

GRADE 7 LEARNERS' PERCEPTION AND MOTIVATION IN MAPEH: A BASIS FOR ENHANCED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This study examined Grade 7 learners' perception and motivation in Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) and determined how teachers' instructional strategies relate to these variables. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and Keller's ARCS model, the research employed a descriptive-correlational design. Researcher-made Likert-type questionnaires were administered to Grade 7 students and MAPEH teachers in a public junior high school during School Year 2024–2025. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, weighted means, standard deviations, and Pearson product-moment correlation. Results revealed that learners' perception of MAPEH was high across the dimensions of value, enjoyment, and relevance, indicating that students generally see the subject as meaningful, engaging, and connected to real-life experiences. Motivation levels were likewise high, with teacher encouragement emerging as the strongest motivating factor. Reported instructional strategies—such as multimedia integration, demonstrations, collaborative activities, and performance-based tasks—were frequently utilized in classes. Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between perception and motivation, and between instructional strategies and both learner perception and motivation. These findings suggest that when students perceive MAPEH as valuable and enjoyable, their motivation increases, and that engaging, student-centered teaching approaches further strengthen both outcomes. An action plan was developed focusing on real-life contextualization, technology-supported and gamified activities, collaborative performance tasks, teacher professional development, and inclusive learning environments. The study recommends sustained use and enhancement of motivating strategies to improve learner engagement and achievement in MAPEH, thereby promoting continuous classroom improvement.

Keywords: MAPEH, Learner Perception, Learner Motivation, Instructional Strategies, Grade 7, Descriptive-Correlational Study

1. Introduction

Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) is a core learning area in the junior high school curriculum that aims to develop learners holistically across aesthetic, physical, emotional, and health-related domains. Through music and arts, students cultivate creativity, cultural literacy, and self-expression; through physical education, they strengthen fitness, discipline, teamwork, and lifelong activity habits; and through health education, they gain knowledge and attitudes for well-being and disease prevention. International literature consistently links participation in arts and physical education with improved cognitive engagement, socio-emotional development, and academic persistence (UNESCO, 2006; UNESCO, 2015). Despite this value, MAPEH is often perceived by learners as less academically demanding than other subjects, leading to uneven engagement and motivation—especially at the Grade 7 level, where students are adjusting to more complex expectations, new peer contexts, and teacher styles.

Learners' perception of a subject—how meaningful, enjoyable, and relevant they find it—plays a decisive role in how they participate in learning tasks. Expectancy–Value Theory explains that students invest effort in activities they consider valuable, interesting, and useful, particularly when they believe they can succeed (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In MAPEH classes, perception may be shaped by signals about the subject's real-life importance, opportunities for creativity and performance, or beliefs that the skills are applicable beyond school. When students view MAPEH as relevant to identity, health, or future goals, they become more inclined to engage actively, practice persistently, and value feedback. Conversely, low perceived value or relevance can result in avoidance, passive compliance, or minimal effort.

Motivation is likewise central to meaningful learning in MAPEH. Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that students sustain motivation when learning environments satisfy three psychological needs: autonomy (feeling of choice and ownership), competence (feeling capable), and relatedness (feeling supported and connected) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). MAPEH is uniquely positioned to nurture these needs through creative tasks, cooperative performance, and mastery-oriented physical activities. However, if activities are overly teacher-directed, competitive without support, or disconnected from students' experiences, motivation can decline. Grade 7 learners, in particular, may require intentional scaffolding to build confidence in performance tasks, movement skills, and health decision-making.

Instructional strategies are among the strongest school-based contributors to learner motivation and perception. Keller's ARCS model explains that motivation increases when instruction captures attention, establishes relevance, builds confidence, and provides satisfaction (Keller, 1987). In the context of MAPEH, attention may be sustained through varied routines, multimedia resources, and interactive demonstrations; relevance may be strengthened by connecting activities to everyday fitness, cultural practices, or personal wellness; confidence may grow through guided practice and feedback; and satisfaction may be supported through recognition and meaningful performance opportunities. Constructivist learning perspectives further argue that students learn best when they actively construct meaning through authentic tasks, social interaction, and reflection (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, collaborative performances, project-based outputs, and activity-centered lessons are expected to influence how learners perceive MAPEH and their motivation to learn.

Recent educational discussions have also highlighted that technology-supported, student-centered approaches can broaden engagement in the arts and physical education by increasing interactivity, personalization, and access to diverse content. When teachers integrate digital music tools, video-based skill modeling, gamified fitness activities, or online health modules, learners may perceive the subject as more contemporary and aligned with their interests. Still, technology alone does not guarantee motivation; rather, its effectiveness depends on how it is used to support autonomy, competence, and relevance. Understanding how Grade 7 learners currently perceive MAPEH, what motivates them, and what strategies teachers commonly employ is therefore essential for evidence-based classroom improvement.

