

The role of extracurricular activities in university education: Student engagement and institutional management



Thanh Thi Nguyen¹, Lan Thi Ha Nguyen^{1,*}, Cuong Van Trinh², Thoan Thi Duong¹

¹Faculty of Psychology and Education, Hong Duc University, Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

²Faculty of Management, University of Transport Technology, Hanoi, Vietnam

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 March 2025

Received in revised form

13 July 2025

Accepted 18 July 2025

Keywords:

Extracurricular activities

Student engagement

Institutional support

Organizational management

Higher education

ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' awareness and engagement levels, evaluates the effectiveness of organizational structures, and identifies key factors influencing the success of extracurricular programs. A survey of 415 participants, including 50 management staff, 35 Youth Union and Student Association officials, and 330 students from various faculties, was conducted using structured questionnaires on student participation, institutional support, and management performance. Statistical analyses, including percentage distributions, mean scores, and ranking assessments, were used to interpret the data. Results indicate that public service and volunteer activities ($\bar{X} = 2.61$) and physical education ($\bar{X} = 2.60$) show the highest participation rates, while political and ideological education ($\bar{X} = 2.53$) ranks lowest. Leadership support ($\bar{X} = 2.93$) and organizational capacity ($\bar{X} = 2.92$) are identified as the most critical factors for success, though challenges remain in interdepartmental coordination and resource allocation. The study concludes that while extracurricular activities significantly benefit students' holistic development, their impact depends on effective management and institutional support. Universities should prioritize interdepartmental collaboration, increase resource investment, and tailor programs to student interests. Future research should address motivational barriers and institutional constraints to further enhance participation.

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1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities in university education refer to structured engagements that occur outside the standard academic curriculum but contribute significantly to students' holistic development. These activities encompass a wide range of student-led initiatives, including academic clubs, sports teams, cultural events, and community service programs (Javed and Srivastava, 2024). Unlike formal coursework, extracurricular activities are voluntary and often self-directed, allowing students to explore their interests, enhance their skills, and develop leadership abilities in various domains. The primary purpose of these activities is to foster students' holistic development by equipping them with essential life skills and competencies. Participation in extracurricular engagements helps students

cultivate leadership, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving skills-qualities that are highly valued in both academic and professional settings (Javed and Srivastava, 2024; Mishra and Aithal, 2023). Additionally, these activities play a crucial role in promoting social interaction, emotional intelligence, and physical well-being, ultimately contributing to students' overall personal growth and resilience. This conceptualization aligns with Astin's (1984) Involvement Theory, which posits that the amount of physical and psychological energy students invest in meaningful activities significantly influences their learning and development outcomes. According to Astin (1984), higher levels of involvement in extracurricular programs enhance students' acquisition of competencies, interpersonal skills, and civic responsibility, all of which are key objectives of university education. Extracurricular activities in universities encompass a diverse range of engagements that cater to students' varying interests and aspirations. These activities can be categorized into academic clubs, sports teams, cultural societies, and volunteer initiatives (Bakhmetieva et al., 2020; Javed and Srivastava, 2024). Academic clubs allow students to delve

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: nguyenthialan@hdu.edu.vn (L. T. H. Nguyen)

