

Impact of Extra-curricular Activities on Students' Academic Performance at Secondary Schools in Samdrup Jongkhar.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100701095>

Received: 10 August 2026; Accepted: 15 August 2026; Published: 21 August 2026

ABSTRACT

Education aims to promote the holistic development of learners by nurturing their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth. Extracurricular activities (ECAs), such as sports, clubs, music, cultural events, and leadership programs, will be considered an important component of school education because they will help students develop teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. However, there will be an ongoing debate regarding whether participation in extracurricular activities will enhance or hinder students' academic performance. While some educators and parents will believe that extracurricular participation will improve academic achievement by increasing students' motivation, discipline, and school engagement, others will argue that it will reduce the time available for academic studies and may negatively affect examination performance. In Bhutan, limited empirical research will have been conducted to investigate this issue, particularly at the secondary school level.

The purpose of this study will be to examine the impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag. The study will also aim to explore students' perceptions of extracurricular activities and compare the academic performance of students who will participate in extracurricular activities with that of students who will not participate.

A mixed-methods research design will be employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data will be collected using a 24-item Student Perception Survey Questionnaire (SPSQ), which will be administered to 471 students from Classes IX to XII across seven secondary schools. Qualitative data will be gathered through open-ended questions to obtain students' views and experiences regarding extracurricular participation. The quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS version 22.0, employing descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and an independent samples t-test to determine differences in academic performance between participating and non-participating students. Qualitative responses will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, academic performance, student perception, mixed-methods research, secondary schools, Bhutan, Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in the holistic development of students by nurturing their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral abilities. Schools are expected not only to promote academic excellence but also to provide opportunities that develop students' talents, leadership, teamwork, communication, and life skills (Hills, 2011). One of the important ways of achieving this holistic development is through participation in extracurricular activities (ECAs), such as sports, clubs, music, cultural programs, debates, scouting, and community service (Zaman, 2017).

Extracurricular activities complement classroom learning by providing practical experiences that help students develop confidence, discipline, responsibility, leadership, and interpersonal skills. These activities also encourage active participation, creativity, teamwork, and a sense of belonging within the school community.

Research has shown that participation in extracurricular activities helps students acquire important life skills that contribute to both academic success and future professional development (Saqib et al., 2012; Wilson, 2009).

Despite these potential benefits, there is an ongoing debate regarding the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance. Some educators and parents argue that participation in extracurricular activities improves students' academic outcomes by enhancing motivation, time-management skills, self-discipline, and school engagement (Craft, 2012; Kirsch, 2014). Others believe that excessive participation reduces the time available for academic studies and may negatively affect students' academic performance, particularly during examination periods (Leung et al., 2011).

In Bhutan, schools encourage students to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities as part of the national goal of promoting holistic education. However, academic achievement continues to receive greater emphasis because it determines students' progression to higher education and future career opportunities. Consequently, many parents and educators remain concerned that participation in extracurricular activities may distract students from their academic responsibilities.

Although numerous international studies have reported a positive relationship between extracurricular participation and academic achievement (Ahmad et al., 2015; Furda & Shuleski, 2012; Whitley, 1998), there is limited empirical evidence within the Bhutanese context, particularly at the secondary school level. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance in secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag. The findings are expected to provide evidence that will assist teachers, school leaders, parents, and educational policymakers in making informed decisions regarding extracurricular programs and their role in promoting students' academic success and holistic development.

Context of the Study

The Royal Government of Bhutan emphasizes the importance of providing quality education that supports the holistic development of every learner. Accordingly, secondary schools across Bhutan offer various extracurricular activities, including sports, cultural programs, literary clubs, science clubs, leadership programs, scouting, and community service. These activities are intended to complement classroom learning by promoting students' physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth.

In Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag, secondary schools actively organize extracurricular activities throughout the academic year. Students are encouraged to participate in inter-house competitions, games and sports, cultural performances, clubs, and leadership programs to develop essential life skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership, responsibility, and self-confidence. These activities also provide opportunities for students to explore their interests and talents beyond the formal curriculum.

