

Extracurricular Club Engagement and Academic Performance among Undergraduates of the University of Calabar: A Philosophical Inquiry into Plato's Duality Idealism

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study investigated the connection between extracurricular club participation and academic performance among undergraduate students at the University of Calabar, utilizing Plato's Duality Idealism as a theoretical framework. Three primary objectives guided the research: determining the correlation between club involvement and academic outcomes, assessing how various club types affect academic achievement, and evaluating students' capacity to balance intellectual and social engagements through Plato's philosophical perspective. A descriptive survey design was employed, with 300 undergraduates selected via stratified random sampling. Data collection utilized a structured, validated questionnaire, and analysis involved Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and regression techniques. Findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between extracurricular participation and academic performance ($r = 0.362, p < 0.05$). ANOVA results indicated that club type significantly influenced academic outcomes ($F(3, 296) = 4.212, p = 0.006$), while regression analysis demonstrated that the ability to balance academic and extracurricular demands significantly predicted academic success ($\beta = 0.335, p = 0.000$). These outcomes support Plato's idealist perspective that harmonizing intellectual and practical dimensions is essential for holistic development. Recommendations include structured student engagement policies, time management training, and incorporating philosophical guidance into orientation programs.

Keywords: Club Activities, Academic Behavior, Influence, University Students.

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INTRODUCTION

University education extends beyond academic instruction to encompass comprehensive student development. A crucial element of this holistic growth is involvement in extracurricular activities, particularly club memberships, which are thought to shape students' cognitive abilities, social

competencies, and personal outcomes. At the University of Calabar, numerous student organizations—including academic societies, social clubs, religious assemblies, and cultural groups—offer platforms for creative expression, leadership cultivation, and social networking. Nevertheless, while these extracurricular pursuits enrich the



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student experience, ongoing questions persist regarding their influence on academic achievement.

This investigation applies Plato’s Duality Idealism, which distinguishes between the realm of ideal forms (intellect and reason) and the material world (physical actions and desires). This philosophical framework enables a critical examination of how students reconcile intellectual endeavors (academic performance) with social or practical engagements (extracurricular activities). The study explores whether harmony or conflict between these domains affects academic outcomes among University of Calabar undergraduates.

University life, while memorable, can be demanding. It represents a critical developmental period for late adolescents and young adults. Social factors, including club involvement, have been shown to affect students’ academic behavior through time demands and psychological impacts. The central question involves how students can effectively balance academic pressures with club commitments and whether club activities potentially shape learners’ academic conduct at the University of Calabar.

The consequences of social activities on students can influence moral, spiritual, and academic dimensions. This complexity arises partly from various societal challenges. The university hosts numerous groups with both shared and distinct objectives, functioning within a larger social system characterized by defined structures, communication networks, and specific goals. Non-conformity to institutional regulations necessitates mechanisms for social control, underscoring that social engagements carry consequences.

Based on researchers’ observations, university students exhibit diverse motivations for enrollment. Some seek admission seeking freedom from parental supervision, leading to misplaced priorities. Rather than focusing on academic excellence, such students invest time in unproductive activities—visiting friends, attending social events, leisure walking, frequenting eateries, watching television, and peer interaction. Conversely, other students engage in social activities like clubs at controlled levels to

mitigate potential negative impacts on academic performance.

Plato emphasized balancing intellectual and social development, advocating for physical education, music, and other activities to develop character and produce well-rounded individuals. His philosophy underscores education’s role in shaping young minds.

Historically, educators expressed skepticism about extracurricular participation, believing schools should focus exclusively on academic tasks. Non-academic activities were viewed as primarily recreational and potentially detrimental to academic achievement (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Recently, educational practitioners and researchers have shown increased interest in this area, recognizing that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” Evidence suggests extracurricular activities may positively influence life skills development and academic accomplishments (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). It is evident that extracurricular activities such as club membership influence academic behavior.

Influence of Club Activities on Academic Behavior

College and university students have participated in various clubs and organizations for generations, from political groups to social clubs and associations.

