



Extracurricular Activities and Academic Performance: Spotlight on Accounting Students of the University of Jos

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ABSTRACT

Extracurricular activities (ECA), though prevalent in educational institutions globally, remain controversial in the research arena. This study investigates the relationship between ECA and academic performance. Using data obtained from questionnaires on students' level of participation in ECA and CGPA data from the Department of Accounting, University of Jos, Nigeria; the study found a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between academic performance and political, religious & sport related ECA's. The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression technique was the analysis tool adopted in the investigation, which was carried out on a sample of 225 students. The findings of this study are expected to aid education administrators, regulators, counsellors and other stakeholders; especially at the university level; in setting appropriate goals for student learning and development.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, Co-curricular activities, Academic performance, CGPA Accounting students, University of Jos

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of education is to activate desirable change in a child's behaviour and personality (Singh, 2017). Parents and educators are primary stakeholders in ensuring that the objectives of education are achieved (Kariyana et al., 2012; Tanner, 2017). Once upon a time, formal learning was the sole preserve of educational institutions. However, an increase in human development coupled with an unprecedented explosion in communication technology has completely changed the concept of learning (Bakoban & Aljarallah, 2015). Learning is no longer confined to the classroom. Preparing students who will be fit for the future requires a balanced philosophy. A philosophy that is not limited to an academic curriculum. Education must go a step further to enhance social interaction, team spirit, leadership, healthy recreation, self-esteem and self-confidence; as well as, provide a platform for developing inborn and creative talents (Singh, 2017).

Extracurricular activities (ECA) describe those activities outside of the classroom setting which focuses on students' intellectual, social, emotional, moral and interpersonal development (Bakoban & Aljarallah, 2015; Kariyana et al., 2012). Generally, ECA may include sports activities, hobbies, workshops, festivals, journeys and visits, competitions, recreational activities, arts and crafts, and so on. While these activities are not traditionally included in the school curriculum, research shows that they are indispensable for the holistic development of students (Kariyana et al., 2012). According to Bakoban and Aljarallah (2015), the impact of ECA focuses on three levels: individual level (student), institutional level, and community level.

A fundamental concern for parents and educators in this part of the world relates to the question of whether ECA distracts students from their academic pursuits, or if it does improve academic performance. The significance of this dilemma is buttressed by two main factors. Firstly, acquiring quality education in Nigeria is no mean feat, in terms of monetary cost¹. Secondly, there is a general perception in Nigeria about holding academic certificates. It is believed that such certifications are the most preferred route to prestige and wealth. Thus, negative perception towards ECA, which is viewed as a threat, is prevalent (Silliker & Quirk, 1997). The non-shifting emphasis on test scores and Grade Point Averages (GPAs) as a measure of students' academic success provides the backdrop against which participation in ECA is scrutinized, especially since these activities are voluntary within the Nigerian context.

Another aspect of the Nigerian paradigm relates to the structure of academic activities and educational curriculum across University campuses. Erratic lecture timetables, deplorable sporting and recreational facilities, an unstructured approach to recognizing students' activity groups, non-existent technical and financial support for non-academic activities; all stifle ECA participation by University students. Furthermore, poor funding of public universities within the country has played no small part in crippling the capacity of these universities to support ECA.

In Nigeria, ECA activities are more pronounced at the lower levels of the educational ladder (primary and secondary school levels). As students move higher, the system seems to constrain them into a sort of academic bottle. Is the Nigerian higher educational system short-changing for students? Is there a need to take the school curriculum back to the drawing board? Is ECA a remedy, at least, in part, for the falling level of academic performance and quality of

¹The annual tuition fee for one student at the University of Jos is approximately 42% of the annual national minimum wage. This is excluding a host of hidden and extra charges which may well raise that statistic.

Graduates from Nigerian higher institutions? The aim of this study is thus; to examine the nature of the relationship between ECA and academic performance in Nigerian Universities.

