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Factors Influencing Students' Participation in Co-Curricular Activities at Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

The co-curricular activities are highly important for students, physical, mental, social growth are accepted in worldwide studies. Beyond this, the emerging key factors influence students' participation in co-curricular activities, which are often neglected in schools due to various physical, social, and emotional challenges. Many students are not given the necessary support to engage in these activities. This study aims to assess the factors influencing students' participation in co-curricular activities at secondary school in the district Lasbela, Balochistan. Qualitative research approaches were used, and a case study was carried out. Data was collected from 15 teachers (male and female) of different secondary schools of the district, while using a purposive sampling technique. NVivo 12 was used for data analysis and created five themes. Four themes of the study which are: institutional support and infrastructure, personal motivation and skills development, academic pressure and time constraints, impact of co-curricular activities on future opportunities, were positively responded. This study findings highlighted the factors that

influence students' participation in co-curricular activities, such as social challenges, lack of infrastructure, ACC equipment, lack of institutional and parental support, academic pressure and time constraints. While the theme of parental and societal influence was responded both positively and negatively. Further, it suggested that higher authorities immediately needed to re-evaluate their policies and strategies to ensure better practice of co-curricular activities.

Keywords: Factors Influencing, Students' Participation, Co-Curricular Activities, Secondary School.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge nourishes children's mind, but physical exercise help them maintain focus and pay better attention. There is a need for the parallel enhancement for co-curricular activities alongside secondary school curriculum instruction (Guo & Liem, 2023). Schoolchildren may sometimes engage in disruptive behavior that affects parents, teachers, and learning environment. School administration, parental support and collaboration is needed to prevent such disruptive behavior; therefore, it is essential to create an environment where school students can participate in meaningful co-curricular activities, to use those opportunities for career growth (Singh, 2017). Globally, the wide co-curricular activities ate highly valued, particularly in Pakistan, are considered worth to enhance students' academic performance. However, some remote schools often neglect and lack awareness related to the importance of co-curricular activities that how it shapes students' school achievements, learning outcomes, and behavior (Bashir et al., 2012).

According to Rathore et al. (2018), many private schools in Pakistan charge high fees but fail to provide quality environment for co-curricular activities. While most of government schools always make effort to provide better co-curricular activities, but public and private secondary schools in Pakistan have poor system to organize co-curricular activities.

Several factors influence students' participation in co-curricular activities. Sikkha and Agnihotri (2013) reported that due to various physical, social, and emotional challenges, co-curricular activities are neglected. Therefore, most of students are not encouraged and supported to engage in these activities (Ali, et al., 2020; Ali, et al., 2020; Xu, et al., 2019). Similarly, Jha et al. (2004) highlighted key factors that hinder students' participation, such as inadequate budgets, lack of teachers' training, overcrowded classrooms, lack of students' participation, lack of awareness and school support, unavailability of resources, and poor monitoring strategies. Additionally, Derebssa (2004) emphasized that the role of communication, facilities, and transformation is necessary to achieve the educational objectives. As lack of important resources and facilities create challenges for the successful implementation of co-curricular activities in schools (Ahmed, & Imran, 2024; (Ahmed, 2023).

Secondary schools' administration and higher authorities are responsible to organize and sponsor co-curricular activities (Bakoban & Aljarallah, 2015). Most of school students' co-curricular activities occur after regular school hours, because many students work part-time or have no transportation from school, which limits their participation (Rasheed, et al., 2025; Shahzadi, et al., 2025). Therefore, schools should enable those co-curricular practices for students that accommodate the desired needs of students (Kelbiso, 2019). To ensure inclusiveness, some schools integrate co-curricular activities into school hours, which is an opportunity for both middle and high school students to participate (Cengelci, 2013). Students' participation in clubs, sports festivals, and other events results in their competencies and good evaluation (Dincer, 2009; Iscan, 2019; Jansen, 2016).