Gayle and Hu (2009) found that social activities positively impact learning and personal development among undergraduates. Conversely, Lei (2007) identified a significant negative correlation between campus involvement and overall academic achievement. The influence of club activities on academic behavior is substantial. Extracurricular activities positively affect students’ academic conduct, enhancing behavior and achievement (Anjum, 2021). This research indicates that extracurricular engagement leads to improved communication skills, enhanced academic performance, and better interpersonal relationships with both adults and peers.

Paulino’s (2011) Philippine-based research revealed a strong correlation between high school students’

extracurricular involvement and academic achievement. The study demonstrated that participation significantly influences cognitive and emotional development, educational effectiveness, and satisfaction. This suggests that through club involvement, students discover beneficial impacts and acquire knowledge beyond conventional classroom instruction, manifesting in improved behavior, academic performance, and successful adult development.

Plato advocated for education beginning at age seven, with early years devoted to play with peers and mothers. He proposed that the first decade should emphasize physical education, requiring gymnasiums and playgrounds to develop children’s health and disease resistance. Plato also recommended music to refine character and bring grace and health to both soul and body. He prescribed subjects including mathematics, history, and science. For Plato, educational content encompassed gymnastics, literature, music, and mathematics—indicating his support for extracurricular engagement as essential for developing well-rounded individuals.

Plato’s philosophical concepts connect to the relationship between club activities and academic behavior. He believed socialization and community are essential for individual development. Club activities encourage peer interaction, social skill development, and relationship building—factors positively influencing academic behavior. Plato advocated experiential learning, where students learn through practical experiences. Club activities provide opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge practically, fostering deeper understanding and potentially enhancing academic performance. He believed education should cultivate virtues including wisdom, courage, and justice. Club activities develop these virtues through leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving opportunities. Plato also advocated balancing intellectual and physical pursuits; club activities can provide this balance, improving overall well-being and academic behavior.

Conversely, Plato’s philosophy also illuminates potential negative influences of club activities. He believed knowledge and wisdom pursuit should be education’s primary focus. Excessive club

involvement may distract students from academic responsibilities, leading to intellectual neglect. In “The Republic,” Plato warned about youth corruption through excessive pleasure and desire indulgence. Similarly, clubs emphasizing socializing or entertainment might corrupt students’ values and priorities, negatively impacting academic behavior. He believed education should develop mind and soul rather than merely body. Club activities overemphasizing physical or emotional pursuits might lead students to neglect academic responsibilities and intellectual development. Plato recognized peer pressure’s powerful influence on youth. Club activities can create social pressures causing students to prioritize relationships over academic responsibilities, potentially harming academic behavior. In Plato’s ideal society, community plays a central role in guiding youth development. Club activities serve as micro-communities where students learn cooperation, discipline, and leadership—qualities Plato viewed as essential for just and virtuous living. He emphasized habituation—practicing virtues through repeated action. Structured club activities with mentorship provide repeated opportunities to practice responsibility, teamwork, and commitment. Plato warned that associating with inappropriate influences could lead youth astray—relevant to how clubs may positively or negatively affect students depending on their values and culture. Plato might argue that well-guided club activities support virtue cultivation and rational soul order, thus enhancing academic behavior, while poorly structured or hedonistic groups might distract from intellectual pursuits and moral growth.

Recognizing that social activities carry potential adverse influences and that students cannot be prevented from participation, some universities intervene to ensure productive engagement. At Hoosier University, monthly evaluations were administered to freshmen via email, assessing group involvement, academic progress, and skills applicable to academics. Evaluations were also completed by club advisors, presidents, and executive boards to verify legitimate active involvement. Non-compliance resulted in consequences: initial offenses required meetings

with student activities directors; second offenses incurred \$75 fees; third offenses necessitated meetings with the president and provost regarding possible academic suspension. Additionally, freshmen could leave groups with adequate justification but had two weeks to join alternative organizations. Semester grades were examined in December to identify differences. At the University of Topeka, operations proceeded normally with consistent involvement levels. Academic records were maintained each semester, with GPAs tabulated and recorded. The same policies implemented at Hoosier University were applied. Upon graduation, GPAs from both universities were calculated to determine averages and compared to entering GPAs.