<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2025.08.013>

Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5190-0139>

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deeper into their field of study, engaging in discussions, research projects, and competitions that enhance their academic proficiency. Sports teams contribute to students' physical fitness and teamwork skills, while cultural societies provide avenues for artistic expression and intercultural exchange. Volunteer work and community service projects, on the other hand, instill a sense of social responsibility and empathy by encouraging students to contribute to societal well-being. Engagement in extracurricular activities has been consistently linked to improved academic performance, skill development, and socialization. Students who actively participate in these activities often demonstrate enhanced critical thinking abilities, a stronger sense of responsibility, and greater adaptability in problem-solving situations (Buckley and Lee, 2021; Javed and Srivastava, 2024; Mishra and Aithal, 2023). Furthermore, extracurricular involvement enriches students' resumes and college applications by showcasing their leadership experiences, initiative, and ability to balance multiple responsibilities effectively. These advantages highlight the crucial role of extracurricular activities in preparing students for academic success and professional advancement. Extracurricular activities significantly contribute to students' intellectual and social development. Through participation in various student-led initiatives, individuals gain firsthand experience in leadership, collaboration, and self-discipline, which are essential for navigating both academic and professional environments. These activities encourage students to think critically, act responsibly, and engage meaningfully with their peers, fostering qualities that contribute to lifelong learning and personal fulfillment. Additionally, involvement in cultural and artistic endeavors allows students to explore creative outlets and develop a well-rounded intellectual culture, further enhancing their overall growth. Extracurricular involvement has a direct impact on students' academic and career achievements. Studies have shown that students who engage in structured extracurricular activities tend to perform better academically, as they develop time management skills and a disciplined approach to their studies (Bartkus et al., 2012; Buckley and Lee, 2021; Guilmette et al., 2019). Additionally, these activities provide students with discipline-complementary skills that enhance their employability, making them more competitive in the job market. Employers often seek graduates who have demonstrated leadership, adaptability, and teamwork-qualities that are actively nurtured through extracurricular participation. Thus, Astin's (1984) framework further emphasizes that students' sustained involvement in such activities enhances their academic persistence, satisfaction, and post-graduate success.

Extracurricular educational activities play a crucial role in university education by providing students with opportunities to enhance their academic, personal, and professional development.

These activities go beyond traditional classroom learning, allowing students to acquire competencies that are essential for career success and personal growth. Universities worldwide have increasingly recognized the importance of such activities in fostering a well-rounded educational experience that prepares students for the complexities of the modern workforce. Participation in extracurricular activities equips students with essential skills that complement their academic knowledge. Leadership, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and resilience are among the core competencies students develop through engagement in student organizations, sports teams, debate clubs, and entrepreneurial initiatives (Buckley and Lee, 2021; Foley et al., 2024; Rezaei and Mahmoudi, 2023). These skills are not only beneficial in academic settings but also play a pivotal role in shaping students into competent professionals. Employers increasingly seek candidates who demonstrate the ability to collaborate, think critically, and adapt to dynamic environments-attributes that are honed through active participation in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities, particularly those that involve volunteer work and community service, encourage students to engage in reflective learning. Through hands-on experiences, students gain insights into societal issues, sustainability challenges, and ethical considerations. Reflection on these experiences fosters changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, ultimately promoting a sustainability-oriented mindset (Díaz-Iso et al., 2019). Such engagement aligns with global educational goals that emphasize responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship, further reinforcing the relevance of extracurricular activities in shaping socially conscious graduates. Beyond skill acquisition, extracurricular activities contribute significantly to students' professional development by enhancing their practical competencies and expanding their professional networks. Involvement in business clubs, research groups, and industry-related competitions provides students with direct exposure to professional environments, helping them apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios (Bodolica et al., 2021; Rezaei and Mahmoudi, 2023). Moreover, these activities facilitate networking opportunities with industry professionals, alumni, and peers, which can lead to internships, mentorships, and job prospects. In an increasingly competitive job market, such early professional exposure provides students with a distinct advantage. Engaging in extracurricular activities has been shown to enhance students' self-efficacy and confidence-factors that are critical for both academic success and future employability. Through participation in student-led initiatives, competitive events, and leadership roles, students learn to navigate challenges, make independent decisions, and develop a sense of competence in their abilities (Griffiths et al., 2021). These experiences contribute to greater self-assurance, which translates into improved academic

performance and a stronger ability to adapt to professional challenges. Extracurricular activities also offer students opportunities for cultural and social engagement, enabling them to develop intercultural competencies and social entrepreneurial skills. Participation in cultural exchange programs, student governance, and international conferences fosters a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and global issues (Bodolica et al., 2021; Zhigunova, 2022). These experiences prepare students to operate effectively in multicultural environments, which is increasingly important in today's globalized world. Additionally, social entrepreneurship initiatives within extracurricular programs encourage students to apply innovative solutions to social challenges, reinforcing their role as proactive contributors to society. Recognizing the growing demand for well-rounded graduates, universities are increasingly integrating extracurricular activities into their frameworks for student development. Graduate attributes – such as critical thinking, adaptability, ethical reasoning, and leadership – are cultivated through structured extracurricular programs (Foley et al., 2024). These attributes are highly valued by employers, as they indicate a candidate's ability to navigate complex work environments and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals. By engaging in extracurricular activities, students develop a diverse portfolio of skills that enhance their employability and long-term career prospects.

