

A Study on the Correlation Between Dance Learning Motivation and Learning Behavior Among Dance Majors at S College in Hunan Province, China

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the current status of dance learning motivation and learning behavior among dance majors at S College in Hunan Province and to examine the differences in these two variables across different demographic characteristics. A quantitative research design was adopted, and 208 undergraduate dance majors were selected as the research sample. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey. The study employed established scales to measure dance learning motivation and learning behavior. The instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity. Statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis. The results indicated that students exhibited a relatively high level of dance learning motivation, with extrinsic motivation slightly higher than intrinsic motivation. Learning behavior was also at a relatively high level, particularly in practicing and problem-posing behaviors. Significant differences were found in both variables across grade and age groups, with senior and older students showing higher levels of motivation and more active learning behaviors. Gender differences were mainly observed in listening, interaction, and performance behaviors, while place of origin showed significant differences only in practicing and problem-posing behaviors. In addition, a significant positive relationship was found between dance learning motivation and learning behavior.

Keywords: S College, Hunan Province, China, Student Dance Learning Motivation, Learning Behavior.

1. Introduction

International research on dance learning has expanded beyond skill development to include cultural, psychological, and social dimensions such as identity, motivation, and behavior. In the United States and Europe, dance education has evolved from performance training toward emphasizing creativity, self-expression, and psychological development (Holguín-Álvarez et al., 2023), while gradually integrating theories from psychology and pedagogy. Recent studies further highlight the interaction between motivation, emotion, and social context, particularly in online learning environments where self-discipline significantly affects learning outcomes (Reeve, 2023). In East Asia, especially in South Korea and Japan, dance education reflects strong cultural characteristics, linking learning with cultural identity, national pride, and career development, and increasingly incorporating popular forms such as K-pop (Cook, 2025). Overall, globalization and digital technologies have accelerated cross-cultural integration in dance education, with innovations such as online platforms and virtual reality reshaping dance learning approaches (Wu et al., 2021).

Research in Chinese dance education has gradually shifted from traditional skill transmission to a more diversified and integrated system influenced by educational reform and globalization (Zhang, 2025). Entering the 21st century, dance education in China has increasingly emphasized artistic expression, creativity, and comprehensive development, particularly under the influence of modern dance, which encourages innovation and individuality (Yu, 2025). At the same time, Chinese dance education integrates Western pedagogical approaches with indigenous cultural elements, where cultural identity plays an important motivational role, especially in ethnic dance learning. In recent years, the rise of digital technologies and online or blended learning models have further reshaped dance education, highlighting the importance of self-directed learning and technological innovation such as VR and AR (Cheng & Wong, 2023).

At Hunan S University's dance program, student motivation is influenced by multiple factors. Beyond traditional interests in dance technique and artistic expression, many students are driven by career aspirations. How to stimulate intrinsic motivation through teaching methods and

(Baker et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, explains that behavior is shaped through the interaction of cognition, behavior, and environment, with observational learning and self-efficacy as its core concepts (Bandura, 2001). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in completing tasks, which directly influences effort, persistence, and behavioral choices (Pajares, 2002). In dance education, this theory is widely applied, as students learn not only through practice but also by observing teachers and peers, then imitating and refining movements (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Such observational learning helps improve both dance skills and self-efficacy, thereby enhancing motivation. Additionally, teacher feedback, peer interaction, and classroom environment jointly influence students' learning behaviors and outcomes. Recent studies confirm that observational learning and self-efficacy are key drivers of motivation in dance learning, supporting students in overcoming challenges and improving performance (Cheng & Wong, 2023; Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Dance Learning Motivation

Dance learning motivation refers to the internal and external driving forces that influence students' participation, engagement, and persistence in dance learning (Reeve, 2023). It is generally divided into intrinsic motivation (interest, enjoyment, self-fulfillment) and extrinsic motivation (rewards, recognition, social approval) (Cheng & Wong, 2023). Based on Self-Determination Theory, motivation quality depends on the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which can significantly enhance students' engagement and long-term learning interest (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Teacher support, feedback, and students' self-efficacy are key factors influencing motivation, as they strengthen confidence, interest, and persistence (Cumming & Duda, 2020).

Existing research shows that dance learning motivation is shaped by multiple factors, including psychological needs, social environment, and cultural context (González et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023). While many studies emphasize intrinsic motivation and autonomy, some scholars argue that external rewards and contextual factors also play important roles, especially in professional settings (Brown & Lee, 2022). Methodologically, most studies rely on

quantitative self-report tools, with increasing calls for mixed methods and culturally sensitive measurement approaches (Hernández et al., 2023). Current measurement research highlights multidimensional frameworks, including achievement, self-regulation, and social motivation, though challenges remain in capturing the complexity and dynamic nature of motivation.

Research confirms that intrinsic motivation plays a dominant role in long-term dance learning, while extrinsic motivation mainly affects short-term behavior (Zhang, 2019). Factors such as teacher support, self-efficacy, and social support significantly influence students' motivation (Wang, 2021). Although progress has been made, limitations persist, including overreliance on self-report data and insufficient consideration of sociocultural differences and individual variability.

