



THE EFFECT OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON THE SELF-ESTEEM AND SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STEM STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of co-curricular activities on the self-esteem and social skills of Grade 11 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students of St. Vincent's College Incorporated (SVCI), Dipolog City, Philippines, during School Year 2018–2019. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 115 randomly selected respondents through a researcher-administered questionnaire combining a co-curricular activities checklist, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). Results showed that most respondents were female (62.6%) and that participation in co-curricular activities was generally poor to moderate, with sports ($M = 1.68$), organizations ($M = 1.78$), and contests or competitions ($M = 1.65$) all rated poor to moderate. Self-esteem was rated average ($M = 2.48$), while social skills were rated high ($M = 2.62$). Independent-samples t-tests revealed a significant sex difference only in sports participation ($t = 3.580$, $p < .05$), favoring male students; no significant sex differences emerged for self-esteem or social skills. Pearson correlation analysis found no significant relationship between co-curricular participation and self-esteem, but a significant, low positive correlation between participation in contests/competitions and social skills ($r = .188$, $p = .045$). Findings suggest that co-curricular involvement alone may not directly influence self-esteem, but competitive activities such as contests may modestly enhance students' social skills. Recommendations are offered for schools to diversify co-curricular offerings and strengthen support structures for student engagement.

Keywords: co-curricular activities, self-esteem, social skills, senior high school, STEM students



Introduction

Education functions as the principal means by which society shapes the habits, character, and capacities of the individual, and schools serve as the primary agents of this socialization (Maribeth, 1990). Beyond the formal academic curriculum, schools also provide a parallel set of experiences — co-curricular activities — that are voluntary, are usually ungraded, and take place outside the confines of the classroom, yet are supervised or financed by the school and contribute to the all-round development of learners (Thomas & Morrison, 1995). These activities, which include sports, clubs and organizations, and contests or competitions, have been linked to the intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development of the child and are widely regarded as a bridge between learning and living (McQuade & Champagne, 1995). Schools that offer a rich range of such activities are considered to do a better job of developing student character (Wynn & Ryan, 1993).

Participation in co-curricular activities has been associated with improved student behavior, reduced disciplinary problems, and a stronger sense of pride and accomplishment, which in turn contribute to self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Brown, 2000). A positive orientation toward school itself, linked to self-esteem, is considered a predictor of academic performance; structured after-school programs designed to build self-esteem have been shown to improve standardized test outcomes even when they did not extend instructional time (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown, 2004). Self-esteem itself is understood as confidence in one's abilities, attitudes, values, and commitments, comprising the components of competence, worthiness, and self-evaluation (Miyagawa, 2010), and is considered a major determinant of behavior, carrying benefits such as independence, tolerance of frustration, resistance to pressure, and willingness to attempt new tasks (James, 2011). In an educational setting, self-esteem has been considered one of the most important factors in determining students' academic success or failure (Fouzia & Ali, 2012).

Co-curricular participation is likewise theorized to promote students' social skills — the competencies that allow learners to build relationships, collaborate, work in teams, manage conflict, communicate, and lead (Noriah, Ramlee, Zuria, & Siti Rahayah, 2006). These competencies, cultivated largely through experiences outside the regular classroom, are considered critical for the development of skills that carry into adulthood (Little, 2005), and participation is thought to facilitate the kind of positive interpersonal relationships that encourage positive youth development.

Theoretical Framework

This study drew on four complementary theoretical perspectives. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory situates social interaction at the center of cognitive development, positing that learners acquire knowledge first at the social (interpsychological) level and subsequently internalize it at the individual (intrapsychological) level; co-curricular activities are understood here as a vehicle for the social interaction through which self-esteem and social competence are built. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943, 1987) frames co-curricular participation as addressing the third (love and belongingness) and fourth (esteem) levels of human need, through which students gain leadership, teamwork, and organizational experience. The youth development approach (Metsäpelto & Pulkkinen, 2012) frames co-curricular activities as a broad mechanism for promoting positive development among children and young people through warm, structured relationships that provide guidance and safety. Finally, Astin's Student Development (Involvement) Theory (Astin, 1984, 1999) holds that the amount of learning and development a student gains from an educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of the student's involvement in it. Taken together, these frameworks support the premise that student involvement in co-curricular experiences should be associated with gains in self-esteem and social skills, a premise this study tested empirically.