Extracurricular educational activities play a crucial role in enhancing university students' personal, academic, and professional development by fostering skills such as leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking. However, at Hong Duc University, there remains a limited understanding of the extent to which students are aware of and actively participate in these activities. Additionally, the effectiveness of institutional management in organizing and promoting extracurricular educational activities, as well as the factors that either facilitate or hinder student engagement, have not been thoroughly examined. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating students' awareness and participation levels, evaluating the current state of extracurricular educational activities organization and management at the university, and identifying key factors that influence the successful implementation and accessibility of these activities. The research is underpinned by Astin's (1984) Involvement Theory, which emphasizes that student development is proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement in educationally purposeful activities. Applying this theoretical framework provides a robust basis for interpreting students' engagement patterns and institutional effectiveness. The findings will provide valuable insights to enhance the strategic planning and management of extracurricular educational activities, ensuring their alignment with students' needs and institutional objectives.

2. Methods and materials

2.1. Participants

This study involved a diverse group of survey participants to gain comprehensive insights into the current situation under investigation. A total of 415 individuals participated in the survey, including 50 management staff from various faculties and departments, 35 Youth Union and Student Association officials, as well as student affairs managers, and 330 students from multiple faculties, including the Faculty of Early Childhood Education, the Faculty of Primary Education, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, and the Faculty of Information Technology of Hong Duc University. The selection of participants was made to ensure a representative sample, capturing perspectives from both administrative staff and students to provide a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

2.2. Data collection

The survey was conducted over a three-month period, from September 2020 to November 2020, allowing sufficient time for participant engagement and ensuring thorough data collection across the target groups. Two types of survey questionnaires were developed and distributed, one specifically designed for management staff and lecturers and another tailored for students to reflect their perspectives and experiences. The survey utilized a structured format where respondents provided feedback through multiple-choice questions and Likert-scale ratings.

2.3. Data analysis

After collecting the survey responses, a structured method was used to process and analyze the data. Statistical techniques were applied to identify patterns and trends in the responses. Percentages were calculated to show how answers were distributed across different categories, and average scores were used to identify general trends in participants' feedback. Additionally, ranking methods were used to identify and prioritize the most important or influential factors.

Each survey question used a four-point rating scale to measure responses. The scale was defined as follows: 4 means Very active, Excellent, or Highly influential; 3 means Relatively active, Relatively good, or Relatively influential; 2 means Average or Neutral; and 1 means Not active yet, Not good, or Not influential. The overall average score for each survey item was calculated within a range from 1 to 4.

To group the results into meaningful categories, a score interval formula was used: $K = (n - 1) / n = (4 - 1) / 4 = 0.75$, where K is the score interval and n is the number of rating levels, which in this case is four. Based on this calculation, the average scores were

interpreted as follows: a score between 3.25 and 4.00 indicates Very active, Excellent, or Highly influential; a score between 2.51 and 3.25 indicates Relatively active, Relatively good, or Relatively influential; a score between 1.76 and 2.50 indicates Average or Neutral; and a score between 1.00 and 1.75 indicates Not active yet, Not good, or Not influential.

3. Results

Table 1 presents data on the current state of students' awareness and participation in extracurricular educational activities. Table 1 categorizes activities into various domains, including political and ideological education, cultural and artistic activities, physical education and sports, humanitarian and charitable activities, learning movements and scientific research, innovative

entrepreneurship, public service and volunteer work, experiential and educational field trips, and crime prevention and social evils awareness campaigns. Participation is measured based on four levels: very active, relatively active, average, and not active. Table 1 also provides the mean score (\bar{X}) and ranking for each activity.

