

A Study on the pathways to enhance self-efficacy through motivation internalization and persistent behavior in adult dance education

Xuelisha GONG

Northeast Normal University, Changchun 130117, China

Abstract: In recent years, adult dance education in China has expanded rapidly through market-driven development, forming an accessible and non-professional art education model. Training institutions cater to diverse adult needs by establishing flexible systems aimed at unlocking potential and stimulating interest. Through progressive learning, participants gain positive feedback, creating a cycle of "interest-driven engagement — achievement incentive — sustained involvement." While institutions achieve market growth via differentiated positioning, a key contradiction persists: high participation rates contrast sharply with low persistence rates. Although current teaching models attract learners quickly, they often overlook the dynamic evolution of psychological motivation.

Keywords: adult dance; motivation internalization; persistent behavior; self-efficacy

1 Motivation types and transformation trends of adult dance learners

1.1 Main types and manifestations of learning motivation

1.1.1 Interest-oriented type

Data of a multiple-choice survey reveal that "Cultivate hobbies and interests" is the primary motivation (65%) for sustained dance learning. This reflects participants' intrinsic love for dance and the enjoyment it brings, rather than external goals. Another significant driver is emotional release (57.5%), as learners turn to dance for personal expression and catharsis. These individuals are categorized as interest-oriented learners.

1.1.2 Aesthetics-oriented type

Motivations such as "enhancing temperament and exercising" focus on physiological and aesthetic improvement. These learners aim to optimize physical function and appearance through dance. Learners driven by such goals are classified as aesthetics-oriented ones.

1.1.3 Socialization-oriented type

Some participants engage in dance primarily to expand social networks or for self-display. These learners, motivated by interpersonal and social recognition needs, are identified as Socialization-oriented learners. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Reasons for participating in training classes

Reasons for Attending Training Classes	Frequency	Percentage
Cultivate Hobbies and Interests	26	65%
Release Stress	23	57.5%
Enhance Temperament	21	52.5%
Exercise Body	20	50%
Social Needs	13	32.5%
Fulfill Childhood Dreams	13	32.5%
Disliked it in Childhood and Grew to Like it	7	17.5%
Other (Please Specify)	1	2.5%

1.2 Pathways and stage characteristics of motivation internalization

The transformation from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation involves internalizing external drivers, a process varying across individuals. Bandura's theory emphasizes that higher self-efficacy fosters persistence in challenging tasks. Surveys reveal that dancers primarily view dance as emotional regulation, prioritizing personal fulfillment over utilitarian goals. When supported by interventions, it will create a satisfaction→engagement→deeper satisfaction feedback loop.

Cross-referencing questionnaires and cases reveal that adult learners typically discover dance through media/social influences, with initial motivations shaping their genre preferences. However, sustained engagement requires internalizing extrinsic motivation. Socialization-oriented learners transition from external validation to intrinsic satisfaction through recognized progress, while aesthetics-oriented learners shift from flexibility goals to self-appreciation after achieving milestones, demonstrating clear extrinsic-to-intrinsic transitions.

2 The psychological role of self-efficacy in learning persistence

2.1 Sense of achievement from short-term goal attainment

Successfully completing tasks enhances self-efficacy in adult dance education. A structured one-hour class demonstrates this progression: the first 20 minutes introduce a 20-second sequence with slowed music, focusing on acquisition; the middle 20 minutes refine movements at original speed without performance pressure; the final 20 minutes transition to independent execution. This phased approach ensures tangible progress every 20 minutes, building self-efficacy progressively toward full sequence mastery.

2.2 Modeling effect

Observing peers' success can indirectly boost self-efficacy. For instance, if a learner struggles during the middle phase but sees "homogeneous role models"—peers of similar age and initial skill level—keeping pace with the instructor, their focus may shift from self-doubt to self-belief. This vicarious experience elevates their self-efficacy, aligning it with that of successful peers and facilitating task completion.

2.3 Encouragement and feedback from teachers and peers

Verbal persuasion is a key educational intervention. When students struggle, educators should: practice empathetic acknowledgment through open-ended questions; affirm competency by highlighting objective progress; and provide specific strategic support. This multi-phase approach maintains motivation through emotional validation and actionable guidance.

2.4 Cognitive attribution and regulatory ability

Learners' interpretation of physiological reactions like breathlessness directly impacts self-efficacy. Misattribution to lack of ability reduces motivation. Effective intervention requires: cognitive reframing to recognize signals as normal training responses, and emotional regulation techniques like breath control to disrupt negative attribution cycles.

3 Constructing the pathway mechanism of motivation, self-efficacy, and persistent behavior

3.1 How extrinsic incentives trigger behavioral motivation

Motivation internalization and persistent behavior form a mutually reinforcing cycle. Learner A initially joined for postpartum recovery, but discovered intrinsic satisfaction through breath-motion coordination, transitioning from mechanical execution to embodied enjoyment. Similarly, Learner B progressed from seeking external validation via social media to finding authentic joy in daily dance practice. These examples illustrate how sustained engagement facilitates the shift from extrinsic persistence to genuine intrinsic motivation.

3.2 The moderating role of self-efficacy as a mediating variable

Self-efficacy serves as a dynamic mediator between motivation internalization and behavioral persistence. It enables learners to reinterpret challenges through the lens of past achievements, thereby catalyzing the transition from extrinsic to intrinsic drive. Evolving through accumulated experience, self-efficacy helps reframe difficulties and transform passive persistence into active, self-determined exploration.

3.3 Formation of persistent behavior

Self-efficacy influences persistent behavior, and persistent behavior reciprocally impacts Self-efficacy. Successful experience and positive reinforcement both contribute to the development of self-efficacy, and they are also outcomes of persistent behavior. Persistent behavior is linked to motivation internalization through two mediators: drive and behavioral internalization, which both facilitate the connection between persistent behavior and motivation internalization.

4 Teaching intervention strategies and practical pathway suggestions

4.1 Differentiated teaching objective setting

A differentiated teaching system should be established based on students' learning objectives and ability levels. For those focused on emotional release, open-formatted modules such as improvisational dance can facilitate expression through movement. For skill-oriented learners, a laddered training program with objectives set just beyond their current abilities ensures learning occurs within their zone of proximal development, promoting continuous and appropriate challenge.

4.2 Teaching feedback and positive incentive mechanism

Effective feedback includes both technical and psychological dimensions. Technical feedback provides precise, actionable corrections during practice, helping students avoid incorrect habits and steadily improve proficiency. Psychological feedback offers encouragement and affirmation, particularly during periods of frustration, to sustain motivation and engagement. Together, these forms of feedback support comprehensive student development.

4.3 Establishing a supportive learning environment

Teachers should adopt a multi-dimensional approach to understand students' learning processes, incorporating in-class performance, psychological shifts, and periodic evaluations. Through tools such as one-on-one discussions and ongoing communication, instructors can track progress, identify challenges, and tailor support to individual needs, fostering a responsive and supportive educational atmosphere.

5 Conclusion

Based on the research findings, future dance education should focus on three key areas: creating a comfortable and

inspiring aesthetic environment; designing diversified, regularly updated curricula that cater to individuals of different ages, professions, and backgrounds; and fostering a teaching philosophy that emphasizes self-identity and emotional expression. These approaches will deepen public engagement in dance, integrating it into daily life as a source of physical, mental, and personal growth.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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About the author

Gong Xuelisha (Born June 2002), Gender: Female; Ethnicity: Han; Place of Origin (Province/City): Xiangyang City, Hubei Province; Education: Master's Candidate; Title: None; Specialization: Dance Choreography.