Furthermore, there are various perspectives on the role of co-curricular activities at secondary school that how this influences students' learning outcomes. The secondary school system of education promotes co-curricular activities widely (Foster, 1925). Terms such as "co-curricular activities," "non-classroom activities," and "extracurricular activities" all refer to similar forms of participation and meaning, including music, drama, and debates (Khuhro et al., 2024). However, limited studies have found on the factors influencing students' participation in co-curricular activities at the secondary school level (Janjua, et al., 2025; Shah, et al., 2024; Naseer, et al., 2018). This study aims to identify the key factors affecting secondary school students' engagement in co-curricular activities. Specifically, this study addresses the following objectives:

1. To identify institutional support and infrastructure for co-curricular activities among secondary school students.
2. To examine parental, societal, motivational, and skill development factors influencing student participation in co-curricular activities.
3. To assess the impact of academic pressure on students' involvement in co-curricular activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the previous literature shows that the number of factors influence students' participation in co-curricular activities in secondary schools. Such as a study in Lamu County, Kenya, reported that about 60% of respondents reported inadequate funding in secondary schools' co-curricular activities (Khoso, et al., 2024; Sultana & Imran, 2024; Ahmad, Bibi & Imran, 2023). Additionally, 71% of respondents stated insufficient infrastructural facilities, while 76% reported lack of parental involvement, these factors highly impact students' participation (Kisango, 2016).

Further, studies explored the factors promoting co-curricular activities in schools, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (Yazidi & Rana, 2025; Feng, et al., 2023). While applying the random sampling technique, the study included 30 principals/headmasters from boys' high schools in Peshawar city, 26 from private schools, and 4 from public schools. Further, 60 teachers (8 from public and 52 from

private schools) and 600 students (80 from public and 520 from private schools) participated (Phulpoto, Oad, & Imran, 2024; Oad, Zaidi, & Phulpoto, 2023). The study identified the key factors, academic support and infrastructure, parental and societal influence, school burden, that contribute to hinder students' participation in co-curricular activities (Khan & Iqbal, 2014).

A descriptive survey was employed in the government school Hadiya zone to identify challenges to the implementation of co-curricular activities (Imran, Zaidi, & Rehan, 2024). Where 150 students and 62 teachers participated, further through a purposive sampling, seven principals and seven supervisors participated (Kayani, et al., 2023; Khan, et al., 2021; Naseer, et al., 2021; Khan & Khan, 2020). Both primary and secondary data sources were used, the data collection instruments including interviews, questionnaires, and deep document analysis of related work (Nisar, et al., 2025; Basharat, et al., 2023; Naz, et al., 2020). The findings show the limited opportunities for students to participate in co-curricular activities. Most schools lack to prioritize these activities, leading to low student encouragement and participation. The government should take the initiative to allocate more resources, and funding to support co-curricular activities (Kelbiso, 2019).

Several factors were observed from pervious literature that influence talent development in co-curricular activities, as observed in secondary school students in Mwatate District, Kenya. According to the Naz, et al., (2022) the key factors, such as funding, infrastructure, teachers' roles, and parental involvement. For this, a descriptive survey was carried out, involving 170 students, from 17 schools, 17 co-curricular teachers, and three principals, while using questionnaires. The qualitative (content analysis) and quantitative (descriptive statistics, XLSTAT) methods were used. The study found that 60% of students were not satisfied with funding, while 71% responded lack of infrastructural facilities, and 76% responded lack of parental involvement (Wangai, 2012).

Further study in Matungulu Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya, identified factors which highly influenced schoolteachers' involvement in different co-curricular activities (Masih, Raju & Saher, 2022; Masih, et al., 2021). Used a descriptive survey research design, targeted 34 principals and 380 teachers, focusing on motivation of participation, school workload, training level, and school administrative support, based on Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964). The study report indicated that workloads and a lack of co-curricular training in secondary school hindered teacher participation (Muema, 2019).