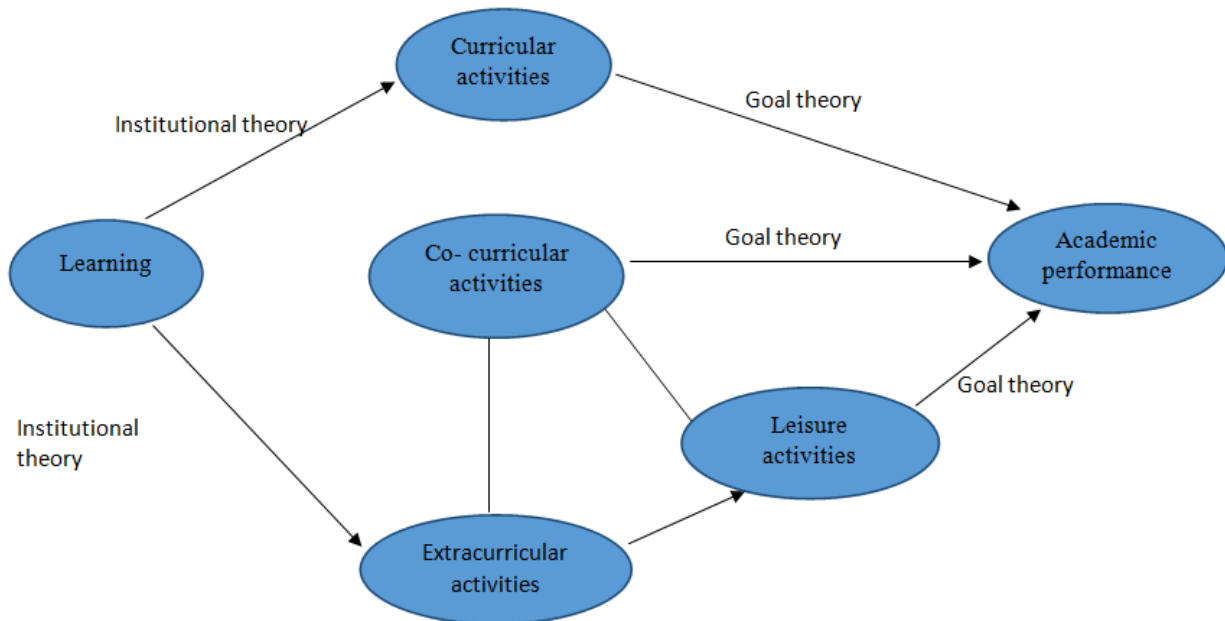
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of extracurricular activities

Bakoban and Aljarallah (2015) describe ECA as out-of- the- classroom activities. They are activities that take place mostly after regular school hours (Cadwallader et al., 2004). Generally, ECA is voluntary and are not a component of the academic grading system (Annu & Sunita, 2015; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). However, the extents to which these activities are voluntary are school and education level specific. Thus, ECA may be a mandatory requirement in some country wise or institution wise structures.

Contemporary literature has paid attention to distinguishing between the concept of *extracurricular activities* and a more recent term, *co-curricular activities*; although they continue to be used interchangeably to refer to a wide range of activities, some of which have been highlighted as examples of ECA activities within this study (Annu & Sunita, 2015). Literally, *co-curricular* suggests that such activities are school-related and complement academic studies. *Extracurricular* on the other hand is a generic term describing all activities which are extra or additional to the documented school curriculum. *Extracurricular* may be viewed as consisting of both curricular-related (structured) and other extracurricular (non-structured) activities that are more leisurely inclined (Singh, 2017). In reality, many of these activities may overlap, and thus transform this categorization into a complex web.

Fig. 1: Complex web of the learning process



Source: Author’s compilation (2019)

Another dimension of ECA that may be significant in assessing its effect on academic performance borders on whether such activities involve a reasonable level of physical exertion or not. Sports, generally, have dominated recent discussions and research, in respect of ECA. This may be due to its worldwide popularity, a wide range of economic opportunities, as well as, a rapidly growing viable commercial industry. Nevertheless, a blanket approach to investigating ECA, or even a specific focus on other less- physical or non-physical ECA; can deliver equally beneficial insight and knowledge.

An avalanche of empirical studies has claimed that participation in ECA contributes positively to not just the academic performance of students, at all levels; but, their overall development, as well. However, there is also empirical evidence that the reverse can be the case, under certain circumstances (Tanner, 2017). A negative relationship may result when students prioritize ECA over school-related work (Dijk et al., 2014). The pros and cons

of ECA unravelled by years of research, thus, suggest that a controlled approach is required to reap the benefits of students' participation in such activities, while also mitigating the negative effects that may arise. Thus, a case may be made for extracurricular activities to be more or less structured (*co-curricular*), in order to maximize the positive potential of such activities to improve academic performance (Kariyana et al., 2012).

