

Effect of Students' Participation in Co-Curricular Activities on Social Development of Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The current research investigated how involvement of secondary school students in co-curricular activities impacted their social development. A causal-comparative methodology based on the quantitative research design was adopted. The sample comprised of Grade 10 male students in government secondary schools in District Gujrat in Pakistan and their number was 1750 students, chosen by cluster random sampling. Researcher-developed questionnaires were used to collect data on the level of participation of students in co-curricular activities and social development with subdimensions of communication skills, social responsibility and confidence. Correlation and regression analyses were used to establish the relationship and predictive impact of co-curricular participation on social development. The results indicated that proactive, committed, and cooperative engagements in co-curricular activities have positive and significant impacts on the social competencies of students. Commitment and cooperation were found to be the most formidable predictors of social growth, with the peripheral impact of involvement. The research recognizes the significance of organized co-curricular activities in building up communication, social responsibility and confidence among secondary school students.

Key Words

Co-curricular Activities, Social Development, Secondary School Students, Collaboration, Dedication, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, Confidence

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Introduction

Co-curricular activities have grown to occupy a bigger role in modern day education than just being a side-by-side part to academic education, it has become an aspect of the whole development of the students. The co-curricular activities include sports, arts, debates, community services, clubs, leadership programs and other structured activities that allow students to interact with others, take responsibility of duties and socialize in various social environments (Yasin et al., 2024). In contrast to the methods of conventional classroom activities, these activities provide students with the atmosphere of the real-world social life where communication, cooperation, problem solving and interpersonal understanding are practiced and improved. These experiences play a critical role in providing the social competencies that a student requires to handle the intricate human relationships and community interaction in a fast-evolving world.

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Adolescence especially in the secondary level is a critical period in social development. At this age, students build their social circles, make concessions about other students, and hone group identity as they engage with peers. Co-curricular involvement provides a dynamic environment in which this development can occur through encouraging cooperation, team work, leadership and peer support- aspects which have strong connection with social competence. The studies show that learners who participate in the co-curricular activities on a regular basis report a better level of empathy, cooperation, communication skills, and civic engagement than those who are not involved in co-curricular activities (Heath et al., 2022). To cite a few, participation in team sports leads to discipline and support one another, cultural clubs promote the awareness of diversity, and student governance positions bring about negotiation and mutual decision-making, which leads to enriched social functioning.

Although the advantages have been noted, the teaching and learning systems of most areas such as Pakistan continue to focus on academic excellence and performance through rote memorization and standardized tests, placing the co-curricular activities in the periphery. This short sightedness endangers students to lack the chance to practice and internalize the critical social practices in real collaborative settings. As people become increasingly concerned over social maladjustment, behavioral difficulties, and the inability to successfully apply interpersonal skills, there is an increasing interest in the role of planned co-curricular participation in shaping the social performances of the students. The exploration of this connection is especially significant in the secondary level, the period during which students develop the most important social habits, attitudes, and skills that are going to define their transition into adulthood (Yeo et al., 2023).

Based on empirical research conducted in the international and local context, it is expected that co-curricular involvement is positively associated with such social outcomes as better communication, teamwork, leadership, and peer relationships (Poredoš, 2023). Nevertheless, lack of systematic research in Pakistan, which targets the effect of co-curricular participation on social development of secondary school students, still exists. This is a gap that constrains the capacity of educators, administrators, and policymakers to make evidence-based decisions on the design of school programs that would balance academic rigor and development of social competence. Thus, the objective of the research is to identify how involvement of students in co-curricular activities influences their social development so as to offer some insights that could aid in ensuring that they develop socially competent, confident and resilient learners.

Rationale of the Study

Academic success alone cannot help students in their holistic development in the modern-day education. Social competence: communication, teamwork, empathy, leadership, and interpersonal skills are necessary to achieve overall development and success in the future. Co-curricular activities provide students with organized chances to socialize, cooperate, take responsibilities, and acquire problem solving skills especially at the secondary level when the social identities are in the process of formation. Although very crucial, co-curricular activities are not taken seriously in Pakistan yet schools are concerned with academic performance and examinations. This narrow focus hinders the development of the social skills of the students and can result in social adjustment and unhealthy peer relationships. Also there are few empirical studies of the effect of co-curricular participation on the social development of Pakistani secondary students. Thus, this paper is an analysis of how involvement of students in the co-curricular activities influences their social development. The research results will guide teachers, school leaders, and policy makers on the necessity to take into account co-curricular programs to give rise to socially responsible, socially competent and socially confident students.

