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## The Role of Co-curricular Activities in the Development of Social Competencies of Students in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This study examines how co-curricular activities affect children's social skills. Give children social skills like communication and self-confidence. Extracurricular activities build interpersonal skills, preparing students for academic success and character development. Social skills are crucial for student interaction. By allowing students to connect with instructors and classmates outside of the classroom, extracurricular activities foster social skills. Extracurricular activities develop tangible, intangible, metaphysical, and intellectual character traits. The second phase of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) emphasizes human capital development. Students build human capital by connecting with their environment, making friends, and learning outside of the classroom through leisure activities. It will also foster knowledge, innovation, and student growth. The purpose of this concept paper is to examine how extracurricular activities affect students' social skills and academic success. Extracurricular activities must be respected in Malaysian education.

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### Introduction

Within the dynamic educational landscape of Malaysia, the dedication to attaining elevated academic benchmarks has consistently been recognized as the fundamental principle of the nation's educational philosophy (Haji Ahmad, 1998). In contrast, with the global trend towards increased interdependence and societal engagement, an increasing number of people are recognising the significance of holistic student development. This collective consists of individuals who possess both scholastic and interpersonal abilities. The social lives of Malaysian students have been significantly influenced by extracurricular engagements as a result of this paradigm change (Buckley et al., 2018). Engaging in a diverse array of extracurricular activities, including athletic competitions, cultural associations, community service initiatives, and leadership development courses, provides an optimal environment for cultivating the social competencies and aptitudes necessary to navigate the intricate social dynamics of contemporary society. The educational system in Malaysia is broad and incorporates a wide range of extracurricular activities that significantly impact the lives of students (Shamsudin et al., 2014). These events foster teamwork toward shared objectives, cultivate interpersonal relationships, and promote a sense of communal belonging among students. These additional areas, such as dynamic sports arenas and serene artistic studios, serve as experimental environments for novel concepts related to individual development and societal advancement. Within this ever-changing context, students engage in active involvement in joint endeavors, cultivate their aptitude for leadership, and enhance their interpersonal proficiencies. Moreover, they cultivate enduring connections with persons hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds. The development, cultivation, and subsequent acquisition of

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social skills within these particular situations exert a significant impact on the framework of Malaysian society in relation to future generations. Nevertheless, inquiries remain unresolved regarding the precise impact of extracurricular activities on the enhancement of social aptitude in Malaysian youth. Despite the abundance of anecdotal data supporting the significant impact of extracurricular activities on the social development of children, there is a lack of comprehensive scientific study that fully elucidates the underlying mechanisms of these activities. Furthermore, it is imperative to conduct further research on the relationship between extracurricular activities and social development in Malaysia. The primary objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate connections between academic achievement and the development of interpersonal skills in educational institutions in Malaysia. The significance of equipping individuals with diverse talents and the capacity to thrive in many social environments becomes increasingly evident as Malaysia progresses towards a knowledge-based economy and enhances its integration into the global sphere. Undoubtedly, academic achievement is an essential requirement for success. It is imperative for students to actively cultivate their social competencies in order to foster the development of their interpersonal abilities, emotional intelligence, and cultural sensitivity. Extracurricular activities provide students with a distinct opportunity to cultivate their fundamental abilities beyond the confines of the conventional classroom environment, owing to their demanding nature and emphasis on hands-on implementation. Extracurricular activities have a crucial role in fostering multicultural peace and facilitating mutual understanding (Keser et al., 2011). The aforementioned tendency is particularly evident in Malaysia, a nation where the concept of multiculturalism is firmly embedded in the social fabric and significantly contributes to the development of the country's identity. The Malaysian population's diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural composition has implications for fostering social cohesion and harmony. Participating in extracurricular activities can facilitate the development of stronger interpersonal connections among children from different cultural backgrounds, leading to increased levels of comprehension and respect. Engaging in these activities has the potential to foster intercultural connections and a collective sense of identity among individuals from diverse cultural origins despite the inherent disparities between them. Despite the inherent advantages of extracurricular activities, ensuring equitable and unbiased access and active participation for all students remains a challenging endeavor. The involvement of children in extracurricular activities might be hindered by several obstacles, such as socioeconomic gaps, logistical challenges, or conflicting academic commitments. These variables play a role in intensifying the existing inequality in social development results. Therefore, it is imperative that individuals engaged in the field of education acknowledge these concerns and proactively implement policies that foster comprehensive and inclusive approaches to the progress of children. Moreover, it is crucial to consider extracurricular activities as essential components of the educational journey rather than optional recreational pursuits. The main objective of this study is to examine the intricate patterns of extracurricular involvements in educational institutions in Malaysia, specifically examining their impact on the development of students' interpersonal skills. The primary objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the various advantages, difficulties, and possibilities associated with engagement in extracurricular activities. The primary objective of this study is to have a significant impact on the advancements achieved in educational policies and practices in Malaysia, with the intention of fostering the holistic growth of students. Integrating extracurricular activities into Malaysian schools has the ability to foster the growth of future leaders, thinkers, and global citizens who possess the essential abilities to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

