

# **THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AMONG MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATES: INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study adopted a sequential approach which includes 200 respondents chosen via systematic random sampling method from the Management and Science University. This study aims to investigate the impact of extracurricular activities (ECA) on undergraduates' academic performance as well as the enhancement of their interpersonal skills. The study used frequency tests, descriptive statistics, and linear regression as well as semi-structured interviews to analyze data. On the whole, the results showed that though students perceived participation in extracurricular activities enhance their academic performance, a non-significant regression equation was found in the analysis ( $F(1, 198)=0.70$ ,  $p>.05$  with  $R=.019$  and an R-Squared ( $R^2$ ) of .000, indicating that there is no significant relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance. However, for enhancement of interpersonal skills through extracurricular activities, a substantial regression equation was found ( $F(1, 198)=116.5$ ,  $p<.01$ , with  $R=.610$  and an R-Squared of .375. The study ends with recommendations for future research to heighten the positive impact of ECA.

**Keywords** – extracurricular activities, academic performance, interpersonal skills, enhancement, positive

## **INTRODUCTION**

Extracurricular activities (ECA) aim to enhance the student learning experience and provide opportunities for students to develop their critical knowledge, competencies, values, and soft skills needed to succeed in today's global workplace besides providing them life experience. Hence, higher learning institutions encourage undergraduates to dedicate some of their time learning outside the classroom as well as organizing activities, in a step-by-step journey to becoming a confident and versatile individuals. Extracurricular activities are activities that enhance and enrich the regular curriculum in the course of learning in a higher learning institution (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019; Buckley & Lee, 2018). Such activities are vital in that they demonstrate that the participant develops into a well-rounded individual. Beyond its physical and health dimensions, ECA contributes to the comprehensive and harmonious development and fulfillment of the human being (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2017). Most higher learning institutions allow a free choice for students' involvement in such activities (Kaur & Singh, 2018) but many private higher learning institutions make involvement in one or more extracurricular activities a mandatory requirement for their undergraduates; believing that the activities will help to create a more 'well-rounded' student. It is the fundamental objective of the education system to nurture an inquiring mind in a fit body and the future emergence of sports will depend on the development of a structured approach to sports in a higher learning institution that involves all the stakeholders in education (Pica-Smith & Poynton, 2014).

In Malaysia, higher learning institutions offer a varied range of extracurricular activities options that appeal to all undergraduates (Singh, 2018; Sabrine, Van Willigenburg-van Dijn, & Van Houdt, 2009). Extracurricular activities enhance formalized learning when measured with defined institutional student learning outcomes (Buckley & Lee, 2018; Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2017). Therefore, higher learning institutions must develop a holistic curriculum that seeks to develop the mental, physical, social, and emotional abilities of students. Indeed, interacting meaningfully with peers, taking responsibility for organizational initiatives, and integrating class concepts into activities, all assist undergraduates to develop good interpersonal and leadership skills (Hsien-Hsien Lau et al., 2014; Kuh, 2006). Leadership skills obtained via ECA in a student organization has a greater effect on students' development along with cognitive and moral elements when compared against simple membership (Singh, 2018). Studies like this are few in comparison to those examining extracurricular involvement as a simple binary concept.

Buckley and Lee (2018) stated that participating in extracurricular activities can provide a lot of benefits which include obtaining better grades, increased standardized test scores and higher educational attainment, regular attendance to classes, and possessing greater self-esteem. Besides, those who participate in out-of-university activities often have higher grade point averages, decreased absenteeism to classes, and increased connectedness to the university

(Wilson, 2009). Participants in out-of-university activities often learn skills such as teamwork and leadership while decreasing the likelihood of alcohol usage, illicit drug abuse, and related problem behaviors. Wilson (2009, p.27) added that “participants in out-of-school activities can decrease the likelihood of being involved with problem behaviors”.

