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The Impact of Extracurricular Activities on University Students in Kandahar

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Abstract

Extracurricular activities are not part of the formal academic curriculum; rather, they are considered an essential component of the educational environment. Universities can utilize extracurricular activities to promote students' personal development in a positive direction, as these activities play a significant role in enhancing students' skills. They encourage students to think critically, manage their time effectively, and establish positive social relationships within their communities. The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of extracurricular activities on university students in Kandahar. The study successfully achieved its objectives by demonstrating that extracurricular activities are an essential part of the academic environment, contributing positively to students' personality development while also enhancing a wide range of practical and academic skills. This research employed a cross-sectional study design. A total of 378 questionnaires were distributed to students enrolled in both public and private higher education institutions in Kandahar, and all responses were collected for analysis. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26 and presented in tabular form. The findings revealed the effects of extracurricular activities on students in Kandahar. The results indicated that 80.5% of the respondents agreed that extracurricular activities help students set appropriate goals. Similarly, 78.5% agreed that these activities have a positive impact on students' mental health, while 85.2% believed that they positively influence students' daily activities. Furthermore, 88.6% agreed that extracurricular activities provide opportunities for making new friends. Conversely, the study also identified some negative perceptions. About 34.1% of the respondents disagreed that extracurricular activities create inconvenience in their daily routines, while 29.3% disagreed that participation in extracurricular activities prevents them from completing family responsibilities on time. The study further identified the extracurricular activities in which students participated most frequently. Sports activities ranked first, with 54.5% of the respondent's reporting participation. Moreover, the findings highlighted the major skills acquired through extracurricular activities, including teamwork (32.5%), communication skills (28.3%), problem-solving skills (14.0%), critical thinking (8.7%), and several other competencies. Overall, the study concludes that students in Kandahar who participate in extracurricular activities demonstrate greater academic achievement and personal development compared with those who do not participate.

Keywords: Impact, Student Level, Extracurricular Activities, University Students.

1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities are not part of the formal academic curriculum; rather, they are considered an essential component of the educational environment. Universities can utilize extracurricular activities to promote students' personal development in a positive direction, as these activities play a vital role in developing students' skills. They encourage students to think critically, manage their time effectively, and establish positive relationships within society. In general, extracurricular activities include sports, debates, drama, social volunteer work, and many other activities that complement the academic environment rather than the formal curriculum. Universities can use these activities to foster students' personal growth because they contribute significantly to the development of students' academic, social, and personal competencies. These activities encourage students to think critically, manage their time efficiently, and develop positive social relationships with others (Seow, 2014). Within educational systems, extracurricular activities play a significant role in promoting students' academic, social, and personal development. Activities such as sports, cultural programs, community service, and skills development programs strengthen students' talents and provide opportunities to enhance their abilities, problem-solving skills, and leadership competencies. Experiences from educational institutions indicate that extracurricular activities positively influence students' academic performance, mental well-being, and social interaction.

Education, as a whole, provides a broad framework for developing an individual's personality, skills, and talents (Balaguer, 2020). In addition to formal education, extracurricular activities constitute an important component that prepares students with practical life skills. These activities, including sports, cultural, academic, social, and creative programs, have a profound impact on students' academic achievement and personal development. The purpose of extracurricular activities is not merely recreation; rather, they play a fundamental role in students' intellectual, cognitive, and social growth (Khan, 2017).

Research has demonstrated that students do not achieve success solely through classroom instruction. They should also be provided with opportunities to develop their practical, artistic, and social skills. Evidence suggests that students who actively participate in extracurricular activities are more motivated to learn, build stronger relationships with their peers, acquire leadership skills, and develop better problem-solving abilities (Shahrani, 2021). Likewise, participation in extracurricular activities such as sports and student clubs contribute to improved academic performance and higher grades (Seow, 2014). Furthermore, these activities help students develop discipline, time management, and teamwork skills, all of which play a crucial role in their future professional and personal success.

However, the benefits of extracurricular activities are not equally experienced by all students. Their effectiveness depends on various factors, including time, place, available resources, and other contextual conditions (Balaguer, 2020). Some studies have also reported that extracurricular activities may have negative effects on students' academic performance because participation in these activities can reduce study time, which may consequently lead to lower academic achievement and reduced learning outcomes (Dang, 2021).

