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Students' Views on Extracurricular Activities in Enhancing Social Skills and Self-Concept

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Abstract: Extracurricular activities (ECAs) play a vital role in students' overall development by extending learning beyond the classroom and supporting personal and social growth. This study explored how high school students perceive the influence of ECAs on their social skills and self-concept. A qualitative descriptive research design involving high school SSLG Presidents or Council Governors from Grades 7 to 12, selected through purposeful sampling. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Through participation in ECAs, students experienced the personal growth through increased self-confidence, clarified self-concept, and a shift from external to internal motivation; social integration through improved communication, expanded peer networks, and interaction with diverse groups; emotional development through managing pressure, navigating emotional highs and lows, and building resilience; leadership growth through hands-on responsibilities and collaboration; and life preparedness through better time management and exposure to real-world tasks. Students viewed ECAs as important in developing social and personal skills that go beyond academics. This study highlights the positive impact of ECAs on students' self-awareness, leadership, and emotional maturity, especially in relation to self-concept, an area still underrepresented in current research.

Keywords: extracurricular activities; social skills; self-concept; student development

1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) are a cornerstone of holistic education and personal development for students. They extend learning beyond the traditional classroom environment and enrich students' overall educational experience. ECAs nurtures the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that lay the groundwork for achievement in school, work, and community life. Involvement in ECAs fosters critical social skills, including teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution (County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2024; Almond et al. 2023; Fredricks and Eccles 2006). Students involved in such activities also experience greater gains in self-esteem, improved peer relationship, and a stronger sense of self-concept and self-efficacy-elements that directly influence academic drive (Abruzzo et al. 2016). Participation in ECAs correlates with higher academic performance and exhibit lower patterns of absenteeism (Christison 2013). By giving students organized, practical opportunities to collaborate, manage time, solve problems, and explore personal interests, extracurricular activities create learning that complements classroom instruction. Moreover, ECAs tie students to their communities, build a sense of civic responsibility, and cultivate lasting peer and mentor relationships. Overall, ECAs are essential to developing well-rounded individuals ready to navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing society.

Although earlier studies underline the promise of extracurricular activities in fostering student development, these rely predominantly on correlational frameworks, which limits the ability to establish causal inferences linking participation in ECAs to shifts in social skills and self-concept (Wang et al. 2024). Few studies explore the impact of ECAs in general terms, failing to control for overlapping factors that might influence outcomes. A third gap lies in the limited focus on varied student groups, which undermines the external validity of results and raises questions about whether all students enjoy equal access to ECAs' positive effects (Bennett et al. 2012). Although some studies find a favorable link between ECAs and self-concept, these seldom include a full range of demographic backgrounds. A more nuanced understanding of the long-term and wider effects of ECAs on social skills and self-concept, particularly from students' perspectives, is still needed to fully leverage the benefits of these programs.

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This study aims to address these gaps by employing a qualitative approach to explore how students experience and perceive the role of ECAs in enhancing their social skills and self-concept. Unlike previous studies focused on single institutions, this research includes a more diverse sample of high school students from various schools in the Province of Iloilo, offering a broad understanding of impacts of ECAs across different student backgrounds. Guided by Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT), which emphasizes learning through observation, imitation, and modeling in social contexts (Simply Psychology 2023), this study frames ECAs as environment where students build self-efficacy and develop social behaviors through reciprocal interactions with peers, mentors, and their surroundings. By examining students' reflections, this research will contribute valuable insights into the specific mechanisms through which ECAs foster personal and social development. Specifically, it answers the question of how do students experience the role of extracurricular activities in enhancing their social skills and self-concept?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how extracurricular activities influence students' social skills and self-concept. A qualitative descriptive design generates a simple report about the experiences of the participants in a study (Colorafi and Evans 2016). This helps in keeping the distance between the researchers and the data minimal and phenomena are described as participants experienced them, which is useful in reducing the levels of theory or interpretation applied. The study collected in-depth narrative data from students who held leadership positions and participated in active extracurricular engagements, detailing the manner in which such involvement fosters social and personal development.