Besides, extracurricular involvement offers positive benefits to the undergraduates’ experience and is considered a part of the total social experience in their life (Behtoui, 2019; Myung, Hughes & Cao, 2016; Tchibozo, 2007). Extracurricular activities can support classroom-based learning apart from providing students an opportunity for campus involvement and personal development outside of the classroom (Saqib, Musab, Abdul Raheem, Iqbal, Salman, and Shahzad, 2018; Seow & Pan, 2014). The researchers also added that social experiences acquired via engagement in extracurricular activities can increase the students’ interaction with their peers from varied backgrounds. In addition, sports-based extracurricular activities promote an active lifestyle for undergraduates, social inclusiveness, employment opportunities, peace and development, and above all a sense of belonging and national pride (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013; Thompson, Clark & Walker, 2013). According to Behtoui (2019) and Olson (2008), involvement in ECA is consistently and positively correlated with good institution attendance, and this in turn is often correlated with a higher grade point average. Olson revealed that students who enrolled in fine arts activities had significantly lower absentee rates than those who did not participate in such activities. Hence, Behtoui (2019) concluded that ECA participation reduced dropouts in higher learning institutions.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Extracurricular activities in Malaysia are obligatory for students and they are given the privilege to choose the type of activities that they desire (Jamalis & Omar Fauzee, 2007). Studies conducted on the benefits of extracurricular engagement among students both internationally (Oberle, Ji, Magee, Guhn, Schonert-Reichl & Gadermann, 2019; Saqib et al, 2018; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002) and locally (Singh, 2019; Kaur & Singh, 2018; Arumugam, Krishnan, & Md Zain, 2007) have highlighted the positive effects of students engaging in extracurricular activities. These studies reinforce the virtues and significance of engaging in extracurricular activities and highlight how they are mostly confined to the secondary school setting but little is known about what happens in higher learning institutions especially in private institutions among medical students. Numerous literature has also reported that medical students from various countries experience a wide range of burnout levels when they participate in extracurricular activities. Almalki, Almojali, Alothman, Masuadi, and Alaqeel (2017) who conducted a study among the medical students at a university in Saudi Arabia exposed alarming findings which revealed a high-stress level among medical students who show involvement in extracurricular activities. In another research, Fares et al. (2015) found that the magnitude of stress and burnout among the preclinical medical students in Lebanon was relatively immense. The high level of

burnout has implications on medical students as it can negatively affect their learning process and ultimately result in the poor quality of health care services delivered to patients (Ishak, Nikraves, Lederer, Perry, Ogunyemi, & Bernstein, 2013). Although previous studies indicate the negative impact of extracurricular activities on medical students, recent research by Shadid et al. (2020) showed otherwise. In their study involving 500 medical students in Saudi Arabia, medical students who did not involve in any extracurricular activities experienced higher burnout rates than those who did. With this contrasting result, it is imperative to research to get a better understanding of how Malaysian medical students perceive their involvement in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, there is little known about the association between burnout and extracurricular activities among medical students within the Malaysian context. This gap has led to the conclusion that there is a dire need to investigate the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and improving academic; involvement in extracurricular activities and improving interpersonal skills among the medical undergraduates within the Malaysian private higher education landscape. Therefore, this study attempts to fulfill this research niche by answering the research questions below:

1. Is there a significant relationship between involvement in extracurricular activity and academic performances among medical undergraduates?
2. Is there a significant relationship between involvement in extracurricular activity and interpersonal skills among medical undergraduates?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will benefit students, educators, and parents to encourage their students to participate in ECA organized by their higher institutions. Most students and parents opine that ECA distracts their academic performance and deviate students' focus on academic. Hence, this study enlightens them. Besides, this will also help policymakers to strengthen their ECA weightage and credit hours in the curriculum. ECA can also be useful for educators in selecting the best representatives to anchor their institutions in establishing their image.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-method sequential explanatory design to elicit data. The researchers first collected quantitative data via Google survey and later the qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview by exploring participants' views in more depth to elaborate on the quantitative results obtained through the survey. The Management and Science University is an established private institution of higher learning in Malaysia. A total of 200 medical undergraduates selected through systematic random sampling participated in this study. These undergraduates must enroll in ECA as a part of their graduation requirements.