2.1.1 Pros and cons of ECA

Tanner(2017) highlights a summary of the benefits and negative effects of ECA discovered by existing studies on the subject of ECA and academic performance. Positive effects of ECA on academic performance include, but are not limited to:

- i. *Balanced life and development*: Burrows and McCormack (2011) argue that ECA may have the capacity to provide life balance for students. It provides a relaxed atmosphere for students to engage socially and release energy (Tanner, 2017). Life balance is a positive predictor of academic achievement and aids students in maintaining an optimal level of efficiency (Bergin, 1997).
- ii. *Self-confidence*: Participation in ECA supports the achievement of personal goals recognition for accomplishments, and frequent interaction with others which leads to better productivity and self-efficacy (Tanner, 2017). Results from several studies support this claim (Cosden et al., 2004; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997).
- iii. *Sense of contribution and duty to school*: ECA fosters a certain kind of bond between students and their schools (Burrows & McCormack, 2011). It enables the merging of identity between student and institution, thus, creating a sense of duty and responsibility in students to act as ambassadors of their school. This sense of duty extends into the academic pursuits of students. Thus academic performance is the better for it (Cosden et al., 2004; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997).
- iv. *Sense of belonging*: It follows from the previous positive effects already highlighted that ECA may be expected to improve a sense of belonging among students. Knifsend and Graham (2012) found a curvilinear relationship between sense of belonging, academic performance, and the number of ECA in which the student participates. This finding gives credence to a controlled approach to ECA, as suggested by this study. Too much ECA may lead to an overload, while too few ECA may lead to missed opportunities (Tanner, 2017).

Participation in ECA can also have negative effects on student's academic performance:

- i. *Overload*: As already highlighted, a negative aspect of students' participation in ECA arises when students engage in too many ECA (Knifsend & Graham, 2012). Such a situation is often described as an overload.
- ii. *Narrow identity*: Another negative effect of ECA relates to a situation in which a student has a misplaced priority. The student prioritizes ECA to the detriment of academic activities. When students define themselves as by the ECA in which they are engaged with little emphasis on their academic roles; then, their CGPAs may likely suffer (Tanner, 2017). Beron and Piquero (2016) found a negative relationship between identity and CGPA in cases where students defined themselves by their ECA.

2.2 Theoretical underpinning

This study, unlike previous studies, attempts to establish a basis upon which the relationship between ECA and academic performance may be examined and investigated:

- i. *Institutional theory*: The institutional theory explains that organizations and organizational practices are shaped by social pressures. Organizations tend to conform to the norms, values and ideologies of the organizational field in pursuit of legitimacy and survival. The organizational field connotes a community of similar and related organizations at different levels of development. The theory posits that organizations that meet the expected characteristics of the environment become acceptable and stand a chance of enjoying the resources of the society. Thus, an institution's environment limits its liberty to determine its strategic path and activities. Major building blocks of the institutional theory comes from the research literature on institutional sociology (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987). Universities are not standalone entities. They are influenced by stakeholders within and outside the institutional environment, whom, to a large extent; dictate the expectations for organizational behaviour and practices. These stakeholder expectations mould the alternative strategies and activities from which school administrators can choose, in pursuance of organizational goals. Acceptability of ECA by school

administrators, as well as, the level of participation by students in ECA, within the institutional framework theory; is thus, a function of social perception about ECA.

- ii. *Goal theory*: it was Edwin Locke, who in the 1960s, propounded the goal theory. The theory holds that goal setting is vital to task performance. Goal theory posits that goals provide intrinsic motivation. Successful performance of tasks requires certain conditions, notwithstanding that goals have already been set. These conditions include goal acceptance and commitment, goal specificity, goal difficulty and feedback. There might be no better place to evaluate the goal theory than in a school setting. Every organization, including a university, is set up to achieve certain goals. The same can be said about students who submit themselves to higher-level education. Participation in ECA by students may be informed by the feedback aspect of the goal theory. If the goal set by Universities is to produce all-rounded students *in Learning and Character*, then the poor quality of Graduates suggest that control and corrective actions are required to be applied to either the nature of the goals, or the process (ECA) of achieving those goals, or both.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study focuses on the Department of Accounting of the University of Jos to examine the relationship between ECA and academic performance. A cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. Data on the independent variables were initially collected before the final semester exams for the 2017/2018 academic session. Thereafter, the CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) data was obtained from the Exams office of the Department of Accounting.

3.1 Population and sample

The target population encompasses students of the final (400 level) and penultimate (300 level) levels of the Undergraduate Accounting programme at the University of Jos, Nigeria; as at the 2017/ 2018 academic session. The researcher is of the view that students at these levels provide a more objective basis to achieve the objective of the study; given that time spent on the programme is sufficient enough to allow a more sustained interaction between the study variables. The sample size for this study is limited by the number of valid questionnaires returned by members of the target population. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the composition of the study sample that was obtained.

