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Extracurricular Activities Amongst Health Colleges Students at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University

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Abstract

Objectives: To study the attitude of health colleges students about extracurricular activities.

Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted among 213 students, only 117 students responded. An online survey was sent to all students in the second-year health colleges at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (formally University of Dammam) in Saudi Arabia in 2015 (February-April). The survey consisted of two parts; Part I: Students participation in different activities, and Part II: consisted of questions about the barriers of participating in the extracurricular activities.

Results: The results showed that the participation percentage in extracurricular activities was low (9.6%). Students at the present study reported that the most common obstacle was the conflict with the classes. Students stated other factors such as; there were no incentive, not encouraged by faculty members to participate in extracurricular activities, no guidance for the activities and its objectives and that most of the activities are not attractive.

Conclusion: Engagement in extracurricular activities among health colleges student at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University was low. Obstacles should be addressed by the deanships of student affairs in order to enhance the involvement in extracurricular activity.

Keywords: extracurricular activities, health colleges Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University

1. Introduction

Involvement of students in extracurricular activities has been an area of interest in higher education over the past few decades. Astin (1984) described a highly involved student as one who devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, interacts frequently with faculty members and other students and participates actively in student organizations(Astin, 1984).

Research has shown that participation in extracurricular activities affects students' academic performance for undergraduate students. Extracurricular activities are activities that students participate in that do not fall into the realm of normal curriculum of colleges. They are totally voluntary so students who do not want to participate in them do not have to. More specifically, extracurricular activities develop general skills that are fundamental to students' overall success. The United States Department of Education conducted a study and concluded that "It was revealed that students who participate in extracurricular activities are three times more likely to have a grade point average of a 3.0 or higher. This is higher than students who did not participate in extracurricular activities. This is regardless of their previous background or achievement." (Stephens & Schaben, 2002). Furthermore, many studies have examined what specific factors influence students' academic achievement, and many activities were found to have a significant influence. The extracurricular activities have positive effects on students' behavior, grades, school completion, aspects to become successful adults, and development of social and leadership skills, self-confidence, satisfaction with college, and further success after college.

A healthy mind is in a healthy body. A healthy people would lead to better outcomes in life and the personal life would be more fulfilling. Warburton et al. (2007) stated that a good health and well-being can be maintained through engaging in any physical activity or exercise regime (Warburton, Katzmarzyk, Rhodes, & Shephard, 2007).

Extracurricular activity helps students develop the skills needed to succeed in the college environment. Several researches have reported multiple benefits of extracurricular activity participation in the increased development of positive outcomes, such as academic achievement, also improved satisfaction with college, higher retention rates, increased confidence in academic ability and a stronger drive to achieve as benefits of student involvement 3, and the reduction of negative outcomes, such a reduction in negative behaviors among adolescents, antisocial behaviors and sexual activity, and appear to be higher among those who are not involved in extracurricular activity (Mahoney, 2000).

Furthermore, extracurricular have positive effects on development of leadership skills and social, self-confidence, satisfaction with college, and further success after college (Huang & Chang, 2004). Although there are significant evidence that student participation influences the overall success, there is a widely held belief that such activities require too much time (Strapp & Farr, 2009). Researchers argue that the time students spend in extracurricular activities will ultimately distract them from academic work which can negatively impact their academic performance.

In Saudi Arabia, universities invested a great deal of manpower and money in support of extracurricular activities in an effort to foster student engagement but still there are lacks of adequate support, extracurricular research about the extracurricular activity among colleges' students, were comparable to students from other countries. The deficiency of information that integrates undergraduate students at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University suggests that there should be little student participation in extracurricular research activities. Therefore, it is necessary to study and evaluate the engagement in extracurricular activities from student perspective by examine the attitude of extracurricular activities directly with quantitative measurements, beyond the interpreted results of surveys. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the current situation of enhancing students' participations at the health colleges at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University by providing students with extracurricular activities. The research tries to answer the question of what is the attitude of health colleges students about extracurricular activities conducted at the health colleges at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

This cross-sectional study was conducted among second year male health college students at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Saudi Arabia in 2015 (February-April). At the time of study, a total of 213 students were enrolled at the second-year health colleges asked to respond to a survey related to extracurricular activities.

2.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed and validated by some colleagues in the department and by a psychometrician. It carried eleven questions related to the theme of the paper. The survey consisted of two parts that was developed based on a comprehensive literature review. Part I: students participation in different activities and Part II consisted of questions about the barriers of participating in the extracurricular activity. The survey was sent online to all students enrolled in the second year health colleges at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University. Among 213 students, only 117 students responded to the survey. The data were entered and analyzed using SPSS, version 22.