### Significance of the Research

The paper emphasizes the relevance of studying how co-curricular activities shape Malaysian students' social skills. In a rapidly changing global society where interpersonal skills, cultural awareness, and teamwork are becoming more important, understanding how extracurricular engagement affects social growth is critical. This research contributes to educational psychology by analyzing the complex relationship between extracurricular activity

participation and social skill development in Malaysia. It also offers educators, policymakers, and stakeholders valuable perspectives on how to develop students with a diverse skill set that can succeed in various social settings.

## Research Question

The aim of this study is to contribute to the development of Malaysian educational policies and practices by offering empirical evidence and insights on the impact of co-curricular activities on the enhancement of social competencies among Malaysian students.

## Literature Review

### Co-Curricular Activities

Extracurricular activities, often known as co-curricular, encompass a diverse array of events and programs that occur beyond the confines of the educational institution (Bartkus et al., [2012](#)). The objective of these exercises is to enhance and foster learning beyond the scope of formal education. Despite the educational benefits associated with these exercises, they are not subject to grading and do not contribute to the overall academic credit. Extracurricular activities refer to educational activities that occur outside of school. Through extracurricular activities, students will acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to spirituality, leadership, teamwork, and self-confidence. Participating in these events will enable individuals to acquire essential skills and enhance their well-being. Engaging in extracurricular activities fosters social cohesion among students and facilitates the integration of individuals from diverse racial backgrounds. Engaging in these activities can additionally facilitate the cultivation of virtues such as integrity, autonomy, diligence, self-restraint, and adherence to legal regulations, thereby fostering their development into industrious individuals within society. Hence, engaging in extracurricular activities might enhance students' social skills, thereby enhancing their future employment opportunities.

### Social Skills

The mastery of social skills is of utmost importance in the establishment and cultivation of interpersonal and occupational relationships (Morgan, [2022](#)). Demonstrating adept interpersonal skills can enable individuals to achieve their career goals, make valuable contributions to organizational achievements, excel in the recruitment process, and expand their professional network. Improving one's social skills can provide benefits in all areas of life. This article emphasizes the importance of social skills and presents concrete examples of social skills, as well as recommendations for improving one's competence in this area. Social skills are essential for effectively communicating with others in various ways, including spoken, nonverbal, written, and visual methods. In academic literature, social skills are frequently referred to as "interpersonal" or "soft skills." Verbal talents refer to the use of spoken language, while nonverbal communication refers to patterns of body language, facial expressions, and eye contact. Every occurrence of interpersonal interaction necessitates the use of social skills. Strong interpersonal skills can help create and maintain successful professional and personal relationships (Bartkus et al., [2012](#)). The following are social skills that everyone should adopt in the workplace:

### Effective Communication

Proficiency in interpersonal communication is an essential social aptitude. Having a high level of communication skills allows individuals to effectively express their thoughts and ideas to others. Effective leaders are individuals who have proficiency in communication, as they possess the capacity to clearly articulate tasks and objectives in a manner that is easily understood.

