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**Effects of Extracurricular Activities on University
Students: The Case of Female Students at a Saudi
College**

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Abstract:

This study explored effects of extracurricular activities on university students' achievement, creativity and giftedness, emotional control, morality, social adaptation and career selection. The study was conducted in the academic year 1438-39 on a sample consisting of 950 female students at Dilam College of Education, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, KSA. Participants came from different specializations and study levels since extracurricular activities are general in nature, i.e., they are not specific to any specialization or study level. Participants completed a 30-item researcher-developed questionnaire groping the effect of extracurricular activities on achievement, creativity and giftedness, emotional control, morality, social adaptation and career selection. Extracurricular activities were found to enhance all the dependent variables in this order: morality, identification of giftedness, emotional control, creativity, career selection, social adaptation and achievement. Based on results, a number of recommendations are offered.

Key words: Extracurricular Activities - Case of Female Students

Introduction

Extracurricular activities complement school curriculum in achieving the basic functions of education, i.e., providing students with knowledge, enhancing their attitudes towards virtues and enabling them to practice what they learn in classrooms. Practice has revealed that the school curriculum alone cannot achieve these functions and that extracurricular activities have a share. According to recent trends, the basic function of education is no longer helping students acquire knowledge. Rather, it has come to focus on furnishing students with life skills that qualify them to live in their societies. Education in developed countries has focused on practical aspects by connecting knowledge-based learning to practice. Extracurricular activities can achieve this connection. This study therefore attempted to investigate the reality of extracurricular activities at Dilam College of Education and the effect they have on students' achievement, creativity, giftedness, emotional control, morality, social adaptation and career selection.

Statement of the Problem

University education focuses on qualifying students in specific specializations, so they can serve their societies by putting what they have learned into practice after graduation. Because education focuses mainly on knowledge, students may lack many life skills. Students seldom receive training on important like skills because their schedules are always full of lectures

whose main concern is providing students with discipline-specific knowledge. It is therefore important to pay the due attention to extracurricular activities where students practice what they learn in their courses of study. There should be a room for extracurricular activities in schedules and extracurricular activities should be included in the items of all curricula. This can bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practice. In this respect, the present study was conducted to explore the reality of extracurricular activities at Dilam College of Education at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, KSA. More specifically, the study explored whether participation in extracurricular activities enhances students' achievement, creativity and giftedness, emotional control, morality, social adaptation and career selection.

Aims of the Study

1. Exploring the significance of extracurricular activities for university students.
2. Exploring the reality of extracurricular activities at Dilam College of Education, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, KSA.
3. Creating a positive attitude towards practicing extracurricular activities on the part of university students.
4. Identify principles that make extracurricular activities beneficial to students.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Extracurricular activities enhance students' achievement.
2. Extracurricular activities enhance students' creativity.
3. Extracurricular activities help with the identification and enhancement of students' giftedness.
4. Extracurricular activities enhance students' emotional control.
5. Extracurricular activities enhance students' morality.
6. Extracurricular activities enhance students' social adaptation.
7. Extracurricular activities enhance students' career selection

Review of Literature

The Importance of extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities are activities that students practice inside and outside school under its supervision (Umayrah, 1442). According to Encyclopedia Americana, extracurricular activities are activities executed under the supervision of schools and they pertain to school life and its various activities that relate to study subjects, social and community aspects, or clubs concerned with theoretical and practical aspects (Abdulwahab, 1987: 20).

Due to ever-developing research, there has been a paradigm shift in education. According to the recent view of education, the main emphasis of education has been placed on qualifying students mentally, morally and physically by providing them with knowledge, skills and attitudes via carefully-designed curricula. However, a gap has been noticed between what students learn in classrooms and what they practice or face in their daily life. Thus, many practitioners and researchers have recommended the use of teaching methods that make possible discovery learning and self-learning, so students can pursue learning outside classrooms (Allazzam, 1422: 15).

Extracurricular activities are important because they can bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practice. They are no longer luxury. Rather, they have become a necessity that the educational system everywhere cannot dispense with. They have become an integral part of curriculum that directly achieves cognitive, skill and affective aims (Alosaimi, 1412). Extracurricular activities have been found to enhance achievement (Aldhry, 1431) and build life experiences that students use to face difficulties of real life and solve its problems (Qandeel, 1422). They provide beneficial entertainment (Aldhafeeri, 1427). Because extracurricular activities are practiced based on students' needs and inclinations, they enhance giftedness that can be an indicator of future careers. They can also enhance students' creativity (Zahaw, 2008).