Within the Afghan higher education system, where students face numerous economic, social, and cultural challenges (Shahrani, 2021), extracurricular activities provide valuable opportunities for students to discover their talents, reduce stress, and strengthen their social skills. Educational institutions can enhance students' academic achievement and promote balanced personal development by providing appropriate extracurricular opportunities.

Therefore, this study was conducted to collect, analyze, and interpret reliable, valid, and evidence-based data regarding the impact of extracurricular activities on university students in Kandahar through a

structured questionnaire survey. The findings of this research are intended to provide useful information and recommendations for relevant educational authorities and stakeholders.

2. Review of Previous Literature

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) refer to activities that are conducted outside the formal academic curriculum, including sports, clubs, student councils, and cultural organizations. These activities are generally organized or supported by educational institutions or student representative bodies, such as the Supreme Student Council (SSC). Over the past two decades, a considerable number of studies have examined how participation in extracurricular activities, particularly student leadership roles, influences students' academic performance. This literature review synthesizes the findings of 23 studies published between 2008 and 2024, highlighting the role of extracurricular activities, the involvement of organizations such as the SSC, the major findings of previous research, and the existing research gaps. These studies were conducted in various countries, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Maldives, Afghanistan, Iran, and several Western countries, providing a broad understanding of the global impact of extracurricular activities.

2.1 Research Gaps

No previous study has specifically examined the role of the Supreme Student Council (SSC) in facilitating extracurricular activities and its direct impact on students' academic performance. Although studies by Leksuwankun (2022) and Fujiyama (2021) discussed student leadership activities, they did not provide detailed explanations of the organizational structure or functions of the Supreme Student Council. Consequently, an important gap remains in understanding the specific contribution of the SSC to students' academic development.

Previous studies have also differed considerably in defining and measuring academic performance. Some researchers focused primarily on Grade Point Average (GPA), such as Baker (2008), while others emphasized practical performance and workplace competencies, such as Buckley (2018). Farahani (2023) adopted a broader approach by including multiple indicators of academic achievement. This inconsistency makes comparisons across studies difficult and highlights the need for standardized measures of academic performance.

Most previous studies employed cross-sectional research designs (e.g., Ahmad, 2019; Ahmed, 2024; R, 2015), limiting the ability to establish causal relationships between extracurricular participation and academic outcomes. One notable exception is Im (2016), who conducted a longitudinal study that followed students from middle school through the ninth grade to examine the long-term effects of extracurricular participation. However, such longitudinal studies remain limited, particularly in non-Western countries.

Although the majority of studies have reported positive effects of extracurricular activities (Ginosyan, 2020; Nassar, 2024), relatively few have investigated their potential negative consequences in depth. Studies by Afalla (2020) and Dang (2021) acknowledged both the positive and negative impacts of extracurricular activities, suggesting that balanced participation is essential for maximizing educational benefits.

Overall, the existing literature indicates that extracurricular activities, including those potentially organized through structures such as the Supreme Student Council, contribute to improving academic performance through both direct and indirect pathways. However, the strength and direction of this relationship depend on several factors, including the type of activity, the level of student participation, and individual student characteristics. Most studies have reported positive outcomes, such as increased

academic motivation, stronger social capital, enhanced leadership skills, and improved institutional reputation. Nevertheless, the literature also suggests that a balanced approach to extracurricular participation is necessary to minimize potential negative effects. Although student leadership and organizational structures have been discussed in previous studies, the specific role of the Supreme Student Council remains largely unexplored. Further research is therefore needed to understand how student councils facilitate extracurricular activities and contribute to improving students' academic outcomes.

The reviewed literature emphasizes the important role of extracurricular activities in education and student development and confirms their value across different educational settings. However, further research is needed to examine the specific role of the Supreme Student Council, utilize longitudinal research designs, and provide a more comprehensive analysis of the potential negative effects of extracurricular participation. Addressing these research gaps will contribute to the development of evidence-based educational policies and strengthen student leadership structures such as the SSC to maximize the academic benefits of extracurricular activities.

Although the above-mentioned studies were conducted in different countries and contexts, no previous research, survey, or published study has specifically investigated the impact of extracurricular activities on university students in Kandahar. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to fill this gap by collecting reliable and valid data on the effects of extracurricular activities on university students in Kandahar and presenting the findings through a systematic and scientifically rigorous research process.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a **cross-sectional** research design using both **descriptive** and **correlational** research methods to examine the relationship between extracurricular activities and students' academic level and to assess the impact of extracurricular activities on university students.

