

A Contemporary Perspective on Co-Curricular Activities Pursuits and Emotional Well-Being: A Study of University Undergraduates Level Students

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Abstract

This study examines how co-curricular activities affect undergraduate students' emotional health, paying particular attention to gender differences in involvement. The study used a quantitative research design, and Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. A sample size of 98 undergraduate students from the University of Malakand and the University of Swat participated in the study. Results A Proportionate sampling technique was used, revealing that although male student numbers in co-curricular activities were lower than females, their participation levels were higher. The study also found that undergraduate students' co-curricular involvement greatly impacts their emotional well-being. Results also revealed that emotional well-being in these activities was not substantially influenced by gender. The study's recommendations are for students to actively participate in activities that are in line with their emotional needs. To maximize their positive impact on students' well-being, educators should balance their commitments, diversify co-curricular activities and propose long-term studies with resources, advocate for funding, integrate activities into the curriculum, and provide training.

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1 Introduction

Co-curricular activities keep students engaged outside their regular academic studies, aiming to develop various skills, interests, and abilities. (Gul & Khilji, [2021](#)). Co-curricular activities include painting, music, debates, drama classes, academic clubs, sports activities, volunteering and community services, artistic and creative pursuits, etc., throughout the academic year (Gul & Khilji, [2023](#); Gul et al., [2022](#)). They are viewed as an integral part of the educational experience, as they offer students opportunities to learn and develop beyond the confines of the classroom and acquire essential life skills. Research studies (Dearman, [2017](#); Gifford et al., [2011](#); Gutman & Schoon, [2013](#)) has concluded that participation in co-curricular activities promotes students cognitive, social, and emotional well-being. Emotional well-being is the ability to produce positive emotions, moods, thoughts, and feelings and adapt when confronted with adversity and stressful situations (Frijters et al., [2020](#)). Co-curricular activities are events and educational opportunities in addition to the academic curriculum. They allow students to reveal their non-academic skills and develop particular skills necessary for interacting with people on an individual or group basis in their social and professional lives.

Numerous students experience stress, tension, and strain as they explore the requests of their investigations, connections, and future vocation possibilities (Ahmad & Kashif, [2022](#); Gul & Khilji, [2023](#); Salameh et al., [2022](#)). These inner difficulties can affect their academic presentation and personal satisfaction (Garó-Santiago et al. [2009](#)). These are regarded as learnt skills outside of the classroom to increase and enhance the structured learning objectives of a course or degree program. Sports, societies, and clubs are co-curricular activities that address subjects, cultures, and uniform bodies (Ahmad & Gul, [2023](#); Gul et al., [2021](#); Gul et al., [2021](#)). Additionally, there are site visits for everyday experiences, educational workshops, swimming, seminars, simulated experiences, volleyball, football, tenpin bowling, golf, orientation sessions, and service-learning, among other sports (Rani et al., [2022](#); Zhou et al., [2022](#)).

Co-curricular activities are a central point in how well students perform because they assist them with learning the fundamentals of responsibility both exclusively and collectively, as well as various abilities that bring down the probability of disappointment in their expert and public activities. According to Stirling and Kerr ([2015](#)), co-curricular activities engage learning objectives to be based on working on students' thriving and their achievement of data and capacities in areas like joint effort, intrapersonal progression, flexibility, decisive reasoning and ability, organisation practical expertise, ethics, mental multifaceted nature, generosity, and citizenship. Studies reveal that association in co-curricular activities that increment academic examinations upgrades the general nature of the student insight (Beltman & Schaebein, [2012](#); Foubert & Urbanski, [2006](#)). Progress to adulthood requires youngsters to shape, seek after, and direct objectives that greatly affect progress and prosperity, including in the university setting.

This study is especially significant to instructive institutions, policymakers, and instructors on the most proficient method to all the more likely plan and carry out co-curricular projects that emphatically impact students' prosperity. Besides, understanding the connection between co-curricular commitment and close emotional well-being can assist with encouraging a steadier and more supporting learning climate, at last helping the students' private and academic development. Teenagers who participate in Co-curricular activities experience age-25 suitable advancement amazing open doors that cultivate independence, making self-character, shaping connections, and further developing accomplishment. (Gul et al., [2022](#); Gul et al., [2021](#); Gul et al., [2021](#)).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study was based on the following objectives.