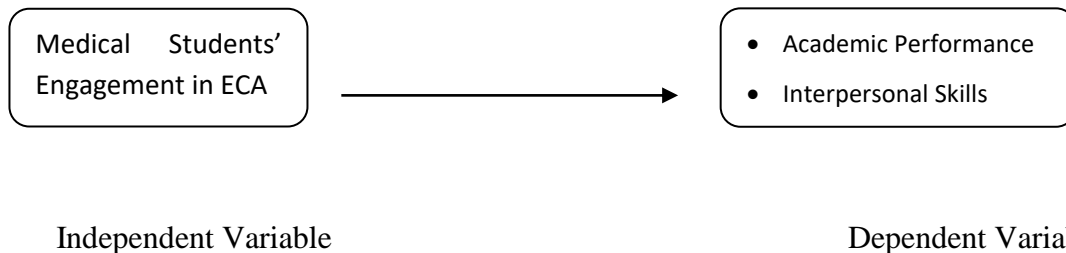
***Instrument***

On the whole, the questionnaire was deemed to produce information about students’ perceptions in participating in ECA towards improving their academic performance and interpersonal skills. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were undertaken to elicit qualitative data about the issues under study i.e. the effect of ECA among undergraduates. The questionnaire consists of three parts; Part A includes the demographic profile of respondents, Part B (adapted from Arumugam, Krishnan, & Masnah, 2007) comprises questions related to involvement in ECA while Part C (adapted from Knifsend & Juvonen, 2014) consists of items about interpersonal skills. As for the analysis purpose, strongly agree and agree will be combined as agree and disagree, and strongly agree will be combined as disagree. The data were analyzed using the frequency count, linear regression to obtain the relationship between ECA - Academic Performance and ECA - Interpersonal Skills using SPSS version 21.0.

***Semi-structured Interview***

Ten students were randomly chosen based on the voluntary basis and availability of the respondents. They were asked if participation in ECA affects their academic performance and also if it helps to improve their interpersonal skills. Their responses helped to triangulate the findings derived from the survey.

**Theoretical Framework**



**FIGURE 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

According to Buckley and Lee (2018), extracurricular activities that include clubs, fraternities and societies have been part of the fabric of higher-level institutions since their origin. A significant body of educational research has investigated the impact of these activities on academic performance and the acquisition of discipline complementary skills and competencies. In the modern context, driven by forces such as marketization, higher-level educational institutions find themselves competing to attract students based on the lived student experience by offering many types of extracurricular activities. There is a need to spread awareness of the positive outcomes of ECA engagement and how to keep a perfect balance between such activities and studies. Hence, this study focuses on the impact of ECA on Academic and

Interpersonal skills to be abreast with the government's policy IR4.0 which stresses the importance of communication and cognitive output.

### ***Demographic Profile of Respondents***

A total of 200 undergraduates of varied age groups were involved in the study. 57% of the respondents were males while 43% were females. The highest percentage of 53% was between the range of 22 and 25 years old. This is followed by 42% between 18 and 21 years and 5% between 26 and 29 years.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Research question 1***

Is there a significant relationship between involvement in extracurricular activity and academic performances among medical undergraduates?

Hee, et al. (2016) and Pica-Smith and Poynton (2014) revealed that ECA contributes to undergraduates' increased academic performance. As the undergraduates in Malaysia have been involved in extracurricular activities from elementary education, they are aware of the benefits of ECA and have acknowledged that involvement in ECA has helped them to improve their academic performance. Table 1 depicts the undergraduates' perceptions about their involvement in ECA.

The responses from the respondents, strongly affirm that participation in extracurricular activities did not affect their academic performance instead helped them to persist in university and bolstered their progress towards graduation. Table 1 illustrates the undergraduates' academic performance and their involvement in ECA.

Generally, it was found that 67% of the respondents admitted that their grades improved when they participated in ECA while 19% disagreed. Meanwhile, 63% of the medical undergraduates revealed that they were able to concentrate on their studies when they participated in ECA while 25% said that they were not able to stay fully focused in their studies while being engaged in extracurricular activities. The responses also revealed that 75% of the respondents felt that ECA could help them de-stress while 17% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. When asked about their academic performance, 71% of the respondents agreed that involvement in ECA provided a platform to succeed academically through a reasonable 25% disagreed with the statement.