Table 1: Population and Sample

	Population	Target population/ Questionnaire distributed	Sample/Valid questionnaires
100 Level	109	-	-
200 Level	172	-	-
300 Level	163	163	131
400 Level	165	165	124
Total	609	328	255

3.2 Instrumentation and analysis tool

A questionnaire designed by the researcher was used to collect student data. Participation in ECA is measured on a continuous ratio scale to accommodate the intensity or level of participation of students in ECA; as suggested by Tanner (2017). The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression technique is the tool of preference to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to run all statistical analyses. The study has grouped ECA into Four major groups: politics-related, religion-related, sport-related and, social/leisure-related. This categorization is informed by the prevailing ECA activities on campus at the University of Jos.

3.3 Regression model and variables measurement

The regression model is specified below:

$$CGPA = \alpha + \beta_1POL + \beta_2REL + \beta_3SPT + \beta_4SOC + \beta_5AGE + \beta_6GEN + \beta_7MST + \beta_8PRA + \beta_9CPX + \beta_{10}MOD + \varepsilon$$

Table 2: Variables and Measurement

Symbol	Description	Measurement
Dependent variable:		
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average	Measured on a 5-point scale
Independent variables:		
POL	Participation in campus politics	Measured on a continuous 10-point scale.
REL	Participation in religious activities	
SPT	Participation in sports	
SOC	Participation in social activities	
ECA	Computed average for all ECA variable groups	
Control variables:		
STG	Membership of study group	Yes = 1, No = 0
AGE	Age of student	Measured in years
GEN	Gender of student	Male = 1, Female = 0
MST	Marital status of student	Single = 1, Married = 0
PRA	Affiliation to professional accounting body	Yes = 1, No = 0
CPX	Proximity to campus	Yes = 1, No = 0
MOD*	Mode of entry into programme	UTME =1, DE = 0

* Students enter the accounting programme either through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Exams (UTME) at 100 level or as Direct Entry (DE) students at 200 level subject to the Department's entry requirements.

3.4 Test of hypotheses

On the evidence of literature surveyed, the study proposes the following

H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between the level of participation in ECA and students' CGPA

The research hypothesis is tested at a 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). If $p < \alpha$, the null hypothesis will be rejected; otherwise, it will be accepted.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3(a): Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	maximum
CGPA	225	2.96	0.72	1.34	4.83
POL	225	4.04	2.83	0.00	10.00
REL	225	7.48	2.19	0.00	10.00
SPT	225	5.14	2.82	0.00	10.00
SOC	225	5.60	2.60	0.00	10.00
AGE	225	25.45	5.94	15.00	59.00

Table 3(b): Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Category	FRQ	%	Variable	Category	FRQ	%
GEN	Male	126	44	STG	Yes	175	22.2
	Female	99	56		No	50	77.8
		225	100			225	100
MST	Single	195	86.7	CPX	Yes	127	56.4
	married	30	13.3		No	98	43.6
		225	100			225	100
MOD	UME	159	70.7	PRA	Yes	35	15.6
	DE	66	29.3		No	190	84.4
		225	100			225	100

Tables 3(a) and 3(b) show the descriptive statistics of the independent and control variables. Variables have been grouped based on common measurement scales used. The mean scores of the ECA categories show an approximately average level of participation of students in ECA. Religion-related ECA (REL) has the highest mean participation of 7.84. This reflects a highly religious society; explained by the institutional theory. Politically-related ECA (POL), on the other hand, records the lowest mean participation of 4.04. This may not be unconnected with the general political apathy usually displayed by the educated elite in Nigeria. A standard deviation of 5.94 years, a mean of 25.45 years and a maximum of 59 years for AGE of students reveal an admission policy that may be considered inconsistent. Such statistics, most probably, is a reflection of the unstable and unregulated nature of the Nigerian educational system which constrains students to spend more than the required duration of time in the system, and with no strict guidelines for admissions at the undergraduate level. This is likely to impede participation in ECA.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

	CGPA	ECA	STG	AGE	GEN	MST	PRA	CPX	MOD
CGPA	1								
ECA ^u	-0.060	1							
STG	-0.215**	0.019	1						
AGE	-0.240**	-0.128	0.102	1					
GEN	-0.112	0.226**	0.000	0.198**	1				
MST	0.127	0.084	0.021	-0.691**	0.058	1			
PRA	0.230**	-0.086	0.052	0.035	0.010	0.012	1		
CPX	0.076	0.195**	-0.017	-0.157*	0.020	0.183**	0.031	1	
MOD	0.251**	0.103	-0.063	-0.471**	-0.020	0.264**	0.0470.	0.143**	1