3.2 Study Area and Duration

The study was conducted in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, over a four-month period from **Mizan to Qaws 1403 (September to December 2024)**. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of extracurricular activities on university students in Kandahar.

3.3 Study Population

The target population consisted of students enrolled in both public and private higher education institutions in Kandahar. According to available records, the total study population comprised approximately **9,702 students**.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Since the study population was known, the sample size was determined using the standard sample size formula for estimating proportions:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 . 0.5 . (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

Where:

- **Z** = 1.96 (95% confidence level)
- **p** = 0.50 (estimated population proportion)
- **e** = 0.05 (margin of error)

The initial sample size was calculated as:

$Z^2 = 1.96^2 = 3.84416$

$p.(1-p) = 0{,}5.0{,}5 = 0{,}25$
$e^2 = 0.05^2 = 0.0025$
Because the study population was finite (N = 9,702), the finite population correction formula was applied:

$$n = \frac{3{,}8416.0{,}25}{0{,}0025} = \frac{0{,}9604}{0{,}0025} = 384.16$$

$(n^{adjusted} = \frac{n}{1+\frac{n-1}{N}})$

$$n = \frac{384.16}{1 + \frac{384.16 - 1}{9702}}$$

$n - 1 = 384.16 - 1 = 383.16$
$\frac{383.16}{9704} = 0.0395$
$1 + 0.0395 = 1.0395$
$\frac{383.16}{1.0395} = 378$
The adjusted sample size was calculated as **378 respondents**.
The study parameters were as follows:

1. Confidence Level: **95%**
2. Margin of Error: **5%**
3. Population Proportion: **50%**
4. Population Size: **9,702**
5. Final Sample Size: **378**

Accordingly, a total of **378 students** were selected using the **systematic sampling technique**, and data were collected from the selected participants.

3.5 Data Collection

Primary data were collected from students enrolled in public and private higher education institutions in Kandahar using a structured questionnaire.

3.6 Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of **29 items** divided into three sections:

- **Section I:** Eight multiple-response questions designed to collect demographic information and participation in extracurricular activities.
- **Section II:** Nineteen statements measured using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree).
- **Section III:** Two open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide additional comments and opinions.

3.7 Data Analysis

After completion, all questionnaires were collected, coded, and entered into **IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26** for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the data. Furthermore, inferential statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between extracurricular activities and students' academic level using appropriate statistical tests.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical research principles. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and all collected information was used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

4. Research Objectives

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To determine the impact of extracurricular activities on the academic level of university students in Kandahar.
2. To identify the types of extracurricular activities that have the greatest influence on students' academic achievement.

5. Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does participation in extracurricular activities affect the academic level of university students?
2. Which types of extracurricular activities have the greatest impact on students' academic achievement?

6. Research Hypotheses

6.1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no statistically significant relationship between extracurricular activities and the academic level of university students.

6.2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between extracurricular activities and the academic level of university students.

7. Significance of the Study

Contributing to societal development, achieving academic excellence, and producing a skilled workforce equipped with both academic knowledge and practical competencies are among the fundamental strategic objectives of higher education institutions. To achieve these goals, universities and other higher education institutions strive to provide quality teaching and research services across various academic disciplines while preparing students with both theoretical knowledge and practical professional skills. In addition to formal academic instruction, these institutions seek to create opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities that contribute to their overall development.

Although higher education institutions in Kandahar offer a variety of educational services, there has been limited evidence regarding the extent to which these services and extracurricular activities contribute to students' professional development and academic performance. Therefore, there was a clear need for a comprehensive, objective, and scientifically rigorous study to determine whether adequate opportunities for extracurricular participation have been provided and to assess how these activities influence students' academic level.

The findings of this study are expected to assist the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan and higher education institutions in curriculum development, educational planning, and policy formulation. Furthermore, the results will provide practical guidance for universities on how extracurricular activities can be effectively integrated alongside formal academic programs to enhance students' academic performance, personal development, and professional competencies, while also preparing graduates to meet the demands of the labor market

8. Results

This study examined the effect of extracurricular activities on student performance at higher education institutions in Kandahar. A total of 378 students from six academic institutions completed the questionnaire. Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their university, faculty, academic year, age, and academic percentage (grade range).