Among the activities, participation in public service, volunteer work, and social activities received the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.61$), indicating the highest level of engagement among students. This is followed by participation in physical education and sports activities ($\bar{X} = 2.60$) and learning movements and innovative scientific research activities ($\bar{X} = 2.59$). Participation in experiential and educational field trips ($\bar{X} = 2.58$) and humanitarian and charitable activities ($\bar{X} = 2.57$) was also relatively high.

Table 1: The current state of students' awareness and participation in extracurricular educational activities

		Participation awareness								\bar{X}	Mean	Ranking
		Very active		Relatively active		Average		Not active yet				
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Participating in political and ideological education activities on ethics	Management staff	9	18.0	14	28.0	20	40.0	7	14.0	2.50		
	Youth Union officers	6	17.1	17	48.6	7	20.0	5	14.3	2.69	2.53	9
	University students	40	12.1	103	31.2	142	43.3	45	13.6	2.42		
Participating in cultural and artistic activities	Management staff	9	18.0	20	40.0	13	26.0	8	16.0	2.6		
	Youth Union officers	7	20.0	15	42.9	8	22.9	5	14.3	2.69	2.56	6
	University students	44	13.3	97	29.4	135	40.9	54	16.4	2.40		
Participating in physical education and sports activities	Management staff	8	16.0	20	40.0	16	32.0	6	12.0	2.60		
	Youth Union officers	8	22.9	14	40.0	9	25.7	4	11.4	2.74	2.60	2
	University students	43	13.0	130	39.4	90	27.3	67	20.3	2.45		
Participating in humanitarian and charitable activities	Management staff	6	12.0	21	42.0	18	36.0	5	10.0	2.56		
	Youth Union officers	7	20.0	14	40.0	10	28.6	4	11.4	2.69	2.57	5
	University students	40	12.1	112	33.9	133	40.3	45	13.6	2.45		
Participating in learning movements and innovative scientific research activities	Management staff	10	20.0	15	30.0	20	40.0	5	10.0	2.60		
	Youth Union officers	9	25.7	12	34.3	10	28.6	4	11.4	2.74	2.59	3
	University students	45	13.6	108	32.7	124	37.6	53	16.1	2.44		
Participating in innovative entrepreneurship activities	Management staff	9	18.0	12	24.0	24	48.0	5	10.0	2.50		
	Youth Union officers	8	22.9	13	37.1	10	28.6	4	11.4	2.71	2.55	7
	University students	42	12.7	111	33.6	131	39.7	46	13.9	2.45		
Participating in public service, volunteer work, and social activities	Management staff	11	22.0	12	24.0	22	44.0	5	10.0	2.58		
	Youth Union officers	8	22.9	15	42.9	9	25.7	3	8.6	2.80	2.61	1
	University students	48	14.5	104	31.5	127	38.5	51	15.5	2.45		
Participating in experiential and educational field trips	Management staff	10	20.0	12	24.0	24	48.0	4	8.0	2.56		
	Youth Union officers	8	22.9	12	34.3	13	37.1	2	5.7	2.74	2.58	4
	University students	48	14.5	96	29.1	137	41.5	49	14.8	2.43		
Participating in crime prevention and social evils awareness campaigns	Management staff	9	8.0	12	24.0	24	48.0	5	10.0	2.50		
	Youth Union officers	7	20.0	13	37.1	12	34.3	3	8.6	2.69	2.55	7
	University students	44	13.3	106	32.1	136	41.2	44	13.3	2.45		

On the other hand, participation in political and ideological education activities on ethics had the lowest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.53$), ranking ninth in terms of student engagement. Cultural and artistic activities ($\bar{X} = 2.56$) and innovative entrepreneurship activities ($\bar{X} = 2.55$) shared a similar level of participation, whereas crime prevention and social evils awareness campaigns also received a mean score of 2.55.

Across all activities, university students, Youth Union officers, and management staff showed different levels of engagement. University students generally exhibited a higher percentage of participation in the "average" and "not active" categories, whereas Youth Union officers demonstrated relatively higher levels of engagement in the "very active" and "relatively active" categories. Management staff also showed varying degrees of participation, often falling between the other two groups. Table 2 presents an evaluation of the current state of organizing extracurricular educational activities for students. Table 2 categorizes the

effectiveness of various organizational activities into four evaluation levels: excellent, relatively good, average, and not good. Each activity is assessed based on the percentage of responses in these categories, and the mean score (\bar{X}) is provided to indicate the overall effectiveness of each initiative. The rankings help identify which aspects of extracurricular organization are perceived as the most or least effective.