## Conflict Resolution

Disagreements and discontent may arise in several situations. Problem resolution is the ability to determine the root cause of a problem and find a practical solution. Effective conflict resolution skills are highly valuable in different professional fields, especially in HR positions that often involve handling employee conflicts, as well as in customer service roles that involve resolving conflicts on behalf of clients regarding a company's products, services, or policies.

## Active Listening

Active listening is the ability to clearly and fully concentrate on someone who is actively communicating with you. Colleagues often hold active listeners in high regard due to their attentive and considerate approach while interacting with others. To improve your listening skills, focus on the speaker, avoid interruptions, and wait until the other person finishes speaking before preparing your response.

## Empathy

Empathy can be defined as the cognitive and affective ability to understand and establish a connection with the feelings that an individual is experiencing (Cuff et al., [2016](#)). The presence of empathy enhances the probability of individuals confiding in themselves. Developing empathy involves a conscious effort to carefully reflect on the emotions of others. Through the cultivation of empathy and the establishment of a strong relationship with individuals, one can foster encounters that are characterized by robustness, courtesy, and transparency.

## Relationship Management

Relationship management encompasses the ability to proficiently maintain and foster favorable relationships while generating crucial connections. For example, individuals working in customer service positions may take on the task of cultivating the relationship between their company and a specific group of customers. Organizational executives are responsible for managing and supervising partnerships with stakeholders and investors. The possession of interpersonal skills facilitates the development of professional relationships, leading to reciprocal benefits for all parties involved.

## Able to Make a Change

Organizational change can be facilitated by students who demonstrate the capacity to initiate and expedite transitions (Stouten et al., [2018](#)). Individuals who exhibit a considerable degree of competence in executing modifications will demonstrate a comprehensive comprehension of the necessity for change, hence reducing obstacles and addressing any factors that could hinder the implementation of those modifications. In the context of educational students, it is crucial for them to demonstrate the resilience necessary to bring about a change in a particular domain that necessitates modification, particularly when their classmates partake in misconduct. Individuals must demonstrate the courage to respectfully draw attention to their friend's mistake and be prepared to confront the potential consequences of being criticized by multiple individuals, particularly their peers. Furthermore, individuals must demonstrate the bravery to articulate their ideas and offer their rationale for participating in a conversation. In this particular situation, the conflicts between two entities can be effectively addressed through the utilization of the concept of profound understanding. The ability to exert influence on others involves the utilization of effective tactics to persuade. A person who possesses this particular skill demonstrates proficiency in exerting influence over others by the skillful presentation of ideas, thus captivating the attention of the audience (Mercer et al., [2010](#)).

## Human Capital

Human capital encompasses the innate advantages and characteristics that augment an individual's efficiency. It is not feasible to transmit this mode to a person, but it must be nurtured and promoted from the school stage. Education has a pivotal role in the advancement of human capital, encompassing the fostering of robust ethical principles (Mercer et al., [2010](#)). Possessing a high level of proficiency, value, knowledge, and expertise to effectively address the requirements of a developed nation in the 21st century. The former Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has produced human capital that includes the ability to think critically and creatively, solve problems, create new possibilities, and traverse the ever-changing global environment with resilience and adaptability (Mohamed Adil et al., [2020](#)). The education system in Malaysia is characterized by a distinctive curriculum design that places equal focus on the acquisition of information and skills, as well as the development of human integrity and moral values. Both the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (NPSC) and the Primary School Standard Curriculum (PSSC) consist of six essential pillars of education that are designed to foster the development of a comprehensive and balanced individual.