2.2 Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was developed to collect students' accounts on the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) in the development of social skills and self-concept (Rubin and Rubin 2012). This approach focused on students' descriptions ensuring coverage of critical areas. This resulted in the collection of rich narratives, deep reflections, and authentic accounts of lived experiences (Enago Academy 2023). The guide is organized based on Gibbs Reflective Cycle, which is a systematic approach reflecting on an event and constructs ideas for improvement based on an analysis that incorporates both positive and negative reflections (University of Edinburgh 2024). The guide was presented in five sections namely description of experience, feelings and emotional reflection, evaluation of impact on social skills, analysis of impact on self-concept, and conclusion and action plan. The guide included five warm-up questions and eighteen interview-specific questions. Prior to implementation, the guide was reviewed and confirmed by a qualitative research expert and was subsequently pilot-tested with a separate group of students who were not participants, which ensured the refinement of language, gauge relevance, and evaluate overall effectiveness. This preparatory sequence fortified a thorough and credibly probing inquiry into how ECA participation shapes social skills and self-concept.

2.3 Informants

Informants of this study were high school students selected using a purposeful sampling technique informed by clear inclusion requirements. To guarantee that each individual aligned closely with the study's aims, the selection was governed by these specific conditions:

1. The individual must be a duly registered high school learner in either a public or private institution within the Province of Iloilo for the academic year 2024-2025.
2. The individual's age must be within the range of 15 to 20 years at the moment data were gathered.
3. The individual must occupy the role of either the Supreme Secondary Learner Government (SSLG) President or the Council Governor in the current school year.
4. The individual must display active involvement in at least one recognized extracurricular activity.

These criteria ensured that participants had both leadership experience and sustained involvement in school-based extracurricular programs, making them well-positioned to reflect on the study's focus. Students in high school were selected to focus the target population because it is the age of social development and the creation of self-concept (Blomfield and Barber 2011). To mitigate possible bias in selection of schools, we used simple random sampling to ensure that each school in the population had an equal opportunity to be selected. This is what controlled which schools were sent an invitation to offer suitable participants.

Table 1. Profile of Informants.

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Years of Extracurricular Involvement
Theresa	Female	16	10 years
Briane	Female	18	10 years
Angel	Female	18	8 years
Tyra	Female	18	8 years
Mariel	Female	17	2 years
Jhana	Female	18	8 years
Russel	Male	18	4 years
Juriel	Male	18	6 years

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

This study received ethical approval from the appropriate body confirming the alignment with research standards. Upon approval, participants were approached from a specific selection of students. Participants had the choice of attending the interview in-person or via video interview, depending on their preferences and schedules. Efforts were made to accommodate students' academic and personal schedules while choosing time slots. Participants were informed clearly and provided consent, for those under 18, consent from a parent or legal guardian was obtained. Each interview was conducted in a calm and secure setting carefully chosen to ensure that participants would be relaxed. Participants granted permission to audio record the conversations which were later transcribed word for word to ensure precision and fidelity in their responses (Creswell and Poth 2016). Confidentiality was adhered to in all stages, all the audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were encrypted. Only those who were involved in the analysis were granted access to the material and for no other reason.

2.5 Data Analysis

The interviews conducted were analyzed thematically as described by (Clarke and Braun 2006) to capture and appreciate the students' everyday experiences. To begin with, the interviews were transcribed and then the narratives were contextualized by reading them several times. Every transcript underwent selection and all the relevant key phrases were highlighted and extracted. Extracted phrases served as the basis to derive meanings that were constructed to capture the core emotional and cognitive reality of the participants. These meanings were then organized into more abstract thematic categories which demonstrated comparable frameworks and congruence to the qualitative research rigor (Nowell et al. 2017). The groups were then combined into a comprehensive, integrative description which illustrated the entire spectrum of the experiences concerning the participants' involvement in extracurricular activities. Within this description, important components arose to illustrate the similarities among the participants' points of views. To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, participants were invited to review the findings in a member-checking procedure. Comprehensive documentation of each analytic phase was retained to guarantee transparency and methodological rigor. The resulting thematic framework and the relationships among the themes subsequently provided the foundation for a thorough report that speaks directly to the research question and the study's objectives.