Learning Behavior

Learning behavior in dance refers to learners' purposeful and conscious actions—such as observation, practice, imitation, feedback, and reflection—aimed at improving dance skills, physical expression, and artistic understanding (Cook, 2025; Mattsson & Pastorek Gripson, 2024). It emphasizes process-oriented engagement, including the regulation and refinement of bodily movements under the influence of motivation, autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Li, 2023).

Current research adopts mixed methods, combining self-report questionnaires with classroom observation and performance assessments. Studies often measure participation, practice duration, engagement, motivation, and satisfaction, while some use pre- and post-tests or objective performance scores to capture behavioral changes (Shintawati & Komalasari, 2023; Perez et al., 2024; Yu, 2025). However, existing tools are fragmented, with limited standardized and validated scales specifically designed for dance learning behavior, especially across different learning contexts such as online and blended environments (Guerard, 2016; Kim, 2021).

Research highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness significantly influence students' learning behavior (Li, 2023). Empirical studies using questionnaires and experimental designs have examined behavior through indicators like participation, practice frequency, and physical or aesthetic outcomes (Yu, 2024; Huang, 2023). Despite growing interest, research still lacks systematic measurement tools and deeper focus on concrete behavioral indicators,

indicating the need for more comprehensive and standardized approaches in future studies.

Research on the Relationship Between Dance Learning Motivation and Learning Behavior

Learning motivation is a key factor influencing dance learning behavior, shaping students' engagement, attitudes, and performance (Zahratunnisa et al., 2025). Research shows that intrinsic motivation and autonomy-related factors—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—significantly promote active participation and sustained learning behavior (Li, 2023; Kibirige, 2023). In university dance education, teacher support, such as emotional encouragement and constructive feedback, enhances students' intrinsic motivation, leading to greater practice commitment and more positive responses to learning tasks (Dong et al., 2024).

Instructional design and learning environments also play an important role. Student-centered and interactive teaching approaches can improve both the frequency and quality of behavioral engagement (Mattsson & Pastorek Gripson, 2024), while blended learning environments further enhance participation through interactivity and timely feedback (Holguín-Álvarez et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2021). Although existing studies confirm the strong link between motivation and behavior, they are often limited to specific contexts, with insufficient cross-cultural comparisons and limited research on how to systematically regulate motivation through instructional design (Bashaw, 2021).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Population and Sample

This study adopted a quantitative approach to examine dance learning motivation and learning behavior among 441 dance majors at S College in Hunan Province, China, and to explore differences based on demographic variables. Using convenience sampling, a minimum sample size of 208 was determined (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), and questionnaires were distributed online. The instrument included demographic information and standardized scales measuring dance learning motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and learning behavior (six dimensions), using a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis.

2.2 Instruments and Instrument Quality Assessment

Reliability and validity results indicated strong measurement quality. The Cronbach's Alpha values for dance learning motivation were 0.921 (intrinsic motivation) and 0.952 (extrinsic motivation), while all six dimensions of learning behavior ranged from 0.922 to 0.948, with overall values exceeding 0.9. Validity testing showed KMO values of 0.811 for motivation and 0.805 for learning behavior, with Bartlett's test reaching significance ($p < 0.001$), confirming suitability for factor analysis. Model fit indices were within acceptable ranges (RMSEA = 0.071; GFI = 0.944; CFI = 0.942; TLI = 0.934), indicating good construct validity. The study ultimately examined the current status of motivation and behavior, analyzed demographic differences, and explored the relationship between the two variables, providing a basis for further recommendations.

2.3 Research methodology

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed online using the "Question Star" platform to investigate dance learning motivation (Birr, 2024) and learning behavior (Quested & Ntoumanis, 2023) among dance majors at S College in Hunan Province, China. The survey was conducted from December 2025 to January 2026 and was disseminated through student group channels with the assistance of counselors to ensure sample diversity. During data collection, the research team sent reminders via WeChat and monitored response progress in real time through the platform's backend system, taking follow-up actions when necessary to improve participation. All collected data were handled with strict confidentiality.

3. Results

The study included 208 valid samples with a balanced demographic distribution. There were 107 males (51.44%) and 101 females (48.56%). In terms of grade, participants included 41 freshmen (19.71%), 54 sophomores (25.96%), 51 juniors (24.52%), and 62 seniors (29.81%), showing relatively even representation across all years. Age distribution was also balanced, with 20.67% aged 18 or below, 28.85% aged 19, 26.44% aged 20, and 24.04% aged 21 and above. Regarding place of origin, 51.44% of students were from urban areas and 48.56% from rural areas. The sample demonstrates good balance and representativeness, providing a reliable basis for analyzing the relationship between dance learning motivation and learning behavior.