Despite these educational benefits, many parents, teachers, and school administrators continue to question whether participation in extracurricular activities influences students' academic achievement. While some believe that extracurricular activities improve students' motivation, discipline, and learning outcomes, others argue that they reduce study time and may negatively affect examination performance, especially among students preparing for board examinations.

Within the Bhutanese education system, academic performance remains one of the primary indicators of educational success. Consequently, some schools and parents give greater priority to classroom learning than extracurricular participation. However, limited research has been conducted to examine the actual relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance among Bhutanese secondary school students.

Therefore, this study will seek to investigate the impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance and to explore students' perceptions of extracurricular participation in secondary schools within

Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag. The findings provide evidence to help schools balance academic learning with extracurricular engagement to achieve a holistic education.

Problem Statement

Education aims to develop students holistically by promoting academic excellence together with physical, social, emotional, and leadership development. Extracurricular activities have become an essential component of school education because they provide opportunities for students to develop teamwork, leadership, communication, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Despite these recognized benefits, there remains considerable debate regarding their influence on students' academic performance.

In Bhutan, many schools encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities; however, academic achievement continues to receive greater emphasis because it determines students' promotion to higher education and future career opportunities. Consequently, many parents and teachers believe that extracurricular activities consume valuable study time and may reduce students' academic performance, particularly during examination periods. Others argue that participation in extracurricular activities improves students' motivation, self-discipline, time-management skills, and school engagement, ultimately leading to better academic achievement.

Although numerous international studies have examined the relationship between extracurricular participation and academic performance, very limited research has been conducted within the Bhutanese context, particularly among secondary school students. As a result, there is insufficient empirical evidence to determine whether extracurricular activities positively or negatively influence students' academic achievement in Bhutan.

This lack of evidence creates uncertainty among educators, school leaders, and parents when making decisions regarding students' participation in extracurricular activities. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance and explore students' perceptions of extracurricular participation in secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag. The findings of this study are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for promoting a balanced approach to academic learning and extracurricular engagement.

Significance of the study

This study is expected to contribute to both educational practice and research by providing evidence on the relationship between extracurricular activities and students' academic performance in secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag.

The findings benefit students by helping them understand how participation in extracurricular activities can contribute to their academic achievement and personal development. The study also encourage students to develop essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, discipline, and time management.

For teachers, the findings provide insights into the educational value of extracurricular activities and support the integration of such activities with classroom learning to improve students' academic performance.

This study assist school leaders and administrators in planning, organizing, and strengthening extracurricular programs that support holistic student development while maintaining high academic standards.

The findings also help parents better understand the educational benefits of extracurricular participation and reduce misconceptions that these activities negatively affect academic performance.

Furthermore, this study provide valuable information for educational policymakers and curriculum developers in strengthening policies related to holistic education and student development in Bhutan.

Finally, the research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on extracurricular activities and academic performance within the Bhutanese education system and serve as a reference for future researchers conducting similar studies.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the impact of extra-curricular activities on student academic achievement.
2. To investigate students perception of the influence of extra- curricular activities on their academic performance.

Research Questions

1. What are the impacts of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance ?
2. What is the students' perception of extracurricular activities in the school to the academic performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

What are extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) are activities that students voluntarily participate in outside the formal academic curriculum. These activities are organized by schools to complement classroom learning and are usually conducted before school, after school, or during weekends. Examples of extracurricular activities include sports, music, drama, cultural programs, literary clubs, science clubs, scouting, leadership programs, and community service (Hills, 2011).

Extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities to develop their talents, interests, and practical skills beyond academic learning. They encourage students to interact with peers, explore their abilities, and gain experiences that contribute to their personal and social development. Unlike classroom instruction, participation in extracurricular activities is voluntary and focuses on developing students' physical, emotional, social, and leadership skills (Hills, 2011).

In Bhutan, schools provide various extracurricular programs to promote holistic education and encourage students to participate actively in sports, cultural activities, clubs, and leadership programs. These activities are considered an important component of students' overall educational experience and contribute to their balanced development.

Importance of Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities play a significant role in promoting students' holistic development. They help students acquire essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, responsibility, and time management, which are valuable both in school and in their future careers (Wilson, 2009; Saqib et al., 2012).

