

A Case Study On The Role Of Student Clubs And Organizations In Enhancing Academic Performance In Higher Education

A. V. L. Chandima

Department of Information Technology

Advanced Technological Institute - Colombo

Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education – Sri Lanka

Abstract

Student clubs and organizations form an essential part of the higher education environment and are known to influence students' academic and personal development. Although widely acknowledged, the direct relationship between student involvement and academic performance remains insufficiently explored. This case study investigates how participation in student clubs influences academic achievement within a mid-sized university. Using mixed methods, including surveys, interviews, and document analysis, the study identifies positive correlations between club involvement and GPA, as well as improvements in time management, academic confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging. The study concludes that student organizations significantly enhance academic outcomes, and it recommends institutional strategies to promote structured and balanced student participation.

Key Word: Student Organizations, Academic Performance, Co-Curricular Activities, Extracurricular Involvement, Higher Education, Student Engagement, Leadership Development, Student Retention, Peer Learning, Holistic Development

Introduction

Student engagement is widely recognized as a core determinant of academic success in higher education. Institutions increasingly promote co-curricular activities as integral components of holistic student development. Student clubs and organizations, whether academic, cultural, social, or leadership-focused serve as platforms for interpersonal growth, skill building, and academic reinforcement.

While considerable research explores student engagement generally, comparatively fewer studies examine how involvement in campus organizations directly impacts academic performance. This paper addresses this gap by conducting a case study within a higher education institution to investigate the relationship between student involvement and academic achievement. The study aims to contribute empirically grounded insights that can inform academic policy, student affairs programming, and institutional practice.

Background and Rationale

▪ Student Engagement in Higher Education

Astin's Theory of Involvement argues that student learning and development are directly proportional to the quality and quantity of their involvement in college life 1. Similarly, Tinto's Model of Student Retention emphasizes social and academic integration as critical to persistence and achievement 2. Student clubs are key vehicles of such integration.

• Purpose of Student Clubs and Organizations

Student organizations provide multiple benefits, including:

- Academic enrichment through tutoring, workshops, and study groups
- Leadership development
- Social support and belonging
- Cultural understanding and identity formation
- Opportunities for creativity and collaboration

These benefits suggest potential positive effects on academic performance, though the strength of this relationship requires further investigation.

Rationale for the Study

Despite the popularity of student clubs, some argue that heavy involvement may distract from academics. This study seeks to empirically assess whether student organizations enhance or hinder academic performance and to identify the mechanisms through which improvement occur.

Literature Review

Recent empirical studies continue to reinforce the role of student clubs, co-curricular and extracurricular activities in supporting academic success and holistic student development. A 2025 meta-analysis found a *significant positive association* between a student's sense of belonging at university and academic outcomes (correlation $r \approx 0.20$), as well as stronger associations with well-being ($r \approx 0.40$) [1]. This suggests that social integration — often facilitated by student clubs — offers both psychological and academic benefits.

In a 2024 study, researchers investigated how structured “freshman learning communities” (a form of organized co-curricular grouping) affected first-year university students. The findings indicated improved academic performance for students who were part of these communities, pointing to the value of peer support, academic socialization, and collaborative learning from the outset of higher education [2].

Another 2023 study examined the dynamics behind participation in extracurricular activities, finding that individual factors such as autonomous motivation, cognitive engagement, and self-regulation predicted stronger involvement in clubs. The authors argue that when involvement is internally motivated and cognitively engaged, the likely benefits extend beyond social gains toward improved academic and professional readiness [3].

Moreover, a 2024 quantitative–qualitative study of co- and extra-curricular engagement across multiple institutions showed that students involved in such activities performed better academically than non-participants, and also demonstrated enhanced behavioral, social, and affective development.[4] The study

noted higher class attendance, greater educational satisfaction, and improvements in leadership and teamwork skills among participants.

On the other hand, recent research also highlights challenges. A 2024 investigation of English-language extracurricular activities identified time constraints and personal obstacles as the main barriers preventing many students from participating, implying that benefits are contingent upon students' capacity to balance responsibility, time, and academic demands effectively [5].

Taken together, these recent studies illustrate a consistent pattern: when student club involvement is motivated, supported by community belonging, and balanced with academic responsibilities, it positively correlates with academic performance, retention, and students' social-emotional well-being. Institutional support and careful structuring of such programs appear critical to maximizing the benefits while mitigating potential overload or exclusion.