8.1. Socio Demographic Responses:

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 378)

Characteristic	**n**	**%**
University		
Kandahar University	253	66.9%
National University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology	45	11.9%
Malalɛ Institute of Higher Education	27	7.1%
Saba Institute of Higher Education	16	4.2%
Benawa Institute of Higher Education	8	2.1%
Lamar Institute of Higher Education	29	7.7%
Faculty		
Medicine	51	13.5%
Law and Political Science	43	11.4%
Economics	46	12.2%
Engineering	28	7.4%
Education	23	6.1%
Languages and Literature	23	6.1%
Computer Science	38	10.1%
Public Administration and Policy	28	7.4%
Pharmacy	23	6.1%
Sharia	23	6.1%
Journalism	23	6.1%
Agriculture	51	13.5%
Academic Year		
First year	100	26.5%

Characteristic	n	%
Second year	73	19.3%
Third year	135	35.7%
Fourth year	64	16.9%
Fifth year	1	0.3%
Sixth year	5	1.3%
Age (years)		
18–25	319	84.4%
26–35	54	14.3%
36–45	4	1.1%
> 45	1	0.3%
Academic Percentage (Grade Range)		
55–65	24	6.3%
66–75	126	33.3%
76–85	141	37.3%
86–100	86	22.8%

8.1.1. Interpretation of Socio Demographic

With regard to institutional affiliation, the majority of respondents (66.9%, n = 253) were enrolled at Kandahar University, with the remaining respondents distributed across five other institutes of higher education, each contributing less than 12% of the sample. This distribution reflects the relative size and enrollment capacity of Kandahar University compared to the smaller private institutes included in the study.

Across faculties, representation was relatively balanced, with Medicine and Agriculture each accounting for the largest shares (13.5%, n = 51), followed by Economics (12.2%) and Law and Political Science (11.4%). The remaining faculties each contributed between 6.1% and 10.1% of respondents, indicating that the sample captured a broad cross-section of academic disciplines rather than being concentrated in a single field.

By academic year, third-year students formed the largest group (35.7%, n = 135), followed by first-year (26.5%) and fourth-year students (16.9%). Fifth- and sixth-year students together made up less than 2% of the sample, which is consistent with standard undergraduate program lengths in the Afghan higher education system.

The age distribution shows that the sample was overwhelmingly composed of traditional-age university students, with 84.4% (n = 319) falling within the 18–25 age range. Only a small proportion of respondents (1.4% combined) were older than 35, suggesting the findings are most representative of the typical undergraduate age group rather than older or non-traditional students.

Finally, academic performance (grade percentage) was concentrated in the 66–85 range, with 33.3% of students scoring 66–75% and 37.3% scoring 76–85%—together accounting for over 70% of the sample. Comparatively fewer students fell into the lowest (55–65%, 6.3%) or highest (86–100%, 22.8%) performance bands, indicating that most respondents were mid-to-high academic performers.

8.2. Multiple Responses Questions:

Table 2

Q1: Extracurricular Activities in Which Students Have Participated

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Sports	206	54.5%	25.8%
Volunteer work	199	52.6%	24.9%
Competitions	181	47.9%	22.7%
Debates	88	23.3%	11.0%
Drawing/Art	77	20.4%	9.6%
None	37	9.8%	4.6%
Mock trials	11	2.9%	1.4%

Table 3

Q2: Weekly Hours Spent on Extracurricular Activities

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Two hours	213	56.3%	30.3%
Three hours	211	55.8%	30.1%
One hour	175	46.3%	24.9%
Three hours (b)	66	17.5%	9.4%
Five hours	24	6.3%	3.4%
Six hours	13	3.4%	1.9%

Table 4

Q3: Activity Most Enjoyed by Students to Date

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Sports	117	31.0%	24.0%
Volunteer work	99	26.2%	20.3%

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Drawing/Art	93	24.6%	19.1%
Debates	65	17.2%	13.3%
Competitions	62	16.4%	12.7%
Mock trials	31	8.2%	6.4%
None	20	5.3%	4.1%

Table 5

Q4: Perceived Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Increased social skills	233	61.6%	22.2%
Increased social participation	225	59.5%	21.4%
Health	221	58.5%	21.0%
Time management	213	56.3%	20.3%
Increased practical activity	78	20.6%	7.4%
Initiative-taking	53	14.0%	5.0%
Leadership skills	27	7.1%	2.6%

