

The Need for Extracurricular **Activities in the Pakistani School System**

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Key Insights/ Abstract

Pakistan does not have many facilities for extracurricular activities. The few facilities available are not affordable for the average student. Schools in Pakistan do not offer these activities either. They do not find these activities important. (Rafiullah, 2019) This research focuses on the attitude of the students in Pakistan towards extra-curricular activities. Are they interested and willing to participate if given the opportunity? And how can the government address this issue? For this study, a sample of 103 students aged 14 to 17 years old from class 6 to 10 were surveyed to understand

their perspectives and gauge their interest in extra-curricular activities. The overall results of the survey indicate that there is a growing need among the youth to take part in extra-curricular activities, and students are willing to participate in them. These facilities should be available in schools since going to outside institutions, which are not affordable for average Pakistanis, will have the added expense of transportation costs. Where facilities are available, they need to be updated to accommodate for a positive growth among the students.

Research Context

Extracurricular activities play an important role in the development of children. It is positively related to cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes for children and adolescents (Emily Maloney, 2019). Students who participate in extracurricular activities get better grades than students who do not participate. Extracurricular activities also teach time management to students, as they have to balance these activities along with academics. Extracurricular activities help build confidence and teach teamwork. Students can explore their interests. It creates broader perspectives, provides experience in multiple areas, and creates a more open sense of opinion. It also relieves boredom which is harmful in the long term. Studies have shown extracurricular activities have a significant influence on the success of students (Ghiyas Kamyar, 2018). Other than that, extracurricular activities are very beneficial for physical health. It increases the student's engagement. Students who do not take part in extracurricular activities, lose motivation and strength to pay attention in school. (Nikki Wilson, 2009). They spend their free time doing harmful or unproductive activities.

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extracurricular activities. The few facilities available are not affordable for the average student. Schools in Pakistan do not offer these activities either. They do not find these activities important. A study showed that the students of Lahore, who participated in extracurricular activities, improved their academic performance and self-concept (Rafiullah, 2019). Most schools in Pakistan focus more on grades and academic scores rather than extracurricular activities. Students are pressured to increase test scores and academic achievement according to research done (Steven Wesley Craft, 2012). They feel that extracurricular activities distract students from their studies, but that is not the case. Parents do not allow their children to participate in them. Due to this, students spend their time rather playing video games (Terry, Marion, Malik, Amjad, Chohan, Bushra, 2020). It is important for families and teachers to know the impact of participating in these activities. Students do not participate in these activities outside school because of financial problems. (Nikki Wilson, 2009). Schools in developed countries encourage extracurricular activities after classes including sports, arts, and music from a very early age (Haruo Kimura, 2018). So, the question remains, what is the

reason for this lack of facilities in Pakistan, and how can it be addressed?

Many researches have been conducted to understand the underlying issues in the academic institutions in Pakistan relating to extracurricular activities, but these have not been from the point

of view of students. This research will focus on the attitude of the students in Pakistan towards extra-curricular activities. Are they interested and willing to participate if given the opportunity? And how can the government address this issue?

Research Design

For this study, a sample of 103 students aged 14 to 17 years old from class 6 to 10 were surveyed to understand their perspectives and gauge their interest in extra-curricular activities. 51 participants were male and 52 participants were female in order to get a more balanced response. The students were from 4 school in different sectors in Islamabad. 2 of the 4 schools provided opportunities and facilities to participate in extracurricular activities while 2 did not have any

of these facilities. The survey questions were multiple choice questions with a few open-ended questions to get a better idea of the students' opinions. The surveys were administered under the supervision of school staff and the data was then compiled in SPSS for further analysis. The results were expressed in percentages based on the frequency of students who selected those responses.

Key Findings and Discussion

About 51% of the students had facilities to participate in extra-curricular activities at their school, and 49% students were from schools that did not offer these facilities.

A majority of 97% students said they were very interested in participating in extra-curricular activities. The most popular extra-curricular activities among the students were sports (83%), Games (78%), Music (45%), followed by Arts and crafts (43%). Sports was the most popular activity among girls (73%) and boys (92%) as well. Of the students from schools that offered extra-curricular activities, a majority of 93% students reported that they took part in these activities showing a high willingness to actually participate in these activities. When asked how often they take part in these activities, 45% students said daily, 33% said once a

week, while 14% said less than once a week.