- i. Humanity
- ii. Physical and Aesthetics
- iii. Communication
- iv. Literacy, science, and Technology
- v. Spirituality, Attitude, and Values
- vi. Self-appearance

The development of education in this country has been continuous for a significant duration, adjusting to growing challenges as time advances (Sarah et al., [2017](#)). Therefore, there is a significant association between co-curricular activities and the enhancement of social skills, which in turn promotes the growth of human capital that can contribute to a nation's future opportunities. Hence, it is crucial that each endeavor done is congruent with an individual's cognitive capacities to facilitate their growth and nurture a sense of accountability for their forthcoming endeavors. To foster the development of a conscientious and sophisticated individual, it is imperative to offer not only formal education but also avenues for extracurricular learning through advantageous endeavors. This will decrease the risk of students succumbing to boredom. The utilization of leisure time has the potential to facilitate the cultivation of skills, creativity, innovation, ethics, and strong moral integrity, thereby equipping individuals with the necessary abilities to effectively address real-world difficulties upon the culmination of their formal education.

## Prior Studies Pertaining to Co-curricular Activities and Social Skills

There exists a strong interconnection between extracurricular activities and the holistic development of students, including several dimensions such as mental and spiritual, physical, and social components (Omae, [2017](#)). Supercurricular activities involve a type of educational pursuit that surpasses the boundaries of traditional classroom settings, integrating elements of spirituality, leadership, teamwork, and self-assurance. Moreover, this training possesses the capacity to augment several social talents, encompassing communication, leadership, critical thinking, interpersonal aptitude, collaboration, and Information and Technology administration. By integrating extracurricular activities, there is a possibility of fostering individuals who possess advanced talents, hence facilitating the development of well-rounded human capital and augmenting their competitiveness in the global arena. The development of highly skilled human capital is vital for the economic progress of a country. This observation is consistent with the existing body of research on education, as it is widely acknowledged as a strategic and enduring investment for the nation. The aforementioned research investigates the influence of co-curricular activities on the cultivation of personal leadership attributes. The results of the study suggest that participation in extracurricular activities has the capacity to promote, nurture, and offer early exposure to

leadership, integrity, and community among students. It is imperative to foster the development of human resources during the educational phase in order to ensure their multifaceted and flexible capabilities rather than limiting them to a singular aptitude. A significant determinant of an individual's professional underperformance is their incapacity to create a productive rapport with their environment. This particular case serves as a perfect example of the importance of proficient communication abilities in any potential industry.

The primary aim was to investigate the influence of interpersonal support from parents, friends, school, and the physical environment on the level of involvement exhibited by teenagers in social activities. The objective of the study was to investigate the perceived social support received by students from various sources, including parents, classmates, school, and physical facilities (Danielsen et al., [2009](#)). Additionally, the study attempted to examine the relationship between this social support and students' engagement in physical activities during their leisure time. Only 20% of participants participated in physical activities during their spare time, as shown by the research. This finding indicates that male adolescents demonstrated greater levels of physical activity in comparison to their female peers. Furthermore, it was shown that male adolescents exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy when compared to their female peers. The acquisition of education is a significant investment that has a strong correlation with the notion of human capital. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of skill development as a pivotal element in the realm of industrial activity. It facilitates the cultivation of exemplary individuals and augments the overall standard of living. The integration of positive values throughout all educational endeavors holds the capacity to foster a cohort that demonstrates the capacity to engage in logical decision-making and demonstrate accountability in their behaviors and perspectives (Scott, [2009](#)). The education system is often regarded as a crucial element in the cultivation of human capital, as posited by economic theory. This is consistent with the attitudes and beliefs of economists who highlight the importance of human resources as a crucial component in the process of production, sometimes known as human capital. Hence, it is crucial to regularly improve human capital to raise competence, expertise, and productivity. Creativity and invention are widely acknowledged as essential qualities that greatly contribute to the development of human capital in the modern period of post-modernization. The inclusion of persons who possess creative and inventive qualities is a pivotal factor in facilitating the success of an organization's collaborative efforts. The effective deployment of energy by educational administrators is crucial for the development of innovative human resources within the educational system, with the objective of promoting advancement and attaining success in the realm of education. The aim of this study is to determine the most effective method for utilizing limited resources to create human capital by implementing a human development strategy. To optimize operational effectiveness, it is crucial to offer training, education, and development initiatives for the human resources inside the organizational framework, thereby harnessing the knowledge and skills of the workforce. Moreover, education plays a pivotal role in shaping wealth inequalities under specific conditions. Extracurricular activities have been found to be highly effective in facilitating the comprehensive development of students' cognitive, spiritual, physical, and social well-being.

