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## The Lived Experiences of Filipino College Students' Volition in Exercise in Northern Mindanao: Basis for Contextualizing the Volition in Exercise Questionnaire

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The Lived Experiences of Filipino College Students' Volition in Exercise in Northern Mindanao: Basis for Contextualizing the Volition in Exercise Questionnaire

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### Abstract

This study investigated the lived experiences of Filipino college students from Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) in Northern Mindanao regarding their volition in exercise, with the aim of contextualizing the Volition in Exercise Questionnaire (VEQ). Employing a phenomenological design as part of a convergent mixed-methods research study, the investigation aimed to capture students' motivations, barriers, and adaptive strategies for maintaining exercise engagement within their socio-cultural environment. A total of 70 participants were purposively selected from eight LUCs across Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte, and Misamis Oriental. Data were gathered through 10 in-depth interviews and eight focus group discussions, supported by a semi-structured protocol validated by experts. Thematic analysis yielded six essential themes: (1) navigating life and practical constraints in exercise commitment, (2) academic and family responsibilities as competing priorities, (3) health and well-being as intrinsic motivators, (4) social, environmental, and technological influences, (5) self-improvement and confidence-building through resilience, and (6) structured programs as enablers of consistency. Findings highlight that Filipino students' volition in exercise is shaped by collectivist values, strategic scheduling, adaptive coping, and contextual limitations in resources. Thematic cross-comparison revealed that while the VEQ captures core constructs such as self-confidence, coping with failure, and reasons for exercising, it underrepresents adaptive postponement, socially mediated confidence, and the positive role of peer and family support. The study concludes that the VEQ requires cultural refinement to reflect the realities of Filipino students accurately. Results provide empirical grounding for the development of a Filipino Volition in Exercise Scale (F-VES) and inform the integration of culturally relevant strategies into PATHFIT programs and higher education curricula.

**Keywords:** Volition in exercise, phenomenology, Filipino college students, psychometric adaptation, cultural context

### 1. Introduction

The Volition in Exercise Questionnaire (VEQ) was developed to assess exercise-related motivational and self-regulatory constructs across diverse populations (Elsborg et al., 2017; Gallotta et al., 2021). While it has shown reliability, cross-cultural application indicates limitations in capturing socio-cultural and environmental determinants of volition. Filipino students enrolled in LUCs often face decisions about exercise that are mediated not only by personal motivation but also by structural, social, and cultural factors. These include academic workloads, family obligations, financial constraints, and collective values that frame health behaviors as social responsibilities rather than purely individual pursuits. Previous research emphasizes that culturally grounded instruments are necessary to avoid misinterpreting adaptive strategies (e.g., purposeful postponement or distraction) as negative volitional deficits (Bento

et al., 2023; Quinzi, 2024). Thus, contextualizing the VEQ is essential to strengthen its validity in Philippine higher education settings and to design interventions aligned with students' lived realities.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design within a mixed-methods framework to explore Filipino college students' lived experiences of volition in exercise (Gomez & Salva, 2025).

### 2.2 Participants and Procedures

A total of 70 students (aged 18–25) from eight Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) in Northern Mindanao were purposively selected. Data collection consisted of 10 in-depth interviews (IDIs) and eight focus group discussions (FGDs), each with 6–10 participants. Recruitment was facilitated by PE faculty, and sessions were held in campus venues.

### 2.3 Instruments and Materials Used

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and FGD guides, validated by experts from the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC). Questions explored motivations, barriers, coping strategies, and interpretations of exercise volition. Sessions were audio-recorded and supported by the researcher's field notes.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were checked for accuracy, coded, and grouped into themes. Credibility was ensured through member checking and triangulation across IDIs, FGDs, and observations.

### 2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured from the UIC Research Ethics Committee (GS-ER-08-24-0107). Participants gave informed consent, were assured of confidentiality, and could withdraw at any time without consequences. Pseudonyms were used in reporting, and all files were securely stored.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Five essential themes emerged: navigating life and practical constraints in exercise commitment, academic and family responsibilities as competing priorities, intrinsic health and well-being as core motivators, and social, environmental, and technological influences on exercise engagement, (5) self-improvement and confidence building through skill development and resilience, (6) structured programs as enablers of consistency.

Furthermore, the interviews and group discussions identified three themes that explain how participants' experiences influence their beliefs: prioritizing health and well-being, recognizing the importance of social support, and embracing exercise as a key part of their identity. The role of experiences in shaping participants' attitudes revealed three emerging themes: cultivating a positive attitude toward exercise, setting and pursuing goal-oriented motivation, and building confidence and self-awareness. Regarding how experiences affect participants' commitment to exercise, three themes emerged that illustrate how their experiences influenced their dedication. The role of experiences in shaping participants' commitment highlights three emerging themes: establishing routines and discipline, utilizing exercise for self-care, and developing independence and resilience.

Lastly, to assess the cultural and contextual relevance of the VEQ in the Filipino student population, a thematic cross-comparison was conducted. This process involved mapping the conceptual domains of each VEQ factor against the core qualitative themes derived from the lived experiences of Filipino college students from LUCs in Northern Mindanao. The analysis aimed to critically evaluate the extent to which the VEQ captures the motivational, cognitive, and affective dimensions of volition as experienced in this cultural context. This comparative synthesis offers insights into which VEQ constructs align with, overlook, or require adaptation based on Filipino students' nuanced perceptions and socio-cultural realities regarding exercise volition.

## 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the volition of Filipino college students in exercise is multifaceted, influenced by individual, social, and environmental dimensions. While the VEQ provides a valuable foundation for assessing volitional constructs, its items require cultural refinement to avoid misinterpretation of adaptive strategies and to reflect collectivist and resource-constrained contexts better. Findings suggest the development of a Filipino Volition in Exercise Scale (F-VES), with subscales on strategic postponement, supportive social influence, practical integration, and resilience.

For practice, PATHFIT instructors are encouraged to embed culturally responsive strategies into their modules by emphasizing exercise as a means of identity, self-care, and community engagement. Policy-level recommendations include supporting validation studies of the VEQ, funding wellness initiatives in LUCs, and institutionalizing structured and low-cost physical activity opportunities. Overall, this study contributes to the contextualization of psychometric tools in the Philippines and advances the discourse on volition in exercise within higher education.

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