In many school settings, MAPEH teachers observe that some Grade 7 learners participate enthusiastically in performance tasks and physical activities, while others remain hesitant, disengaged, or anxious about being evaluated. This divergence may reflect differences in perceived enjoyment, value, and relevance, as well as differences in the motivational climate created by instructional approaches. Identifying these patterns matters because early secondary school experiences can shape long-term attitudes toward arts participation, physical activity, and health behaviors (UNESCO, 2015). If learners build positive perceptions and stable motivation at the Grade 7 stage, they are more likely to sustain engagement across later grade levels and apply MAPEH competencies outside the classroom.

Anchored in these theoretical and practical considerations, the present study examines Grade 7 learners' perceptions and motivations in MAPEH and explores how these factors relate

to teachers' instructional strategies. Specifically, the study assesses learners' perceptions of value, enjoyment, and relevance and measures motivation using indicators consistent with intrinsic and extrinsic engagement, including the influence of teacher encouragement. It also describes the instructional strategies frequently used by MAPEH teachers and tests the relationships among these variables using a descriptive–correlational design. By clarifying how perception and motivation interplay within the MAPEH classroom—and how teaching strategies are associated with both—this research aims to provide an empirical basis for enhancing instruction. The results intend to guide teachers and school leaders in designing motivating, relevant, and learner-centered MAPEH experiences that support holistic development, sustained participation, and improved learning outcomes for Grade 7 students.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to determine the levels of Grade 7 learners' perception and motivation toward MAPEH and to examine the relationships among these variables and teachers' instructional strategies. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to describe existing conditions as they naturally occurred in the classroom without manipulating variables, while also testing the strength and direction of associations between perception, motivation, and instructional practices. Data were gathered through researcher-made Likert-type survey questionnaires administered to Grade 7 students and MAPEH teachers, and results were summarized using weighted means and standard deviations; Pearson product–moment correlation was then used to establish whether significant relationships existed among the key study variables, providing an empirical basis for proposing enhanced instructional strategies.

2.2 Participants

The participants in the study were Grade 7 learners and MAPEH teachers from a public junior high school during School Year 2024–2025. The student-respondents served as the primary source of data for assessing perceptions of MAPEH in terms of value, enjoyment, and relevance, as well as their level of motivation to learn the subject. The teacher-respondents, on the other hand, provided data on the instructional strategies commonly used in MAPEH classes. By involving both learners and teachers, the study was able to capture a more comprehensive view of classroom experiences and examine how teaching practices relate to students' perception and motivation within the natural school setting.

2.3 Instrumentation

The study used researcher-developed survey questionnaires as the primary instruments for data collection, consisting of structured Likert-type scales explicitly designed for Grade 7 learners and MAPEH teachers. The student questionnaire measured learners' perceptions of MAPEH across the dimensions of value, enjoyment, and relevance, as well as their motivation toward the subject through indicators of engagement and influencing factors such as teacher encouragement. The teacher questionnaire gathered information on the frequency and extent of instructional strategies employed in MAPEH classes, including multimedia use, demonstrations, collaborative activities, and performance-based tasks. Prior to administration, the instruments were subjected to expert validation to ensure alignment with the study variables and to pilot-test reliability. These tools enabled the systematic quantification of respondents' views and practices necessary for descriptive analysis and correlational testing.

2.4 Data Analysis

The study followed a quantitative approach aligned with the descriptive–correlational design. After collecting completed Likert-type questionnaires from Grade 7 learners and MAPEH teachers, responses were tallied and organized for statistical analysis. Frequency counts were used to describe respondent distributions. At the same time, weighted means and standard deviations summarized learners' perceptions (value, enjoyment, and relevance), motivation toward MAPEH, and the extent of instructional strategies employed by teachers. To determine whether significant relationships existed among the key variables, the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient (r) was applied, with corresponding p -values interpreted to test the null hypotheses. This analytic procedure provided both descriptive evidence of prevailing classroom conditions and inferential results establishing the strength and direction of associations that served as the basis for the proposed instructional enhancement plan.

3 Results

The results showed that Grade 7 learners demonstrated a highly positive perception of MAPEH across all measured dimensions. The overall perception mean was high (approximately 3.85), indicating that students generally view MAPEH as an important, enjoyable, and meaningful subject. Among the three components, enjoyment had the highest mean (around 3.92), suggesting that learners particularly appreciate the interactive, activity-based nature of MAPEH lessons. Value and relevance also received high ratings, reflecting that students recognize the subject's contribution to their personal growth, health awareness, creativity, and daily life.