Methodology

Data Collection

This study adopted a mixed-method case study approach. Quantitative data were collected through surveys, and qualitative insights were gathered through interviews and document analysis.

Target group

A total of 110 undergraduate students completed the survey. Twenty participants were selected for in-depth interviews based on varying levels of organizational involvement.

Data Collection Instruments

1. Survey questionnaire measuring GPA, involvement level, study habits, and perceived academic effects
2. Semi-structured interviews gathering detailed reflections
3. Document analysis of club event reports, academic initiatives, and participation data

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Qualitative interview data were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and relationships.



Results and Findings

Levels of Student Involvement

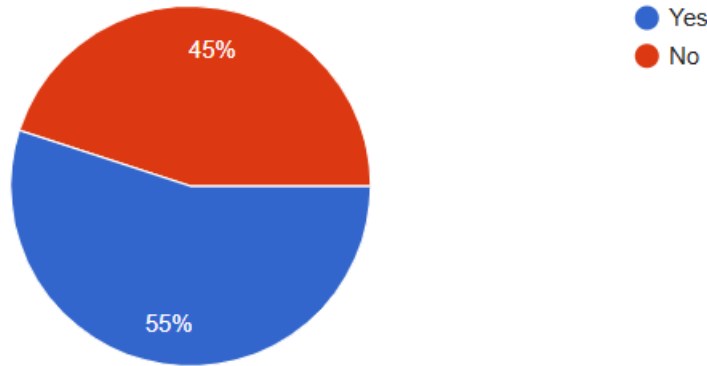


Figure1: Student Involvement

Results revealed that:

- 56% of students belonged to at least one club
- 46% Not belonged to any club

Relationship Between Involvement and Academic Performance

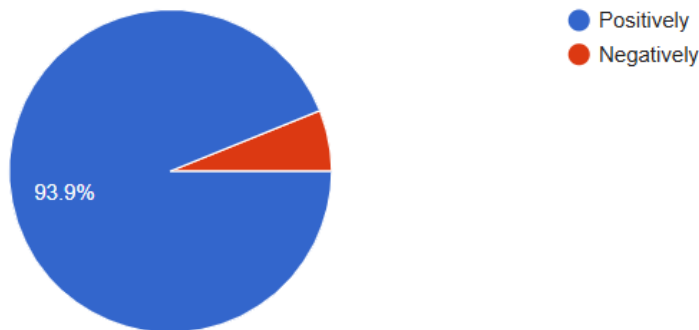


Figure 2: Relationship of Academic

Survey findings showed a positive correlation between involvement and Academic Performances. Students who participated in clubs reported a higher performance among non-participants. Students in academic or professional societies had the highest Academic Performances.

Interview data revealed that club participation supported academic performance through:

- Peer mentoring
- Shared study resources
- Academic workshops
- Increased motivation and accountability

Development of Academic-Related Soft Skills

Participants reported improvements in:

- Time management
- Organization
- Leadership
- Communication
- Problem-solving

These skills enhanced their ability to manage coursework and succeed academically.

Social and Psychological Benefits

Students described improved well-being due to:

- Stronger sense of belonging
- Reduced academic stress
- Better integration into the university community

These factors contributed indirectly to improved academic performance.

Challenges Reported

Some students (15%) reported:

- Over-commitment
- Stress from demanding leadership roles
- Conflicts between club duties and academics

However, most students adapted through improved time management or reduced involvement during peak academic periods.

Discussion

Positive Academic Effects of Student Organization Participation

The findings confirm that club involvement enhances academic performance through academic support, resource sharing, and development of study-related skills. Clubs serve as extensions of the educational environment.

Role of Leadership in Academic Growth

Leadership roles provided students with advanced skills related to discipline, responsibility, and communication, all of which correlate with higher academic performance.

Importance of Social Integration

Echoing Tinto's work, the study demonstrates that social belonging fosters academic engagement and persistence.

Balancing Involvement

Although involvement is largely beneficial, monitoring commitment levels is essential to prevent overload and ensure academic priorities remain central.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that participation in student clubs and organizations positively influences academic performance in higher education. Benefits include improved GPA, enhanced soft skills, increased motivation, and stronger social integration. While over-involvement carries risks, balanced participation significantly enriches students' academic experiences. Institutions should invest in structures that encourage meaningful engagement to promote academic success and holistic student development.

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