Table. 1: Demographic Information of the Participants (N=208)

Variable	Item	n	%
Gender	Male	107	51.44
	Female	101	48.56
Grade	Freshman	41	19.71
	Sophomore	54	25.96
	Junior	51	24.52
	Senior	62	29.81
Age	18 years old and under	43	20.67
	19 years old	60	28.85
	20 years old	55	26.44
	21 years old and above	50	24.04
Place of Origin	Urban	107	51.44
	Rural	101	48.56
Total		208	100.00

(1) Dance majors at S College in Hunan Province demonstrated generally high levels of both dance learning motivation and learning behaviors. Among the dimensions of dance learning motivation, external motivation scored the highest ($M=4.16$, $SD=0.521$), indicating that strong external incentives (such as teacher evaluations and performance opportunities) effectively drove students' dance learning. Intrinsic motivation ($M=3.57$, $SD=0.745$) also reached a relatively high level, reflecting students' enthusiasm for dance as an art form. In terms of learning behaviors, practice behaviors ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.544$) and problem-posing behaviors ($M=4.08$, $SD=0.473$) scored the highest, while listening behaviors ($M=3.21$, $SD=0.930$) scored the lowest, indicating room for improvement in students' classroom focus.

(2) The differential analysis showed that dance learning motivation and learning behavior varied across demographic variables. For learning motivation, no significant gender differences were found ($t = -1.698$, $p = 0.091$), while significant grade differences were observed in intrinsic motivation ($F = 61.351$, $p < 0.001$) and overall motivation ($F = 59.116$, $p < 0.001$). Age showed significant differences in external motivation ($F = 18.061$, $p < 0.001$) and overall motivation ($F = 3.538$, $p = 0.016$), whereas no significant differences were found by place of origin ($t = 0.422$, $p = 0.673$). Regarding learning behavior, significant gender differences were identified in overall learning behavior ($t = -2.445$, $p = 0.015$). Grade differences were also significant in overall learning behavior ($F = 17.564$, $p < 0.001$), while

age differences were significant ($F = 3.728$, $p = 0.012$). For place of origin, significant differences were found in practicing behavior ($t = -4.363$, $p < 0.001$) and problem-posing behavior ($t = -8.044$, $p < 0.001$), but not in overall learning behavior ($t = -0.922$, $p = 0.357$). These findings indicate that grade and age exerted stronger influences on students' dance learning motivation and behavior than gender and place of origin.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis between Dance Learning Motivation and Dance Learning Behavior

	Dance Learning Motivation	Learning Behavior
Dance Learning Motivation	1	.563**
Learning Behavior	.563**	1

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

(3) There was a significant positive correlation between dance learning motivation and learning behaviors among dance majors ($r=0.563$, $p<0.01$), indicating that higher learning motivation was associated with more active learning behaviors. This confirms that dance learning motivation is a key driving factor for students' learning behaviors, and enhancing students' learning motivation can effectively promote their active participation in learning and improve their overall learning outcomes.

4. Discussion

The results, dance majors at S College in Hunan Province demonstrated relatively high levels of both learning motivation and learning behavior, with extrinsic motivation slightly higher than intrinsic motivation. In terms of behavior, practicing and problem-posing were more prominent, while listening and performing behaviors were relatively moderate. No significant differences were found in overall motivation by gender, while grade and age showed significant positive trends. In addition, place of origin had no significant effect on overall motivation, although rural students showed higher performance in practicing and questioning behaviors. Correlation analysis further indicated a significant positive relationship between learning motivation and learning behavior.

These findings may be explained by the increasing emphasis on professional training and performance-oriented education in dance programs, which encourages students to engage more in practice and task-based learning. The stronger performance of senior and older students

may be attributed to accumulated experience, clearer learning goals, and stronger professional identity. The higher extrinsic motivation observed may reflect the influence of academic requirements, assessments, and career development pressures in professional dance education.

These results are supported by previous studies, which similarly found that external motivation and academic progression are associated with stronger learning engagement and behavioral performance (López & Martín, 2022). Gender differences in behavioral engagement are consistent with Cheng & Wong (2023), while the positive influence of experience on motivation and behavior aligns with Smith & Johnson (2022). Furthermore, the positive relationship between motivation and learning behavior is supported by González et al. (2021) and Cook (2025), confirming that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play important roles in promoting student engagement.

5. Recommendations

Universities should integrate dance learning motivation into curriculum and training systems by combining theoretical courses, technical practice, and performance activities. External incentives such as competitions and exhibitions should be provided, while internal motivation can be strengthened through interest-based workshops and goal-oriented guidance. Instructors should actively guide students to transform learning motivation into concrete behaviors through classroom participation, group practice, performance tasks, and continuous feedback, forming a structured link between learning interest and behavioral engagement. Departments should implement differentiated teaching strategies based on students' gender, grade, age, and background. Targeted support should be provided to lower-level students, while advanced training and performance opportunities should be offered to senior students to promote balanced development. A comprehensive evaluation system should be established to assess both learning motivation and behavior through classroom performance, practice participation, and creative output, and link results to academic credits and rewards to enhance student engagement. Universities should improve dance education conditions by providing professional studios, digital resources, mentorship systems, and practice platforms, while also promoting competitions, workshops, and campus cultural activities to support continuous development of

motivation and behavior.

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