- To determine the gender differences in the level of participation in different types of Co-curricular activities and emotional well-being in undergraduate students.
- To analyse the effects of different types of co-curricular activities on the emotional well-being of undergraduate students.
- To analyse the gender-wise differences in the effects of different Co-curricular activities on emotional well-being among undergraduates.

2 Literature Review

The positive and negative effects of Co-curricular activities

According to the researchers, students who participated in co-curricular activities at university typically performed better academically and had higher GPAs than their non-sharing friends. The studies focused on different social factors connected with co-curricular activities and student academic performance (Bukhari et al., [2021](#); Gul & Khilji, [2021](#); Gul, et al., [2021](#)). Curricular and co-curricular activities are separated by specialists who have focused on them. The activities that include students participating in sports and so on are considered curricular activities. Research shows that the effect of curricular and non-curricular activities on academic performance varies (Guest and Schneider, [2003](#)). According to research, the extra time you spend participating in loosening up activities, the terrible your working affinities and academic performance become. In contrast, the more time you spend participating in co-curricular activities like games, debates, art, volunteering services and theatre, the better your academic grades are (Gul et al., [2020](#)). Participating in co-curricular activities can influence significant thriving, depending on how students see and are attracted to these activities.

2.1 Positive Effects of Co-curricular Activities:

Initially, co-curricular activities didn't develop rapidly (Broh, [2002](#)). However, co-curricular activities can develop the potential to meet people, structure partnerships, experience a sense of neighborhood, etc. Finding self-acknowledgement and fulfilment can come from doing things as per their tendencies and interests (Gul et al., [2020](#); Gul et al., [2021](#)). Moreover, participating in humanitarian activities can help one's sense of direction and confidence. Participation in all co-curricular activities is connected to high CGPAs (Bates & Hayes, [2017](#)).

Researchers have found a positive connection between students' commitment to co-curricular activities and their insightful achievement (Guest & Schneider, [2003](#)). Most co-curricular activities have been seen as areas of strength for helping students make and work on their educational development. According to Marsh and Kleitman ([2002](#)), students who participate in co-curricular activities show excellent manners and higher achievement in academic activities than students who are not participating in co-curricular activities.

2.2 Negative Effects:

Students who participate in co-curricular activities can benefit, but it is vital to understand that there might be drawbacks, too. Instructors, guardians, and, surprisingly, the actual students ought to give cautious ideas to these negative impacts; some elements that show the disadvantages of participating in co-curricular activities are as follows:

Participation in many co-curricular activities alongside academic work resulted in an extreme workload (Ahmad et al., [2022](#); Ali et al., [2021](#); Batool et al., [2022](#); Gul et al., [2020](#)). Students could perform well in both subjects but not in all subjects at the same time, creating feelings of anxiety

and leaving them with less time for recreation and individual interests.

Students who participated in co-curricular activities broadly needed help to balance their responsibilities between co-curricular activities and their scholarly obligations. This imbalance might have hindered their entire educational experience, potentially leading to dropouts from the institution (Batoool et al., [2021](#); Gul et al., [2020](#); Tufail et al., [2022](#); Rani et al., [2023](#); Salameh et al., [2022](#)). Performance surveys were standard instruments of co-curricular activities. Students might have felt constrained to perform in this competitive environment, which could have resulted in low confidence or deep insecurities. Participation in co-curricular activities that required late-night practices, challenges, or events could have caused a lack of sleep, negatively affecting students' emotional state, overall well-being, and mental capability. The fact that co-curricular activities could work on unambiguous abilities meant students might have needed more opportunities to pursue hobbies and interests beyond the programs that were advertised. This limitation could have made exploring their interests more challenging due to limited time. Participating in co-curricular activities that included late-night practices, contests, or events could have caused sleep deprivation, which might have had a detrimental effect on students' emotional state, cognitive function, and general health (Huebener & Marcus, [2017](#)).

What question are you addressing, and where are this study's hypotheses and rationale built from the literature?

2.3 Research Question:

The questions of the study are the following.

