceptual Factors Affecting the Learning Engagement of the Tertiary Students

Table 1 presents the summary mean of the factors affecting tertiary students' learning engagement.

Table 1. *Summary Mean on the Factors Affecting the Learning Engagement of Tertiary Students*

Indicators	M	SD	Interpretation
Professor-Related Factors	1.45	1.31	Very Effective
Student-Related Factors	1.85	1.02	Moderately Effective
Environmental Factors	3.84	1.04	Ineffective

Based on the findings, professor-related factors were rated highly, particularly the professor's subject-matter expertise, which received the highest mean score of 0.97 and was interpreted as "very effective." This suggests that students value instructors who demonstrate strong mastery of the content. This result aligns with Zhang et al. (2023), who found that motivation-based and well-structured teaching strategies significantly improved student engagement and learning outcomes in a Nursing English course. Similarly, effective instructional strategies, such as the purposeful use of teaching materials and structured lesson delivery, contribute to improved academic performance. In contrast, indifferent teaching practices received a mean score of 3.60, which is interpreted as "ineffective," suggesting that repetitive, unvaried instruction may reduce classroom engagement.

A notable contrast emerged regarding the provision of structured lesson plans. Clear lesson organization enables teachers to deliver content systematically in line with academic schedules and objectives. When instruction becomes monotonous or lacks variation, students tend to disengage from the learning process. Furthermore, student-related factors such as regular class attendance (M = 0.89) and genuine interest in the subject matter (M = 0.90) were both interpreted as "very effective." These findings are supported by Yuliana (2023), who emphasized that students' concentration and active involvement significantly influence learning outcomes. Conversely, factors such as drowsiness and lack of focus negatively affect academic engagement, particularly when students are fatigued or have diminished concentration.

Environmental factors, particularly classroom overcrowding and noise pollution, were rated as "ineffective." These results are consistent with Tayeg (2015), who reported that overcrowded classrooms limit meaningful teacher–student interaction and negatively affect the overall learning experience. Such conditions make it difficult for students to concentrate and actively participate in discussions. Overall, both male and female respondents predominantly rated professor-related factors as "very effective," while environmental conditions were viewed as barriers to effective learning. These findings reinforce the idea that while instructional quality strongly promotes engagement, unfavorable classroom environments can significantly hinder students' academic performance.

Factors Affecting the Learning Engagement

Professor-Related Factors

Table 2 presents factors affecting nursing students' learning engagement, with a focus on professor-related factors.

Table 2. *Factors Affecting the Learning Engagement of Nursing Students in Terms of Professor-Related Factors*

Indicators	M	SD	Interpretation
The Skills of the Professor in Creating Motivation	1.11	1.01	Very Effective
Proper Time Management by Professors in the Presentation of Content	1.19	1.43	Very Effective
Use of PowerPoint	1.05	1.05	Very Effective
A Large Volume of Teaching Materials in a Session	1.35	1.36	Very Effective
Student's Positive Mental History	1.17	0.90	Very Effective
The Professor's Proper Teaching Speed	1.31	1.35	Very Effective
Monotonous Teaching	3.40	1.52	Ineffective
Professor Ethics	1.30	1.03	Very Effective
The Professor's Ability to Bring Students Together	1.15	1.01	Very Effective
Sufficient Knowledge and Information of the Professor About the Subject	0.99	0.99	Very Effective
The Difference Between the Professor's and the Student's Gender	1.97	1.01	Moderately Effective
Category Mean	**1.45**	**1.15**	**Very Effective**

The table reveals respondents' perceptions of the factors influencing learning engagement, with a category mean

of 1.45 for professor-related factors, indicating "very effective". The most important factor is "*sufficient knowledge and information of the professor about the subject*" with a mean of 0.99 and interpreted as "very effective". Additionally, "*use of PowerPoint*" got a mean of 1.05, interpreted as "very effective". On the other hand, "*monotonous teaching*" is the least factor with a mean of 3.40, interpreted as "ineffective".

Student-Related Factors

Table 3 shows the student-related factors affecting nursing students' learning engagement.

Table 3. *Factors Affecting the Learning Engagement of Nursing Students in Terms of Student-Related Factors*

Indicators	M	SD	Interpretation
Eating Before the Class Starts	1.32	1.15	Very Effective
Drowsiness in the Classroom	3.75	1.03	Ineffective
Having a Base on the Topic Presented	0.98	1.09	Very Effective
Other Students' Focus	3.43	0.95	Ineffective
Interest in the Subject Matter	0.93	1.52	Very Effective
Having Individual Intellectual Conflicts	3.47	0.65	Ineffective
Active Presence in Class	0.94	1.06	Very Effective
Belief in Learning the Content While Teaching	1.31	1.01	Very Effective
Relying on Leaflets	1.48	1.95	Very Effective
Co-educational Classes	1.45	1.53	Very Effective
Read the Prepared Pamphlets or References Before Class	1.29	0.85	Very Effective
Category Mean	**1.85**	**1.16**	**Moderately Effective**

The table presents respondents' perceptions of the factors influencing learning engagement, with a category mean of 1.85, interpreted as "moderately effective". The most important factor is "*active presence in class*" with a mean of 0.94 and interpreted as "very effective". Additionally, "*interest in the subject matter*" got a mean of 0.93, interpreted as "very effective". On the other hand, "*drowsiness in the classroom*" is the least significant factor, with a mean of 3.75, interpreted as "ineffective".