The highest-rated activity is the role of the Student Affairs Office, which collaborates with the Youth Union, Student Association, and specialized faculties to assist the Rector in developing and directing annual programs and activity plans. This initiative has the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.28$), indicating that it is considered the most effective aspect of extracurricular organization. Similarly, providing training for Youth Union and Student Association officers is ranked second, with a mean score of 2.21. This suggests that training programs for student leaders are well-received and play a crucial role in supporting extracurricular activities.

Table 2: The current state of organizing extracurricular educational activities for students

	Evaluation levels								\bar{X}	Ranking
	Excellent		Relatively good		Average		Not good			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
The Student Affairs Office, in collaboration with the Youth Union, the Student Association, and specialized faculties, is responsible for assisting the Rector in developing annual programs and activity plans, as well as directing their implementation.	13	15.3	20	23.5	30	35.3	22	25.9	2.28	1
Organize and guide academic advisors, Youth Union branches, the Student Association, and students in effectively carrying out extracurricular educational activities within their respective units.	9	10.6	21	24.7	25	29.4	30	35.3	2.11	5
Assign departments, groups, and individuals appropriately, ensuring the right people are in the right positions with the correct functions and authority in organizing extracurricular educational activities for students.	10	11.8	18	21.2	33	38.8	24	28.2	2.16	4
Provide training for Youth Union and Student Association officers.	11	12.9	20	23.5	30	35.3	24	28.2	2.21	2
Establish a coordination mechanism to foster collaboration among departments, facilitating the achievement of set objectives.	10	11.8	15	17.6	27	31.8	33	38.8	2.02	6
Regularly monitor and supervise extracurricular educational activities, making necessary adjustments when needed.	13	15.3	16	18.8	30	35.3	26	30.6	2.19	3

Regular monitoring and supervision of extracurricular educational activities rank third ($\bar{X} = 2.19$), emphasizing the importance of ongoing oversight and necessary adjustments in ensuring successful program implementation. The assignment of departments, groups, and individuals in appropriate roles is ranked fourth ($\bar{X} = 2.16$), highlighting the significance of strategic delegation in improving extracurricular organization.

Organizing and guiding academic advisors, Youth Union branches, and the Student Association in carrying out extracurricular activities within their respective units is ranked fifth ($\bar{X} = 2.11$). This indicates a moderate level of effectiveness but suggests potential areas for improvement in ensuring better guidance and coordination. The lowest-ranked activity is establishing a coordination mechanism to foster collaboration among departments, which has the lowest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.02$). This suggests that collaboration between different organizational units remains a challenge and may require more structured approaches to improve efficiency.

Table 3 presents an assessment of factors that influence the management of extracurricular educational activities for students. Table 3 categorizes these factors based on their perceived level of impact, which is divided into four categories: highly influential, relatively influential, neutral, and not influential. Each factor is evaluated based on the distribution of responses across these categories, with the mean score (\bar{X}) provided to indicate overall perceived influence and a ranking assigned accordingly.

The highest-rated factor influencing the management of extracurricular activities is the presence of mechanisms, policies, and support from school leadership, which has the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.93$). A significant percentage of respondents (58.8%) rated this factor as relatively influential, while 20.0% considered it highly influential, highlighting the critical role of institutional policies and leadership support in shaping extracurricular education.

The second most influential factor is the organizational and management competence of units

responsible for extracurricular activities ($\bar{X} = 2.92$). Like the first factor, 58.8% of respondents considered this relatively influential, while 21.2%

regarded it as highly influential. This suggests that the effectiveness of management units directly impacts the success of extracurricular programs.