The results demonstrate that 65% agreed that involvement in ECA allowed them to find a balance between studies and sports activities. A total of 73% of them shared that ECA encouraged them to participate actively in academic discussions in the classroom. This is further

reinforced by 64% of the respondents indicating that ECA has made them more productive in the classroom and in completing their assignments.

**Table 1: Involvement in Extracurricular Activities and Academic Performance**

| No | Items   | Agree % | Uncertain % | Disagree % |
|----|---|---------|-------------|------------|
| 1  | My grades improve when I am involved in extracurricular activities                              | 67      | 14          | 19         |
| 2  | When I participate in extracurricular activities, I am able to concentrate on my studies        | 63      | 12          | 25         |
| 3  | Extracurricular activities help me to de-stress   | 75      | 8           | 17         |
| 4  | Involvement in extracurricular activities provides support to succeed academically              | 71      | 4           | 25         |
| 5  | Extracurricular involvement helps me to seek a balance between my studies and sports activities | 65      | 12          | 24         |
| 6  | I can participate in academic discussions despite my ECA  | 73      | 10          | 17         |
| 7  | I am more productive in completing my assignments after involving in ECA                        | 64      | 14          | 22         |
| 8  | Extracurricular activities do not stress me out   | 25      | 8           | 67         |
| 9  | I have not missed assignments or turned in assignments late due to ECA                          | 33      | 9           | 60         |
| 10 | Staying back for ECA after classes do not affect my study time                                  | 28      | 8           | 64         |
| 11 | I do not ignore my homework because of ECA  | 26      | 7           | 67         |
| 12 | I did not fail a test due to involvement in extracurricular activities                          | 22      | 9           | 69         |
| 13 | I have sufficient time to do revision   | 66      | 12          | 22         |
| 14 | I am satisfied with my cumulative grade (CGPA)  | 69      | 13          | 18         |

A total of 69% of the respondents disagreed with item 12 stating that they failed a test due to their involvement in extracurricular activities though 22% said otherwise. Concerning turning in assignments on time and meeting due dates, 60% of the undergraduates indicated that involvement in ECA did not delay the completion of their assignments. Meanwhile, a total of 67% disagreed that staying back after classes for sports affected their revision time. A majority of the undergraduates (66%) agreed that they had sufficient time revising despite being actively involved in ECA while 69% admitted that they were satisfied with their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) despite being involved in extracurricular activities. In brief, students' responses are in line with Hee, et al (2016) and Pica-Smith and Poynton (2014) who corroborated that involvement in ECA helps undergraduates to perform better in their studies. To anchor this further, a linear regression was carried out to instigate the relationship between academic performance and involvement in ECA.

Table 2a: Involvement in Extracurricular Activities and Academic Performance

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .019 <sup>a</sup> | .000     | -.005             | .30349                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), ECA

Table 2b

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |      |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F    | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | .006           | 1   | .006        | .070 | .791 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 18.237         | 198 | .092        |      |                   |
|                    | Total      | 18.244         | 199 |             |      |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Academic  
b. Predictors: (Constant), ECA

Table 2c

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |                            |                             |            |                           |        |      |                                 |             |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Model                     |                            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |             |
|                           |                            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      | Lower Bound                     | Upper Bound |
| 1                         | (Constant)                 | 3.214                       | .089       |                           | 36.045 | .000 | 3.038                           | 3.390       |
|                           | Extracurriculum Activities | -.010                       | .038       | -.019                     | -.265  | .791 | -.086                           | .065        |

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Simple linear regression was carried out to investigate the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance. A non-significant regression equation was found ( $F(1, 198)=0.70, p>.0.5$  with  $R=.019$  and an R-Squared ( $R^2$ ) of .000. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and academic performance. Surprisingly this contradicts with students’ survey responses which give an idea that ECA helps them to improve their grades. This also negates with Darling, Caldwell, and Smith (2017) who expressed that participation in ECA yields positive academic-related outcomes like helping students to obtain a higher grade point average and also decreases dropout rates.

**Research question 2**

Is there a significant relationship between involvement in extracurricular activity and interpersonal skills among medical undergraduates?



