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Exploring the Role of School Management in Supporting Extracurricular Activities and Academic Success in South Punjab

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ABSTRACT
Education in South Punjab faces persistent challenges, including resource limitations, rote-based learning, and insufficient emphasis on holistic student development. Extracurricular activities (ECAs) are recognised as key contributors to academic success, social skills, and personal growth, but their effectiveness depends heavily on the support of school management. This study investigated the role of school management in promoting ECAs and examined their relationship with students' academic performance in government high schools of District Muzaffargarh. The population of the study included 150,568 students, 45,122 teachers, and 8,083 administrators across government high schools in District Muzaffargarh. Using a stratified random sampling technique, a sample of 384 respondents was selected, comprising 254 students, 80 teachers, and 50 administrators. Data were collected through structured questionnaires on a 5-point Likert scale and analysed quantitatively. Findings revealed that stakeholders largely perceived school management as supportive of extracurricular activities. Results also showed a positive relationship between student participation in ECAs and academic performance, with some gender-based differences noted among administrators and students. The study concludes that school management plays a vital role in integrating ECAs into school culture, which in turn strengthens academic outcomes and overall development. It recommends policy initiatives to institutionalise ECAs, ensure gender-inclusive participation, and conduct regular program evaluations for sustained impact.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, school management, academic performance, holistic development, South Punjab

Introduction
Education is a multifaceted process that aims to develop individuals holistically, addressing intellectual, emotional, social, and physical aspects of growth (Hollins, 2022). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the role extracurricular activities (ECAs) play in enhancing students' academic performance and overall development. Extracurricular activities, which include sports, music, debates, drama, and community service, are often considered integral to a well-rounded education (Mahoney et al., 2005). They provide opportunities for students to explore their interests, develop life skills, and

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build social connections, complementing the formal curriculum. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive correlation between participation in ECAs and academic performance. For instance, Marsh and Kleitman (2002) found that students involved in extracurricular activities often exhibit higher academic achievement, better time management skills, and increased motivation. ECAs foster critical skills such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving, which can indirectly influence academic success (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Furthermore, participation in such activities has been linked to improved mental health and a greater sense of belonging within the school community (Eccles et al., 2003).

In the context of Pakistan, the education system faces numerous challenges, including limited resources and a focus on rote learning (Rehman et al., 2021). While government high schools in District Muzaffar Garh provide basic academic instruction, extracurricular activities are often overlooked or underutilised. This lack of emphasis on ECAs may hinder students from reaping the potential benefits of a holistic education. Previous research in similar socio-economic contexts suggests that incorporating ECAs into school programs can improve not only academic outcomes but also students' self-esteem and social skills (Baig et al., 2020). Education plays a critical role in shaping the intellectual and personal growth of students. However, academic success is not solely determined by classroom instruction and textbook learning. Extracurricular activities (ECAs) offer students opportunities to develop essential skills, build confidence, and foster a sense of community. Despite these benefits, the role of ECAs in influencing academic performance remains underexplored in the context of government high schools, particularly in underprivileged regions such as District Muzaffar Garh.

District Muzaffar Garh, like many rural areas in Pakistan, faces significant educational challenges, including resource constraints, a lack of trained staff, and a heavy reliance on rote learning. In such settings, the integration of ECAs can serve as an alternative pathway to enhance students' learning experiences and improve their academic outcomes. Research suggests that ECAs promote positive behaviours, improve cognitive skills, and provide students with platforms to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). However, these insights are often derived from studies conducted in urban or international contexts, leaving a gap in understanding their relevance and impact in rural Pakistani schools.

Statement of Problem

In the education system of Pakistan, particularly in rural regions such as South Punjab, the focus of schools has largely remained on academic instruction, often emphasising rote memorisation over holistic learning. Extracurricular activities (ECAs), which are recognised globally for their role in fostering students' cognitive, social, and emotional growth, remain underutilised in many government schools. Despite research evidence suggesting that ECAs enhance academic performance, self-confidence, and life skills, their integration into the school system is inconsistent.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives of the study were:

Evaluate how the school management supports extracurricular activities for the all-round development of its students.

To examine how students who participate in extracurricular activities perform academically compared to those who do not.

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Research Questions of the Study

The following were the research questions of the study:

How can school management encourage pupils to get involved in extracurricular activities?