3. Results

There are five health colleges at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (College of Medicine, College of Dentistry, College of Nursing, College of Applied Medical Sciences, and College of Clinical Pharmacy). Most of the responses as shown in Figure 1came from the College of Medicine (43.59%) followed by the College of Clinical Pharmacy (25.64%), then the College of Nursing (23.93%). The responses from the College of Applied Medical Sciences and the College of Dentistry formed 6.83%.

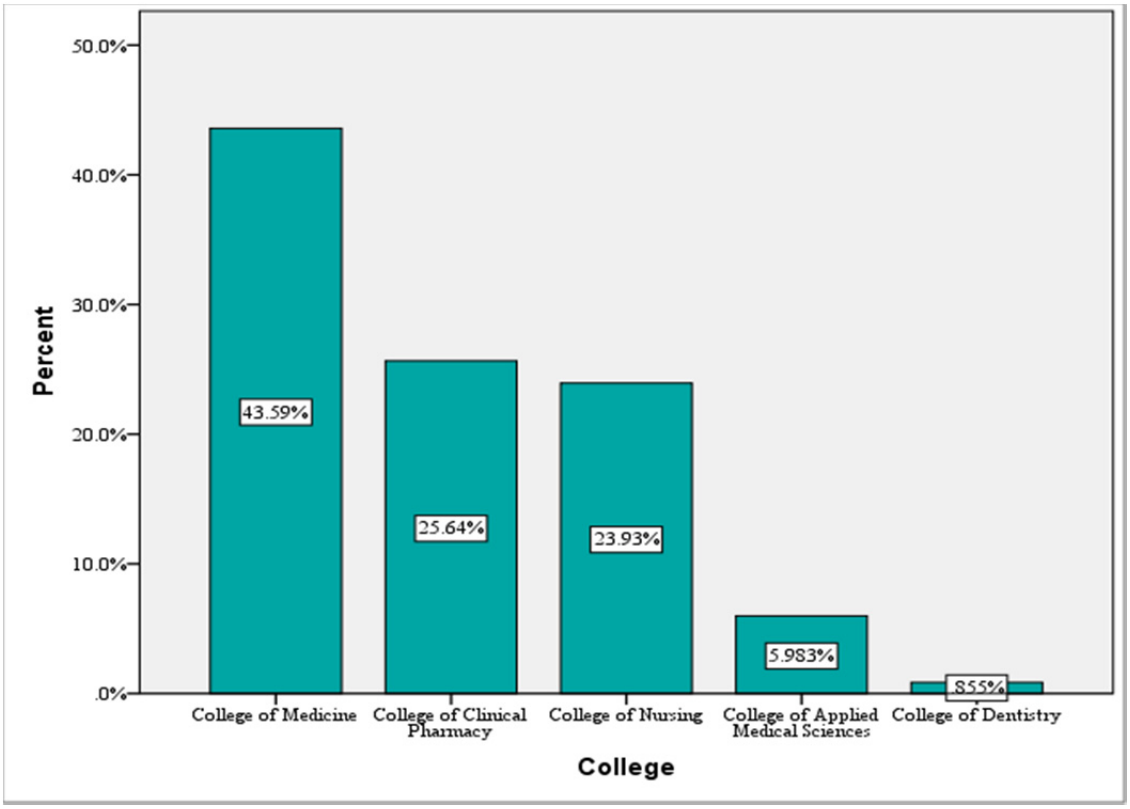

Figure 1. The Participating Health Colleges

The participating students were asked ten Yes/No questions about their involvement in the extracurricular activities, their responses were presented in Table 1. The first question was about whether the students participate in the extracurricular activities in their colleges, the response was that 90.4% said no. Even when there are ceremonies in the colleges, only 18.3% participate in those events. In the social activities, only 13.9% get involved in the activities. Students were also asked if they participate in the voluntary activities inside and outside their colleges, only 22.6% said they do participate.

Participants were also asked if the activities are related to the curriculum. 73.5% indicated that the activities are not related to their curriculum. Most of them (61.7%) think that extracurricular activities will help them a lot while study in college.

Table 1. Whether students participate in different activities

No.	Question	Yes	No
1.	Do you participate in the extracurricular activities conducted in your college?	9.6%	90.4%
2.	Do you participate in the weekly meeting for the Students Club in your college?	11.3%	88.7%
3.	Do you participate in the ceremonies of your college?	18.3%	81.7%
4.	Do you participate in any social activities?	13.9%	86.1%
5.	Do you participate in the workshops held at your college?	17.4%	82.6%
6.	Do you participate in the squad club at your college?	1.7%	98.3%
7.	Do you participate in the reading forum at your college?	7.8%	92.2%
8.	Do you participate in a long trip at your college?	100%	0
9.	Do you participate in the awareness weeks at your college?	18.4%	81.6%
10.	Do you participate in voluntary activities inside and outside your college?	22.6%	77.4%

The researchers in this study tried to find out the reasons that prevent students from getting involved in the different extracurricular activities around them, the reasons are presented in Table 2. The first main reason was that they have heavy load and time conflict with the activities times. The second reason was that there are no incentives for their participation. The third one was that they are not encouraged by their teachers to participate in the extracurricular activities. The other reasons are presented in table below.