Statement of the Problem

This study determined the effect of co-curricular activities on the self-esteem and social skills development of Grade 11 STEM students of St. Vincent's College Incorporated, Dipolog City, during School Year 2018–2019. Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the students in terms of sex?
2. What co-curricular activities do the students participate in, and to what extent?
3. Is there a significant difference in co-curricular participation when students are grouped according to sex?
4. What is the level of self-esteem of the students?
5. Is there a significant difference in the level of self-esteem when students are grouped according to sex?
6. Is there a significant relationship between co-curricular participation and self-esteem?
7. What is the level of social skills of the students?
8. Is there a significant difference in the level of social skills when students are grouped according to sex?
9. Is there a significant relationship between co-curricular participation and social skills?

Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance:

H1. There is no significant difference in the co-curricular activities students participate in when grouped by sex.

H2. There is no significant difference in students' self-esteem when grouped by sex.

H3. There is no significant relationship between co-curricular participation and self-esteem.

H4. There is no significant difference in students' social skills when grouped by sex.

H5. There is no significant relationship between co-curricular participation and social skills.

Significance of the Study

The findings are intended to benefit school division policy and program makers, in assessing how co-curricular involvement affects student performance and time management; school administrators, in enhancing policies on organizing co-curricular activities and allocating facilities; classroom teachers, in basing pedagogical and advisory decisions on empirical evidence; and future researchers, in extending the study of co-curricular effects to broader student populations and additional developmental outcomes.

Scope and Delimitation

Co-curricular activities are recognized as a source of enrichment for the school curriculum (Acquah & Anti Partey, 2014), providing challenges, alternative resources, and life-long learning experiences beyond the regular subjects. This study was delimited to the effect of co-curricular participation — specifically in sports, organizations, and contests or competitions — on the self-esteem and social skills of 115 randomly selected Grade 11 STEM students of SVCI — Senior High School, gathered during School Year 2018–2019 using a descriptive-correlational, quantitative design.



Methods

Research Design

The study used the descriptive-correlational method of research. The descriptive component was used to characterize the students' profile, the co-curricular activities they participated in, and their levels of self-esteem and social skills, as well as to examine differences in these variables when students were grouped by sex. The correlational component was used to determine whether significant relationships existed between co-curricular participation and self-esteem, and between co-curricular participation and social skills, and to assess the strength of any statistically significant associations.

Research Setting and Respondents

The study was conducted at the Senior High School Department of St. Vincent's College Incorporated, Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. Respondents were 115 randomly selected Grade 11 STEM students. A stratified random sampling procedure was used, with proportional allocation across sections to obtain a representative sample.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a three-part, researcher-administered questionnaire. The first part listed the most commonly available co-curricular activities in the school — sports, school clubs and organizations, and contests or competitions — with an option for respondents to specify activities not listed. The second part was the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a widely used 10-item, 4-point Likert instrument (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) measuring global self-worth, with items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 reverse-scored; higher summed scores indicate higher self-esteem. The third part was the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) developed by Frank M. Gresham and Stephen N. Elliott (cited in the original instrument documentation; full citation not available in the source reference list), a scale designed to measure the frequency with which a student exhibits behaviors associated with success in the classroom.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the School Principal of the Senior High School Department of SVCI. Upon approval, the researcher administered the questionnaire directly to the student respondents. Confidentiality of all responses was assured and maintained; data were used solely for the purposes of this study.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Frequency and percentage distributions described the students' profile and their co-curricular participation. Weighted means, interpreted against a four-point statistical continuum (1.00–1.74 = Poor/Low; 1.75–2.49 = Moderate/Average; 2.50–3.24 = High; 3.25–4.00 = Very High), described the levels of co-curricular participation, self-esteem, and social skills. The independent-samples t-test was used to determine significant differences in these variables when respondents were grouped by sex. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the significance and strength of the relationships between co-curricular participation and self-esteem, and between co-curricular participation and social skills, interpreted using the scale of Punsalan and Uriarte (2000) (± 0.90 – 1.00 = very high; ± 0.60 – 0.89 = high; ± 0.40 – 0.59 = moderate; ± 0.20 – 0.39 = low; below ± 0.19 = negligible). All tests were evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$ with 113 degrees of freedom (critical $t = 1.981$; critical $r = 0.183$).