Unfortunately, Nigerian public universities lack such formal social organization structures. Though numerous informal and formal clubs exist, they operate without monitoring or control, explaining why many Nigerian undergraduates engage in activities adversely affecting their academics.

Welbeck (2008) noted that club activities have long been recognized for enhancing school experience and developing students' social skills across universities and secondary schools. Beyond creating school culture and promoting school spirit, club activities relate to academic behavior development, responsibility cultivation, ability and interest discovery, self-discipline, and leadership skills. While activities vary, they share goals including education, psychosocial development, recreation, and career awareness. Club activities educate students by providing appropriate environments for study and quiet time. Leadership develops through involvement with others; club activities provide opportunities to understand diverse attitudes, skills, and talents while working toward common goals. Furthermore, club activities provide personal belonging and school integration, fostering accomplishment feelings (Wela & Kharn, 2009).

Ferton (2009) investigated the correlation between club activities and university students' learning outcomes using descriptive surveys and structured questionnaires. Findings revealed that club activities relate to learning outcomes, with academic clubs such as debate teams helping students develop

memory retention and perform at high levels. Club culture motivates, encourages, and heightens intellectual abilities. However, the study noted that many Nigerian tertiary institution students engage in antisocial behaviors and gangsterism rather than positive club activities, resulting in underachievement, dropout, and failure. The study concluded that students' motives for joining clubs and club goals predict whether participation improves academic performance.

Regarding potential negative impacts, Reeves (2008) determined that parents and teachers may fear students losing academic focus when overcommitted to out-of-school activities. Excessive rehearsals, practices, and meetings may reduce homework time. Overscheduled students may spread themselves too thin, leading to reduced study time and class preparation. Another drawback occurs when parents push children into excessive activities, scheduling piano lessons, soccer, youth groups, scouts, and dance classes to fill every evening. This may impact not only academic success but also dedication to each activity, especially if participation is not voluntary. Thompson (2008) noted that commitment level matters more than specific activities. Overscheduling can affect academics, commitment, and emotional and physical well-being, potentially causing stress, fatigue, and burnout. These studies collectively highlight the nuanced impact of club activities on undergraduate academic behavior, emphasizing balanced involvement and institutional support importance.

Statement of the Problem

Examination failures are occasionally observed, often attributed purely to academic factors. Some attribute such failures to students' social activities outside academics while inadequately considering integral learner development needs. This study examines the extent to which club and social activities contribute to University of Calabar students' examination performance regarding motivation, time management, and academic behavior.

Purpose of the Study

1. To determine the relationship between undergraduate participation in extracurricular club activities and academic performance.
2. To examine how different types of extracurricular club activities (academic, social, religious) influence academic achievement.
3. To analyze the balance between academic responsibilities and extracurricular involvement through Plato’s Duality Idealism framework.

academic performance among undergraduates.

2. Different extracurricular club activity categories do not significantly influence students’ academic performance.
3. There is no significant association between students’ ability to balance academics and extracurricular engagement and their academic achievement, as interpreted through Plato’s Duality Idealism.

Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between extracurricular club activity participation and academic performance among University of Calabar undergraduates?
2. How do different extracurricular club categories influence students’ academic achievement?
3. How can Plato’s duality idealism concept be applied to understand the academic-extracurricular balance among university students?

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design. The population comprised all full-time undergraduate students at the University of Calabar during the 2023/2024 academic session. The university features diverse student involvement across various extracurricular clubs and organizations. A sample of 300 undergraduates was selected using stratified random sampling.

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire. Internal consistency was determined using Cronbach’s Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high reliability. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) summarized demographic data and club participation patterns. Hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level.