3. Results

High school students affirmed that involvement in ECAs enhances their personal development, aids in social integration, contributes to emotional growth, nurtures leadership skills, and equips them for academic and life challenges.

3.1 Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

Exploring one's interests and shaping their own growth is one of the primary reasons why students engage in ECAs. They are presented opportunities to take part in tasks of their own choosing and lead towards developing both their sense of self and their motivations beyond their personal being. As students navigate through new challenges, they gain more insight in understanding and defining themselves on top of gaining new skills for life. ECA participation reinforces one's identity, fosters positive attitudes towards his or herself, and helps align individuals with ideal social values. Personal development through joining extracurricular activities results in increasing self-confidence, clarifying self-concept and purpose, and transitioning from external to internal motivation.

3.1.1 Increased Self-Confidence

Partaking in ECAs lets learners improve their confidence by giving them chances to exercise their skills in midst of challenges, giving them moments of achievements, and letting them acknowledge their capabilities. Competence and belief in one's ability are fostered by the nurturing and structured nature of ECAs unlike that of traditional set-ups in classrooms (Brooks, 2013). Theresa expressed *"After joining different extracurricular activities, I was able to develop my self-confidence, especially in areas such as speaking."* While Briane added *"I was doubting if I can do it or if I can succeed. After joining extracurricular activities, I am confident to stand in the front and take lead in group works."* ECAs promote feelings of emotional growth and self-worth through social interaction and skill formation.

3.1.2 Clarify Self-Concept and Purpose

Extracurricular activities introduce learners to new environments and challenges which let them explore other aspects of their identity. They are oriented into adapting into new roles while exposed to experiences that can either support or undermine their perceptions. ECAs open up venues for students' self-expression and social participation, which build their self-concept. Angel affirms *"As I joined many co-curricular activities, it became clear that my self-concept was really towards serving other people."* Tyra expressed that although she initially joined activities because her mother said so, she now joins because *"she knows her passion, her purpose, and what she's really fighting for."* Long-term involvement in ECAs lets learners immerse and identify themselves with roles which reflect their interests, values, and planned goals in the future.

3.1.3 Transition from External to Internal Motivation

External motivation and conventional competencies can be instilled as individuals take part in extracurricular activities. Participation in ECAs, which may be done for personal goals and other internal reasons, eventually internalizes values such as industriousness, discipline, and responsibility over time. Self-motivation, which transforms into other forms of ambitions, is often observed in youth that engage in ECAs. Jhana confesses *"(ECAs) made me realize how important it is to not only excel in school, but also be excellent in helping your parents at home. So, it taught me how to be responsible."* Russel also shared *"I don't care about the world as long as I have the internet and food. But then, I joined an organization, and I can say that all of those habits were wrong."* Skills that have been externally validated are achieved through participation in extracurricular activities. This involvement translates an internal drive into an outward accomplishment, which means maintaining motivation both academically and in one's career.

3.2 Social Integration and Skill Development

Engagement in ECAs fosters social integration and promotes various skills. ECAs foster opportunities for self-expression, teamwork, and the development of significant relationships. By being involved in school activities, students acquire skills on how to relate and interface with different people. Participation in ECAs helps to develop social skills, empathy, self-esteem, teamwork and social awareness. The social development skills gained from participation in ECAs include enhanced verbal and non-verbal communication and social networking, and learning from the exchange with other people.

3.2.1 Enhancing Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Students communicate better and develop interpersonal skills through interacting and public speaking which is part of the extracurricular activities they engage with, demonstrating how ECAs provide a space for growth. The skills learned enable students to self-express, which helps in working with others in the future. From the school, Briane said, "*Before joining, I was shy, now I speak confidently even with strangers."* To that, Jhana said, "*Organizing school events helped me open up, not just to others, but to myself."* ECAs sharpen self-expression, active listening, and respectful engagement, which foster social intelligence and better prepare learners for the globalized society and the wider school setting.