Participation in extracurricular activities also enhances students' self-confidence, self-esteem, and sense of belonging within the school community. Students who participate in clubs, sports, and cultural activities develop stronger interpersonal relationships and are more likely to become active members of society (Wilson, 2009).

Furthermore, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to discover and develop their talents and interests. According to Ahmad et al. (2015), participation in extracurricular activities helps reduce disciplinary problems by keeping students positively engaged while simultaneously improving teamwork and leadership skills. Similarly, Joekel (as cited in Ahmad et al., 2015) reported that achievement in extracurricular activities is an important predictor of future success beyond school.

Hills (2011) further emphasized that high school provides students with numerous educational opportunities that contribute to their emotional, mental, physical, and social development. Therefore, extracurricular activities complement academic learning and contribute significantly to students' overall growth and lifelong learning.

Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Academic Performance

Many researchers have investigated the relationship between extracurricular activities and students' academic performance. Most studies suggest that participation in extracurricular activities has a positive influence on students' academic achievement.

According to Hass (2004, as cited in Craft, 2012), extracurricular activities improve students' academic performance by developing discipline, responsibility, and a strong work ethic. Students who actively participate in extracurricular activities tend to demonstrate higher motivation, better attendance, improved classroom engagement, and stronger academic commitment.

Kirsch (2014) found that students believed extracurricular participation enhanced school connectedness, leadership skills, self-esteem, socialization, and academic motivation. These factors contribute positively to students' academic success and overall educational experience.

Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2015) reported that students who participate in extracurricular activities generally achieve better examination results, obtain higher standardized test scores, attend school more regularly, and possess higher self-confidence than students who do not participate. Whitley (1998) also found a positive relationship between extracurricular participation and academic achievement, while Furda and Shuleski (2012) concluded that involvement in extracurricular activities contributes significantly to students' success in secondary education.

Despite these positive findings, some researchers argue that excessive participation in extracurricular activities may reduce the amount of time available for academic studies, particularly during examination periods (Leung et al., 2011). Therefore, maintaining a balance between academic responsibilities and extracurricular participation is essential to maximize students' academic performance and overall development.

Students' View on ECA and Academic Performance

Students generally perceive extracurricular activities as beneficial for both their personal development and academic achievement. Participation in extracurricular activities allows students to build friendships, improve communication skills, develop leadership qualities, and increase their confidence in interacting with others (Saqib et al., 2012).

According to Wilson (2009), students involved in extracurricular activities are more socially connected, demonstrate better leadership abilities, and are less likely to engage in negative behaviours such as substance abuse and school misconduct. These positive experiences contribute to improved academic engagement and better learning outcomes.

However, students also recognize some challenges associated with extracurricular participation. Saqib et al. (2012) reported that some students prefer spending their free time resting or studying instead of participating in extracurricular activities. Others expressed concerns that sports-related activities may occasionally result in injuries, particularly in games such as football and hockey. Nevertheless, the researchers concluded that the educational, social, and personal benefits of extracurricular activities outweigh these potential disadvantages.

Overall, the literature indicates that students generally hold positive attitudes toward extracurricular activities. They believe that participation enhances their social skills, leadership abilities, motivation, and confidence while also contributing positively to their academic performance when appropriate balance is maintained between extracurricular involvement and academic responsibilities (Kirsch, 2014; Wilson, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

The Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance. The quantitative approach is being used to measure students' perceptions and compare the academic performance of students who participate in extracurricular activities with that of those who do not. The qualitative approach is used to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and perceptions regarding extracurricular participation through open-ended questions.

The mixed-methods design is appropriate because it combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research, allowing the researcher to obtain comprehensive and reliable findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative findings supported and explained by qualitative data, thereby improving the validity and richness of the study.

Research Setting and Context

This study was conducted in secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag, Bhutan, involving students from Classes IX to XII. The study was carried out in the context of Bhutanese education, where schools focus on the holistic development of students through both academic learning and extra-curricular activities (ECAs) such as sports, cultural programs, clubs, and leadership activities.