Furthermore, studies explored challenges and barriers in secondary schools that hinder students' participation in co-curricular activities (Hsu & Huynh, 2023; Hsu et al., 2022; Hsu, Huang, & Huynh, 2021). The key factors such as insufficient staff training, lack of adaptive equipment, inadequate infrastructure, and limited awareness of teachers and students (Chohan & Haq, 2025; Qazi, et al., 2025; Malik, Muzaffar & Haq, 2025). Further, the study emphasized the need for a supportive school environment, policy changes, and creating opportunities for students to be engaged in co-curricular activities (Temesgen, 2024; Guo & Liem, 2025).

The diversity of co-curricular activities is structured in Addis Ababa's secondary schools (Danish, Akhtar & Imran, 2025; Mankash, et al., 2025; Hafeez, Yaseen & Imran, 2019). The findings highlighted the positive impact of co-curricular activities to enhance mutual understanding and collaboration among students. Whereas a study involved 375 participants (187 males, 188 females) and incorporated qualitative insights from interviews (Shah, et al., 2025; Rehan, et al., 2024; Imran, et al., 2023). Further suggested to enhance awareness strategies, and programs to promote co-curricular activities (Assefa, 2024).

The comparative study reported in Pretoria, South Africa, in public and private schools, confirmed that sports activities significantly contribute to students' physical strength (Ahmad, et al., 2024; Mohammad, et al., 2024; Khoso, et al., 2024). The respondents of study were 256 female teachers, the responses were collected through questionnaires (Saifi, 2023). Another study in Addis Ababa identified the impact of co-curricular practices on secondary school students. The study found co-curricular activities significantly enhance diversity management, mental health, and social cohesion among students (Danish, Akhtar & Imran, 2025; Mankash, et al., 2025; Hafeez, Yaseen & Imran, 2019). The study included 375 participants, further suggested to give awareness and to ensure a student centered educational environment (Assefa, 2024).

The studies explored the impact of co-curricular activities, particularly sports, arts, and clubs, on students' learning, time management, and intrinsic motivation. Same as a descriptive study was conducted in Lusaka District, Zambia, to identify these. While 200 participants, including educational officials, teachers, and students, were selected through stratified random sampling (Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024). The study found that co-curricular activities enhance students' abilities to be affiliated with theoretical knowledge that enhances students' social and emotional development and should be integrated into educational policies for holistic student growth (Thelma et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Owusu, (2022) revealed that co-curricular activities, such as clubs, provide valuable moral lessons, help students to navigate societal challenges. Further, corporate bodies and NGOs fund co-curricular programs to enhance their sustainability and impact. Similarly, Januarto et al. (2020), highlighted that co-curricular activities were implemented with structured policies in the Tuban district, as well as at provincial, and at national level. Further, I emphasized the need for improved infrastructure and integration of co-curricular activities. The finding in Kiambu County, Kenya, highlighted high dropout rates and the value of co-curricular activities in the holistic development of students. Further, recommended the resources allocation for co-curricular infrastructure and policy formulation (Mwaura et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The several qualitative research designs focus on data collection, analysis, and writing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). These numbers of designs originate from different disciplines and follow different research procedures, depending on the type, phenomena that occur, the encountered problems, and ethical considerations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Similarly, in this study researcher developed a deep analysis of case study research design, collected information using data collection procedures on a specific time period, and the cases were bound with activities and time (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012).

Instrumentation

Effective and well-developed instrumentation shape and guides the study. Well-developed and well-structured qualitative research instruments are essential for gathering rich data to meet the deep insights of the problem; however, poor formulated questions can create problems in later stages of research (Babbie, 2007). According to Banyard and Williams (2007) self-developed research instruments stem from intellect, curiosity, mind-mapping, and scholarly brainstorming after deep literature review. Charmaz (2006, p. 20) stated that well-developed research questions make the focus of researchers. Similarly, in this study, researcher developed research instruments and were employed. The number of semi-structured instruments were 13, which were refined through multiple drafts and scholarly reviewed by experts.