Do students who participate in extracurricular activities perform significantly better academically than those who do not?

Significance of the Study

This study underscores the need for schools to prioritise and allocate resources for ECAs. It provides empirical evidence to support the integration of structured extracurricular programs into the school curriculum, enabling administrators to create environments that promote overall student development. Policymakers can utilise the study's findings to design educational policies that emphasise the role of ECAs in enhancing academic performance, especially in underprivileged areas like District Muzaffar Garh. The research offers a basis for advocating for increased funding, training, and infrastructural support for ECAs in government schools.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the relationship between ECAs and academic performance, particularly in rural and resource-constrained contexts. It provides a foundation for further research on the subject, inspiring future studies to explore similar themes in other regions or educational settings. By demonstrating how ECAs positively influence academic success and holistic development, this study highlights the broader societal benefits of investing in education that transcend classroom boundaries. Students who participate in ECAs are more likely to develop into well-rounded individuals, capable of contributing meaningfully to their communities.

Delimitations of the Study

The current study was delimited to the District Muzaffar Garh schools.

Research Methodology

It outlined the methods and procedures adopted to explore the Effects of Extra-Curricular Activities on Students' Academic Performance in Government High Schools of District Muzaffargarh. It detailed the research design, population, sampling technique, instruments, data collection, and data analysis methods to ensure the study's validity and reliability.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between participation in extra-curricular activities (ECAs) and academic performance. A descriptive correlational approach was used to measure the extent and nature of the association between these variables.

Population

The targeted population included:

Students: Enrolled in grades 9^{th} and 10^{th} in government high schools of District Muzaffargarh. They were 15056850.

Teachers: Particularly those involved in managing or overseeing ECAs. They were 45122.

School Administrators: Responsible for implementing academic and extra-curricular programs. There were 8083 heads, both males and females.

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Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representativeness. The sample was divided into strata based on:

Gender: Separate groups for boys' and girls' schools.

From each stratum, a proportional number of students, teachers, and administrators were selected, ensuring a balanced representation of the population. The sample size was 384 respondents:

254 students

80 teachers

50 administrators

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire for Students:

Structure: Closed-ended questions on a 5-point Likert scale.

Sections:

Participation in ECAs (frequency, type).

Perceptions of ECAs' impact on academic performance.

Academic performance (self-reported grades).

Questionnaire for Teachers and Administrators:

Focuses on:

Perceived benefits of ECAs.

Observations on students' academic performance.

Challenges in organising ECAs.

Data collection

The data collection for the study "Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Students' Academic Performance in Government High Schools of District Muzaffargarh" was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed on a 5-point Likert Scale, having options strongly agree, agree, Neutral, Disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about students' participation in various extracurricular activities, the time they dedicate to these activities, and their perceived impact on academic performance. It included frequency of extracurricular involvement and Likert-scale items to assess the influence on study habits and grades. The questionnaires were distributed to a purposive sample of students, ensuring diversity in gender and academic levels, with ethical considerations like confidentiality and voluntary participation strictly upheld. Data was analysed quantitatively to uncover relationships between extracurricular activities and academic outcomes.

Analysis of the Data

Table#1: Evaluate how the school management supports extracurricular activities for the all-round development of its students. (Inline objective 3)

Stakeholders	Gender	A. School management Supports										Total Responden
		SA		A		UD		DA		SDA		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Administrator	F	11	44.0	10	40.0	1	4.00	2	8.00	1	4.00	25
	M	12	48.0	9	36.0	2	8.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	25