Although ECAs are considered important for developing students' social, physical, and leadership skills, there is an ongoing concern among parents and educators that participation may affect academic performance. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the impact of ECAs on students' academic achievement and explore students' perceptions of these activities.

The study involved 471 students from seven secondary schools in Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag and used a mixed-method research approach involving questionnaires and open-ended responses to collect data. The research sought to provide evidence on whether ECAs support or hinder students' academic performance in the secondary school context.

Research Tools

In the study, to collect the primary sources of data, two instruments were used: 1. Student Perception Survey Questionnaires (SPSQ) 2. Open-ended questions to obtain the necessary data to test the hypothesis.

The survey questionnaires consist of 24 statements related to students' perception towards impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance. Questionnaires are a useful option to consider when conducting a postal survey and increased the speed of data collection if the sample is large and widely dispersed, low or not cost requirement, and higher levels of objectivity compared to many alternative methods of primary data collection (Mathers et al., 2010). The SPSQ is build using a four-point Likert scale i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The reliability coefficient of 0.60 (N=471) was obtained. Therefore, the SPSQ was reliable instrument to use in the study.

There are three sets of Open-ended questions which offer respondents an opportunity to provide a wide range of answers. In addition, open-ended questions are used so that the respondents can answer the question in their own way and in their own words. The open-ended question is supposed to catch information that is not seized by a closed question. An open-ended question in a survey or public opinion poll is a question in which possible answers are not suggested, and the respondent answers in his or her own words

Participant Sample

The target population of this study consists of students studying in Classes IX to XII in secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag.

A purposive sampling technique will be used to select the participating schools because they offer organized extracurricular activities suitable for the study. Within the selected schools, simple random sampling will be employed to select student participants from each grade level.

The study will include 471 students from seven secondary schools under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag. The sample consists of 240 male students and 231 female students, distributed as follows:

Class	Total Students	Boys	Girls
XII	120	70	50
XI	150	70	80
X	100	70	30
IX	101	30	71
Total	471	240	231

Data Analysis

This study includes both qualitative and quantitative data. Marshall & Rossman (1999) described that data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. Data analysis was the process “of making sense out of the data” (Merriam, 1998, p.178). The researcher examined the data in an attempt “to understand the essence of what is being expressed in the raw data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.160). The analysis of data obtained in the study was done in two areas: (i) Students’ perception analysis (ii) Open ended question analysis.

The researcher has used SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to analyze the quantitative data. The significance level was set to 0.05. For students’ perception analysis, mean, standard deviations, percentage and frequency on SPSQ were computed and calculated while T-test analysis was used to identify mean and statistical significance of academic performance of students’ participation in extracurricular activities.

In order to further validate the finding, the three sets of open-ended questions were developed to support the quantitative outcomes by examining related literature and textbooks. The students’ answers to open-ended questions help to uncover their in-depth feelings towards the effectiveness of extracurricular activities on students’ academic performance. They were explanatory in nature, meaningful and culturally salient to the participants. Open-mindedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desired (Turner, 2010). The raw data obtained from open-ended questions of 200 students were transcribed and categorized under themes.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the quality of the research instruments, the Student Perception Survey Questionnaire (SPSQ) will be reviewed for content validity by experts in educational research and experienced teachers.

The reliability of the SPSQ was established in the original study using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.60 for a sample of 471 students, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for the study.

In addition, the use of a mixed-methods approach enhances the credibility of the findings by triangulating quantitative survey results with qualitative responses from open-ended questions.

Ethical Consideration

The study ensured that ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from the Dzongkhag Education Office before collecting data. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. The confidentiality and privacy of the respondents were maintained by keeping their personal information anonymous. The collected data were used only for research purposes, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences

Data Analysis

The qualitative study was analyzed using descriptive statistics based on mean and standard deviation-SD using SPSS 22.0 software. In addition, the inferential statistics t-test were used to analyze the statistical significance of students' academic performance, participation and their perception on extracurricular activities. Paired sample t-test was used to examine the statistical significance of students' academic performance those who involved in extracurricular activities.