Participants

The study participants were focused by the researcher, qualitative research approach, consider their phenomenal knowledge, experiences with certain phenomena, and the challenges they have encountered (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In this study, those participants who were interviewed who had relevant experiences were interviewed using semi-structured questions. The study participants were secondary school teachers of the district Lasbela, Balochistan, Pakistan. Both genders were considered as study participants of different ages. The total number of participants was 15, from different schools in the district. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants' relevant experience and knowledge regarding the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher approached participants physically while taking interviews face-to-face, using semi-structured questions. The data was recorded by mobile phone audio recording and was coded with a sequence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Further, to ensure scholarly practice for data collection, the researcher planned and employed an interview protocol, as recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), as mentioned below:

- Standardized scholarly practices were applied while interviews were conducted.
- Follow-up questions were used to clarify and expand the responses of participants.
- A final thank-you statement that acknowledged the interviewees' time and participation.

Primarily, the data was collected in the form of audio recordings, and secondly, researcher transcribed these in Microsoft Word and later were analyzed thematically through NVivo.

DATA ANALYSIS

The deep insights of qualitative data analysis involves organizing collected data, finally interpreting findings within the study's framework (Creswell, 2017). Qualitative data contains sources such as audio, text, and images, which contain in-depth thematic exploration. For this study analysis, NVivo 12 software was used. The process involved coding the data, followed by the creation of themes and sub-themes. Likely, 5 themes of the study were created from the analyzed data.

To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher followed the steps recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017):

1. Organized and prepared raw data for analysis (transcription).
2. Read all data thoroughly.
3. Coded the data.
4. Identified themes and descriptions.
5. Interrelated themes and descriptions to derive meaningful insights.
6. Validated the accuracy of information through systematic verification processes.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic information of interviewed participants

Coded Names	Gender	Age	School
Participant 1.	Male	37	GBHS Nootani Bela
Participant 2.	Female	40	GGHSS Nootani Bela
Participant 3.	Male	45	GGHS (Rawani)
Participant 4.	Female	30	GGHS Balochi Goth
Participant 5.	Male	36	GBHS Winder
Participant 6.	Female	41	Haji Chutta Rind
Participant 7.	Male	55	GBHS Moosani
Participant 8.	Female	30	GGHSS Uthal
Participant 9.	Male	37	GBHS Goth Sayyan
Participant 10.	Female	37	GGHS Bela
Participant 11.	Female	41	GGHS Kumach
Participant 12	Female	37	GGHS Bara Bagh
Participant 13	Male	35	GBHS Gaddor Bela
Participant 14	Male	38	GBHS jam Yousfabad
Participant 15	Male	28	GBHS Moosani

The interviewed participants' Profiles, including a year of the program, age, gender, and Schools, are shown in Table 3.1. The interviewed participants were both male and female of different ages; the age range is from 28 to 55 of different school

teachers. Moreover, Table 1 shows the anonymity of interviews. The participants were afforded pseudonyms, Such as participant 1, participant 2, etc., to ensure confidentiality.

Institutional Support and Infrastructure

An interviewed teacher reported that many parents have lack of awareness about the value of extracurricular activities in their children's education. From a teacher's perspective, these activities are crucial for students' skill development, such as diversity of activities, sports, debates, and creative arts contribute significantly to cognitive, social, and emotional growth. However, parents accept the traditional education system, where academic achievement is prioritized as a holistic development of secondary school students, as per commented below:

I think, most parents don't recognize these activities as useful or important for the children, but we, as teachers, understand that these activities make students more skillful and physically fit (Interviewed Teacher 1)

Another interviewee emphasized the lack of co-curricular opportunities such as academic sports competitions, debates, quizzes, and speech competitions, are essential to enhance critical thinking, self-confidence, and teamwork among school students. Without these activities, students may have weak speaking skills and problem-solving abilities in real life. This only affects students' school experiences but also has consequences, as the respondent commented below:

In our schools, there are very few extracurricular activities that are practiced on ground. There are no sports competitions, no speech competitions, no debates and quiz competitions in our school; these activities are very rarely practiced. (Interviewed Teacher 5)