Saqib, et al. (2018) claimed that EAC participation allows youths to form new connections with peers and acquire social capital. Additionally, ECA is one of the few contexts in which adolescents regularly meet their peers outside of the classroom.

**Table 3: Involvement in Extracurricular Activities and Interpersonal Skills**

|    |  | <b>Agree %</b> | <b>Uncertain %</b> | <b>Disagree %</b> |
|----|--|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1  | Involvement in extracurricular activities increase my self confidence  | 79             | 7                  | 14                |
| 2  | Involvement in extracurricular activities helps me to make friends   | 84             | 5                  | 11                |
| 3  | Involvement in extracurricular activities is the best way to meet new people                                 | 85             | 4                  | 11                |
| 4  | Involvement in extracurricular activities make me feel more connected to my collegemates                     | 81             | 6                  | 13                |
| 5  | Involvement in extracurricular activities helps me to acquire skills that I can use after college            | 81             | 6                  | 13                |
| 6  | Involvement in extracurricular activities helps me to tolerate peers' weaknesses                             | 78             | 8                  | 14                |
| 7  | I am not intimidated by administrative officials   | 76             | 9                  | 15                |
| 8  | My communication skills have improved  | 83             | 5                  | 12                |
| 9  | I am free to mingle with people at social functions  | 80             | 6                  | 14                |
| 10 | When I don't understand any topics in my subjects, I am not afraid to ask fellow students for clarifications | 81             | 6                  | 13                |
| 11 | I can manage my emotion  | 79             | 8                  | 13                |
| 12 | I miss out on events with family or friends  | 50             | 10                 | 40                |

Table 3 indicates the findings on the effects of extracurricular activities on interpersonal skills for students at higher learning institutions. The involvement in extracurricular activities has helped to boost self-confidence perceived to be important (79%) and less important (14%). A large percentage (84%) of the medical students strongly believe that extracurricular activities help them to make friends compared to 11% of them who think otherwise. In addition, 85% of the undergraduates feel that through extracurricular activities, they can meet new members as opposed to 11% who showed disagreement.

To further triangulate the findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a few respondents randomly. The findings of the semi-structured interview reveal that many of the respondents viewed ECA as a good avenue to foster interest in the activities as they enjoyed organizing activities in ECA clubs. Besides, they found ECA to be very helpful and created a stress-free environment which helped improve their academic performance as well as expanded their circle of friends. This is inconsistent with Shadid et al. (2020) pointed out that medical students who did not involve in ECA experienced higher burnout rates than those who did. This also can enlighten Almalki, et al (2017) who found a high stress level among medical students who were involved in ECA.

Respondent 97 said that “ECA gives me a chance to try something new to extend my learning into a realm of physical or creative activity beyond something strictly academic.” The students added that the fulfillment achieved from participating in ECA resulted in students remaining with the club. The results of the semi-structured interview, on the whole, disclosed that involvement in ECA activities helps students to improve their CGPA. However, Respondent 45 felt that when she represented the University for Taekwondo Tournament, she had to miss classes a few times. “The competition sometimes will clash with my important classes. I had to complete assignments before my competition or had to request special permission for a later submission”. She added that such a condition had increased her levels of burnout and anxiety. She added,

When I won the public speaking competition, I was overjoyed. I never thought that I will win. It was my first win. I was so proud. This motivated me to work harder not only in my club but also in my class. All my friends also started respecting me. I was motivated to be more responsible.

Hence, for Respondent 45, ECA retained confidence and provided motivation.

Although in general, participation in ECA was advantageous for the students, nonetheless it was also discovered that ECA poses some challenges for these students. It was also found through semi-structured interviews that organizing an event can be time-consuming and impact the students emotionally and physically which could lead to stress, fatigue, and burn out. Another issue highlighted was the need for more financial support for running the club’s events.

The respondents provided useful feedback in the semi-structured interviews. It was obvious that many of them viewed ECA as a good avenue to foster interest in such activities as the students enjoyed organizing activities in ECA clubs. Besides, they found ECA very worthwhile and that it created a stress-free environment that helped improve their academic performance as well as expanded their circle of friends.