Research reported a positive correlation between extracurricular activities and many dependent variables. Participation in extracurricular activities can enhance students' self-confidence and self-esteem and eliminate many psychological problems, e.g., shyness and selfishness. They have been reported to enhance achievement, improve writing and foster self-learning (Aldhry, 1431).

Aldhafeeri (1427h) explored the extent to which extracurricular activities achieve the social function of the school in a sample of Saudi secondary school students. Results revealed that extracurricular activities (1) strengthen social relationships among students, (2) provide students with good social experiences, (3) eliminate stereotypes, (4) increase self-confidence in students and (5) foster leadership in students. Based on findings, the researcher recommended that educational institutes pay the due attention to extracurricular activities.

Mazuo (2014) investigated the role of extracurricular activities in developing educational principles in a sample of Saudi intermediate school students. Extracurricular activities were found to enhance democracy, equality, freedom, responsibility, obedience, achievement and initiative.

Zahaw (2008) developed a proposal for activating the role of school activities in enhancing creativity among elementary school students. She found a positive relationship between participation in school activities and creativity. Newly graduated teachers in private schools were found to pay more attention to extracurricular activities than teachers in public schools. Dense curricula were documented as the basic factor deterring the application and practice of extracurricular activities at schools.

Housain (2005) explored the role of extracurricular activities in enhancing national awareness among elementary school students. Analysis of interviews with students revealed that students who participate in extracurricular activities significantly outnumber students who do not in national awareness. Aldhry (1431) examined the effect of school activities on students' psychological and social stability and achievement. Participation in extracurricular activities correlated positively with psychological and social stability and achievement.

The reality of extracurricular activities at Dilam College of Education

Extracurricular activities at Dilam College of Education are executed under the supervision of the Student Activity Unit that is an affiliate of the Student Affairs Deanship (the girls' section). The Student Affairs Deanship supervises extracurricular activities at colleges of Prince Sattam University. These activities include:

1. Activities executed by departments. These include:
 - a. Celebrating public events, e.g., the National Day, reception of new students, the Teacher's Day, the Arabic Language Day, Janadria, the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign.
 - b. Activities where students can display their creations in poetry, drawing and literature.
 - c. College and/or university-based competitions, e.g., the Annual Forum where students compete in scientific research, entrepreneurship, speech giving, prose writing, poetry, drawing and photographing.
 - d. Special competitions such as Quran recitation and intellectual awareness.
2. Activities executed by the Graduates Unit. The Graduates Unit executes training activities for prospective graduates to help them with their future careers, e.g., computing skills, writing biographies, English for daily communication.
3. Prayer time activities where students are instructed about Quran recitation, religious doctrines and Sunnah.
4. Sporting activities. Dilam College of Education initiated sporting activities and organized a marathon for students in the academic year 1439-40h.

These varied activities reflect the University’s interest in extracurricular activities owing to their role in preparing students to be effective citizens when they get into the labor market.

Method

The researcher used the survey method to explore the acquisition of educational, psychological, environmental, recreational, social and remedial functions of extracurricular activities by students. Furthermore, the survey aimed to identify the activities that students preferred and obstacles of practicing them as a preliminary step to eliminate such obstacles. This is important for extracurricular activities to bring about the desired outcomes.

Participants

All female students at all levels at the departments of Islamic Studies, the Arabic Language, Domestic Science and Mathematics represented the study population. A purposive sample of 950 students (10% of the total number of students) completed the study questionnaire during the second semester of the academic year 1439-40h. The sample was purposive because only students practicing extracurricular activities were selected.

The Questionnaire

A 30-item questionnaire was developed by the researcher after surveying similar questionnaires in related literature. Participants were asked to respond to items by indicating how far they agreed to the statements on a five-point rating scale. Each response was associated with a point value, where “Strongly agree” was assigned a point value of 5 and the response “Strongly disagree” a point value of 1. The 30 items assessed the educational, psychological, environmental, recreational, social and remedial functions of extracurricular activities.