Table 6

Q;5 Channels Through Which Students Learn About Extracurricular Activities

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
University announcements	219	57.9%	36.0%
Social media	192	50.8%	31.5%
Friends	93	24.6%	15.3%
Online sources	68	18.0%	11.2%
Community centers	37	9.8%	6.1%

Table 7

Q:6 Skills and Knowledge Gained Through Extracurricular Activities

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Critical thinking	240	63.5%	22.1%
Communication	185	48.9%	17.1%
Leadership	175	46.3%	16.1%
Subject-specific skill/knowledge	169	44.7%	15.6%
Initiative	133	35.2%	12.3%
Teamwork	75	19.8%	6.9%
Problem-solving skills	61	16.1%	5.6%
Time management	47	12.4%	4.3%

Table 8

Q; 7Overall Contribution of Extracurricular Activities to Quality of Life

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Increases sense of innovation/progress	234	61.9%	34.9%
Creates sense of accomplishment	217	57.4%	32.4%
Expands social relationships	104	27.5%	15.5%
Courage	66	17.5%	9.9%
Reduces psychological stress	49	13.0%	7.3%

Table 9

Factors That Motivate Student Participation

Response Option	n	Percent of Cases	Percent of Responses
Affordability	219	57.9%	22.6%
Achievements and awards	211	55.8%	21.8%
Variety of activities	186	49.2%	19.2%
Social environment	177	46.8%	18.3%
Having free time	77	20.4%	7.9%
Parents	62	16.4%	6.4%
Encouraging advisors/mentors	37	9.8%	3.8%

8.2.1. Interpretation of Multiple Responses Questions

The findings from the multiple-response questions indicate that sports, volunteer work, and competitions were the most common extracurricular activities among students, with most participants spending one to three hours per week on these activities. Sports were also identified as the most enjoyable activity. Students perceived extracurricular activities as beneficial for improving social skills, social participation, health, and time management. University announcements and social media were the primary sources of information about these activities. The results further showed that extracurricular participation enhanced critical thinking, communication, leadership, and subject-specific knowledge, while also contributing to a greater sense of innovation, achievement, and improved quality of life. Finally, affordability, achievements and awards, the availability of diverse activities, and a positive social environment were identified as the main factors motivating students to participate in extracurricular activities. Overall, the findings suggest that extracurricular activities make a meaningful contribution to students' academic, personal, and social development.

8.3. Likert Skills Responses:

Table 10

Student Agreement and Disagreement Regarding Extracurricular Activities

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Extracurricular activities are a means to students' academic success.	125 (33.1)	190 (50.3)	32 (8.5)	22 (5.8)	9 (2.4)
2	Extracurricular activities create a disturbance in students' daily activities.	73 (19.3)	110 (29.1)	65 (17.2)	110 (29.1)	19 (5.0)
3	Students are satisfied with all extracurricular activities carried out at the university.	119 (31.5)	167 (44.2)	42 (11.1)	37 (9.8)	13 (3.4)
4	Extracurricular activities give students positive thinking.	141 (37.3)	179 (47.4)	47 (12.4)	9 (2.4)	2 (0.5)
5	Students accomplish family responsibilities on time alongside extracurricular activities.	92 (24.3)	174 (46.0)	75 (19.8)	36 (9.5)	1 (0.3)
6	Students feel a sense of daily activity/energy because of extracurricular activities.	141 (37.3)	185 (48.9)	40 (10.6)	11 (2.9)	1 (0.3)
7	Extracurricular activities make students more engaged in their studies.	162 (42.9)	170 (45.0)	24 (6.3)	20 (5.3)	2 (0.5)
8	Students can control the affairs of their daily life because of extracurricular activities.	93 (24.6)	185 (48.9)	70 (18.5)	29 (7.7)	1 (0.3)