The majority of the respondents (81%) are aware that the involvement in extracurricular activities helps them to acquire skills that can be beneficial after college as well as feeling more connected to college mates while 13% disagree with these claims. A total of 78% of the respondents think that involvement in extracurricular activity helps them tolerate peer’s weakness, while 13% consider it less beneficial to them. To the item “I am not intimidated by administrative officials”, 76% of the respondents said that they were not intimidated by administrative officials even though 15% of the respondents exhibited total disagreement.

A majority of 83% revealed that their communication skills improved by participating in extracurricular activities while 12% consider it as less beneficial. A total of 80% admitted that they are free to mingle with people at social functions while 14% disagreed with the statement. According to Maamor, Ibrahim, and Samsi (2015) students in higher institutions perceive their

involvement in extracurricular activities as useful in enhancing their self-confidence and developing better communication skills.

Besides, a good percentage of the respondents (81%) indicated that they were not afraid to seek help from fellow undergraduates for clarification when they face difficulties in understanding their academic subjects. A total of 79% of the respondents found it easy to deal with their emotions well although 13% distinguished such opportunities as less important. Behtoui (2019) and Chickering (1997) report that engaging in ECA helps to stabilize students' emotions and develops their interpersonal skills. When asked whether their involvement in extracurricular activities deprived them of attending social events and meeting family and friends, 50% of the respondents fully agreed. Buckley and Lee (2018) and Roulin and Bangertter, (2013) also concur with this idea as their study showed active involvement in ECA would improve one's socializing skills.

**Table 4a: Involvement in Extracurricular Activities and Interpersonal Skills**

| Model Summary                     |                   |          |                 |                            |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Model                             | R                 | R Square | Adjusted Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1                                 | .610 <sup>a</sup> | .372     | .368            | .71499                     |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), AVEEXC |                   |          |                 |                            |

| Table 4b ANOVA <sup>a</sup>       |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model                             |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                                 | Regression | 59.569         | 1   | 59.569      | 116.526 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                                   | Residual   | 100.708        | 197 | .511        |         |                   |
|                                   | Total      | 160.277        | 198 |             |         |                   |
| a. Dependent Variable: AVEINTPERS |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), AVEEXC |            |                |     |             |         |                   |

| Table 4c Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |                                 |             |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Model                              |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |             |
|                                    |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      | Lower Bound                     | Upper Bound |
| 1                                  | (Constant) | .083                        | .210       |                           | .395   | .693 | -.331                           | .497        |
|                                    | AVEEXC     | .975                        | .090       | .610                      | 10.795 | .000 | .797                            | 1.153       |
| a. Dependent Variable: AVEINTPERS  |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |                                 |             |

Simple linear regression was carried out to investigate the relationship between curricular activities and interpersonal skills. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(1, 198)=116.5$ ,  $p<.01$ , with  $R=.610$  and an R-Squared of  $.375$ ). This indicates that 37.5% of the variation in

interpersonal skills can be explained by extra-curricular activities. Although the R-Squared value is low, statistically significant coefficients still show the interpersonal skills are influenced positively by extracurricular activities. The Beta Unstandardised Coefficient shows that for each unit of extra-curricular activities increases, 0.975 units will increase in interpersonal skills. Hence, this stresses that there is a significant relationship between extracurricular activities and interpersonal skills. These findings corroborate with Kariyana, Maphosa, and Mapuranga (2017) who highlighted that ECA helps students mature socially by providing a setting for student interaction, and relationship formation. They also added that working outside the classroom with diverse groups of individuals allows students to gain more self-confidence and become autonomous through embedded hands-on experiences, practical knowledge and skills.

In the semi-structured interview, R76 shared that he has a good relationship with his members in Theatre Club. He added that the members help each other and most of the club mates have become good friends. ECA not only improve interpersonal skill among students but also helps to improve relationships with their instructor. “My club advisor, Madam C is our lecturer. In class, she is quite strict but she is very friendly and approachable as an advisor in our theatre club”. In other words, ECA has created a supportive relationship among students and gave them the confidence to rely on each other for help.