Results

Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Profile of Respondents in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Female	72	62.6	62.6
Male	43	37.4	100.0
Total	115	100.0	

Of the 115 respondents, 72 (62.6%) were female, and 43 (37.4%) were male, indicating that the majority of Grade 11 STEM respondents were female.

Extent of Co-Curricular Participation

Table 2. Co-Curricular Activities Participated in by the Students

Category	Grand Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Sports	1.68	Poor
Organizations	1.78	Moderate
Contests / Competitions	1.65	Poor

Participation across all three categories of co-curricular activity was low overall. Sports participation (grand weighted mean = 1.68) and participation in contests or competitions (1.65) were both rated Poor, while participation in organizations (1.78) was rated Moderate. Among individual sports, badminton (2.23) and volleyball (2.13) drew the highest engagement, while sepak takraw (1.28) and table tennis (1.32) drew the least. Among organizations, the Math Club (1.84) and Science Club (1.83) drew the most participation. Among contests, school-sponsored activities (1.81) were the most participated in, while literacy competitions (1.53) were the least.

Respondents most frequently cited lack of time as the reason for limited participation, consistent with the finding that 70% of students uninvolved in after-school activities in a separate study cited time constraints, attributed to increasing student workloads (Alexandrov & Ivaniushina, 2014).

Sex Differences in Co-Curricular Participation

Table 3. Difference in Co-Curricular Participation When Grouped by Sex

Category	Male M	Female M	Computed t	Critical t	Result
Sports	2.977	2.417	3.580	1.981	Significant
Organizations	2.256	2.167	0.473	1.981	Not significant
Contests	1.977	1.986	-0.053	1.981	Not significant

A significant sex difference emerged only for sports participation ($t = 3.580 > \text{critical } t = 1.981$, $df = 113$, $\alpha = 0.05$), with male students reporting significantly higher participation than female students. No significant differences were found for organizations ($t = 0.473$) or contests ($t = -0.053$). This pattern is consistent with prior findings that male students are more likely to participate in recreational sports, motivated in part by personal

interest and, among female students, by the performance of national athletes in international competition (Liang-Ting Tsai et al., 2015).

Level of Self-Esteem

Table 4. Level of Self-Esteem of the Students

SELF-ESTEEM	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	3.03	H
2. At times, I think I am no good at all.	2.77	H
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	2.12	A
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	2.83	H
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	2.45	A
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	2.73	H
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	2.88	H
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1.70	L
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	2.28	A
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1.97	A
GRAND WEIGHTED MEAN	2.48	A

Grand Weighted Mean = 2.48 (Average). Respondents scored highest (High interpretation) on positive self-statements such as “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself” (3.03) and “I feel that I'm a person of worth” (2.88), but scored lower on negatively worded items such as “I wish I could have more respect for myself” (1.70, Low) and “I take a positive attitude toward myself” (1.97, Average).

The grand weighted mean of 2.48 indicates that, overall, students' self-esteem was average — consistent with the view that when students feel good about themselves, they are more likely to become better achievers in the classroom, and that fostering can-do attitudes through positive feedback is an essential task for both teachers and parents (Watson, 2017).

Sex Differences in Self-Esteem

Table 5. Difference in the Level of Self-Esteem When Grouped by Sex

Sex	Mean	Computed t	Critical t	Result
Male	25.00	1.008	1.981	Not significant
Female	24.63			

The computed t value of 1.008 did not exceed the critical value of 1.981 ($df = 113$, $\alpha = 0.05$); self-esteem did not differ significantly by sex. This result departs from a substantial body of literature reporting a modest but persistent

gender gap in self-esteem favoring males that emerges in adolescence (Feingold, 1994; Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999; Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002).