Statement of the Problem

Social development of students is an essential part of holistic education in the school setting since it determines their skills in effective communication, working in groups, expressing empathy, and participating in responsible

activities in their communities. Although co-curricular activities are considered a common practice of developing such social skills, most schools still focus on academic success instead of creating structured ways of engaging socially. This has resulted in a poor perception of the impact of active involvement in co-curricular activities on social development of students.

In Pakistan, one can find the empirical evidence on the relationship between the involvement of students into co-curricular activities and the growth of their social competencies is observed to be lacking. In the absence of this evidence, teachers, administrations, and policymakers have no tangible information to guide them in designing and executing programs that will enable social skills and academic learning to develop. Moreover, there is no understanding of which elements of participation, including involvement, dedication, or collaboration, have the greatest impact on social development in the case of secondary school students. This study fills this gap by examining how involvement in co-curricular activities impacts the social development of students in the school level, which will provide evidence that can help schools promote programs that will help students in a holistic development.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the correlation between student attendance and participation in co-curricular activities and their social development at the secondary level.
2. To identify which of these characteristics of co-curricular participation: participation, commitment or cooperation, has the most significant impact on social development among students.

Research Questions

1. Is there significant correlation between student' participation in co-curricular activities and their social development at the secondary level?
2. How subfactors of co-curricular participation, in particular, the aspects of participation, commitment, and cooperation, best predict social development among secondary school students?

Review of Literature

The modern-day view of education is not just based on academic success but the overall growth of the learner in regard to social, emotional and interpersonal skills. The concept of co-curricular activities (CCAs) can be interpreted as an organized experience that enriches the formal classroom learning process and offers learners with a chance to interact with each other, collaborate, and learn practical aspects of life outside the textbooks (Eccles & Barber, 1999). These involve sport, arts, drama, debates, community service, student governance, clubs and voluntary activities which are generally considered as vital factors in social progress of students. The literature continues to confirm the existence of positive effects of co-curricular involvement on students, their communication, teamwork, leadership, empathy and self confidence, which are also fundamental social competence constituents (Lamaey, 2022).

The theoretical framework of the social benefits of co-curricular activities is based on the developmental psychology especially, Erikson psychosocial theory which emphasizes social interaction as the fundamental element in the construction of identity and competence in the adolescence stage (Erikson, 1968). Youth at this secondary school level are bargaining social identities and how to go about peer relations, group relationships and expectations of the society. CCAs provide such naturalistic environments in which students engage in collaboration, conflict resolution, shared decision-making, and cooperative leadership, which help them learn socially and not just in the classroom (Vandell et al., 2022).

Co-curricular activities have been conceived to be a counterpart to the formal curriculum and are designed in a way that fits between academic learning and social life in the real world (Lo & Leung, 2022). The engagement in such activities has been associated with enhancement of self-efficacy, better social networks and increased involvement in school life. Incidentally, participation in team sports helps in instilling discipline, teamwork, and mutual support, whereas participation in arts and cultural clubs helps in increasing expression, creativity and diversity appreciation. The activities that develop communication skills, confidence in social interaction, the ability to listen and respect different opinions are debate and public speaking activities (Karamat et al., 2024).

Extensive literature has always demonstrated that, students engaged in co-curricular activities have better social skills than those who are not engaged in the activities. Participation in structured activities has been related to an increased level of teamwork, communication and peer engagement. Students undertaking extracurricular programs become more socially confident and have better interpersonal skills. These programs offer settings where common objectives and mutual work are possible, and trust, collaboration, and mutual support among colleagues are ensured, which are important measures of social growth (Brown et al., 2023).