The results of the qualitative study obtained from open-ended questions of 200 students randomly picked were transcribed and categorized. Then students' responses to each question were examined to ascertain the similarities and differences. Responses that were similar in meaning were combined under a theme or category. The themes or categories developed were the units of analysis. The categories were abbreviated as codes and were written next to the appropriate segment of the text. A code was given to each theme (Creswell, 2003). Text segments belonging to each theme were cut out and displayed on the wall. The researcher analyzed the themes or categories identified and the meanings derived from the data were reconstructed. The keywords or typical quotations from participants were used to justify conclusions. To obtain quantitative data it was determined by the frequency of the themes.

Quantitative Analysis—Survey questionnaires

Analysis of Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities

Table 4.1 Statistics of Paired Sample T-test

Class	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Participation in Extracurricular Activities	2.04	.736	0.00
Students' Perception on Extracurricular Activities	1.78	.649	0.00
Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Academic Performance	2.08	.665	0.00
Total	1.95	.683	0.00

From the comparative analysis of the themes. The Table 4.1.1 shows the impact of Extra-curricular activities on academic performance has a highest mean ($M=2.08$, $SD=.665$, $N=471$) while the lowest mean is the students' perception on extra-curricular activities ($M=1.78$, $SD=.649$, $N=471$). The overall finding of survey questionnaires revealed with mean of ($M=1.95$, $SD=.683$, $N=471$). In addition, it was depicted that statistically significant value (p) was 0.00 which is lower than the significant value $p<0.05$. Since the computed $p<0.05$ level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant effect is rejected by researchers. In terms of coefficient reliability the cronbach's alpha is 0.845 which means the reliability of the data is good. The finding

entails the reality that students have better academic performance after participating in extracurricular activities.

Table: 4.2 *Students' participation in extra-curricular activities*

Statement						Mean	Std. Deviation
	N	SA	A	DA	SDA		
I participate in the extra-curricular activities in school always	471	94	305	60	12	1.97	.655
I prefer playing indoor/outdoor games	471	142	247	71	11	1.89	.732
Most students participate in ECA	471	138	265	62	6	1.86	.676
Participation is mandatory	471	124	231	89	27	2.04	.825
I participate under compulsion	471	31	199	160	81	2.61	.844
School has enough extra-curricular facilities	471	95	262	93	21	2.08	.755
School provides enough time to engage in ECA	471	105	265	87	14	2.02	.726
School has a schedule to engage students in ECA	471	140	270	52	9	1.85	.680
Subtotal	3768	869	2044	674	181	2.04	.736

Level of Opinion: 1-1.75: Strongly Disagree(SDA) 1.76-2.50: Disagree (D) 2.51-3.25: Agree (A) 3.26-4.00: Strongly Agree (SA) (Harpe, 2015; Best & Kahn, 2006).

he analysis of students' participation in extracurricular presented in Table 4.2 depicted that 23.06% (N=869) of students responded with "Strong Agree" and 54.24 % (N= 2044) of students responded with "Agree". However, about 17.88% (N=674 and 4.82% (N=181) of students responded with "Disagreed and "Strongly Disagree" respectively. The subtotal mean was 2.04, the standard deviation was .736 with level of opinion "Agree". The results signifies that students' participation in extracurricular activities is more in the school than whose students who do not participated.

Analysis of Students' perception on Extracurricular Activities

Table: 4.3Students Perception on extra-curricular activities

Statement						Mean	Std. Deviation
	N	SA	A	DA	SDA		

I like/prefer engaging myself in Extra-Curricular Activities	471	124	285	57	5	1.87	.642
ECA keeps our body physically and mentally sound	471	229	228	9	5	1.55	.591
I can actively engage in the class	471	134	287	45	5	1.83	.623
ECA helps me to be punctual in most of the school activities	471	119	282	66	4	1.90	.646
Students enjoy participating in ECA	471	180	250	37	4	1.71	.642
I am an active participant in most of the Extra-curricular activities conducted in the school	471	69	247	138	17	2.21	.732
I suggest the schools to continue engaging students in ECA	471	200	233	34	4	1.66	.647
ECA provides enriching experiences and values	471	219	238	12	2	1.56	.567
Subtotal	3768	1274	2050	398	46	1.78	.736

The analysis of students' perception on extracurricular presented in Table 4.3 revealed that 33.81% (N=1274) of students responded with "Strong Agree" and 54.40 % (N=2050) of students responded with "Agree". However, about 10.50 % (N=398) and 1.20% (N= 46) of students responded with "Disagreed and "Strongly Disagree" respectively. The subtotal mean is 1.78, the standard deviation is .736 of opinion level "Agree". The statement "ECA helps to keep our body physically and mentally sound" had highest respondent of 229. The results indicated that students have positive perception towards extracurricular activities in the school.