Learners' motivation toward MAPEH was likewise rated high, with an overall mean of about 3.82. This implies that students are consistently driven to participate in MAPEH activities and complete learning tasks. Notably, teacher encouragement emerged as the strongest motivational factor (with a mean of about 3.95), highlighting the crucial role of supportive teacher behavior in sustaining learner engagement. The findings suggest that beyond interest in the subject itself, students' willingness to exert effort is reinforced by teachers who provide guidance, affirmation, and meaningful feedback during performances, skill practice, and health-related learning tasks.

In terms of instructional practices, MAPEH teachers reported frequently employing a variety of learner-centered strategies, reflected in a high overall mean of roughly 3.81. The most used approaches included multimedia integration, demonstrations, group or collaborative activities, and performance-based tasks. These strategies align with the nature of MAPEH as a practical and skills-oriented subject, and they provide students with opportunities to learn actively, observe models, practice repeatedly, and express creativity in authentic contexts.

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among the major variables. Learners' perceptions were strongly and positively related to their motivation ($r \approx 0.684$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that students who perceive MAPEH as more valuable, enjoyable, and relevant are also more motivated to learn it. When examined along dimensions of value, enjoyment, and relevance, each showed significant correlations with motivation (r values ranging from 0.66 to 0.70), confirming that all aspects of perception contribute meaningfully to motivational outcomes.

Finally, the findings indicated that teachers' instructional strategies were significantly associated with both learners' perception and motivation. More engaging and varied strategies corresponded with higher learner ratings of enjoyment, value, and relevance, as well as stronger motivational levels. Taken together, these results suggest a reinforcing cycle in the MAPEH classroom: effective student-centered strategies promote positive perceptions, which in turn strengthen motivation, and motivated learners are more responsive to classroom activities. These empirical patterns served as the foundation for the proposed action plan to enhance MAPEH instruction for Grade 7 learners further.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study corroborate a large body of motivation research in physical education and allied MAPEH domains showing that positive learner perceptions are strongly tied to higher motivation and engagement. In the present results, Grade 7 learners rated MAPEH highly in value, enjoyment, and relevance, and these dimensions were significantly and positively related to motivation. This pattern aligns with Expectancy–Value Theory research, indicating that students participate more actively in physical education when they perceive activities as important, enjoyable, and useful for present and future life (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). A meta-analysis of EVT studies in physical education likewise concluded that task value (interest/enjoyment and utility) is a consistent predictor of students' effort and engagement, strengthening the idea that perception and motivation operate together in PE-type learning areas such as MAPEH (Zhang & Chen, 2022).

The high motivation levels observed in this study—especially the prominence of teacher encouragement as a motivating factor—also echo Self-Determination Theory findings in PE contexts. SDT posits that motivation rises when teachers support autonomy, provide structure that builds competence, and foster relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Empirical PE studies show that adolescents who perceive stronger autonomy support and teacher involvement report greater psychological need satisfaction and more self-determined motivation (Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007). Similarly, SDT-based work linking supportive teacher behavior to increased engagement and physical activity suggests that teacher encouragement functions as a practical expression of autonomy support and relatedness, reinforcing students' willingness to participate—consistent with the present study's results (Cheon et al., 2019).

The study's evidence that enjoyment was the highest-rated perception dimension mirrors related investigations showing that affective experiences in PE strongly influence continued participation. For example, research on middle school students found that perceived competence and enjoyment significantly predicted persistence and physical activity engagement, underscoring how pleasurable classroom experiences translate into stronger motivation and sustained involvement (Zhu et al., 2023). This supports the current conclusion that when Grade 7 learners enjoy MAPEH tasks—performances, arts production, games, or fitness routines—their motivational drive becomes more stable and classroom engagement improves.

The findings on teachers' instructional strategies further align with motivational-instruction literature, particularly ARCS-based and student-centered PE studies. In this study, teachers frequently used multimedia, demonstrations, collaborative activities, and performance tasks, and these strategies were significantly associated with higher learner perception and motivation. ARCS-focused PE intervention research likewise reports that lessons designed to capture attention, emphasize relevance, build confidence through guided practice, and provide satisfaction via meaningful performance opportunities lead to stronger motivation and improved participation (Keller, 1987; Tsai et al., 2022). The convergence suggests that varied, interactive, and contextually meaningful strategies are not just popular practices but demonstrably linked to learners' positive attitudes and motivation in movement- and performance-oriented subjects like MAPEH.

Overall, the present study strengthens and localizes international evidence: students' positive perceptions (value, enjoyment, relevance) are associated with higher motivation, and supportive, engaging instructional strategies are linked to both perception and motivation. By demonstrating these relationships among Grade 7 learners within a MAPEH setting, the research echoes SDT and EVT conclusions in PE while reinforcing ARCS-informed claims that motivation is teachable through deliberate instructional design. This corroboration provides strong theoretical and empirical justification for the study's proposed action plan, emphasizing real-life contextualization, technology-supported engagement, collaboration, and teacher professional development as routes to sustain learners' motivation and perceptions in MAPEH.

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