### **Social Skills of Students**

Employers' selection of employees is heavily influenced by the acquisition of many abilities, including effective communication, problem-solving, decision-making, leadership traits, teamwork, and other soft skills. Moreover, these talents play a pivotal role as essential criteria for registries in the assessment of kids' applications to boarding schools, cluster schools, or even institutions of higher education. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of individuals who have successfully attained their educational qualifications exhibit a deficiency in the necessary skills, leading to their inability to fulfill the prescribed standards (Nevenglosky et al., [2019](#)). The absence of competence in multi-skills and soft skills among individuals who have completed their education was a notable determinant in their inability to achieve a more prosperous life path.

Although not all modern students have problems in technical areas like understanding science, mathematics, and physics, they lack competency in soft skills, which leads to less-than-ideal mastery of technical courses. Vocational training institutes have shown insufficient ability to impart crucial skills such as interpersonal skills, writing skills, and communication skills. School students serve as the bedrock for future generations. The implementation of various programs by the Ministry of National Education is intended to foster a generation that will make valuable contributions to the nation's reputation. A fundamental principle of the Malaysian educational framework is the holistic development of individuals' capabilities to nurture a balanced and multifaceted individual, embracing cognitive, spiritual, affective, and physical aspects (Yusuf et al., [2021](#)). This method is based on the fundamental concepts of trust and obedience to God. The primary aims of education in Malaysia are to foster the development of individuals who demonstrate self-regulation and display reverence for themselves, their families, communities, educational establishments, and the nation. The completion of education in Malaysia has been a prevailing norm, ensuring that the resulting citizens possess the necessary skills and knowledge to make meaningful contributions and maintain the country's esteemed standing, a matter of enduring importance in contemporary times.

### **The Impact of Co-Curriculum on the Development of Social Skills**

The inclusion of a co-curricular curriculum provides students with valuable opportunities to cultivate their interpersonal skills and foster the growth of their communication capabilities (Sarkar, [2022](#)). The main objective of the co-curricular curriculum is to enhance and strengthen student interaction and communication. The extracurricular learning environment, which takes place beyond the confines of the classroom, exerts a substantial influence on an individual's conduct and plays a pivotal role in the cultivation of students' social aptitude. Extracurricular activities have a substantial influence on the development of students' social skills. The author posits that the development of children is a result of the dynamic interaction between their immediate environment and their personal encounters. Development in children pertains to the impact of the surrounding environment on children, as well as their attitudes and behaviors in relation to the environment. Social skills are fundamental aspects of emotional intelligence that significantly influence the level of competence demonstrated by students in different situations. To attain brilliance, it is important for an individual to possess more than just academic intelligence. Participating in extracurricular activities can enhance the growth of social skills through personal or group interactions in everyday life. Moreover, it will help them develop the bravery to accept the challenge and effortlessly reveal their hidden talents. In order to properly engage and develop connections with their surroundings, individuals necessitate the acquisition of social skills and competencies. Extracurricular activities are of paramount importance in the pursuit of the national education policy aimed at cultivating a sense of unity and cohesion among students hailing from diverse racial origins. Extracurricular activities can cultivate a spirit of service, cooperation, and mutual help, which are essential components in creating a harmonious society. Each student is obligated to don a uniform, engage in athletic activities, and become a member of one of the school's various clubs or societies. A positive association has been shown between student involvement in extracurricular activities and both academic achievement and attendance rates. Furthermore, it has been shown that students who actively engage in extracurricular activities exhibit a decreased inclination to involve themselves in disciplinary matters, as opposed to their less-involved peers. The relationship between student involvement in extracurricular activities within the school environment, particularly from a social standpoint. Based on the findings of his study, it has been observed that students who actively participate in several extracurricular activities over a prolonged duration possess the capacity to reduce their involvement in criminal behaviors and mitigate the probability of attrition. Engaging in this extracurricular endeavor facilitates the development of students' personality attributes, such as self-confidence, interpersonal collaboration, and leadership proficiencies. The government's efforts to promote the participation and involvement of students in co-curricular activities are