** ($p < 0.01$), * ($p < 0.05$), ^u (mean score of ECA categories)

Table 4 shows the Pearson correlation matrix of the study variables. Gujarati(2003) asserts that correlations between independent variables of 80% or higher may pose econometric problems of multi-collinearity. The analysis shows that there are no issues of multi-collinearity, with correlations well below 80%. A fundamental observation reveals that GEN ($r = 0.226$) and CPX ($r = 0.195$) may be important determinants of the level of students' participation in ECA. They both show significant positive correlations with the overall level of participation in ECA. Thus, Males are therefore more likely to participate in ECA than females. This is consistent with the findings by Singh(2017). Also, proximity to campus will improve student's participation in ECA. An earlier assumption of the likely relationship between AGE and ECA is confirmed in Table 4. AGE ($r = -0.128$) is negatively correlated with ECA. The implication is that, as a student grows older, the motivation to engage in ECA continues to fall. A possible

explanation for this behaviour could be explained by the goal theory; where the task of participating in ECA no longer provides intrinsic motivation, in the light of mounting economic and family pressures.

Table 5: Regression Estimates

Variables	Standardized Coefficient	t- statistics	Probability	VIF
Constant		7.212	0.000	
POL	0.011	0.602	0.548	1.324
REL	0.006	0.301	0.764	1.135
SPT	0.004	0.227	0.820	1.399
SOC	-0.041	-1.996	0.047*	1.477
STG	-0.344	-3.235	0.001*	1.031
AGE	-0.019	-1.593	0.113	2.529
GEN	-0.109	-1.089	0.277	1.289
MST	-0.030	-0.162	0.871	2.101
PRA	0.482	3.964	0.000*	1.020
CPX	0.036	0.384	0.701	1.106
MOD	0.321	2.867	0.005*	1.371

$\alpha = 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.206$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.165$; F- statistic = 5.034; probability of F- statistic = 0.000; N = 225,

*= Significant at 0.05

The result from table 5 shows that the overall predictive power of the regression model is 21% ($R^2 = 0.206$) and is significant at a 5% level of significance ($p = 0.000$). The Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) indicate that there is no multi-collinearity problem in the model ($VIF < 10$). The threshold of 10 for VIF is a rule of thumb used by many researchers (O’ Brien, 2007). The regression estimates confirm a positive but non-significant relationship between; POL ($\beta = 0.011$, $p = 0.54$), REL ($\beta = 0.006$, $p = 0.76$), SPT ($\beta = 0.004$, $p = 0.82$) and CGPA. Findings from studies such as Bakoban and Aljarallah(2015), Masoni(2011), Singh(2017) support positive interaction between participation in ECA and students’ CGPA. Meanwhile, a statistically significant negative relationship is observed between SOC and CGPA ($\beta = -0.041$, $p = 0.04$). On the evidence of these results, there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, which states that *there is no statistically significant relationship between ECA and CGPA*. Furthermore, it is worthy to note that the model indicates PRA as having the largest statistically significant impact on academic performance ($\beta = 0.482$, $p = 0.000$). This means that accounting students can improve their CGPA by approximately 48% through membership of a professional Accounting body. Given that Accounting is a professional course, this relationship is not unexpected. Consequently, it may be important to flag the negative correlation observed between PRA and ECA ($r = 0.086$) in Table 4. MOD is also positively statistically significant. Thus, these variables represent areas for further investigation.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The mixed results for the different categories of ECA examined, as it relates to CGPA, indicates that ECA can both be beneficial and detrimental to students’ academic performance in Nigerian Universities. These results are consistent with previous literature which have claimed that ECA can have both positive and negative effects on students’ academic performance. Therefore, a blanket approach to assessing ECA may not be objective enough to answer questions on how ECA affects academic performance. Such factors as; type of ECA, level of participation and, level of supervision (relatedness to academic activities) will most likely influence the direction and extent of the relationship between ECA and student performance measures. The study recommends that more attention should be given to fostering students’ participation in ECA. University management must devise means of engrafting ECA in school curricular. There is currently an unstructured approach to participation in ECA at the University of Jos.

Structuring ECA to complement traditional classroom curricular will likely have a positive effect on the student learning process and goals, as revealed by the findings of the study.

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