Relationship Between Co-Curricular Participation and Self-Esteem

Table 6. Correlation Between Co-Curricular Participation and Self-Esteem

Category	Pearson r	p-value	Result
Sports	−0.027	0.773	Not significant
Organizations	−0.105	0.263	Not significant
Contests	−0.166	0.077	Not significant

None of the computed Pearson r values reached significance against the critical value of 0.183 ($df = 113$, $\alpha = 0.05$). There was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of no relationship: the extent of students' co-curricular participation did not significantly influence their self-esteem, which remained at the average level regardless of participation. This finding did not support prior work reporting that co-curricular involvement enhances students' drive and self-esteem (Ahmad et al., 2014) or research linking extracurricular sports participation to higher self-esteem in early adolescence (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011).

Level of Social Skills

Table 7. Level of Social Skills of the Students

Social Skill	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Controls temper in conflict situations with peers.	2.70	H
2. Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.	2.35	A
3. Appropriately questions rules that may be unfair.	2.50	H
4. Compromises in conflict situations by changing one's own ideas to reach an agreement.	2.48	A
5. Responds appropriately to peer pressure.	2.45	A
6. Says nice things about himself or herself when appropriate.	2.84	H
7. Invites others to join in activities.	3.02	H
8. Uses free time in an acceptable way.	2.76	H
9. Finishes class assignments within time limits.	2.55	H
10. Makes friends easily.	2.90	H
11. Responds appropriately to teasing by peers.	2.42	A
12. Controls temper in conflict situations with adults.	2.80	H
13. Receives criticism well.	2.49	A



14. Initiates conversations with peers.	2.58	H
15. Uses time appropriately while waiting for help.	2.57	H
16. Produces correct schoolwork.	2.52	H
17. Appropriately tells you when he or she thinks you have treated him or her unfairly.	2.47	A
18. Accepts peers' ideas for group activities.	3.03	H
19. Gives compliments to peers.	2.81	H
20. Follows your directions.	2.78	H
21. Puts work materials or school property away.	2.41	A
22. Cooperates with peers without prompting.	2.60	H
23. Volunteers to help peers with classroom tasks.	2.71	H
24. Joins ongoing activity or group without being told.	2.49	A
25. Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by other children.	2.42	A
26. Ignores peer distractions when doing class work.	2.38	A
27. Keeps desk clean and neat without being reminded.	2.72	H
28. Attends to your instructions.	2.75	H
29. Easily makes a transition from one classroom activity to another.	2.51	H
30. Gets along with people who are different.	2.73	H
Grand Weighted Mean	2.62	H

Grand Weighted Mean = 2.62 (High). Twenty-two of the 30 SSRS items were rated High; the remaining eight were rated Average. Highest-rated behaviors included "Invites others to join in activities" (3.02) and "Accepts peers' ideas for group activities" (3.03); the lowest-rated item was "Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told" (2.35).

The overall High rating indicates that students have largely acquired the tools needed to communicate, cooperate, and build healthy relationships with peers, consistent with the view that social skills are the competencies needed to interact adaptively within one's cultural environment and are central to a child's emotional health and well-being (Lawson, 2003).



Sex Differences in Social Skills

Table 8. Difference in the Level of Social Skills When Grouped by Sex

Sex	Mean	Computed t	Critical t	Result
Male	80.47	1.226	1.981	Not significant
Female	77.69			

The computed t value of 1.226 did not exceed the critical value of 1.981 ($df = 113$, $\alpha = 0.05$); social skills did not differ significantly between male and female respondents. This departs from literature reporting that girls tend to show higher social competence than boys from an early age (Gresham & Elliott, 1990; further sex-based studies cited in the original manuscript could not be verified against the reference list).