Furthermore, the interviewee reported the extracurricular challenges, due to untrained teachers, insufficient resources, and a lack of opportunities for secondary school students. Which lead barriers for students to participate in extracurricular programs in school with limited financial and infrastructural resources. Lack of structured opportunities means students often remain unaware of their potential or fail to insight into skills through practical exposure. The comment of interviewee is mentioned below:

Most students face challenges, like lack of trained teachers, lack of resources, and fewer opportunities for participation. (Interviewed Teacher 3)

Similarly, another teacher interviewee indicated the lack of administrative involvement of the school in co-curricular activities, such as arranging programs for students' necessary exposure to enhance their abilities. In addition, the absence of structured extracurricular activities means students have fewer chances to show their abilities, collaborate with peers, and develop essential life skills such as leadership and teamwork, as commented by one of the respondent below:

If the school administration does not actively arrange competitions and programs, students do not get the exposure needed for skill development. (Interviewed Teacher 9)

Parental and Societal Influence

The interviewee highlighted that parents have lack of interests, gender-based restrictions, regarding girls' participation in sports. These barriers influence cultural norms, traditional gender roles, or concerns over propriety and safety. As the respondent pointed out, through co-curricular activities, teamwork, leadership, resilience, and confidence build up. Furthermore, the following statement of the respondent reflects a image of parental restriction which may shape the educational and social landscape for young women.

Parents do not allow their daughters to participate in sports, which limits their opportunities to develop teamwork and leadership skills. (Interviewed Teacher 6)

Similarly, this statement of the interviewee reflects the above statement that the school achievement of students is seen as the ultimate goal of education, while extracurricular activities are considered invaluable or considered distractions. The phrase "formal education" is prioritized over creative, social, or emotional development because this perspective stems from societal expectations, economic pressures, and a narrow definition of success. Further, the respondent's statement about extracurricular activities is mentioned below:

In our society, people mostly focus on formal education and do not give much importance to extracurricular activities. (Interviewed Teacher 7)

Furthermore, the teacher interviewed highlighted the critical equity issue within students' participation in co-curricular high-performing students are selected to participate in these activities. The interviewee's statement shows the biased selection of students for co-curricular activities; the opportunities are given for confidence-building, public speaking, teamwork, or exposure. Further, the respondent's comments are mentioned below:

Some students want to participate, but teachers often select those who are already active, leaving out those who need confidence-building the most. (Interviewed Teacher 4)

Moreover, the teacher interviewed 10 stated that activities like drama and music, which are powerful co-curricular activities for building confidence, empathy, and communication skills, are often stigmatized or discouraged in certain cultural contexts. Importantly, students lose opportunities to engage with others, express themselves, and build social-emotional competencies. The respondent commented on his observation in the following comment:

I think cultural barriers prevent many students from taking part in activities like drama and music, which commonly develop confidence and social skills. (Interviewed Teacher 10)

Personal Motivation and Skill Development

A statement of an interviewed teacher highlighted that co-curricular activities like speech competitions, debates, and group discussions serve not only as academic or extracurricular exercises but also as transformative experiences that sharpen students' communication skills and build their self-confidence. These activities clarify their thoughts, expressions, and opinions, which are crucial for both

academic and professional contexts, the response of the participant is mentioned below:

Debates, speech competitions, and group discussions improve students' communication skills and confidence. (Interviewed Teacher 2)

Moreover, an interviewed participant highlighted the student-centered approach to leadership development, appointing group leaders to manage tasks, guide peers, and resolve problems to enhance ownership, accountability, and initiative. Further, to empower students, helping them discover their strengths and potential in real-life situations, as commented below regarding the situation:

By making group leaders and allowing students to take responsibility, leadership skills are enhanced. (Interviewed Teacher 3)

Further, the interviewee stated that the psychological dynamics of motivation, recognition, and reward are symbolized as a motivator for students. Further, this comment of the participant pointed out to the social-emotional aspect of participation, such as; admiration, aspiration, and ambition, as the comment is mentioned below:

Students feel motivated when they see others winning awards, and they push themselves to participate more. (Interviewed Teacher 8)

Notably, another interviewee stated that those students who actively participate in co-curricular activities are more likely to perceive these activities valuable, enjoyable, and socially rewarding. The comment of the respondent is mentioned below:

Peer interaction plays a major role in co-curricular; when students see their classmates engaging in these activities, they also want to be part of them. (Interviewed Teacher 9)

School Pressures and Time Constraints

The statement of an interviewee had concern among students regarding the conflict between school performance and participation in extracurricular activities. The respondent stated a fear-driven hesitation rooted in the belief that involvement in non-academic activities may negatively impact school results. In an educational environment, success is emphasized to nurture talents, creativity, leadership, and social skills, which are the result of actively participating in extracurricular activities, hereby commented below:

Students often hesitate to take part in extracurricular activities because they fear it will affect their school performance. (Interviewed Teacher 1)

In the same way, one of the interviewed respondents acknowledged that co-curricular activities are considered as occasional events rather than integral components of school. According to the respondent, there is infrequent organization of limited to once or twice annually. In addition, these activities explore diverse interests, develop life skills, or gain practical experience outside of the classroom. Same as mentioned below, commented by interviewee:

Our school gives priority to academic subjects, and co-curricular activities are conducted only once or twice a year, which limits students' exposure. (Interviewed

Teacher 4)

According to the Observation of the interviewed teacher, there is a lack of co-curricular activities within the educational system where students are expected to be engaged in course learning and co-curricular activities. In addition, there seems to be systemic flaws where schools may encourage participation in co-curriculars but fail to provide such platforms, resource arrangements to harmonize them with academic demands. As a result, struggling to maintain academic performance and explore personal interests, further respondents' own observation is mentioned below:

There is no proper balance between curricular and co-curricular activities; students struggle to manage both. (Interviewed Teacher 6)

Furthermore, one of the interviewed teachers identified the root cause of low student participation in co-curricular activities, which is the timetable planning that compels students to choose between academic classes rather than co-curricular practices. Further interviewees highlighted that a structured timetable, slots for co-curricular engagement within the school schedule, however, the institutional reform is needed. In the following comments of the respondent is mentioned below:

If we had scheduled time for these activities rather than forcing students to choose between academic and co-curricular activities, more students would participate. (Interviewed Teacher 7)

Impact of Co-Curricular Activities on Future Opportunities

The interviewee identified confidence as a crucial outcome that helps the secondary school students far beyond the classroom into the professional realm. Communication, assertiveness, and interpersonal skills are considered very important components of success. Specifically, it reflects that holistic educational development, such as emotional and social competencies in professional life, is also developed while participating in these activities as vital as academic knowledge. Further, we have motioned the respondent's statement below:

Through co-curricular activities, students gain confidence that helps them in professional life. (Interviewed Teacher 5)

Similarly, the interviewee reported that leadership and responsibility are the result of role-based learning in school settings. Leadership experience enables qualities such as, accountability, time management, delegation, and ethical decision-making, are crucial for future professionalism. Likely, we have mentioned the respondent's comment below:

In my point of view, when students become team leaders in school, they develop skills that make them more responsible professionals in the future. (Interviewed Teacher 3)

Importantly, noted the urgent need to integrate digital literacy and foster technical skills as a broader educational experience. The respondent argued that co-curricular activities actively serve as a flexible and innovative platform to bridge the existing gap between traditional learning and digital demands. This statement of the respondent mentioned below reflects a progressive vision of education:

Nowadays, digital skills should be provided to students, which are essential and with technical training as part of co-curricular activities. (Interviewed Teacher 8)

On the other hand, one of the respondent commented that the personal and professional benefits are achieved through co-curricular engagement and are observed as direct correlation between active participation and creative skills. These activities enable students to generate new ideas that contribute to problem-solving, as we have mentioned in the respondent's comment below:

If school students involve in co-curricular activities tend to be more positive, innovative, and good decision-makers in their careers. (Interviewed Teacher 10)

DISCUSSION

This study contains major themes emerged within influencing students' engagement in co-curricular activities (CCAs). The findings of the study are critically compared with light of previous literature and analysis. As study themes are, institutional support and infrastructure, parental and societal influence, school pressure and time constraints, and impact of co-curricular activities on future opportunities. For interpreting a comprehensive discussion, these are compared with previous analysis.