Environmental Factors

Table 4 presents environmental factors affecting nursing students' engagement in learning.

Table 4. *Factors Affecting the Learning Engagement of Nursing Students in Terms of Environmental Factors*

Indicators	M	SD	Interpretation
Noise Pollution	3.81	1.05	Ineffective
Poor Light and Ventilation in the Classroom	3.84	0.99	Ineffective
A Large Number of Students in the Classroom	3.87	1.48	Ineffective
Category Mean	**3.84**	**1.17**	**Ineffective**

The table reveals respondents' perceptions of the factors influencing learning engagement, with a category mean of 3.84, which is interpreted as "ineffective". The most important factor is "*a large number of students in the classroom*" with a mean of 3.87, which is interpreted as "ineffective". On the other hand, "*noise pollution*" is the least influential factor, with a mean of 3.84, interpreted as "ineffective".

Relationship Between Factors Affecting Learning Engagement and GWA

Table 5 shows the remaining relationship between the 3 identified factors and the GWA of tertiary students.

Table 5. *Relationship Between the Factors Affecting Learning Engagement and the General Weighted Average (GWA) of Tertiary Students*

	General Weighted Average (GWA)			
Variables	**r**	**p-value**	**n**	**Interpretation**
Professor-Related Factors	r= 0.32,	p=0.01	126	Weak Positive, Significant Relationship
Student-Related Factors	r=0.21,	p= 0.41	126	Weak Positive, Not Significant
Environmental Factors	r= 0.61	p=0.03	126	Strong Positive, Significant Relationship

Table 5 shows the relationships between various variables and students' GWA. There was a positive, statistically significant relationship between professor-related and environmental factors with GWA, and a weak positive, statistically not significant relationship between student-related factors. In this study, learning engagement did not significantly relate to GWA (r = -0.103, p = 0.249). This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that engagement alone does not necessarily translate into academic success. For example, Fuertes et al. (2023) and Brallier (2020) found that engagement, in general, does not consistently lead to improved academic outcomes. On

the contrary, as Boatman and Long (2016) also indicated, external factors can influence engagement, e.g., through financial support or other support systems, which in turn might indirectly influence achievement.

Other researchers show that the effect of engagement varies across its dimensions. Casuso-Holgado et al. (2013) found that academic outcomes were more predictive of behavioral and emotional engagement than overall engagement scores. On the same note, Ginting (2021) and Havik and Westergard (2020) highlighted that classroom dynamics and teacher impact can significantly affect engagement, the learning environment, and the quality of teaching, making the learning environment and quality of teaching more important than student effort alone. Classroom noise and infrastructure have also been demonstrated to influence engagement and academic performance (Bulunuz, Bulunuz, and Tuncal, 2017).

Conclusion

The learning engagement of University College students is affected by multiple dimensions. As this study showed, the professor's expertise is a major influence, and student participation and the quality of the environment affect their levels of learning engagement. Some variables, such as monotonous teaching and a distracting classroom environment, are negative contributors to learning engagement; however, the study recommends specific motivational approaches to make learning much more engaging. Surprisingly, students' engagement was not significantly correlated with their school performance, suggesting that engagement serves as a broader indicator of their educational experience rather than directly measuring academic achievement.

Motivational activities recommended based on the findings of this study focus on the key factors that enable learning engagement. Firstly, teacher-related improvements can be achieved by supporting dynamic, interactive teaching strategies, such as media tools like "PowerPoint" presentations and class discussions that provoke critical reflection. Instructors' training programs can bring teachers on board to continue providing engaging teaching practices and avoid dull lecturing, which can lead to disinterest. Student-related, encouraging active participation in class by working in groups, role-playing, and contributing to discussions should increase interest in the topic. Incorporating short mental breaks and mindfulness practices, or revering class schedules to alleviate drowsiness, can help improve students' attentiveness in lectures. Environmentally, strategies should include reducing thumping or overcrowding in the classroom. This might mean optimizing classroom layout, setting size limits for classes, and establishing quiet zones within classrooms to minimize distractions.

This research would impact education by showing that one needs to examine individual and environmental factors affecting learning engagement. With the correct identification of key drivers and barriers to student engagement, such as the expertise of professors, student engagement, and the physical environment of classrooms, an institution and educators could develop specific strategies for their enhancement in classroom management that would make them more engaged and provide more support for both old and new students. This research advocates for innovative approaches to teaching, strengthening teacher-student interaction, and optimizing physical learning environments to motivate and focus students.

The great thing about this study is that it will help develop evidence-based interventions to improve the quality of education. Understanding the subtle dynamics of engagement will enable educationalists to develop instructional methods and institutional policies that enhance academic performance and further improve the overall learning experience. This is especially true in higher education, where undergraduate involvement in the learning process needs to be intense and prolonged to prepare students for the professional roles they are being groomed for. The results of the research will thus serve as a framework for creating environments in educational settings that are motivated and adaptable to inclusion, which are essential components of academic success and individual development.

Contributions of Authors

Asst. Prof. Queenne Kimverlee C. Landingin, MAN, MSN, MAED, is the sole researcher of the study.

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Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest to declare.

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