Impact of Extracurricular Activities (ECA) on Academic Performance

Table: 4.4Impact of extracurricular activities on academic performance

Statement						Mean	Std. Deviation
	N	SA	A	DA	SDA		
ECA refreshes and helps me to study better	471	122	291	52	6	1.87	.637
Participating in ECA has improved my academic score	471	59	249	142	21	2.26	.731
ECA has improved my concentration in the class	471	58	266	137	10	2.21	.670

ECA helps to actively participate in the class activities	471	85	288	86	12	2.05	.680
I participate in ECA to broaden my knowledge	471	99	309	52	11	1.94	.641
ECA has guided me to improve my academic skills	471	102	282	80	7	1.98	.668
Participating in ECA has improved my retention power	471	55	321	87	8	2.10	.599
Participation in ECA has enhanced my mood to study	471	91	282	85	13	2.04	.695
Sub Total	3768	677	2288	721	88	2.05	.665

The analysis of impact of extracurricular on academic performance presented in Table 4.4 depicted that 17.96% (N=677) of students responded with “Strong Agree” and 60.72 % (N=2288) of students responded with “Agree”. However, about 19.13% (N= 721) and 2.33% (N=88) of students responded with “Disagreed and “Strongly Disagree” respectively. The subtotal mean was 2.05, the standard deviation was .665 with level of opinion “Agree”. The study indicates that 78.68% of the respondents believe that ECA helps to improve their academic skill which implies that students' academic performance was enhanced by their participation in extracurricular activities in the school.

Qualitative Analysis

Open ended question analysis

In order to enhance confidence in ensuring quantitative data results, qualitative data collected through open-ended questions were analyzed. The findings of the open-ended questions supported that participating in extra-curricular activities enhance the students’ academic performance. The three open-ended questions were used to get the impact of extracurricular activities in students’ academic performance. An examples of the open-ended questions findings are as follows :

Do Extracurricular Activities (ECA) have effect on your studies? Why or why not?

From the random sampling of 200 out of 471 students’ response were analyzed. 96.53% of the students have responded that Extra-Curricular Activities (ECA) have positive effect on their studies. In this connection, they affirmed that ECA helps in improving their concentration in the class, helps in engaging themselves in class activities, broaden their skills and perform better in the class. This study reveals that ECA has positive effect on students’ academic performance, notwithstanding the response given by the students.

The study found out that 60.57 % of the students participating in ECA has enhanced their concentration in the class and could perform better in their studies. In the words of (C248), “Yes, it helps me to enhance our creativity and skills, it helps us to keep our body fit and healthy whereby it can avoid dullness and laziness within our body so that we can perform well in studies and have a productive learning.” In the same line (C437) states “it helps to develop my concentration on studies by refreshing me and keeping my body healthy, when I am healthy I am to able study for longer period of time”.

Moreover, 42.34% of the respondent revealed that ECA engages them fruitfully with highest respondent amongst others. About 32.68 % of the respondent responded that ECA makes them attentiveness in the class and 22.13% of the students are of views that it broadens their skills respectively. However, 7 respondents are of the view that participation in ECA makes them sleepy and tired in the class. The children shared that, “too much of extra-curricular activities makes them tired, sleepy and exhausted in the class.” (C101)

How will ECA boost your academic performance?