Table 2. The Reasons that prevent students from participating in the different extracurricular activities

No.	Items	Percentage
1.	We have heavy load and time conflict with our classes	75.5%
2.	There are no incentives to participate in the activities	51.8%
3.	Students are not encouraged by faculty members to participate in the activities	49.1%
4.	There is no guide for the activities and its objectives	46.4%
5.	The activities are not attractive	45.5%
6.	Few appropriate places to do the activities	25.5%
7.	No desire to take responsibility for participation in any activity	23.6%
8.	No effective participation from faculty members in the college	19.1%
9.	Activities organizers are not qualified	19.1%
10	I believe that the activities are a waste of time	19.1%
11	The college is not the right place to do activities	13.6%
12	Hard administrative procedures to participate in the activities	13.6%
13	Weak budget allowance for the activities	12.7%
14	There are other activities outside the college	12.7%
15	Students are not encouraged by their family to participate in the activities	12.7%
16	No participation in the organization and preparation for the activities	11.8%
17	Inappropriate facilities for the activities	10%
18	I cannot participate in the activities for medical reasons	2.7%

4. Discussion

A primary concern, based upon the findings of present study was the participation rates in extracurricular activities low. Health colleges students at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University seem to spend most time engaged in their study. As indicated by the findings of this study, the low participation in extracurricular activities is due to the conflict with the classes as stated by the majority of students. Our finding was with consistent with previous study (Wang & Shiveley, 2009).

Second year health colleges (pre-clinic) at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University is the first oriented year after the preparatory year by which all students divided in to five colleges (Medicine, Dentistry, Clinical pharmacy, Applied medical science and Nursing), during this years, schedules is becoming more inflexible and make it more difficult to arrange extracurricular activities and most students at this level trying to study hard to succeed in medical college and get good grades.

Students in this study reported that among the obstacles there were no incentive, not encouraged by faculty members to participate inthe extracurricular activities, no guidance for the activities and its objectives and that the activities are not attractive. These are the main reasons that prevent students from participating in the extracurricular activities. The rest are technical reasons. Barriers for these activities should be addressed by the deanship of students' affairs at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in order to enhance extracurricular activities among the students.

Such findings should be taken into consideration since the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University as well as the other universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia invests a lot of money on students' extracurricular activities bidding that the various activities do enrich students' academic performance. Health students should be aware

about the importance of the engagement in different extracurricular activities with academic achievement (Alexander Jr, 2009), career earnings (Hu & Wolniak, 2010) and student motivation (Holloway, 2002). Health students will individually benefit from guidance about optimal levels of engagement in extracurricular activities. Moreover, participation in extracurricular activities provides college students with great chances connect and meet with other students, contribute to the campus and explore areas of interest and to expand their experiences beyond their health college's education.

Few studies have investigated the attitude and motivation for medical student participation in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, Astin (1984), argued that "for student learning and growth to take place, students need to actively engage in their environment". Student activities do indeed provide opportunities for students to become more engaged in their college environment (Astin, 1984).

Health related students were known to experience high levels of anxiety and stress (Dyrbye, Thomas, & Shanafelt, 2006), which often related to lack of free time and performance demands. Vice versa, it was found that lower anxiety and stress among medical students who volunteered, exercised, or spent time away from coursework (Chang et al., 2012).

Extracurricular activity, perhaps because they engage students in the academic culture, need more integration between the curricular and extracurricular activities since studies showed that the younger generation's orientation toward structured, team-based, adult-led activities (Howe & Strauss, 2009). There is also evidence that different social and cultural backgrounds can have a significant effect on participation and type of extra-curricular activities (Brown & Evans, 2002).

5. Conclusions

Engagement in extracurricular activities among health colleges student at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University was low. There was little guidance offered regarding such activities. Counseling should be provided during orientation about student engagement in extracurricular activity. Other obstacles should be addressed by the deanship of students' affairs in order to enhance the involvement in extracurricular activities. There is no doubt and based on many studies that there is a correlation between healthy body and positive mental performance. The benefits of well-designed and guided activities could serve the purpose very well.

6. Limitations

This survey has limitation as it was conducted in a single academic year and for one level (second-years students). Therefore, it should distribute to all levels of health colleges to have a wider view on students' attitude towards extracurricular activity.

7. Recommendation

An extra effort needs to be focused on guiding, recruiting, attracting students to participate in these various extracurricular activities to enhance their engagements and on integration and organization between curricular and extracurricular activities. Finally recommendations for future researches are needed to determine what motivates students with busy live outside university and to find out more about student stress related to participation in extracurricular activity.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest regarding the publication of the paper.

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