- To what extent does male and female participation in co-curricular activities differ among undergraduate students?
- To what extent are there differences in the level of emotional well-being among undergraduate students who participate in co-curricular activities?
- How does participation in different co-curricular activities affect the emotional well-being of undergraduate students?
- To what extent does the effect of different co-curricular activities on the emotional well-being of the students vary by gender at the undergraduate level?

2.4 Hypothesis:

This study will be based on the following hypotheses:

H1: To determine the gender differences in the level of participation in different types of Co-curricular activities and emotional well-being in undergraduate students.

H2: To analyse the impact of different types of Co-curricular activities on the emotional well-being of undergraduate students.

H3: To analyse the gender-wise differences in the impact of different Co-curricular activities on emotional well-being among undergraduates.

3 Methods and Materials

Quantitative research collects and analyses numerical data to measure and quantify phenomena, explore cause-and-effect relationships, and generalize findings to a larger population. A quantitative research design was deemed appropriate for investigating the effects of co-curricular activities on emotional well-being. It facilitated the assessment of participants' then-current emotional well-being and examined potential associations between participation in co-curricular activities and variations in emotional well-being.

3.1 Population of the Study

The participants were many male and female undergrad students who effectively participated in co-curricular activities at two distinct universities of KP, the University of Malakand and the University of Swat. According to the data collected from the Directorate of Sports, several participants at the University of Malakand were 896 males and 220 females (for 2022), and the University of Swat had 480 males and 380 females (2022).

3.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Proportionate sampling techniques were used to take study samples. Accordingly, the total number of participants was divided into subgroups, male and female. A sample size of 27 males (out of 548 males) from the University of Malakand and 22 males (out of 440 males) from the University of Swat were taken as proportional (20%) to the population size, using the criteria suggested by Gay (2012). Similarly, using a 20 % population size, 28 females (out of 568) from the University of Malakand and 21 females (out of 420) from the University of Swat were taken as samples. Thus, a total of 98 undergraduate students participated in the study sample. What is the rationale for using 20% as a sample proportion? How would you support the idea that this sample size is sufficient for generalizability?

3.3 Research Instrument

Two research instruments, one co-curricular activities scale and one scale on emotional well-being, were used. Likert scale Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. A Likert scale is a psychometric scale named after its creator, American social therapist Rensis Likert and it is commonly used in research questionnaires. It is the most widely used approach to scaling responses in survey research. Likert scale evaluations are organized to give quantifiable response choices that make investigating information more straightforward. Respondents likewise have a scope of answers that is better defined for how they feel about an item or administration. The research instruments were developed after reviewing the related literature, which consisted of articles, reports, journals, etc.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

To collect information, the researcher visited universities and took permission from the sports directorate to gather data. Participants were provided with an information sheet. The researcher personally approached undergraduate students who were actively involved in co-curricular activities. The respondents successfully filled out all questionnaires. They were given sufficient opportunity to fill out the questionnaire. The data collected through the research instruments was analysed and interpreted in light of the study's objectives. Information gathered from the responses was placed into a computer document for investigation utilizing SPSS - version 26. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests (regression analysis and correlational tests) were used for the questionnaire questions.

3.5 Reliability Statistics

Table1: Reliability statistics

Variables	Questionnaires	Cronbach Alpha
Co-curricular Activities	15	.715
Emotional Wellbeing	10	.757

**Cronbach's Alpha > = 0.70 = Reliable*

Table No. 1 shows the reliability statistics of both the variables under study. The Independent variable, Co-curricular Activities, has 15 questionnaires, and Cronbach's alpha value is .715, while the dependent variable, Emotional Well-being, has ten questionnaires and Cronbach's alpha value

is .757. These values exceed the required range of Cronbach's alpha y coefficient. The results of Table No. They are confirming that the data is reliable.

4 Results

4.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The respondents were all undergraduate students of the University of Malakand and the University of Swat. A total of 98 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, and all the 98 filled questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 100%. Respondents were asked about their Gender on the questionnaire, and their responses were analysed by mean of frequency distribution as shown in Table 4.1

Table 2: Summary of Respondents according to Gender

Gender		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	36	35.0	36.7	36.7
	Female	62	60.2	63.3	100.0
	Total	98	95.1	100.0	
Missing	System	5	4.9		
Total		103	100.0		

Table 2 shows that among the respondents, 36 were male students (36.7%), and the rest 62 representing (63%) were female students. This ratio reflects the proportion of females who were more than male students in the study.