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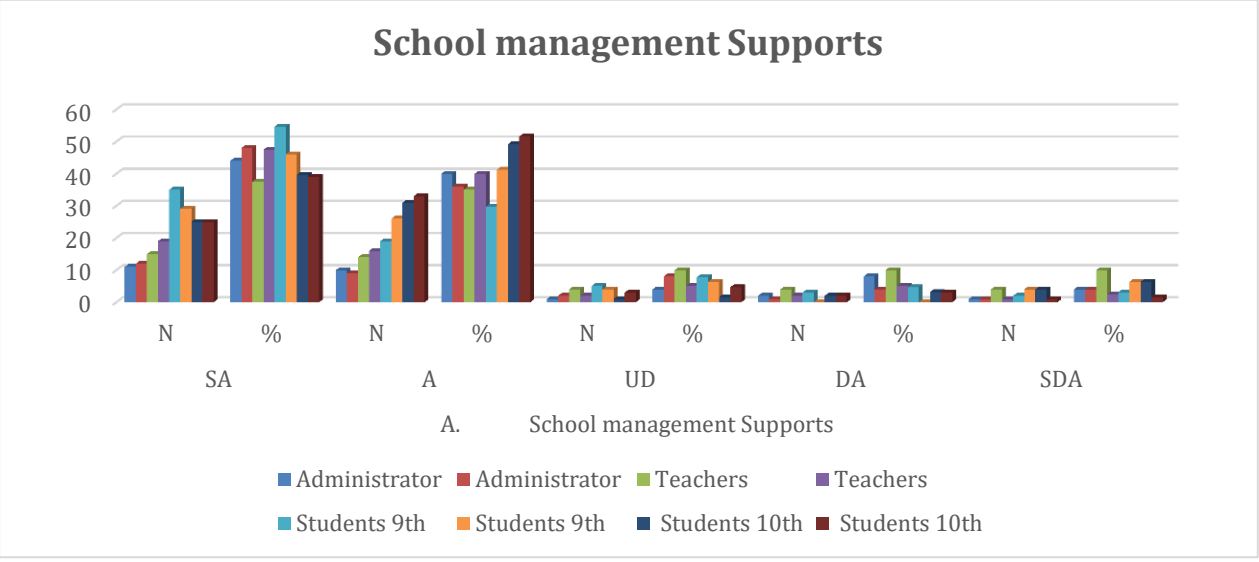
Teachers	**F**	15	37.50	14	35.0	4	10.0	3	10.0	4	10.0	**40**
	M	19	47.5	16	40.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	1	2.50	**40**
Students 9th	**F**	35	54.68	19	29.68	5	7.81	3	4.68	2	3.12	**64**
	M	29	46.03	26	41.26	4	6.35	0	0.0	4	6.35	**63**
Students 10th	**F**	25	39.68	31	49.20	1	1.58	2	3.17	4	6.35	**63**
	M	25	39.06	33	51.56	3	4.68	2	3.12	1	1.56	**64**

The data in Table #1 indicates that school management's support for extracurricular activities is largely perceived positively across all stakeholder groups, with the majority of respondents either strongly agreeing (SA) or agreeing (A). Female and male administrators and teachers showed high agreement, with male teachers slightly more affirmative (47.5% SA) than their female counterparts (37.5% SA). Among students, female 9th-grade students demonstrated the highest percentage of strong agreement (54.68%), while male 10th-grade students had the highest agreement overall (51.56%). The undecided (UD), disagree (DA), and strongly disagree (SDA) responses were comparatively low across all groups, suggesting a consensus on the management's effective role in fostering extracurricular activities for the all-round development of students. However, slight variations among groups highlight the need to further explore specific concerns or suggestions for improvement.



Table#2 Comparison of Responses Regarding School Management Supports extracurricular activities for the all-around development of its students

Stakeholders	**Gender**	**School Management Supports**			**Comparison.**					
					Gender			**Stakeholders**		
					The significant difference using the t-test			**Stakeholders' differences: Using ANOVA**		
		N	**Mean**	**S. D**	**t_{cal}**	**t_{tab}**	**P_{value}**	**F_{cal}**	**F_{tab}**	**P_{value}**

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Administrator	F	**25**	4.12	1.07	-0.322	±2.064	0.750			
	M	**25**	4.20	1.02						
Teachers	F	**40**	4.12	1.02	-0.318	±2.021	0.75			
	M	**40**	4.20	0.96						
9th Students	F	**64**	4.12	1.02	-0.318	±2.00	0.75	0.318	2.10	0.75
	M	**63**	4.20	0.96						
10th students	F	**64**	4.12	1.02	-0.318	±2.00	0.75			
	M	**63**	4.20	0.96						

The analysis in Table#2 reveals no significant differences in perceptions of school management support across gender or stakeholder groups. The t-test results show that the t-calculated values are lower than the t-tabulated values, with P-values exceeding 0.05, indicating no significant gender-based differences among Administrators, Teachers, and Students (9th and 10th grades). Similarly, ANOVA results demonstrate that the F-calculated value (0.318) is lower than the F-tabulated value (2.10), with a P-value of 0.75, confirming no significant differences in perceptions among the stakeholder groups. This suggests consistent perceptions of school management support across all examined groups.