During the analysis of 200 respondents for the open-ended questions, 73.56 % implored that ECA boost their mood, which would further heighten academic performance of students. The question on whether or not ECA boost academic performance was administered during the survey to ascertain its reliability. One of the respondents is of the view that, "ECA boost our academic performance in a way it refresh our mind and do away with tiredness, whereby while studying we could comprehend abruptly and hence we can perform well in academics." (C435). Similarly (C223) states, "ECA can boost our academic performance by keeping our mind broad and making our thinking capacity even more knowledgeable. It helps us to keep our mind fresh, so that whatever things we study we can easily catch up with this." The study found out that confident level physically and mentally, refreshing in the class and activeness boost academic performance which together compounded to 30.28%. Differing from the above view, about 2.36% responded that it does not boost academic performance.

What positive effects have you got from participating in the ECA?

Out of 200 respondent, 178 responded that there is positive impact on them in terms of academic learning. Some of the positive effects of participating in the ECA are: improve retention power with (46.5%), active participation in the class (72.34%), gain experience and behavioral change with (13.79%) and maximum students responded as helping in academic score with (80.48%) . A student (C112) noted, "the positive effect I have got from participating in the ECA are: helps to concentrate in the class, helps to participate in class activities, keeps body healthy and improve my academic scores." The study indicates that participating in ECA would definitely enhance the students' academic score as specified above. Most of the students believed that extra-curricular activities would improve their physical and mental domain and keep them healthy which improves their academic performances, as evident, "it improves academic score, class concentration and improves in studies," (C303).

FINDINGS

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are presented in three major categories: i) participation of students in extracurricular activities. ii) students' perception on extracurricular activities. iii) impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance.

Findings of Students' participation in extracurricular activities

The findings of the study revealed that the students' participation in extracurricular activities is more in the school than those students who do not participated. As Feldman & Matjasko (2005) declared "that there is a significant correlation between academic achievement and the level of extracurricular participation, marked by increases in students' academic achievement". The study also confirmed their findings on the positive correlation between students' participation in the school and their academic performance, in consonance to those students who do not participate and who participate in ECA.

The study found that 23.06% (N=869) of students responded with "Strong Agree" and 54.24 % (N=2044) of students responded with "Agree" that they participate in extracurricular activities provided in the school. Apart from this, Ahmad et al (2015) asserted, "Students who participate in structured activities are more likely to respect diversity, play by the rules and contribute as a member of a team whether it is sports, scouting or clubs" than those who do not participate in the ECA at schools. Furthermore, a respondent (C202) had the view that participation in the ECA helps him to improve concentration, engage actively in the class activities which promotes to perform better in academics. Similarly Craft (2012) states " Children who participate in team sports typically do better in school, have better interpersonal skills, are generally healthier, and are more team oriented."(p.26)

Findings of Students' perception on extracurricular activities

The results indicated that students have positive perception towards extracurricular activities in the school. A study conducted in Lucknow, the capital of the state Uttar Pradesh, showed a positive effects on student's lives by improving behavior, school performance, school completion, positive aspects to make successful adults, and social aspects (Annu & Sunita, 2005). This study discovered that 33.8% (N=1274) of students responded with "Strong Agree" holding the opinion that extracurricular activities has positive impact on their academic performance. They have the view that ECA nourished their brain and raised their confidence level unlike 54.48 % (N=2050) of students responded with "Agree" pointing to: refreshed their mind, augment both physical and mental activeness. The positive perception on extracurricular activities is authenticated in the study conducted by Saqib et al. (2018), "The most people realize the importance of participation in extracurricular activities when they go into professional life as it helps develop social and personal skills and increases self-perception and confidence, professional advice students to be involved in extracurricular activities while at the same time keeping it at balance with their academic performances".(p.126) The recent study to find the perception of students on extracurricular activities is congruent the findings of Saqib and his team. This understanding is furthered supported by Wilson (2009) who states that students who participated in extracurricular activities has generally benefitted from the many opportunities offered to them, thus confirming the opinion of the current research.

Findings on impact of extracurricular activities on students' academic performance

The results suggested that students' academic performance was enhanced by their participation in extracurricular activities in the school. According to Akos (2006), Participants in extracurricular activities are positively correlated with academic achievement. Students who participated in extracurricular activities were associated with higher test scores, higher class grades, and greater academic achievement partially due to peer pressure to get work done and to keep grades up (as cited in Kirsch, 2013). In the recent study, it was depicted that 17.96% (N=677) of students responded with "Strong Agree" and 60.72 % (N=2288) of students responded with "Agree". Similarly, in the words of Wilson (2009), those students who participated in extracurricular activities scored better grades, higher standardized test scores and higher educational attainment. They also attended school regularly and developed higher self-concept. However, about 19.13% (N=721) and 2.33% (N=88) of students responded with "Disagreed and "Strongly Disagree" respectively.