Students involved in ECA assumed more responsibilities and could make decision making especially in planning their activities. These activities provided students “hands-on” experience of leadership especially planning and organizing activities for the club members respectively. ECA allows them to groom their leadership skills. R17 who was the secretary of the debate club shared that, “Heading an inter-school debate competition taught me a lot of leadership skills. When my team organized interschool debate, I learned to prepare official documents, meet people who hold higher positions at my institution, and how to organize a successful event”. Those who participated in non-sport ECAs reported consistently better adjustment than those who did not participate in ECAs and those who participate in sports (Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2017). In other words, ECA creates a supportive relationship among students and gives them the confidence to rely on each other assistance.

### **Implications of the Study**

Extracurricular activities offer an essential platform for students to participate in various activities that are beneficial and the skills attained from these activities will help to build their professional skills that a classroom alone cannot always prepare. This is because generic skills are an important aspect of every individual as a whole, and especially when graduates step into the working world in the future. There are demands for a quality workforce due to globalization and advances in technology. Since higher learning institutions are the frontrunners in fulfilling the job market demand, it is best to keep them in the know of the benefits of ECA. Once we

know how the undergraduates benefit by engaging in the ECA, more encouraging and constructive societies can be established at higher learning institutions. ECA not only assists the undergraduates to improve their academic performance but also guides them to build their interpersonal skills as well as leadership skills. Generic skills or employability skills will put them at an advantage in securing employment. In dealing with the drawbacks of ECA, it is suggested that undergraduates would need to be educated in selecting the right kind of ECA and activate their intellect and interpersonal skills simultaneously.

### **Recommendations of the Study**

Although the ECA does not significantly bring negative outcome among medical students, yet to some extent, causes distress and burnout among the students. Due consideration and corrective measures should be taken to address this problem among the medical undergraduates. University counselors, for example, could allocate more attention and work with undergraduates to determine a "best fit" for participation in activities that build on their interests and skill level. Community partnerships are encouraged as working together to find quality coaches, sponsors, and funding for a variety of activities is beneficial to all involved. Institutions that offer training for coaches, sponsors, and leaders may minimize the harsh effects of poor leadership in extracurricular activities. Therefore, higher learning institutions need to create a system whereby students can establish a positive relationship with their peers who are more engaged academically.

Future longitudinal research can be carried out with students from other areas of study to find out the similarities or differences that exist among the male and female students concerning their participation in extracurricular activities. Studies can also explore the types of activities preferred and ways to reduce the burnout levels among medical undergraduates.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, though the linear regression analysis shows no positive significant relationship between involvement in ECA and academic performance, students' perception shows otherwise. They feel that involvement in ECA consistently and positively correlated with good institution attendance. The study indicated that at times undergraduates who became too involved in more than one ECA, we're unable to seek a balance between their ECA and completing academic assignments. However, if one learns time management skills, this issue could be addressed.

The undergraduates had fun when engaged in ECA at which strengthened friendship bonds and nurtured camaraderie. As students from all walks of life involved in ECA, they could get to know each other through clubs to build a stronger community in the college. ECA encourages

youth and staff to achieve great things (Shadid et al., 2020; Wilson, 2009) while encouraging young people to take on leadership roles and boost their confidence level.

Students involved in ECA assumed greater responsibilities and could make decisions especially in planning their activities. These activities provided students “hands-on” experience of leadership skills especially when planning and organizing activities for the club members. It is worth mentioning, however, that undergraduates who gravitate toward positions of leadership within undergraduate clubs and/or organizations generally appeared to be more motivated and engaged. This is in line with Kariyana, Maphosa, and Mapuranga (2012), Zacherman et al. (2014), and Hsien-Hsien Lau et al. (2014) who indicated that ECA creates an opportunity for students to apply their content knowledge into the real world which consequently prepares them for workplace management.

In other words, ECA allows one to transfer knowledge to practice. It was noted that ECA paves the way for students to understand the importance of critical thinking and time management skills apart from enhancing their interpersonal skills. Behtoui (2019) shares similar thoughts whereby he stressed that participation in ECA motivates students to transfer their classroom knowledge into their everyday life and that ECA plays an important role in the students’ lives. Thus, we can reiterate that although ECA does not have a positive significant relationship with students’ academic performance, it is quite notable that the students’ interpersonal skills are enriched through extracurricular activities.

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