Table#3: To examine how students who participate in extracurricular activities perform academically compared to those who do not. (Inline objective 4)

Stakeholders	**Gender**	**B. extracurricular activities and academics**										**Total Responden**
		SA		**A**		**UD**		**DA**		**SDA**		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Administrator	**F**	10	40.0	8	32.0	2	8.00	3	6.00	2	8.00	**25**
	M	12	48.0	6	24.0	3	12.00	2	8.00	2	8.00	**25**
Teachers	**F**	14	35.0	15	37.5	3	7.5	5	12.5	3	7.5	**40**
	M	14	35.0	18	45.0	1	2.5	3	7.50	4	10.0	**40**
Students 9th	**F**	30	46.87	31	48.43	0	0.0	3	4.68	0	0.0	**64**
	M	29	40.68	26	41.26	3	4.76	0	0.0	5	7.93	**63**
Students 10th	**F**	28	44.44	27	42.85	4	6.34	2	3.17	1	1.58	**63**
	M	28	44.44	30	46.87	2	3.17	2	3.17	2	3.17	**64**

The data from Table #3 reveal that the majority of respondents from all stakeholder groups agree on the positive impact of extracurricular activities on academic performance. Among administrators, 40% of female respondents and 48% of male respondents strongly agreed, while 32% of females and 24% of males agreed. The responses from teachers showed that 35% of female and male respondents strongly agreed, with 37.5% of females and 45% of males agreeing. In the 9th-grade student

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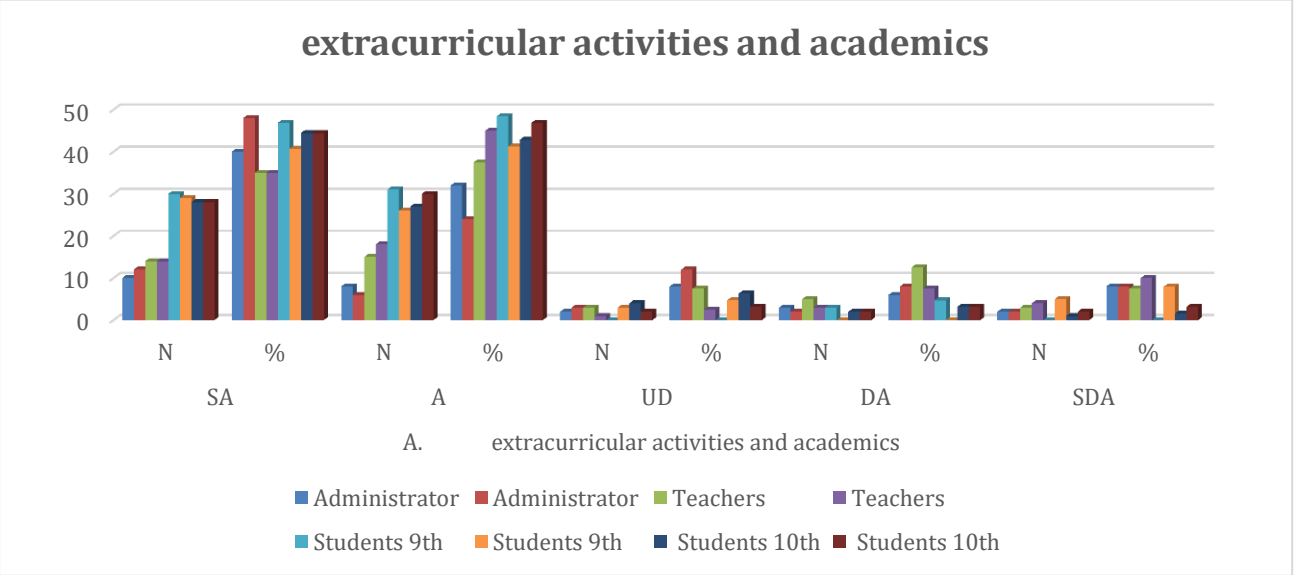
group, 46.87% of female students and 40.68% of male students strongly agreed, while 48.43% of females and 41.26% of males agreed. For 10th-grade students, 44.44% of females and males strongly agreed, with 42.85% of females and 46.87% of males agreeing.