Notably, Shakir (2011) and Fatima et al. (2019), observed institutional facilities and resources allocation, which play an important role in students' involvement in co-curricular activities, closely aligned with theme institutional support and infrastructure. While, Hussain (2018) noted poor and inadequate infrastructure, and lack of planning discourage students' participation in co-curricular activities.

Moreover, the study participants had different views about the theme parental and societal influence: some participants commented on strong parental support, while others did not due to social and cultural resections. Although dual perception was also reported by Ali et al. (2017), who observed that parental encouragement can both positively and negatively influence students' choices depending on the socio-cultural context. Regarding barriers, Mahmood and Akhtar (2015) also reported on the traditional setups that CCAs are often discouraged, especially for female students.

Most importantly, self-expression and acquisition of soft skills (e.g., confidence, communication) contribute as driving factors for CCA involvement. Similarly, the theme personal motivation and skill development was positively responded, strongly supported by Khan and Iqbal (2019) and Nawaz and Javed (2020), who reported the role of personal initiative in developing leadership and collaborative skills. Afzal et al. (2016), shows that CCAs play an effective role in shaping secondary school students' overall development, such as an identity in school, in society, and career.

Notably, excessive school workload, exams, and strict discipline and timetables discouraged students' participation in CCAs. These are viewed by interviewees in theme school pressure and time constraints, are consistent with

study findings of Zafar and Mehmood (2018), highlighted that school burden, strict discipline, and timetables are key factors to influence students' participation in CCAs. Similarly, Guo and Liem (2025), stated that schools often fail to integrate CCAs time within school schedules, which distracts students' interest.

Confidently, school students' engagement in CCAs builds confidence, teamwork, and career. As Khalid et al. (2019) and Ahmed and Akhtar (2021), reported that students' engagement in CCA enhances the competencies of professional career, builds confidence and passion for teamwork, aligned with this study theme impact of co-curricular activities on future opportunities. Also supported by Raza et al. (2020), CCAs has a long-term impact on building students' leadership skills, personal skills, and passion for teamwork.

CONCLUSION

This study identified the factors that influence students' participation in co-curricular activities in secondary school in the district Lasbela. Five themes were created through qualitative thematic analysis: institutional support and infrastructure, parental and societal influence, personal motivation and skill development, academic pressures and time constraints, and the impact of CCAs on future opportunities.

The findings revealed that secondary school teachers emphasized the value of CCAs for skills development of school students, build leadership qualities, and making career. While social challenges discourage the students from participating, such as lack of infrastructure, lack of important ACC equipment to perform, and event planning by school. Furthermore, cultural and parental expectations, particularly in conservative traditional settings of the school environment, notably influence students' participation in co-curricular activities. While study respondents agreed that co-curricular activities enhance personal growth. However, school workloads and time schedules frequently discouraged students' interests.

Importantly, the study confirms that co-curricular activities, particularly in school, are not only valuable for students' achievements but also a component of overall development. If CCAs are practiced in schools, encouraged to be supported by parents, and flexibly planned by higher authorities, result as a powerful tool to enhance self-confidence and creativity.

Recommendations

Considering this study findings, and after deep observations, secondary school higher authorities immediately needed to re-evaluate their policies and strategies to ensure better practice of co-curricular activities, such as conduct awareness sessions in schools, train school staff, and plan diversity of co-curricular activities. These initiatives, and better implementation enhance students' credibility and encourage a student-centered environment. Further, consider socio-cultural sensitivities, workload balance, and career-oriented outcomes.

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