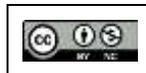
Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between extracurricular club activity participation and

Results

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	140	46.7
	Female	160	53.3
Level of Study	100 Level	60	20.0
	200 Level	75	25.0



	300 Level	90	30.0
	400 Level	75	25.0
Type of Club Joined	Academic	90	30.0
	Social	75	25.0
	Religious	60	20.0
	Cultural	75	25.0

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics of the 300 participants. Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 46.7% male and 53.3% female students. This slight female majority reflects current enrollment trends in Nigerian higher education.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between participation in extracurricular club activities and academic performance among undergraduates.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Club Participation and Academic Performance

Variables	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Club Participation Score	18.2	4.15	0.362	0.000*
Academic Performance (CGPA)	3.12	0.45		

Table 2 shows a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between club participation and academic performance ($r = 0.362$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Different categories of extracurricular club activities do not significantly influence students' academic performance.

Table 3: ANOVA Result – Club Type and Academic Performance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	3.145	3	1.048	4.212	0.006*
Within Groups	73.122	296	0.247		

Total	76.267	299			
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Table 3 indicates an F-value of 4.212 with $p = 0.006$ (< 0.05), demonstrating that academic performance differences based on club type are statistically significant. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant association between students’ ability to balance academics and extracurricular engagement and academic achievement, as interpreted through Plato’s Duality Idealism.

Table 4: Regression Analysis – Balancing Academics and Extracurricular Engagement as Predictor of Academic Performance

Model	B	SE	β	t	p-value
Constant	2.511	0.213	—	11.78	0.000
Balance Index Score	0.278	0.062	0.335	4.48	0.000*

$$R^2 = 0.112, F(1, 298) = 20.07, p = 0.000^*$$

Table 4 reveals that the Balance Index—representing students’ perceived harmony between intellectual (academic) and material/social (extracurricular) pursuits—significantly predicts academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate a significant relationship between extracurricular club activity participation and academic performance among University of Calabar undergraduates. Pearson correlation analysis yielded a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.362, p = 0.000$), indicating that actively engaged students tend to perform better academically. This contradicts assumptions that such activities distract from academics and supports the view that club involvement may enhance time management, social

skills, and intellectual engagement—factors reinforcing academic success.

ANOVA results revealed that extracurricular club type significantly affects academic performance ($F(3, 296) = 4.212, p = 0.006$). This suggests variable impacts: students in academic and religious clubs may benefit more cognitively and structurally than those in purely social or cultural groups. This aligns with Plato’s Duality Idealism, which emphasizes intellectual pursuits (ideal forms) over mere material or sensual experiences. Students whose extracurricular activities complement rather than compete with academic goals appear to achieve healthier balance contributing positively to academic outcomes.

Regression analysis reinforced this perspective, showing that balancing academic demands with extracurricular commitments significantly predicts academic performance ($\beta = 0.335, t = 4.48, p =$



0.000). The model accounted for 11.2% of academic performance variance ($R^2 = 0.112$), demonstrating that balanced engagement—measured by a Balance Index reflecting Plato’s philosophical dualism—is a meaningful academic success factor. This supports the interpretation that students internalizing idealistic harmony between intellect (academic work) and practice (extracurricular engagement) are more likely to thrive academically.

Conclusion

Literature review reveals researcher consensus regarding club activities’ influence on academic behavior. Club activities significantly affect university students’ academic behavior.

This study establishes that engaging in social activities such as clubs leads to enhanced communication skills, improved academic performance, and better interpersonal relationships. Some authors, including Plato, emphasize including social/extracurricular activities in school curricula and maintaining balance between social/extracurricular and academic time. However, excessive extracurricular involvement may lead to overscheduling, pushing some students too far and potentially causing burnout. Schools should implement longitudinal monitoring of student participation to determine impacts on academic behavior.

School authorities should monitor students’ social activity participation to help balance social and academic time. Excessive time spent on social activities negatively affects academics and may lead to failure. As Plato recommended, balance between extracurricular activities and academic behavior is essential.

Recommendations

1. Students should evaluate club activities’ relevance to their personal and academic goals.
2. Universities should provide orientation and counseling on balancing academics with extracurricular activities.

3. Students should learn to establish clear boundaries, time schedules, and academic priorities.
4. Parents should avoid compelling children to participate in club activities they do not genuinely desire.
5. School authorities and parents should discourage excessive extracurricular involvement to prevent burnout and potential academic failure.

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