Co-curricular participation is also associated with the development of an emotional intelligence dimension of social development which entails empathy, self-regulation and interpersonal awareness. Empathy and emotional intelligence are developed as students participate in activities that involve learning to take into consideration the positions of others, responding to the needs of peers, as well as managing emotions in a group context. An example of this is community service and volunteer work which exposes students to the various social situations and problems in which they tend to think and react with compassion and increased social awareness. In such a manner, CCAs serve as feasible spaces of exercising adaptive social behavior that consolidates positive peer relations and social integration (Channa & Alwi, 2024).

His/her role in fostering leadership and responsibility also highlights their role in social development by the use of the CCAs. It has been proposed that students who assume the responsibility of team captains, club officers, and project leaders learn organizational skills, responsibility, and decision-making skills. Such leadership roles involve organizing group work, problem-solving and effective communication all of which lead to social maturity and resilience. These roles are also usually associated with an increase in self-esteem and social competence, which means that the leadership of activities in a structured way can lead to personal development and the development of social skills (Shafiq, 2024).

Although the advantages have been identified, the literature also indicates that there are differences in the effect of the CCAs with regard to the nature and quality of the participation. Every interaction does not lead to identical levels of social benefits, and long-term commitment and active cooperation are specifically significant predictors of favorable social results (Owusu, 2022). Students who are active and play significant roles will demonstrate more improvements on social competencies compared to those whose participation is more superficial and occasional. This difference is in line with the research evidence that the level and quality of engagement is important and not the existence of participation per se in promoting any significant outcome of social development (Syed, 2023).

Research on the impact of co-curricular participation on the social life of developing nations such as Pakistan is still scarce but the new research indicates that there are also positive correlations of co-curricular participation. Historical systems of education within these settings tend to place more emphasis on academic results and grades in examinations without much focus on institutionalized CCAs. Nonetheless, research examining the impact of co-curricular activities in Pakistani schools has shown that learners participating in these roles will have a stronger peer relationship, enhanced social confidence and communication skills in comparison to learners not (Shafiq,

2024). These results can be used to indicate the applicability of CCAs in improving social competency of students even where they are not historically exploited.

The other significant factor that is examined in the literature is how the school environment and institutional support affect the effectiveness of CCAs. Schools that make resources, skilled leadership, trained facilitators, and culture of co-curricular engagement will have more powerful social outcomes in students (Sarwar et al., 2024). With the inclusion of CCAs as part of the school culture and a part of the education package, not a marginal extra, the chances of students perceiving them as important and investing more in them increase and hence the maximum benefits of social development.

Moreover, co-curricular interaction with peers leads to social network which may have a positive impact on school retention, motivation, and wellbeing in general. With the help of clubs or teams, students will establish a sense of belonging, which will have a higher likelihood of developing prosocial behaviors (Gearhart & Littman, 2024). This social network has the potential to minimize isolation, increase the ability to work as a team, and engage in healthy conflict management all of which are part of social competence.

Altogether, the literature will confirm the opinion that involvement in co-curricular activities will have a significant impact on the social development of students at secondary level. CCAs create contexts of experiences that encourage communication, collaboration, leadership, empathy and social confidence. The extent and the quality of engagement, particularly long-term commitment and active cooperation are very important in the calculation of the scale of these social gains. Considering the favorable correlations in the varying educational environments including the new evidence in Pakistan, the promotion of structured and meaningful co-curricular interaction should be viewed as an urgent measure to develop social competencies in secondary education.

Research Methodology

The current research used a quantitative method of analyzing the predictive effect between secondary school students' involvement in co-curricular activities and social development. The cause-comparative design was employed to establish the predictive power of co-curricular engagement variations in predicting social development. The independent (predictor) variable was the involvement of students in co-curricular activities, and the dependent (criterion) variable was the social development in terms of communication, cooperation, leadership, and teamwork. The sample was a Grade 10 male students of 312 government secondary schools in District Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan. The sample size of Grade 10 students was chosen because of their developmental readiness to participate actively in co-curricular activities, as well as, displaying social competencies. A sample of 50 schools was chosen by means of cluster random sampling, which resulted in a sample of 1,750 students. This was an appropriate method since the population was geographically dispersed, and sampling bias was minimized.