Table 3: Assessment of factors influencing the management of extracurricular educational activities for students

	Level of impact								\bar{X}	Ranking
	Highly influential		Relatively influential		Neutral		Not influential			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Mechanisms, policies, and support from the school leadership for extracurricular educational activities.	17	20.0	50	58.8	13	15.3	5	5.9	2.93	1
Organizational and management competence of units responsible for organizing extracurricular educational activities.	18	21.2	50	58.8	9	10.6	8	9.4	2.92	2
Awareness of extracurricular educational activities among social stakeholders, faculty members, and students.	20	23.5	43	50.6	16	18.8	6	7.1	2.91	3
Organizational capacity of units responsible for conducting extracurricular educational activities.	19	22.4	35	41.2	20	23.5	11	12.9	2.73	4
Infrastructure and financial resources for extracurricular educational activities	16	18.8	33	38.8	26	30.6	10	11.8	2.65	5

The awareness of extracurricular educational activities among social stakeholders, faculty members, and students ranks third ($\bar{X} = 2.91$). While 50.6% of respondents rated this factor as relatively influential, 23.5% considered it highly influential. This finding underscores the importance of awareness and engagement from various stakeholders in fostering active participation and support for extracurricular initiatives.

The organizational capacity of units responsible for conducting extracurricular activities is ranked fourth ($\bar{X} = 2.73$). While 22.4% of respondents rated this factor as highly influential, a notable 23.5% considered it neutral, indicating that some respondents perceive limitations in the current capacity of organizational units in managing extracurricular education.

The lowest-ranked factor is infrastructure and financial resources for extracurricular educational activities ($\bar{X} = 2.65$). This factor had the highest percentage of respondents rating it as neutral (30.6%) and not influential (11.8%), suggesting that while resources are an important consideration, other management-related factors are perceived to have a greater direct impact on extracurricular education.

4. Discussion

This study assessed students' awareness and participation in extracurricular educational activities, evaluated the current organization of these activities, and identified key factors influencing their management. The findings revealed that students are more actively engaged in public service, volunteer work, physical education, and academic-related movements, while participation in political and ideological education remains comparatively lower. Additionally, while leadership support and training are generally perceived as effective aspects of extracurricular organizations, challenges persist in fostering collaboration and maintaining consistent coordination across departments. Moreover, leadership support, management competence, and stakeholder awareness emerged as the most critical

factors affecting the successful management of extracurricular activities.

The findings of this study indicate that students demonstrate higher levels of participation in extracurricular activities related to public service, volunteer work, physical education, and academic learning movements. In contrast, engagement in political and ideological education remains relatively low. This discrepancy suggests a need for further initiatives to enhance student involvement in underrepresented areas, particularly in political, ethical, and ideological education. University students tend to be more actively engaged in volunteer work, public service, and physical education due to several compelling reasons. One of the primary factors is the practical and social benefits associated with these activities. Volunteer work, for instance, connects students with their communities, fostering social responsibility, empathy, and interpersonal skills. These experiences act as a bridge between academic life and societal involvement, enabling students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings while also contributing to their personal and professional growth (Ji, 2023; Leng and Zhang, 2024). Furthermore, volunteer activities are often integrated with ideological and political education, making them a more engaging and accessible form of learning. Many universities incorporate service-learning components into their curricula, encouraging students to develop critical thinking and civic awareness while participating in socially impactful projects. By engaging in community service, students inadvertently gain exposure to ideological and political discussions in a more applied and interactive manner. This approach can make ideological education more appealing compared to traditional classroom-based instruction (Ji, 2023). Physical education also stands out as an area of high student participation, largely due to its active and participatory nature. Unlike theoretical subjects, physical activities provide immediate and tangible benefits, including improved physical and mental health. Engaging in sports and fitness activities not only helps students maintain a healthy

lifestyle but also fosters teamwork, discipline, and stress relief, making it an attractive extracurricular option (Hastie et al., 2022). The structured and engaging nature of physical activities often contrasts with the more abstract and discussion-based approach of political and ideological education, further influencing student preferences.