Q.No.1 To what extent is male and female participation in co-curricular activities different among undergraduate students?

To answer this question on students' perception of participation in different co-curricular activities, find the frequency distribution for each question separately. Each statement was analysed by finding frequencies, means, and standard deviations from the data obtained through the questionnaire.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Questions related to Level of participation Gender participation in co-curricular activities co-curricular activities

Gender		Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15
Male	M	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.1	1.6	2.4	1.7	1.6	1.6	2.5	1.5	1.7	2.0	1.7
	N	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
	SD	.48	.48	.74	.69	.83	.57	.87	.60	.49	.49	1.0	.50	.51	.82	.56
	M	1.6	1.5	1.9	1.7	2.2	1.8	2.2	1.6	1.6	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.5
Female	N	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62
	S D	.55	.50	.76	.76	.89	.56	.75	.62	.53	.63	.85	.58	.56	.85	.50
	% of															
	Total	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%

Table 4: Comparison of Co-Curricular Activities Means

1	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	29.69	36	2.216
Female	29.30	62	3.508
Total	29.44	98	3.090

Result of Tables 3 and 4 indicates that male students have a higher level of participation in extracurricular activities than the level of the involvement of females, even though male participants were less in number than female students.

Q.2 What are the differences in the level of emotional well-being of students who participate in co-curricular activities?

Table 5: One-Sample Statistics

Dependent Var. Qs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
D_VAR_Q.1	98	1.80	.574	.058
D_VAR_Q. 2	98	1.92	.728	.073
D_VAR_Q. 3	98	1.79	.677	.068
D_VAR_Q. 4	98	1.91	.576	.058
D_VAR_Q. 5	98	1.81	.586	.059
D_VAR_Q. 6	98	1.86	.626	.063
D_VAR_Q. 7	98	1.68	.529	.053
D_VAR_Q. 8	98	1.96	.555	.056
D_VAR_Q. 9	98	1.93	.630	.064
D_VAR_Q. 10	98	1.71	.626	.063

Results in Table 5 reveals that for the statement Q8 (I can handle challenges and setbacks with resilience (participants with a mean of 1.96 and standard deviation .55 showed the highest level for the statement Q9 (I feel supported and understood by the people around me (participants with mean: 1.93, SD: .63 showed second highest level. Furthermore, for statement Q2, (I am able to effectively manage and cope with stressors in my life(participated with mean of 1.92 and standard deviation: .72 showed third highest level while statement Q4, (I feel a sense of belonging and connection with my peers and community(participated with mean of 1.91 and standard deviation: .57 showed the fourth highest level now statement Q6, (I have a positive outlook on my future and its possibilities (participated with mean of 1.86 and standard deviation: .62 showed less level than that of statement Q4, now statement Q5, (I am able to communicate my feelings and emotions effectively to others (participated with mean of 1.81 and standard deviation: .586 showed the sixth highest level on the other hand statement v1(I generally feel content and satisfied with my life(participated with mean of 1.80 and standard deviation: .57 showed the high level than statement 3, furthermore Q3 statement (I often experience feelings of joy and happiness(participated with mean of 1.79 and standard deviation: .67 showed the low level while statement Q10 (Overall, I feel emotionally well-balanced and stable (participated with mean of 1.71 and standard deviation: .62 showed the lower level and at the end last statement Q7 (I often experience a sense of calm and relaxation (participated with mean of 1.68 and standard deviation: .52 showed lowest level.

Q.3 How does participation in different co-curricular activities impact the emotional well-being of undergraduate students?

Table 6: Pearson's Correlation of Co-curricular Activities and Emotional Wellbeing

Variables	Co-curricular Activities	Emotional Wellbeing
Co-curricular Activities	1	0.354*
Emotional Wellbeing	0.354*	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). *

4.2 Correlations between Co-curricular Activities and Emotional Wellbeing

Table No. 6 represents Pearson's coefficient of correlation of the variables under study. Pearson Correlation was used to compare the means of Co-curricular Activities and Emotional well-being at a confidence interval of ($P < 0.05$). The results explained a significant correlation between these two variables.