Gaining new friends, improving communication skills, learning new skills, increased motivation were among the benefits that students reported getting from extra-curricular activities. Some of the reported negative effects were being distracted from studies, feeling tired to do anything else, and physical injuries.

On the other hand, the results from students who did not have these facilities were highly contrasting. Only 36% of respondents reported participating in extra-curricular activities outside of school even though they were highly interested in them. The most common reason cited for not participating was financial issues (37%), followed by focus on studies (32%), lack of energy (16%), other

responsibilities (15%), and lack of time (11%).

Overall, more than half of the students (52%) reported having more than 9 hours spare time per day. When asked what they do in their spare time, 44% said they surf on the internet and 33% said they hang out with family and friends. These are very high proportions of students who could be encouraged to do more productive activities to build skills or interests for the future.

Over 40% respondents were not satisfied with the management of extra-curricular activities in their schools specifically and in Pakistan in general. Reported reasons included: lack of facilities, lack of support from authorities, unaffordability of academies and clubs, lack of variety, and no equipment.

The overall results of the survey indicate that:

- There is a growing need among the youth to take part in extra-curricular activities.
- Students are willing to participate in extra-curricular activities when given the opportunity to do so.
- Students have experienced many visible positive effects of extra-curricular activities and may continue to do so in the future.
- Where facilities are available, they need to be updated to accommodate for a positive growth among the students.
- Institutions outside of schools that may provide these facilities are way too costly for the average Pakistani student. Along with extra fees for the outside-school activities, transport is another expense. That's why it would be more convenient for extracurricular activities in school.
- Another reason for students not taking part in these activities is the lack of energy. Students put most of their effort into increasing their test scores so they barely have any free time.
- Many students end up wasting their time when they do not have any useful commitments to develop their skills.

Are you interested in any extracurricular activities?	
Yes	97%
No	3%
What extracurricular activities would you like to participate in?	
Sports	83%
Games	78%
Music	45%
Arts	43%
Poetry/Creative writing	14%
Debates	12%
Drama	9%
Book Clubs	9%
Others	8%
How often do you participate in extracurricular activities?	
Daily	45%
Once a week	33%
Twice a week	14%

Others	8%
Does your school offer any extracurricular activities?	
Yes	49%
No	52%
If yes, do you participate in them?	
Yes	93%
No	7%
How many hours of spare time do you have per day?	
3 – 5 hours	23%
6 – 8 hours	25%
9 – 11 hours	45%
More than 11 hours	7%
What do you usually do in your spare time?	
Play some sports	55%
Surf on the internet	44%
Hang out with your friends/family	33%
Shopping	10%
Study	4%
Other	3%
Poetry/Creative writing	14%
Book Clubs	9%
Other	8%
Do you participate in any extracurricular activities outside school?	
Yes	36%
No	44%
If no, why not? (Select all options that apply)	
No time	11%
Financial issues	37%
Burden of studies	32%
Lack of energy	16%
Other responsibilities	15%
How do you feel after extracurricular activities?	
Tired	33%
Satisfied	27%
Nothing	22%
Relaxed	14%
Other	4%

What positive effect have you got from participating in extracurricular activities? (Select all options that apply)	
New friends and improved communication skills	54%
Entertainment	49%
Learn new skills	37%
Increased energy levels	26%
Improved practical abilities	21%
Increase motivation	18%
Better physical health	25%
Other	5%
What negative effect do you think too many extracurricular activities can have? (Select all options that apply)	
Distracts from studies	22%
Makes people feel tired	42%
Physical injuries	13%
Other	8%
Do you think extracurricular activities have any effect on your studies?	
Yes	34%
Maybe	39%
No	27%
Other	8%
What effect do you think it has on your studies?	
Positive	53%
Negative	47%
Are you satisfied with the management of extracurricular activities?	
Yes	25%
Not Sure	35%
No	40%
If no, why not? (Select all options that apply)	
Not enough facilities in Pakistan	43%
Not enough extracurricular activities in school	63%
Not affordable	57%
The equipment should improve	22%
Other	6

Table: Students' opinions on extra-curricular activities

Policy Recommendations

- The schooling system should systematically incorporate extra-curricular activities which should be compulsory for students.
- The government should allocate a budget for educational institutions (both public and private) to be able to provide extra-curricular activities to their students.
- There should be a government institution for monitoring the advancement in extra-curricular activities.
- The government should organize inter-school, inter-city and inter-province competitions to encourage the you

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