Despite the importance of political and ideological education in fostering informed and responsible citizens, student engagement in this area remains relatively low. One contributing factor is the perception of political engagement among students. Contemporary university students are often perceived as less politically active compared to previous generations, with political participation seen as less rewarding or impactful than other extracurricular activities. Many students feel disengaged from formal political structures and express skepticism about their ability to effect meaningful change through political activism (Brooks et al., 2020). Another major challenge is the complexity and abstract nature of political and ideological education. Unlike volunteer work or physical education, which offer clear, immediate, and tangible benefits, political education often involves theoretical discussions, historical analyses, and abstract concepts that may not directly resonate with students' daily experiences (Le and Nguyen, 2021; Macfarlane and Tomlinson, 2017). Without practical applications or relatable contexts, students may find it difficult to engage in ideological coursework in a meaningful way.

The findings of this study indicate that while certain aspects of extracurricular activity organization, such as leadership support and training, are widely perceived as effective, significant challenges persist in fostering collaboration and ensuring consistent coordination across departments. The effectiveness of leadership initiatives in extracurricular activities is evident in their role in developing critical skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. However, the lack of structured interdepartmental cooperation and resource limitations hinder the full potential of these programs. Extracurricular educational activities play a crucial role in enhancing students' leadership abilities and employability by providing them with real-world experiences that complement their academic learning. Leadership support and training programs are particularly effective in helping students develop a range of essential skills. Skill development is one of the most significant benefits, as participation in extracurricular activities fosters leadership, communication, and teamwork skills – attributes that are highly valued in both academic and professional settings (Javed and Srivastava, 2024; Peng, 2023; Rezaei and Mahmoudi, 2023). These activities provide students with opportunities to work in diverse teams, make strategic decisions, and lead initiatives, preparing them for future career responsibilities. Another key advantage of extracurricular participation is the promotion of self-

leadership and autonomy. Programs that encourage student independence enable individuals to set and achieve personal goals, enhancing their ability to take initiative, make informed decisions, and improve problem-solving capabilities (Han and Shin, 2023). Students who take on leadership roles in clubs, organizations, or student government often develop greater self-confidence and a proactive mindset, which are essential for long-term career success. Additionally, community leadership emerges as a vital outcome of extracurricular engagement. By participating in student organizations, volunteer work, and service-learning projects, students cultivate leadership skills that contribute to positive social change and civic engagement. These experiences not only strengthen their sense of responsibility toward society but also enable them to develop networks and collaborations that extend beyond the university setting. Thus, extracurricular activities serve as a crucial platform for developing future leaders who are both socially responsible and professionally competent.

Despite the evident benefits of extracurricular activities, several challenges hinder their effective implementation, particularly in the areas of interdepartmental coordination, institutional barriers, and resource limitations. One of the primary obstacles is the lack of structured collaboration across departments. Effective extracurricular programs require seamless coordination between various university divisions, including academic departments, student affairs offices, and faculty advisors. However, varying institutional priorities, differences in administrative approaches, and inconsistent resource allocation often result in fragmented efforts that weaken the overall impact of these activities (Bodolica et al., 2021; Nasir et al., 2020). Without clear communication and cooperative planning among departments, extracurricular initiatives risk being inefficient or underutilized. Another significant barrier is the presence of cultural and institutional challenges. Differences in institutional philosophies and administrative structures may prevent the seamless integration of extracurricular programs into the broader educational framework (Bodolica et al., 2021; Isac et al., 2023). Some universities prioritize academic performance over extracurricular engagement, leading to a lack of recognition or support for student-led initiatives. Furthermore, cultural factors, such as differing perspectives on leadership development and student autonomy, may influence how extracurricular activities are perceived and valued within different educational contexts. Addressing these barriers requires a shift toward a more holistic approach to education, where extracurricular engagement is viewed as a fundamental component of student success rather than a secondary pursuit. Finally, resource limitations pose a significant challenge to the sustainability and effectiveness of extracurricular programs. Many student organizations and initiatives operate with minimal

financial and logistical support from faculty and administration, restricting their ability to expand, improve, or sustain meaningful engagement opportunities (Nasir et al., 2020). Limited funding often results in inadequate training, insufficient event planning, and a lack of incentives for faculty involvement, ultimately diminishing the quality and reach of extracurricular activities. Without proper investment in student programs, universities risk undermining the potential benefits that these activities can offer.