Validity of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was then content validated by a number of specialists (see appendix). They were asked to judge the clarity of questions and the inclusion of items under the target dimensions. This led to the reformulation of some items. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was then established by computing correlations among items and the total score. These correlations are listed in table 1.

Table 1. Correlations among items and the total score (internal consistency)

Items	Correlations with the total score	
Improving achievement	Pearson Correlation	.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Practicing what is learned theoretically	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.443** .000
Performance in tests	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.388** .000
Assimilation of study courses	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.279** .006
Improving GPA	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.437** .000
Organization of time	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.572** .000
Increasing study hours	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.550** .000
Excellence in study	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.500** .000
Increasing creativity in field of study	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.533** .000
Identifying & enhancing of giftedness	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.721** .000
Self-confidence	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.555** .000
Practicing talents	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.597** .000
Self-recognition	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.722** .000
Identification of inclinations	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.713** .000
Emotional control	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.741** .000
Satisfaction of psychological needs	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.711** .000
Enhancing morality	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.750** .000
Getting used to good habits	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.789** .000
Successful confrontation of life situations	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.664** .000
Establishing good relations with colleagues	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.751** .000

Establishing good relations with teachers	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.713** .000
Serving community	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.656** .000
Social adaptation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.806** .000
Problem solving	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.771** .000
Alleviation of psychological pressures	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.774** .000
Entertainment and recreation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.765** .000
Identification of the society's culture	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.780** .000
Career selection	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.739** .000
Practicing preferred jobs	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.752** .000
Creation of positive attitudes towards careers	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.746** .000

As seen in the above table, all correlations among items and the total score were significant at the 0.01 level, hence indicating that the questionnaire was internally consistent.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire was established by alpha Cronbach (0.95) and split-half (0.83) methods. These reliability values indicate that the questionnaire was quite reliable.

Data Analysis

To answer the research question, percentages, means and standard deviations were computed using the SPSS program. The two points (agree and strongly agree) and (disagree and strongly disagree) were grouped together so as to find out whether the participants agreed or disagreed to questionnaire items.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Extracurricular activities enhance students' achievement

To test the first research hypothesis that extracurricular activities enhance students' achievement, frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the achievement items were computed. These are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Percentages, means and standard deviations of achievement

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Improving achievement	43.2	13.4	43.3	3.48	1.0
Practicing what is learned theoretically	53.6	14.4	32	3.55	1.11
Performance in tests	50.5	14.4	35.1	3.54	1.1
Assimilation of study courses	51.5	7.2	41.2	3.72	.95
Improving GPA	39.1	19.6	41.2	3.33	1.1
Organization of time	38.1	20.7	41.2	3.33	1.1
Increasing study hours	40.2	18.5	41.2	3.36	1.2
Excellence in study	44.3	17.5	38.1	3.38	1.1
Total Mean				3.46	1.09
Order				7	

It can be observed from data in table 2 that percentages of agreement to the achievement items were higher than percentages of disagreement. The total mean score (M=3.46) was moderate. This shows that participation in extracurricular activities has a moderate positive effect on students' achievement. Thus, the first research hypothesis was supported.

However, the achievement dimension came last among all questionnaire dimensions. A possible explanation for this is that extracurricular activities are not linked to study courses. Examination of existent extracurricular activities at the college reveals that all courses but the Holly Quran competition did not relate to courses. Even the Quran completion is not based on what students study.

Hypothesis 2: Extracurricular activities enhance students' creativity

To test the second research hypothesis that extracurricular activities enhance students' creativity, percentages, means and standard deviations were computed. These are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Percentages, means and standard deviations of creativity

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Improved creativity	57.7	25.8	16.4	3.61	1.2
Order				4	

As listed in table 3, the percentage of students who agreed to the item about the positive effect of extracurricular activities on creativity was significantly higher than students who disagreed. The mean score was (M=3.61) was high. This reveals that participation in extracurricular activities enhances creativity in the field of study. The creativity dimension came in the fourth order. Thus, the second research hypostasis was supported.