3.2.2 Expanding Social Networks and Peer Engagement

ECAs allows students to increase the variety of their social and peer relationships through participation in collective activities and functions. These engagements strengthen connections with the school and foster a greater sense of belonging. Mariel stated*, "I stepped out of my comfort zone through these seminars and met other student leaders who influenced me."* Theresa added, *"I used to be shy, but participating in contests and clubs helped me become more social."* ECAs foster active peer participation and enable students to interact meaningfully and create relationships with a wider diversity of people beyond their immediate friend groups. Empathy, inclusivity, and community norms are paramount, enabling students strengthen their social circles while building robust interpersonal bonds that foster collaborative confidence to serve them in future academic, social, and civic pursuits.

3.2.3 Learning from Diverse Social Interactions

Extracurricular activities actively foster valuable social learning contexts by bringing students from different backgrounds, encouraging peer exchange, empathy, and cultural competence. Angel reflected, "*I became more careful about what I say when (I am) interacting with different people,"* indicating some degree of heightened social awareness. Tyra described enhanced emotional understanding when she said, *"I now understand not just words, but the emotions behind them."* Juriel focused on the long-term networking value: *"Building connections that will help me in the future."* These responses indicate that ECAs help students understand different perspectives, and the development of emotional intelligence, communication, and flexibility. ECAs help anchored learners, aligned with the described social classroom research in which students interact in groups and develop positive attitudes about their peers and understanding of different social groups.

3.3 Emotional Journey and Coping Mechanisms

Engagement in extracurricular activities significantly impacts students' emotional experiences, ranging from feelings of initial anxiety and excitement to ongoing emotional development. These activities also act as essential avenues for developing coping strategies, helping students to address pressures and handle burnout, which ultimately promotes resilience and adaptability. Understanding the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and wellbeing is important for comprehensively assessing the development of students. This part describes how students understand and manage their emotional issues, develop coping skills, and deal with the stresses that come with participating in a range of activities.

3.3.1 Experiencing Anxiety, Excitement, and Emotional Growth

Involvement in structured activities, like extracurricular activities, greatly benefits the mental health of children and adolescents, improving confidence along with a feeling of belongingness. Interviewees reported a range of reactions: Angel reported feeling "*anxiety*" and Mariel described her emotions as "*doubtful*" which signals the universal nervousness from novel experiences. On the other hand, Juriel thought it *"really fun*" to interface with all sorts of people and Tyra boldly stated *"the first thing I felt was that I was really excited*." These responses show that while nervousness is a common theme, extracurricular activities provide constructive opportunities to not only overcome these fears but to thrive emotionally and develop excitement, helping to foster their all-around growth as students, easing over their doubts and embracing new challenges that enrich their social and emotional wellbeing.

3.3.2 Managing Burnout and Pressure

Accomplished students, who are active in extra-circulars, deal with unique stressors, overtime and workload, that need to be effectively managed. Participants underscored the burdensome sides of their participation. To illustrate, Mariel shared, "(it was) stressful before and during the preparations," when organizing and participating in certain activities. Tyra related, "*If I were to describe my overall experience, it would be the word kapoy (tiring)… I forgot to take a rest."* Russel also mentioned, "*my excitement comes with stress."* These stories show that while meaningful, extracurricular activities come with significant stress. To effectively enhance the social-emotional well-being of students, strategic engagement is needed while also averting burnout.

3.3.3 Building Resilience and Adaptation

The engagement of physical activities and extracurricular activities can be very effective in building resilience, enhancing emotional regulations and developing a growth mindset, assisting youths to bounce back from setbacks. The interviewees illustrated this development. As Angel stated*, "I tell myself… it's fine as long as you just do your best and you are able to adapt with what environment you are in.*" *"I developed confidence within myself that although my performance was not that perfect, it developed over time,". Brian* said. *"(Learning to) bring back the money while not letting it spread into an issue"* as said by Russel when facing an organization's financial problems. Jhana emphasized, "*every after the success… it boosts up my confidence. I think I am capable of doing this.*" These experiences actively demonstrate students do develop resilience from engagement.