The findings of this study indicate that leadership support, management competence, and stakeholder awareness are the most critical factors influencing the management and success of extracurricular activities for university students. These elements directly impact the effectiveness and sustainability of such programs by ensuring they are well-organized, adequately resourced, and aligned with the broader goals of student development. However, while these factors are recognized as essential, challenges remain in strengthening the capacity of responsible units and securing sufficient financial and infrastructural resources. Leadership support is foundational to the success of extracurricular programs. Effective leadership is crucial for setting a clear vision, providing the necessary resources, and offering guidance to ensure that these activities align with the university's broader educational goals. Leaders in student affairs and extracurricular programs have the responsibility to create a supportive environment that encourages student participation and engagement. This involvement is vital for fostering an intellectual culture and promoting socialization among students (Solehah et al., 2022). Leadership can also drive the strategic direction of extracurricular initiatives, ensuring they address the evolving needs of students and remain relevant to the changing landscape of higher education. Without strong leadership, even well-intended programs can falter, as they may lack coherence, direction, and support. Management competence is another critical factor in ensuring the effective administration of extracurricular activities. Competent management involves organizing, coordinating, and evaluating extracurricular programs to ensure they achieve their intended goals. A well-managed extracurricular program provides structure, consistency, and adaptability, allowing the activities to evolve in response to new challenges and student needs. Effective management also ensures that these activities are strategically aligned with educational outcomes, such as character building, self-regulation, and emotional well-being, all of which contribute to students' academic success and personal development (Astafurova et al., 2023; Guilmette et al., 2019; Leksuwanakun et al., 2023). Management competence encompasses various aspects, including the design of structured work programs, regular assessments of program outcomes, and the flexibility to adapt to students' evolving interests and societal changes. The role of stakeholder awareness is also pivotal to

the success of extracurricular programs. Stakeholders, including students, faculty, and external partners, must fully understand the benefits and objectives of these activities. Awareness ensures that the various parties involved recognize the importance of extracurricular engagement in the holistic development of students. When stakeholders are well-informed, they are more likely to support and participate in these activities, which can significantly enhance their impact. Moreover, aligning extracurricular programs with students' motivations and needs is crucial for maintaining high levels of engagement and participation (Chapman et al., 2023; Griffiths et al., 2021; Li, 2022). Awareness can be further strengthened through regular communication, outreach, and feedback mechanisms that help keep stakeholders engaged and invested in the success of extracurricular programs.

4.1. Implications

The findings suggest universities should develop more engaging methods to promote political and ideological education, such as incorporating debates, case studies, and experiential learning. Improved interdepartmental coordination through structured frameworks and digital tools is necessary. Financial and infrastructural support must also be prioritized, with greater investment in student-led initiatives and external funding sources. Policymakers should recognize extracurricular engagement as integral to student development, possibly integrating extracurricular achievements into academic evaluations to enhance motivation and career readiness.

4.2. Limitations and recommendations

A key limitation is self-reported data, which may introduce response bias. Future studies should use observational methods or institutional records for validation. Additionally, the study's findings may not be fully generalizable, as they are based on selected faculties. Expanding research to diverse institutions would provide broader insights. Furthermore, while the study identifies management challenges, it does not fully explore their root causes. Future research should use qualitative methods to better understand barriers to effective extracurricular management. Lastly, student motivations and constraints were not deeply analyzed. Exploring financial, academic, and personal factors influencing participation could inform more inclusive policies.

5. Conclusion

This study underscores the vital role of extracurricular educational activities in students' academic, personal, and professional development. While participation in volunteer work, physical education, and scientific research is high, engagement in political and ideological education

requires strengthening through more practical approaches. Leadership support, stakeholder awareness, and effective management are key to sustaining extracurricular initiatives, although challenges such as interdepartmental coordination and resource limitations persist. A more integrated, student-centered approach is necessary to maximize the impact of extracurricular activities and align them with students' aspirations for academic success and career readiness.

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the APA Code of Conduct. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants after informing them about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participation was voluntary, and to ensure confidentiality, all responses were anonymized with personal identifiers removed prior to analysis.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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