

Extracurricular Activities and Academic Performance: A Study of Preclinical Medical Students in Sri Lanka

Dissanayake D.M.G.C.^{1*}, Peiris T.T.R.¹, Thanujan S.¹, Abewardhane T.M.V.B.¹, Karunaratna W.M.M.S.¹, and Dias R.²

¹*Faculty of Medicine, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka*

**gayangee.cd@gmail.com*

Extracurricular activities (EA) offer a platform for fostering soft skills including teamwork, communication and time management, with the added benefit of stress relief. This study aimed to investigate the association between medical students' participation in EA at the university and their performance in the preclinical bar exam (2nd MBBS). This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at the Faculty of Medicine, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. A total of 145 students comprised the sample. The independent variables considered were participation or non-participation in university EA, gender and English competency level. The dependent variables included classes and the highest grades obtained in the 2nd MBBS exam. Data was collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Among the 145 students, the male-to-female ratio was 57 (39.31%): 88 (60.69%). Notably, 53.8% actively engaged in EA, with 59.64% of them being females. The pass rate for the 2nd MBBS exam on the first attempt was 83.4%, and 61.15% of those students' achieved classes. Among the students who earned classes, 59.45% had participated in EA. A statistically significant association was observed only in Physiology and EA ($p = 0.046$). Furthermore, out of the 70 students who received an A grade in English, 61 (87.14%) had engaged in EA. These results underscore the potential benefits of promoting EA along with English proficiency among university students, as higher participation in EA correlated with increased class achievement in the 2nd MBBS. In conclusion, while a statistically significant association was established solely for Physiology and EA, the study demonstrates that medical students who actively participate in university EA tend to perform better academically than their non-participating counterparts.

Keywords: *Academic performance, Extracurricular activities, Medical students, Preclinical*