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	Extracurricular activities can steer students away from bad/idle company.	157 (41.5)	168 (44.4)	44 (11.6)	8 (2.1)	1 (0.3)
10	Extracurricular activities improve students' moral behavior with friends.	154 (40.7)	177 (46.8)	42 (11.1)	4 (1.1)	1 (0.3)
11	Extracurricular activities help students become better problem-solvers.	126 (33.3)	187 (49.5)	51 (13.5)	10 (2.6)	4 (1.1)
12	Extracurricular activities help students become better athletes.	150 (39.7)	124 (32.8)	93 (24.6)	10 (2.6)	1 (0.3)
13	Extracurricular activities help students set good, appropriate goals for themselves.	114 (30.2)	190 (50.3)	48 (12.7)	24 (6.3)	2 (0.5)
14	Students can balance curricular and extracurricular responsibilities when facing challenges.	91 (24.1)	163 (43.1)	90 (23.8)	29 (7.7)	5 (1.3)
15	Students feel pressure when extracurricular activities conflict with their own or friends' expectations.	78 (20.6)	125 (33.1)	112 (29.6)	59 (15.6)	4 (1.1)
16	I think the opportunity for extracurricular activities should be made available for others too.	132 (34.9)	168 (44.4)	53 (14.0)	23 (6.1)	2 (0.5)
17	Extracurricular activities have a positive impact on students' mental health.	137 (36.2)	160 (42.3)	60 (15.9)	20 (5.3)	1 (0.3)
18	Extracurricular activities help students make new friends.	153 (40.5)	182 (48.1)	26 (6.9)	16 (4.2)	2 (0.3)
19	I believe extracurricular activities are necessary and essential for students.	179 (47.4)	169 (44.7)	19 (5.0)	10 (2.6)	1 (0.3)

8.3.1 Interpretation of Likert Scale Responses (Q1–Q19)

The Likert-scale results indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of extracurricular activities. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that extracurricular activities contribute to academic success, promote positive thinking, improve daily motivation, enhance study engagement, strengthen moral behavior, develop problem-solving abilities, support goal setting, improve mental health, and help students make new friends. A large majority also believed that extracurricular activities are necessary and should be made available to all students. Although some respondents expressed concerns about balancing extracurricular activities with daily responsibilities and occasional pressure arising from participation, most students disagreed that these activities disrupt their daily lives. Overall, the findings demonstrate that

extracurricular activities have a significant positive influence on students' academic performance, personal development, social relationships, and psychological well-being.

8.4. Open-Ended / Descriptive Questions

Alongside the closed items above, the questionnaire also included two open-ended questions, allowing students to freely share their views on the impact of extracurricular activities. Most respondents wrote answers along the following lines:

8.4.1 What suggestions do you have for your university, the Ministry of Higher Education, and society regarding extracurricular activities?

Most students' responses centered on organizing competitive contests between universities and faculties, allocating designated time for extracurricular activities, approving a dedicated budget for them, raising public awareness among students about these activities, providing access to online resources such as journals and libraries, and giving students unrestricted internet access.

8.4.1 In your opinion, what other extracurricular activities should the university provide opportunities for students to carry out?

Most students expressed a preference for competitions on the Prophet's Mohammad ﷺ biography (Serat) and Qur'an recitation (Tajweed), a suitable environment for extracurricular activities in general, computer and English language courses, training programs in public speaking, calligraphy, and drawing, internship opportunities both inside and outside the university, debates and mock trials to strengthen political and legal skills, and facilities and programs for sports such as swimming, running, wrestling, horse racing, tug-of-war, and javelin/spear throwing.

9. Inferential Statistical Analysis

The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Academic percentage was treated as an ordinal outcome. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used for ordinal associations, and an exploratory ordinal logistic regression was used to assess the overall perception index in relation to the academic-percentage category.

Analysis	Valid N	Statistic	p-value	95% CI	Decision / interpretation
Cronbach's alpha (19-item scale)	377	$\alpha = 0.764$	—	—	Acceptable internal consistency; higher scores indicate more favorable perceptions.
Q1 academic-success perception vs academic percentage	377	$\rho = 0.014$	0.785	—	Very small positive association; not statistically significant.
Q7 study-engagement perception vs academic percentage	377	$\rho = 0.089$	0.083	—	Small positive association; not statistically significant.
Overall, 19-item perception index vs academic percentage	376	$\rho = 0.096$	0.063	—	Small positive association; not statistically significant.

Analysis	Valid N	Statistic	p-value	95% CI	Decision / interpretation
Ordinal logistic regression: overall perception index	376	OR = 1.562	0.070	0.964–2.531	Positive estimate, but CI includes 1.00 and p > .05; not statistically significant.
Hypothesis decision	376	α = 0.05	—	—	Fail to reject H_0; available perception measures do not support H_1.

Interpretation notes: the inferential predictors are students' perception measures, not complete respondent-level participation indicators for each extracurricular activity.

9.1 Hypothesis Decision

The observed p-values for the principal correlation and regression analyses were greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is not rejected on the basis of the available perception-based measures. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) is not supported by these analyses. This finding should be interpreted narrowly: it does not demonstrate that extracurricular participation has no value, but it indicates that the analyzed perception measures were not statistically associated with the academic-percentage categories in this dataset.