3.4 Leadership and Service Orientation

ECAs significantly assist in developing the unique leadership qualities of students together with a strong a sense of service. These activities provide students a chance to cultivate and develop important leadership skills through hands-on experience in many immersive events and in different community service projects to identify. These activities bolster teamwork skills among students, strengthen the students' commitment to public service and help serve the community in more meaningful ways. This section highlights the ways through which students transform their leadership skills and commitment to volunteering by taking different extracurricular programs which are prepared not only for leadership but also for their character development and future service to society.

3.4.1 Developing Leadership through Practice

Participation in extracurricular activities enhances leadership skills such as social interaction, collaboration, and effective communication among students. Interviewees verified the enhancement of their leadership skills. Jhana stated, *"I learned how to lead a team. I learned how to deal with different kinds of people."* Juriel said, *"it made me realize that I am a leader and I can do a lot of things. And I can lead a lot of people."* Theresa said, *"my overall experience… was enlightening… I also developed my self-confidence, especially with areas like public speaking and debating."* These responses highlight that direct involvement provides a crucial environment for students to genuinely practice, internalize, and enhance their leadership behaviors and self-confidence in real-world settings.

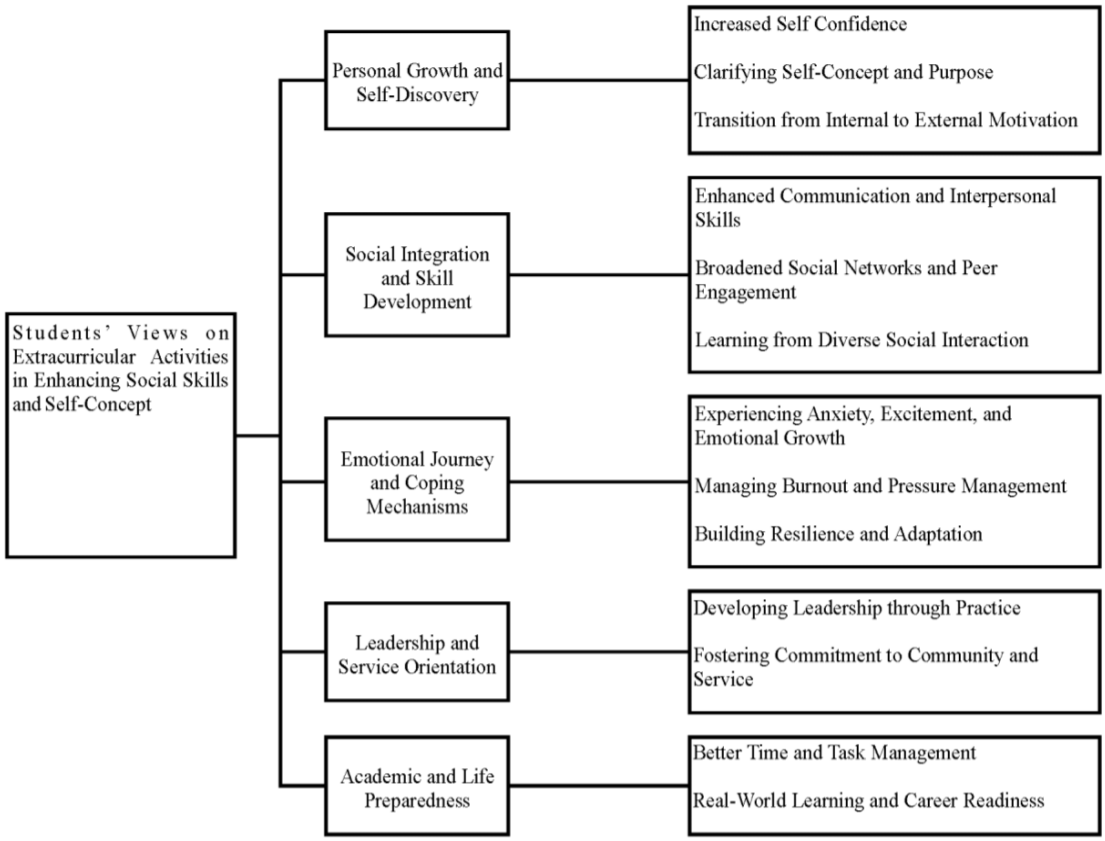


Figure 1. Thematic Map of Students' Views on ECAs in enhancing Social Skills and Self-Concept