Instrumentation

The researcher designed two research instruments to gather information in this study. The independent variable identified in the questionnaire as Students, Participation in Co-Curricular Activities (SPCA), measured the extent to which students participated, dedicated, and collaborated in co-curricular activities. The questionnaire used to measure the dependent variable was the Students Social Development (SSD) questionnaire which tested the subdimensions, communication skills, cooperation, leadership and teamwork. The two instruments were built on a careful perusal of pertinent literature and theoretical frameworks, hence, content validity. All the items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) which offered a standardized approach to measure the engagement and social competency of students. These measures provided the opportunity to systematically assess the correlation between the level of co-curricular participation and social development in the secondary school level.

Data Collection

The data used in current study was gathered among Grade 10 students of government secondary schools in District Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan. Before collecting data, the school authorities gave formal consent and the students were informed regarding the objective of the study and voluntary participation was ensured. The researcher personally gave the SPCA and SSD questionnaires to the participants during school hours so as to ensure a high response rate and to clarify on any doubt question. The questionnaires filled were gathered instantly, reviewed to confirm that they were complete, and arranged to be analyzed further. This methodological strategy was used to guarantee valid and precise information to analyze the correlation between the involvement of students in co-curricular activities and their social growth.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Correlation Between Students' Participation in Co-Curricular Activities and their Social Development

Factors of Co-Curricular Activities	CS	SR	CONF	SD
Involvement in Co-Curricular Activities	.287**	.503**	.290**	.491**
Dedication in Co-Curricular Activities	.393**	.653**	.190*	.579**
Collaboration in Co-Curricular Activities	.372**	.658**	.305**	.615**
Participation in Co-Curricular	.406**	.696**	.291**	.644**

Results of the correlation analysis reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship between students' involvement in co-curricular activities and all the dimensions of social development. The overall involvement in co-curricular activities (PCA) has the greatest positive relationship with social development ($r = .644$, $p < .01$), implying that the more students participate in co-curricular activities, the more they develop social competencies. Considering the subdimensions, collaboration (CBN) is the most correlated with social responsibility ($r = .658$, $p < .01$) and overall social development ($r = .615$, $p < .01$), which means that cooperative and group-related activities are the most important in promoting prosocial behavior. The dedication (DCN) is highly related to social responsibility ($r = .653$, $p < .01$) and general social development ($r = .579$, $p < .01$), indicating that the motivated and committed involvement in the co-curricular activities can develop the social skills of students to a considerable extent. The involvement (INV) has a slightly lower correlation, but, nevertheless, it is positively correlated with all aspects of social development, which proves that frequent involvement can play a valuable role in the social development of students. On the whole, these findings indicate that proactive, committed and participatory involvement of co-curricular activities contributes heavily towards the social development of the secondary school students, enhancing their communication skills, social accountability, self-confidence and general social competence.

Table 2

Regression Analysis Predicting Impact of Students' Participation in Co-Curricular Activities on Their Social Development

Predictor	Social Development			
	r (Correlation)	p (r)	β (Beta)	p (β)
Involvement in Co-Curricular Activities	.491**	.000	0.084	.001
Dedication in Co-Curricular Activities	.579**	.000	0.296	.000
Collaboration in Co-Curricular Activities	.615**	.000	0.411	.000
Model R			.682 ^a	
Model R ²			.465	
F (3, 1707)			494.581	.000 ^b

The regression analysis has studied the predictive value of involvement of students in co-curricular activities on their social development. The correlation between the overall model produced a high relationship with $R = 0.682$ and $R^2 = 0.465$, which means that about 46.5 percent of the variance in social development can be attributed to a combination of involvement, dedication and collaboration in co-curricular activities. The model is also statistically significant ($F = 494.581$, $p < .001$) which proves that the combination of these factors predicts social development. Collaboration is the highest positive predictor among the predictors ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < .001$), indicating that those students who participate actively in co-curricular activities based on collaboration and groups are most likely to acquire greater social competencies. Social development ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$) is also greatly predicted by dedication, indicating that motivated and committed participation can increase the communication and social responsibility of the students as well as their confidence. Regular participation has a lower yet still positive beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.084$, $p = .001$) that suggests that regular involvement is a contributing factor to social growth only to a certain degree. In general, the results indicate that quality of involvement especially in the form of collaboration and dedication plays a significant role in the social development of secondary school students, with involvement without engagement and commitment playing a minor role in this development.