Hypothesis 3: Extracurricular activities help with the identification and enhancement of students' giftedness

To test the third research hypothesis that extracurricular activities help with the identification and enhancement of students' giftedness, percentages, means and standard deviations were computed. These are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Percentages, means and standard deviations of giftedness

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Identification of giftedness	52.2	22.7	24.7	3.45	1.33
Confidence in talents	66	14.4	19.6	3.81	1.22
Practicing talents	68.	15.5	16.5	3.90	1.21
Total Mean				3.72	1.25
Order				2	

As shown in table 4, the percentages of agreement to three items relating to the identification and enhancement of giftedness were 52.2, 66 and 68, whereas the disagreement percentages were 22.7, 14.4 and 15.5. It is clear that agreement percentages are significantly higher. The total mean score (M=3.72) was high. This shows that participation in extracurricular activities helps with the identification and enhancement of talents. This dimension came in the second order. That is, the third research hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 4: Extracurricular activities enhance students' emotional control

Percentages, means and standard deviations were computed to test the fourth research hypothesis that extracurricular activities enhance students' emotional control. This data is shown in table 5.

Table 5. Percentages, means and standard deviations of emotional control

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Self-recognition	73.2	7.2	19.6	4.10	1.14
Identification of inclinations	56.7	18.6	24.7	3.58	1.35
Emotional control	58.8	21.7	19.6	3.61	1.38
Satisfaction of psychological needs	56.7	25.8	17.5	3.48	1.46

Alleviation of psychological pressures	45.3	28.9	25.8	3.23	1.16
Total Mean				3.6	1.30
Order				5	

As listed in table 5, the agreement percentages to items relating to emotional control were 73.2, 56.7, 58.8, 56.7 and 45.3, whereas the parallel disagreement percentages were 7.2, 18.6, 21.7, 25.8 and 28.9. The total mean score (M=3.60) was high. This indicates that participation in extracurricular activities enhances students' emotional control. This dimension came in the fifth order. This finding supports the fourth research hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Extracurricular activities enhance students' morality

Percentages, means and standard deviations were computed to test the fifth research hypothesis that extracurricular activities enhance students' morality. This data is shown in table 6.

Table 6. Percentages, means and standard deviations of religiousness

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Enhanced religiousness	70.1	16.5	13.4	3.91	1.34
Getting used to good habits	69.1	13.4	17.5	3.92	1.28
Successful confrontation of life situations	54.7	17.6	27.8	3.60	1.34
Establishing good relations with colleagues	69	16.5	14.4	3.80	1.37
Establishing good relations with teachers	66	23.7	10.3	3.69	1.50
Total Mean				3.78	1.37
Order				1	

As listed in table 6, the agreement percentages to items relating to religiousness were 70.1, 69.1, 54.7, 69 and 66, whereas the parallel disagreement percentages were 16.5, 13.4, 17.6, 16.5 and 23.7. The total mean score was (M=3.8) was high. This indicates that participation in extracurricular activities enhances morality. This dimension came in the first order. That is, morality is the most positively affected by extracurricular activities. This supports the fifth research hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: Extracurricular activities enhance students' social adaptation

Percentages, means and standard deviations were computed to test the sixth research hypothesis that extracurricular activities enhance students' social adaptation. This data is shown in table 7.

Table 7. Percentages, means and standard deviations of social adaptation

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Serving community	60.8	18.5	20.6	3.64	1.39
Social adaptation	58.7	14.4	26.8	3.64	1.27
Problem solving	51.5	18.5	29.9	3.48	1.28
Identification of the society's culture	57.8	24.8	17.5	3.56	1.24
Total Mean				3.58	1.30
Order				6	

From table 7, it can be seen that agreement percentages to the four items relating to social adaptation were 60.8, 58.7, 51.5 and 57.8, whereas the parallel disagreement percentages were 18.5, 14.4, 18.5 and 24.8. The total mean score (M=3.6) was high. This indicates that participation in extracurricular activities enhances social adaptation. This dimension came in the sixth order. Thus, the sixth research hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 7: Extracurricular activities enhance students' career selection

Percentages, means and standard deviations were computed to test the seventh research hypothesis that extracurricular activities enhance students' career selection. This data is shown in table 8.