3.4.2 Fostering Commitment to Community and Service

Youth participation in extracurricular activities is a significant predictor of later civic engagement, serving as a "*training ground"* where young people develop values and skills for pursuing common goals. Interviewees' statements powerfully underscore their developing dedication to service. Mariel stated, "*it was very fulfilling for all of us that we achieved something not only for ourselves but for our organization, for our school."* Angel expressed, "*I tell myself... it's fine as long as you just do your best... because you chose to do that."* Russel advised, "*Remember that extracurriculars are not for clout. You do them for a cause. You do them for something. You do them for someone."* These responses collectively demonstrate how active involvement in extracurriculars cultivates a deep sense of purpose and commitment to a broader community and its well-being, reflecting the fostering of prosocial values and dedication.

3.5 Academic and Life Preparedness

Extracurricular activity involvement helps students prepare for academic and career pursuits. These engagements provide the necessary experience, opportunities for skill development, and exposure to working conditions which are advantageous for later use and professional applications. ECAs help learners hone their capabilities and adapt themselves for challenges they'll face inside the classroom and in their future occupations. This part will evaluate how life and academic preparation through ECA participation leads to more effective time and task management, real world learning, and career preparedness.

3.5.1 Better Time and Task Management

Extracurricular activities sharpen skills such as effective time management since learners attempt to balance competing tasks within defined time windows. ECAs helps students face and plan their activities. This instills discipline, accountability, and an orderly arrangement of priorities. Briane in particular said that she plans out her activities and executes them noting it was also "*fun*" in summary. Theresa also stressed that she became more "*enhanced and organized"* after joining ECAs. Adapting to the demands of their respective activities, these responses indicate how ECAs improve students' time and task management skills, letting them cope with time restrictions and scheduling activities.

3.5.2 Real-World Learning and Career Readiness

Joining extracurricular activities lets students gain essential skills, qualities, and necessary experience that are practical in both everyday life and their careers. This lets them access areas of life and face challenges that are not present in academic settings. ECAs also enable to engage in environments where academic and professional competencies are refined and gauged, letting learners develop valuable traits such as leadership, problem-solving, resiliency, and other skills that are related to their career-readiness. Russel affirms that "*When I started to join organizations, my communication skills were improved and also the way I step-up in a group, how I solve all the problems inside the organization."* Juriel stresses that "*these experiences will tell you much about what reality is, what life out there is, and not just in a classroom setting.*" Drawing from these responses, ECAs enable long-term advantages as they are enacted in the immediate time frame, honing individuals holistically for various areas of life.

4. Discussion

This research examines the impact of extracurricular activities (ECAs) on the social skills and the self-concept of students. The reflections of the student leaders show that their participation in ECAs has relayed some form of social growth in addition to personal growth. There was enhanced confidence, defined identity, and increased intrinsic motivation. They also reported significant improvement in communication, relationship skills, and adaptability in many social contexts. This research explored the impact of ECAs on the student development with regard to self-concept and social skills.

Personal growth and self-discovery indicate that engaging in extracurricular activities bolsters self esteem and self-identity, as well as shifts motivation from intrinsic to extrinsic. This motivates one to define and sharpen one's self-concept. Through extracurricular activities, students learn to regulate their emotions and self-assessment over time as they encounter new challenges. This development is observable over time as they develop emotional resilience, maturity, and a sense of self-worth when confronted with diverse pressures in ECAs (Kort-Butler 2012). Gradually, as student leaders tackle increasingly complex tasks, their skills enhance because they need to adapt to the new challenges and rising demands of the structured activities they participate in. (Blomfield and Barber 2011), pointed out that involvement in organized and appropriately supportive extracurricular activities for adolescents, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds, is beneficial for their self-concept. Such contexts that are well-structured and appropriately challenging help cultivate safety, allow the development of important skills, and help achieve a strong, affirmative identity, which is critical, especially outside the academic sphere. These achievements and acquired recognition within ECAs seem to cultivate student leaders' emerging confidence and social affirmation. However, as students strive to fulfill their duties and meet expectations, the demanding requirements of ECAs may lead to feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and pressure, alongside overwork. As (MDCOC 2024) pointed out, overly competitive or pressure-driven ECAs may result in performance anxiety. While participants journey through the various challenges presented by ECAs, they also explore their purpose and understanding of self, as they are exposed to experiences that affect their self-concept. Extracurricular activities provide students with meaningful opportunities for personal expression, as they pursue tasks that reflect their values and interests (Christison 2013). While numerous student leaders admit that they joined out of curiosity, they later describe their eventual shift towards internal motivation as they engaged in more meaningful roles. This is affirmed by Lewis (2005), as students gain competencies and qualities such as leadership, productivity, task management, and discipline, which can sustain their long-term academic and career pursuits.