Conclusions

The results show that the students who engage in co-curricular activities in secondary schools have strong and positive relationships between their social development and participation in these activities. Students who actively participate in co-curricular activities have better social competencies such as the ability to communicate better, social responsibility, confidence, and overall social competence. Along with the other dimensions of participation, collaboration and dedication seem to be the most powerful ones, thus underlining the fact that cooperative group activities and committed, engaged participation are in the focus of promoting the social development of students. Even the average involvement, however, insignificant, plays a role in social development. Comprehensively, these findings indicate that active, dedicated, and group involvement in co-curricular activities is a great contributor to the social growth of secondary school students.

The regression analysis shows that the involvement in co-curricular activities by students is a significant predictor of social development. According to the model, roughly, half the variance in social development is attributed to the roles of involvement, dedication and collaboration, which proves the significant impact of the combination of factors collectively. Of them, cooperation proves to be the strongest predictor, highlighting that the active participation in the activities of cooperation and groups significantly improves the communication skills, social responsibility, confidence, and the social competence of the students. Commitment is also a great factor, whereby enthusiastic and committed involvement reinforces social development. Only involvement, although positively correlated, has a relatively lower effect, which indicates that active participation without full engagement and commitment to the process is less effective in promoting social development. By and large, the results indicate that the quality of the participation quality through collaboration and commitment is imperative in enhancing the social competencies among students who are in their secondary schools.

Discussion

The correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the social development of the students and their participation in co-curricular activities. Dedication, overall participation, and collaboration were determined as the strongest correlates and the data indicates that the students who are actively involved in the co-curricular practices have a higher degree of communication skills, social responsibility, confidence, and social competence in general. This observation correlates with the prior studies that reveal that co-curricular participation increases social skills and interpersonal competence due to the possibility of interaction,

working in a team, and learning with peers (Mogonea, 2023). In particular, team sports, group projects, and drama have been identified to promote prosocial behavior and empathy in their activities because they involve negotiations, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Boy et al., 2022). All in all, the positive relationship implies that the engagement of co-curricular activities is a valuable background of the cultivation of the necessary social skills in secondary school students.

Collaboration and dedication are among the subdimensions of participation with the strongest relations with the social development. The value of collaboration was especially linked to social responsibility and general social competence, which shows the importance of group-based interaction to the advancement of cooperative behavior and accountability. Social development was also closely connected with commitment, and the process of motivation and continuous participation is the way to improve the social skills of students. These results can be applied to the theoretical approaches to experiential learning, according to which active engagement and personal commitment to collective action contribute to the enhancement of social cognition and more applicable interpersonal skills (Lekswankun et al., 2023). The findings highlight the notion that not participation is equal, the quality of the engagement, which is determined by collaboration and commitment, is more important than the presence or even nominal participation in the activity.

The regression analysis proved that collaboration and dedication are great predictors of social development, but only the involvement influences it to a lesser degree. Collaboration was the most powerful predictor hence showing that cooperative activities are especially effective in improving communication, social responsibility and confidence. Commitment also played a major role in the development of the society, as it indicates that when an individual is committed to co-curricular activities, the social skill and interpersonal efficacy is developed. These results correspond with the previous studies that revealed that formal, intentional involvement in extracurricular and co-curricular activities facilitated social competence, civic participation, and team-building skills (Nguyen, 2022). The percentage of contribution of sheer involvement is relatively lower, this implies that mere attendance cannot be enough to enable students to enjoy the significant social benefits; there has to be meaningful and combined involvement.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is advisable that schools should take the lead in formulating and instituting systematic co-curricular activities that promote interaction and commitment among the students since this is what contributes greatly in socially developing the students. The school and teachers must offer students a wide variety of group-oriented experiences including team sports, drama, debates and community services projects to develop communication skills, social responsibility, and confidence. Monitoring and encouraging the sustained participation of students are also suggested as the schools are likely to promote meaningful participation but not involvement because the quality of participation is a crucial factor in social development. Moreover, educational policy makers and planners ought to incorporate co-curriculum activities as a vital aspect of the school curriculum, since it helps to produce socially fit, responsible and confident adolescents.

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