Table#4 Comparison of Responses: To examine how students who participate in extracurricular activities perform academically compared to those who do not.

Stakeholders	Gender	extracurricular activities and academics			Comparison.					
					Gender			Stakeholders		
					The significant difference using the t-test			Stakeholders' differences: Using ANOVA		
		N	Mean	S. D	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P_{value}	F_{cal}	F_{tab}	P_{value}
Administer	F	25	3.19	1.34	1.98	±2.01	0.0019	1.19	3.92	0.276
	M	25	2.04	1.28						
Teachers	F	40	2.48	1.28	0.45	±1.99	0.654			
	M	40	2.60	1.30						
9th Students	F	64	2.09	0.63	1.90	±1.98	0.047			
	M	63	2.38	1.10						
10th students	F	64	2.14	0.91	1.14	±1.98	0.258			
	M	63	2.33	0.89						

Table #4 reveals that significant differences were observed in the responses of 9th-grade students, with both the t-test (p = 0.047) and ANOVA (p = 0.019) showing significant differences between genders and stakeholders regarding the impact of extracurricular

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activities on academic performance. For administrators, the t-test showed a significant difference ($p = 0.0019$) between genders, but ANOVA indicated no significant difference among stakeholders ($p = 0.276$). Similarly, no significant gender or stakeholder differences were found for teachers (t-test $p = 0.654$, ANOVA $p = 0.276$) or 10th-grade students (t-test $p = 0.258$, ANOVA $p = 0.275$), suggesting that the perceived impact of extracurricular activities on academics was largely consistent across these groups.

Discussions

Stakeholders expressed strong agreement regarding the supportive role of school management in extracurricular programs (Table 4.5). Female 9th-grade students (54.68%) and male 10th-grade students (51.56%) exhibited the highest levels of strong agreement, reflecting positive perceptions across demographic groups. Minimal negative responses highlight a consensus on the importance of management's role in fostering these programs. This finding corroborates earlier research that emphasised the critical role of institutional support in sustaining successful extracurricular initiatives (Eccles et al., 2003).

The absence of significant differences in stakeholder perceptions of school management support (Table 4.6) indicates uniform acknowledgement of its importance. Statistical analyses, including t-tests and ANOVA, showed consistent results with p-values exceeding 0.05. These findings suggest stakeholders share a unified view of management's role, underscoring the effectiveness of current institutional policies and practices.

Significant gender-based differences were observed in Table 4.8 for specific groups, such as administrators and 9th-grade students, where females reported more positive perceptions. This aligns with previous research suggesting that gender may influence attitudes toward academic and extracurricular engagement (Coleman, 2009). However, no significant differences were found for teachers or 10th-grade students, reflecting consistent perceptions in these groups. The findings suggest the need for targeted strategies to address gender-specific concerns and optimise the benefits of extracurricular activities.

Conclusions

The results reinforce the positive impact of extracurricular activities on academic performance and study habits, as well as the critical role of school management in facilitating these programs. While perceptions were generally consistent across stakeholders, minor gender-based differences warrant further investigation to address underlying factors and enhance program effectiveness.

Recommendation

Awareness campaigns highlighting the positive link between extracurricular activities and academic performance should be organised for students, parents, and teachers. This could help dispel misconceptions and encourage greater participation in these activities.

Institutions should conduct periodic evaluations of extracurricular programs to measure their effectiveness and impact on students' academic performance. Feedback from students, teachers, and administrators can guide improvements and ensure alignment with institutional goals.

Collaboration among students, teachers, and administrators should be encouraged to co-design and implement extracurricular activities. Such partnerships can help create

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programs that address diverse interests while maintaining a focus on academic enhancement.

Policies should be developed to integrate extracurricular activities with academic goals, ensuring they complement rather than detract from academic pursuits. Schools can explore innovative strategies such as project-based learning and co-curricular events to bridge the gap between academics and extracurricular engagement.

To build on the current findings, further research involving larger and more diverse samples should be conducted. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of extracurricular activities on academic performance and life skills development would provide valuable insights.

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