praiseworthy. This is because the modern younger generation should have a balanced and harmonious combination of their academic endeavors, extracurricular activities, and personal qualities. Most firms now place a high importance on hiring individuals who have excellent interpersonal skills, show expertise, have high moral integrity, and excel in teamwork. Extracurricular activities have a significant role in enriching the curriculum by providing students with opportunities to improve, evaluate, and apply the skills, knowledge, and values that are being integrated within the classroom environment.

### Obstacles and Challenges

Every coin is composed of two opposing sides. Excessive involvement in extracurricular activities might cause students to experience uneven time management, resulting in partial neglect of allocated learning time. Furthermore, their lack of focus during classroom lectures is ascribed to exhaustion and difficulties in understanding the topic. Moreover, children may deceive their parents by providing inaccurate information regarding the imperative nature of involvement in extracurricular pursuits within the educational institution. Instead, they opt to partake in activities such as socializing, engaging in video games at a cyber café, or embarking on travel without securing authorization from the teacher. Individuals have the potential to utilize extracurricular activities as a means to achieve their personal goals. This particular approach is commonly utilized by students. Moreover, some students prioritized extracurricular activities over the academic curriculum. It results in their default condition and impedes their concentration on formal study within the educational institution. Consequently, this will result in below-average academic achievement and a reduced passion for acquiring knowledge. The involvement of parents in extracurricular activities can exert a substantial influence. The reason for this phenomenon is that some parents do not actively encourage their children's participation in extracurricular activities, as they view them as lacking importance and potentially causing undue obsession. A decrease in student participation and enthusiasm in extracurricular activities might be attributed to the inadequate facilitation skills of teachers. Another notable factor contributing to this issue is the inadequate accessibility of facilities and equipment. Incorrect opinions exist regarding the factors that contribute to the lack of interest among students and the community in co-curricular activities. Extracurricular activities are distinct from the academic curriculum as they are not subject to the same evaluation or grading criteria as the academic-based curriculum, which primarily emphasizes cognitive ability. Consequently, a considerable proportion of parents demonstrate reluctance to encourage their children's involvement in extracurricular pursuits, choosing instead to dedicate their time to their children's involvement in additional courses, music, and academic assignments. The parents tend to assign lower significance to extracurricular activities while placing greater emphasis on academic endeavors. Parents maintain the conviction that their children's academic accomplishments are more inclined to result in a more auspicious future than their participation in extracurricular activities within educational establishments. From a different perspective, it is important to acknowledge that there are certain constraints in the implementation of these extracurricular activities by particular organizations. Extracurricular activities are not given priority in the teaching and learning process. The level of instructors' involvement in implementing extracurricular activities is insufficient as a result of a lack of skills and capabilities. This phenomenon may emerge as a result of a deficiency in understanding the principles that provide the basis for a well-defined schedule of tasks.

### Conclusion

Generally, students who have strong social skills are those who actively participate in a range of school activities. Extracurricular activities possess the capacity to mold the personal character of a learner. The growth of leadership characteristics, the development of a healthy personality, and the building of a disciplined generation are among the predicted benefits associated with participation in extracurricular activities. Participation in extracurricular activities can additionally facilitate the development of a positive character and promote a sense of responsibility.



Engagement in societies, clubs, and other extracurricular pursuits promotes the acquisition of social competencies, facilitates the formation of harmonious interpersonal connections, and nurtures the capacity to construct public relations that may be effectively employed in forthcoming societal settings. Participating in extracurricular activities functions as a strategy for equipping individuals for the labor market, thus influencing their financial earnings. Extensive research has been conducted with a particular focus on the field of education. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of skills training since it directly influences future employment opportunities and income levels.

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