The overall finding of survey questionnaires also revealed with mean of (M=1.95, SD=.683, N=471) that statistical significance value (p) was 0.00 which is lower than the significant value $p < 0.05$. Whereby, the null hypothesis of no significant effect is rejected by researchers.

The finding of study entails the reality that students have better academic performance after participating in extracurricular activities. A study conducted in 1996 involving 126,700 students in 133 high schools looked at academic performance, graduation rates, school behavior, and absenteeism rates (Whitley, 1998). This study reported that there was a positive impact on student achievement when students participated in extracurricular activities. By the same token, Ahmad et al (2015) confirmed, "Students who participate in extracurricular activities generally benefit from having better examination results, having higher standardized test scores and higher educational attainment, attending class more regularly and having higher self-concept". Further in the same line Rees (2008) states "the participation in school based extra- curricular activities had stronger effect on academic achievement than other activities outside of school. The ability to excel at secondary level paves the way for students to experience success in college, in their professional lives and within the social circle." (p.9) stands in consonance to the findings of the recent study conducted at in the seven secondary schools of Samdrup Jongkhar.

This study examines the positive impact of extracurricular activities on the academic performance of secondary school students in classes IX to XII. The findings indicate that extracurricular activities exert a significant influence on students' academic performance. First, respondents reported that participation in extracurricular activities contributed to an improvement in their academic performance. This finding aligns with Kirsch (2013), who notes that students engaged in extracurricular activities tend to demonstrate greater

academic achievement, higher standardized test scores, improved attendance, expanded social opportunities, increased self-esteem, and stronger connectedness to school. Similarly, Seou and Pan (2014) argue that participation in extracurricular activities fosters greater interaction among students and with the school, thereby building social ties and developing social capital; this social capital, in turn, functions as a form of social control that encourages adherence to school norms and supports academic success (p. 7).

Second, respondents perceived that extracurricular activities enabled them to remain engaged, maintain physical fitness, and gain valuable experience and values. Finally, the findings point to a positive relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance.

Furthermore, Kirsch (2013) contends that participation in extracurricular activities not only positively influences students' academic achievement and behavioral and social development, but also cultivates essential life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and time management. Extracurricular activities thus play a significant role in students' lives, contributing to school performance and to the broader development of successful students.

The findings of this study suggest that schools and educational institutions currently lacking extracurricular programs should introduce such activities to encourage student engagement and facilitate exposure to the wider world beyond the classroom, thereby fostering a positive school environment in which students can grow and thrive.

As Yadav (2016) observes, extracurricular involvement allows students to connect academic knowledge with practical experience, leading to a deeper understanding of their abilities, talents, and career goals; consequently, students with this heightened skill set become more competitive in the job market, as employers increasingly seek such qualities (p. 104).

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed.

First, since participation in extracurricular activities was found to improve academic performance, attendance, and self-esteem, schools and parents should encourage every student to participate in at least one extracurricular activity throughout their secondary education.

Second, given that extracurricular activities were found to build social ties and social capital among students, schools should design programs that maximize peer interaction, such as team-based clubs and inter-house competitions, to strengthen students' sense of school connectedness.

Third, as respondents reported that extracurricular activities helped them remain physically engaged and fit, schools should provide adequate sporting facilities and equipment to support broader student participation.

Fourth, since the study found that extracurricular activities cultivate essential life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and time management, schools should structure activities to include rotating leadership roles and collaborative tasks, while parents support this development at home by encouraging effective time management.

Fifth, in light of the finding that extracurricular involvement helps students connect academic knowledge with practical experience and career-relevant skills, career counselors should highlight this connection to students and parents.

Finally, teachers, parents, and school authorities should engage in ongoing professional learning to stay informed about effective extracurricular practices, ensuring that these programs continue to support students' academic, social, and personal development.

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