

**MEDIA NEWSLETTER**

UAEU College of Education Celebrates Historic First: Exercise Physiology Lab Research Published Internationally

Al Ain, UAE, January 19, 2026

The United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) College of Education is proud to announce a historic milestone: its first-ever research paper, based on data collected in the Exercise Physiology Laboratory, has been published in an international peer-reviewed journal.

The study, titled *“Expectancy Beliefs and Values Underlying Cardiometabolic Risk Factors and Physical Activity in Middle Eastern Female College Students,”* appears in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health.* The article is part of a research project analyzing college students’ psychological and physiological responses to daily physical activity led by Dr. Arto Gråstén, Chair of Physical Education Department.

Faculty members, Dr. Jamal Alnuaimi, Dr. Gehan Handouk, MSc. Balazs Gabor and five undergraduate students from the College of Education, Ms. Wadha Alderei, Ms. Alia Alhassani, Ms. Nawal Almeheiri, Ms. Wadima Alkebti, and Ms. Alyazia Alkebti, assisted with data collection in the laboratory and data coding, contributing valuable support to the research process and gaining experience in being part of a research project.

This achievement marks the first time in the history of the College of Education and the Department of Physical Education that data collected within the Exercise Physiology Lab has contributed to a published scientific paper. It highlights the department’s growing capacity for world-class research in the health and physical activity domain.

The study examined how motivation, measured through expectancy beliefs and task values, relates to body composition, blood pressure, and physical activity among 221 female college students in the UAE. Data collection involved advanced laboratory testing for fat, muscle, and bone mass, along with blood pressure monitoring and activity tracking.

Key findings showed that motivation and health factors are interconnected in complex ways. For example, students with higher expectancy beliefs tended to have lower fat and, unexpectedly, less muscle mass, while a stronger “interest value” was linked to more physical activity. The results suggest that boosting motivation alone may not guarantee healthier outcomes, highlighting the need for holistic health promotion strategies.

“This study represents a proud moment for our department and the College of Education,” said Dr. Arto Gråstén. “It is the first time our Exercise Physiology Lab has contributed to a published research paper. We are committed to expanding research that supports student health, physical activity, and wellbeing in the UAE and beyond.”

Publication:

Gråstén, A., Handouk, G., Gabor, B., & Alnuaimi, J. (2025). Expectancy beliefs and values underlying cardiometabolic risk factors and physical activity in Middle Eastern female college students. *Journal of Physical Activity.* <https://journals.human kinetics.com/view/journals/jpah/aop/article-10.1123-jpah.2025-0147/article-10.1123-jpah.2025-0147.xml>

**About UAEU College of Education:**

The College of Education at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) is dedicated to advancing research and practice in physical education, health, and human movement. Through innovative teaching and laboratory research, the college prepares graduates to make meaningful contributions to education, health promotion, and lifelong wellbeing.

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In media:

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