10. Item-Level Spearman Correlations

Each of the 19 Likert items was correlated with academic percentage. The items were oriented so that higher scores represent more favorable perceptions; the negatively worded items (Q2 and Q15) were reverse-oriented. Holm adjustment was applied across the 19 item-level tests to control the family-wise error rate.

Item	Valid N	Spearman ρ	Unadjusted p	Holm-adjusted p	Interpretation
Q1	377	0.014	0.785	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q2	376	-0.074	0.152	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q3	377	0.042	0.417	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q4	377	-0.009	0.860	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q5	377	0.085	0.099	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q6	377	-0.042	0.414	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction

Item	Valid N	Spearman ρ	Unadjusted p	Holm-adjusted p	Interpretation
Q7	377	0.089	0.083	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q8	377	0.069	0.178	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q9	377	0.099	0.054	0.877	Not significant after Holm correction
Q10	377	0.082	0.113	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q11	377	0.129	0.012	0.227	Not significant after Holm correction
Q12	377	0.100	0.052	0.877	Not significant after Holm correction
Q13	377	0.091	0.078	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q14	377	0.126	0.014	0.261	Not significant after Holm correction
Q15	377	-0.037	0.479	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q16	377	-0.039	0.448	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q17	377	-0.002	0.974	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q18	377	0.020	0.700	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction
Q19	377	-0.023	0.656	1.000	Not significant after Holm correction

No item remained statistically significant after Holm correction. Q11 and Q14 had nominal unadjusted p-values below .05, but neither remained significant after multiplicity adjustment.

11. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that extracurricular activities play an important role in the academic, personal, and social development of university students in Kandahar. Among the 378 respondents, sports were the most common extracurricular activity (54.5%), followed by volunteer work

(52.6%) and competitions (47.9%). These findings indicate students' interest in activities that promote physical, social, and intellectual development.

The results further revealed that extracurricular activities contribute to developing essential competencies, particularly critical thinking (63.5%), communication skills (48.9%), and leadership (46.3%). Moreover, 80.5% of respondents agreed that these activities help students establish appropriate goals, while 78.5% reported positive effects on mental health and 88.6% acknowledged their role in developing new friendships. These findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting the contribution of extracurricular activities to academic motivation, social relationships, confidence, and personal development (Balaguer et al., 2020; Seow & Pan, 2014; Zaman & Khan, 2017).

Similarly, the findings support research conducted at Balkh University, which identified positive relationships between extracurricular participation, academic motivation, leadership, and personal development (Shahrani & Mohammadi, 2021). However, some respondents reported difficulties balancing extracurricular activities with their daily and family responsibilities. This suggests that effective time management and appropriate institutional planning are essential to maximize the benefits of participation, as also emphasized by previous research (Afalla, 2020; Dang, 2021).

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of providing accessible, diverse, and well-organized extracurricular opportunities within higher education institutions. Nevertheless, because this study employed a cross-sectional design and relied on students' self-reported responses, its findings reflect perceived benefits rather than establishing a direct causal relationship with academic achievement.

12. Conclusion

This study concludes that extracurricular activities are an important complementary component of university education in Kandahar. The findings indicate that participation contributes positively to students' perceived academic engagement, critical thinking, communication, leadership, social relationships, and psychological well-being.

Sports, volunteer work, and competitions were identified as the most common activities, while students expressed a strong demand for additional educational, cultural, professional, and recreational opportunities. Therefore, public and private higher education institutions should strengthen extracurricular programs through dedicated budgets, appropriate facilities, regular schedules, inter-university competitions, and greater student awareness.

Ultimately, integrating extracurricular activities into university life can contribute to a more balanced and supportive educational environment. Further longitudinal research is recommended to examine their long-term effects and establish their relationship with students' actual academic performance.

13. Recommendations:

1. Public and private academic institutions should, with quality-improvement standards in mind, provide students with opportunities for extracurricular activities.
2. These institutions should organize competitions among themselves and among their own faculties.
3. These institutions should approve and practically implement a dedicated budget for students' extracurricular activities.
4. Alongside their academic and administrative affairs, these institutions should establish regular schedules for students' extracurricular activities.

5. These institutions should raise public awareness among students, through various means, about the importance of extracurricular activities.

14. References

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