Table 8. Percentages, means and standard deviations of career selection

Items	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	M	SD
Entertainment and recreation	54.7	23.7	21.6	3.57	1.43
Selection of future careers	62.9	19.6	17.5	3.69	1.39
Practicing preferred jobs	61.8	17.5	20.6	3.77	1.28
Creation of positive attitudes towards careers	66	15.4	18.6	3.79	1.25
Total Mean				3.7	1.34
Order				3	

From table 8, it can be seen that agreement percentages to the four items relating to career selection were 54.7, 62.9, 61.8 and 66, whereas the parallel disagreement percentages were 23.7, 19.6, 17.5 and 15.4. The total mean score (M=3.7) was high. This indicates that participation in extracurricular activities enhances career selection. This dimension came in the third order. This supports the seventh research hypothesis.

In brief, data analysis revealed that extracurricular activities had positive effects on all the dependent variables in the following order:

1. Morality.
2. Giftedness.
3. Emotional control.
4. Creativity
5. Career selection.
6. Social adaptation.
7. Achievement.

Discussion

Data of the present study revealed that extracurricular activities had positive effects on all the dependent variables. This is in line with the mainstream of previous studies that reported positive effects of extracurricular activities on achievement (Aldhry, 1431; Mazuo, 2014), psychological well-being (Aldhry, 1431), social adaptation (Aldhry, 1431), and creativity (Zahaw, 2008). The strongest effect was on students' morality, followed by identification and enhancement of talents, career selection, creativity, psychological balance, social adaptation, and achievement. The reason that morality was the most affected by extracurricular activities is that students at the college participate in several religious activities. These activities are mainly concerned with good behavior.

Extracurricular activities were found to provide opportunities for students' creativity and talents to be identified and enhanced. Teachers and personnel in charge with activities can identify students' potentials and nurture them. These potentials can remain uncovered in classroom work where students are overwhelmed by coursework that leaves no space for the expression of students' talents and potentials.

Students in extracurricular activities establish relationships with colleagues, instructors, personnel and people from the local community where activities involve partnerships with the local community. Such interactions are not available in the classroom again because of the hectic nature of classroom work. In extracurricular activities, students learn how to establish and maintain relationships (Aldhry, 1431). They also learn social skills that enhance one's ability to maintain relationships, e.g., negotiation, co-operation and collective decision making. This way, participation in extracurricular activities can enhance the students' ability to adapt with others and with their environment.

The finding that extracurricular activities enhance students' emotional stability seems logical. The atmosphere of extracurricular activities is free from stressors that students experience in traditional classroom learning. Positive relations that students can establish in extracurricular activities can help them to practice emotional control not to spoil one's relations. Furthermore, several extracurricular activities have several elements of fun and enjoyment, which improve students' general well-being (Aldhry, 1431).

Participation in extracurricular activities can sensitize students to their career preferences, especially when activities involve partnerships with local institutes and associations. Extracurricular activities can be a link between university education and the labor market. Through them, students can identify the needs of the labor market and the careers to make for when they graduate. In some extracurricular activities, students are taken to workplaces to experience the real places where they might get employment in the near future. This undoubtedly helps students make career preferences, which makes them goal-oriented.

That the least effect of extracurricular activities was on achievement can be explained in the light of the fact that extracurricular activities in the college are not related to study courses. For this reason, there should be activities relating to courses. These activities can focus on getting students to apply what they learn in courses in real life situations. Application of theoretically acquired knowledge makes learning meaningful and instrumental.

Recommendations

Based on the results, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Paying more attention to scientific societies, e.g., specialized scientific societies.. These activities can be entertaining and can enhance achievement in the same time.
2. Paying more attention to activities that are concerned with community service.
3. Using activities that can enhance students' innovativeness.
4. Varying activities to cover all functions of extracurricular activities.
5. Increasing the budget allocated to extracurricular activities.
6. Including all students in extracurricular activities.
7. Including skills such as communication and speech giving in curricula.
8. Using teaching methods that foster attitudes and skills.
9. Providing students with opportunities to practice their talents and hobbies.
10. Providing times in schedules where students can participate in extracurricular activities.
11. Equipping labs for practical extracurricular activities.
12. Encouraging scientific research by organizing competitions and giving awards.

13. Encouraging and supporting students' small projects.
14. Setting partnerships with community institutions, e.g., voluntary institutions where students can receive training.

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