Social integration and enhanced interpersonal skills, expanding social networks, engaging with peers, and learning through diverse social interactions are essential in navigating through extracurricular activities. These are especially prevalent as their engagements involve varying degrees of social interaction, coordination and communication with fellow participants, adapting to different contexts, and maximizing opportunities through networking. As ECAs are social activities, student leaders hone their communication and interpersonal skills to accomplish shared tasks. As (Furda and Shuleske 2019) pointed out, soft skills such as teamwork, empathy, and self-expression are exercised and refined through frequent interactions and regular involvement in ECAs. Additionally, these activities serve as a social bridge, allowing participants to expand their social networks and form bonds with peers. Schaefer et al. (2021) affirm that students engaged in service- and activism-based ECAs experienced increased peer bonding and mutual influence, fostering friendships and emotional support. Many student leaders cited that they were also provided chances to interact with resource persons essential for professional advice, as well as skill and personal development. ECAs help build social skills by instilling a sense of belonging and build positive networks with both friends and supportive adults (Metsapelto and Pulkinen 2012). Social interactions within ECAs eventually lead to engagements with peers of diverse backgrounds and social roles. Students leaders shared instances of learning to appreciate varying perspectives, suggesting an environment where empathy and awareness are promoted. Empathy, respect, and other forms of emotional and social growth are fostered as they connect with peers despite differences (Cortellazo et al. 2024). The development of social skills was seen as both an outcome of and an instrument for further engagement in ECAs.

Emotional journey and coping mechanisms of the student learners are demonstrated in their experiences of anxiety, excitement, emotional growth, and adaptive measures to manage stress. Joining extracurricular activities introduces new pressures into their emotional journeys, prompting emotional responses and influencing their experience as they complete tasks. In addition to increased confidence, student leaders reported a range of emotions in their ECA engagements, from "anxious" and "doubtful" to "excited" and "fun." Gradually, many overcame the negative aspects of their emotional experience, shifting toward a sense of fulfillment. ECAs encourage emotional growth by providing opportunities for both skill and mental development (Scribd n.d.). As time passes,

participants encounter stressors while tackling heavy workloads and managing time for extracurricular involvement. This is especially experienced during times of preparation or in the absence of rest, leading to student fatigue. These findings contradict the study of (Wang et al. 2023), which suggests that while ECAs can reduce stress levels, they may also introduce new stressors for participants. Extracurricular investment by adolescents led to facing increased stress and anxiety. However, participants eventually adapt and build resilience to these pressures as they continue fulfilling their responsibilities (Li and Wang 2020). Several student leaders reported utilizing strategies such as embracing imperfection, shifting their perspectives, engaging in compromise, and sacrificing leisure time in order to meet obligations. A study by (Chen 2023) observes that psychological resiliency is improved through extracurricular sports activities in aspects such as interpersonal assistance, emotional regulation, and goal focus. For many, ECAs performed as experiential settings where their emotional resilience and adaptability were gauged and strengthened.