Relationship Between Co-Curricular Participation and Social Skills

Table 9. Correlation Between Co-Curricular Participation and Social Skills

Category	Pearson r	p-value	Result
Sports	0.003	0.975	Not significant
Organizations	0.028	0.763	Not significant
Contests	0.188*	0.045	Significant

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); critical $r = 0.183$, $df = 113$.

Participation in contests and competitions was significantly and positively correlated with social skills ($r = 0.188$, $p = .045$), though the correlation is low in magnitude. Participation in sports ($r = 0.003$) and organizations ($r = 0.028$) showed no significant relationship with social skills. This is broadly consistent with the view that competitive engagement, such as speech contests, can help students build confidence and connect with their community (Wilson, 2009), and that out-of-school time — which for many adolescents constitutes up to 80% of waking hours — represents a significant opportunity to develop social, emotional, and cognitive skills not always acquired within the regular classroom (Coltin, 2006).



Discussion

Overall, the findings suggest a more nuanced relationship between co-curricular involvement and student development than a simple additive model would predict. Consistent with Astin's involvement theory (Astin, 1984, 1999), which holds that developmental gains are proportional to the quality and quantity of student engagement, the generally low-to-moderate levels of co-curricular participation observed in this sample may help explain why no significant relationship was found between participation and self-esteem: students may simply not have been involved enough, across enough activities, for the theorized benefits to register statistically. This qualification is important because it implies that the absence of a measurable effect need not be read as evidence against the theoretical mechanism itself, but rather as a consequence of insufficient dosage of the presumed active ingredient — sustained, high-quality involvement.

The one activity category that did show a significant, if modest, relationship — contests and competitions — to social skills is instructive. Competitive activities, unlike routine club membership, place students in structured situations that require direct interpersonal engagement, negotiation, and performance under evaluation, conditions that plausibly train the specific behaviors measured by the SSRS (e.g., initiating conversations, cooperating without prompting, accepting peers' ideas). This is consistent with the Social Development Theory perspective, in which social competence is built through active engagement in socially structured tasks rather than passive membership.

The absence of significant sex differences in self-esteem and social skills, despite a significant sex difference favoring male students in sports participation specifically, suggests that the observed participation gap in sports did not translate into differential developmental outcomes for this sample — an encouraging finding for equity in student support, though one that also departs from a substantial body of prior research reporting sex-based differences in self-esteem and social competence. This divergence may reflect context-specific factors particular to the research setting (e.g., the relatively small and homogeneous STEM cohort, the specific school culture at SVCI) that merit further investigation with a larger and more diverse sample.

Practically, the findings imply that increasing the sheer availability of co-curricular activities may be insufficient on its own to move the needle on self-esteem; schools may need to pair access with structured mentoring, recognition, and lower barriers to entry (particularly around time constraints, the most commonly cited reason for non-participation in this study) to realize the developmental benefits that theory predicts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Grade 11 STEM students at SVCI — Senior High School participated in co-curricular activities at generally poor-to-moderate levels, most commonly citing time constraints as a barrier. Their self-esteem was average and did not vary significantly with the extent of their co-curricular participation, nor with sex. Their social skills were rated high overall and likewise did not vary significantly by sex, but did show a small, statistically significant positive relationship with participation in contests and competitions specifically. Taken together, the extent of participation in co-curricular activities, as measured in this study, had no detectable effect on students' self-esteem and only a slight, activity-specific effect on their social skills development.

Based on these findings, the following are recommended:

1. Schools should diversify co-curricular offerings to accommodate students' varied talents and interests, thereby encouraging broader and more sustained participation.
2. Schools should actively encourage at-risk students to join clubs, organizations, or other recreational activities as a preventive and developmental intervention.



3. Schools should expand opportunities specifically for social and communication skill-building — particularly through contests and competitions, which showed the clearest link to social skills in this study — to strengthen students' self-esteem and interpersonal competence.
4. Future researchers should examine additional variables (e.g., intensity and consistency of involvement, type of mentorship received, socioeconomic factors) and consider larger, more diverse samples across school types to test the generalizability of these findings.



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