4.3 Correlation Matrix

The correlation matrix shows variation among the variables of the study. It is clear from the table

that there was a significant but positive correlation between Co-curricular Activities and Emotional well-being (0.354 (*), * $p < 0.05$). These results show that Co-curricular Activities greatly influence the Emotional Well-being in the mentioned universities. The findings recommend that both variables directly affect each other.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Table No 7 Model Summary, illustrating the regression analysis of Co-curricular Activities and Emotional well-being. There were two main variables in the study. Therefore, this variable was measured through linear regression. The central values considered in the table below are $R = 0.354$ and $R^2 = 0.1253$. The values in the table show a positive and highly significant relationship between Co-curricular Activities and Emotional well-being. The Coefficient of Determination R^2 is 0.1253. This analysis shows the ratio of explained variation to total variation.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354	.1253	4.058

a. Predictors: (Constant), Co-curricular mean

ANOVA shows the values of the sum of squares, degree of freedom, mean square, f and the values of significance. The imperative statistic in this table is the F -value and P – value. The results in the ANOVA table show that the F-value is 23.531, which is greater than 3 ($F > 3$) and highly significant.

Table No 8: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.552	1	1.552	23.531	.000
Total	1582.135	97			

Table No 8, Coefficients, shows the Unstandardized Coefficients, Standardized Coefficients, t – value and P – values. The t-ratio value (2.407) is greater than 2 ($t > 2$), and the P value 0.000 is highly significant with ($P < 0.05$). The beta coefficient (Beta = 0.354).

Table 9: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	20.145	3.947		5.104	.000
Co-Curricular-Means	.541	.133	0.354	2.407	.000

5 Discussion

This study discovered the gender differences in co-curricular activities and their effect on emotional well-being at the undergraduate level, where 98 students participated, and the majority were female students. The researcher associated the current study's findings with the existing literature and found that some of the other researchers agreed with the findings while others disagreed. Based on the first finding that (male students have an elevated degree of cooperation in curricular activities than the level of support females, even though male members were less in number than female students, a similar study conducted by (Basler, [2020](#)) found that male students incline to have a higher level of participation than female students while highlighting the importance of student participation in curricular activities. The researcher has further exposed that male students are often more actively involved in curricular activities than their female peers, contributing to a gendered pattern of participation.

This study also revealed a big difference between the levels of the emotional well-being of students who participate in co-curricular activities. The existing literature firmly accepts the vital role of emotional well-being in a student's life (Hughes & Byrom, 2019). The researchers have stressed that emotional well-being not only boosts positive mental health but also impacts individuals' academic performance and socialization. Looking at the drawn-out impacts, Denman (2019) found that students who effectively partook in co-curricular activities during their undergrad years revealed higher life fulfilment and a more uplifting perspective on life in post-graduation years. This supports the idea that co-curricular activities affect emotional well-being.

This study found a strong connection between support in co-curricular activities and the emotional skills of university students. Research concentrates on showing that emotional well-being is recognised as a unique component of students' lives, impacting their relational connections, academic performance and in general emotional wellness (Wang & Zhao, 2020). Understanding the variables that add to emotional well-being is fundamental for sustaining a positive and helpful environment. A few examinations continually show significant areas of strength for a connection between participation in co-curricular activities and improved emotional well-being among university students (Bowman et al., 2023).

6 Conclusion

This study examines the impact of co-curricular activities on emotional well-being at the undergraduate level. With 98 students, the vast majority of whom were female, the review not only adds to the field's existing knowledge but also basically talks about different perspectives. The underlying finding that male students participate in co-curricular activities at more significant levels is steady with some past examinations. The study, however, challenges competing theories in the body of literature by arguing that participation levels can differ greatly amongst extracurricular activities. One important factor influencing emotional outcomes is the role of institutional support. The importance of institutional resources and support in influencing the psychological advantages of extracurricular activities is emphasised by Kokko et al. (2015). This is reliable, given the more broad thought that the assets and backing presented by the instructive organization decide how powerful co-curricular commitment is (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006).

Future studies on the complex relationships between gender, extracurricular activities, and emotional health should continue as educational institutions work to establish inclusive settings that support holistic student development. This will help to develop more focused and efficient teaching strategies.

7 Conflicts of Interest:

This study's authors do not involve any conflicts of interest.

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