Leadership and service orientation are manifested through extracurricular activities in the leadership through practice and fostering commitment to commitment and service. Student leaders consistently reported that their roles in ECA enabled them opportunities to lead, manage entire committees and organizations, and dedicate themselves to a larger cause. Participation in ECAs over time necessitated the development of leadership skills required for success. Taking on roles and responsibilities allowed student leaders to hone qualities such as competence, interpersonal management, communication, and teamwork. This helps them identify a unique personal and professional self-fulfillment path and develop key attributes such as self-confidence (Zada and Zeb 2021). They demonstrated greater community and leadership responsibility while gathering relevant experience in ECAs (Agyepong et al. 2020). ECAs and community engagement activities fostered leadership and collective community value in participants (Kim 2022). The leadership value increased in direct relation to the degree of active participation. Most study participants were active participants and for the greater part, the current SSLG Presidents or Council Governors of their respective schools. The student leaders displayed and demonstrated considerable commitment to their roles and to active service for the stakeholders. The roles they served were not only self-fulfilling but also served the community and causes. The statements showed rising compassion and growing responsibility, suggesting the emerging civic values (Boy et al. 2022).

Academic and life preparedness, as better time and task management gained from extracurricular activities, stem far beyond the immediate context, resulting in long-term advantages and real-world learning. These skills learned from extracurricular activities impact the learner's performance in the classroom and their career in the future. Student leaders who balance their extracurricular and personal activities with academics master the task of effective organization. Student leaders progressed in discipline and accountability, which balanced with their academic and other responsibilities, led to improvements (Kort-Butler 2012). ECAs also improve behaviors and self-image, boosting school-related competencies such as exam scores and class attendance (Anjum 2021). Beyond simply improving in those areas, student leaders believed their roles in ECAs helped them gain firsthand skills as they simulated real-world and workplace experiences. This helped them work towards developing critical skills and field knowledge, as well as polish their social and academic attributes that were shaped to career expectations (Lewis 2005; Christison 2013).

This study explored the consequences of extracurricular activities on students. It further balanced the understanding of ECAs by investigating their effects on self-concept and social skills. The study balanced the representation of students from public and private schools to eliminate disproportionate sampling between the two. The methodology ensured the depth and reliability of data gathering by intentionally selecting incumbent SSLG Presidents or Council Governors. This study also had its limitations. Lack of questions regarding the positive and negative framing of ECAs within the data-gathering tool led to insufficient data collection. The study also ignored some factors, such as socioeconomic status and living situation, which can influence the impact of ECAs and personal details like one's identity. The data collection tool also lacked questions about the specific ECAs a participant joined and the impact of each on the participant. Although the modified methodology obtained relevant data, it introduced bias by only focusing on student leaders' testimonies and excluding other ECA participants who might have had different roles and levels of involvement. To improve how the results are evaluated, addressing these gaps as a motivation to refine the evaluation framework to inspire inventive ways to bridge these gaps would be beneficial.

Current research recommends broadening the sample populations to understand the differences in the impact of extracurricular activities for diverse demographics. Future studies should assess the socioeconomic status, living situation, and any pertinent factors in relation to ECAs and their impacts. Additionally, a study focused on the various types of ECAs is essential to understand their effects better in relation to specificity. A study focused on the negative impacts of ECAs, is required to grasp their effects more comprehensively. Quantitative studies focusing on the relationship between ECAs and the development of students' social skills and self-concept are argued to be critical for more extensive, cross-context generalizations. These suggestions will help advance the research on extracurricular activities and their role in student development.

5. Conclusions

Student leaders show consistent benefits in personal growth such as self-confidence, a better self-concept, and greater purpose in life, as well as shifts toward intrinsic motivation. Beyond personal development, ECAs foster social integration through improved communications and interpersonal relations, a broadening of peer networks, and engagement with people from different cultures and diverse backgrounds. Equally important was the emotional journey that students went through as they engaged in emotional regulation, resilience, and coping strategies to manage pressure and stress. ECAs helped develop leadership skills, as they provided opportunities to take initiative, deepening commitment to community service. Finally, students attained improved time management and task organization skills, as well as greater preparedness for the real world in greater context, boosting academic performance and enhancing career readiness. ECAs are an integral part of education, they are essential in fostering and cultivating well-rounded individuals, socially competent, and preparing students for the world outside the classroom.

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