



Voices from the Margins: Students' Perception of the Value of their Extracurricular Talents

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19562398

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the perception of students of Tanjay City Science High School (TCSHS) on the significance of their extracurricular talents in an academically focused learning institution. In most Philippine schools, academic performance is often emphasized as the primary gauge of success among students, which may result in the under-emphasis of talents in arts, sports, music, and leadership skills. This study, underpinned by Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, aims to examine students' perception of their non-academic talents and its effects on their self-confidence, motivation, and self-identity. A qualitative phenomenological study was utilized in gathering data from students of TCSHS who are actively engaged in extracurricular activities. The study employed Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis of data gathered from semi-structured interviews of purposely selected students from TCSHS. The study identified five key themes: positive engagement, skill, performance development, character growth, social connection and collaboration, self-discovery, and identity formation. For instance, students found extracurricular activities to be enjoyable and fulfilling experiences that offered a meaningful counterbalance to academic pressures. These activities contributed to the development of discipline, confidence, resilience, teamwork, and communication skills. Most importantly, students discovered more about themselves and understood their potential through extracurricular activities. Therefore, it is concluded that extracurricular activities significantly contribute to the overall development of students in academically competitive environments. Significance of Study: The study is significant in highlighting the importance of recognizing diverse student talents and promoting school programs that support student development in both academic and non-academic areas.

Keywords: Students Perception, Extracurricular Talents, Self-Value, Self-Worth, Talent Recognition

Introduction

Here in the Philippines, students are often valued mainly for their academic performance. Schools, parents, and society generally place heavy emphasis on grades, standardized tests, and achievements in core subjects such as mathematics, science, and language. Merit-based systems such as scholarships and academic honors strengthened this by recognizing students who excel in their studies (Bernardo, 2019). As a result, students who possess valuable skills in fields like journalism, arts, sports, music and other creative pursuits may feel undervalued or overlooked.

This focus on academics has been part of Philippine educational culture, shaped by old practices and today's expectations. From a young age, students are trained to value memorization, drills, and doing well on tests. Because



of this, many people believe that high grades show intelligence and a bright future for success, while students who find academic subjects difficult are sometimes judged unfairly. In this kind of school environment, talents in arts, sports, music, and journalism often don't get the same attention or are seen as less important (UNESCO, 2020).

Critics point out that the strong focus on grades and honors creates pressure and may limit students' creativity, overall development, and emotional well-being (Opinyon, 2021).

Within this framework, students may feel intense pressure to meet academic expectations, which can limit their opportunities to develop their own talents. Although strong performance in core subjects is important, an overly rigid focus on academics can accidentally discourage students from their interests where they may naturally thrive. As a result, students whose strengths fall outside traditional academic areas may not feel good enough or start to lose self-worth, as their abilities receive less recognition within the school setting. This dynamic can impact their motivation, confidence, and overall sense of belonging in the school community (Gardner, 2011).

Students at Tanjay City Science High School (TCSHS) often face this challenge. Since the school emphasizes strong academic excellence, skills in areas such as arts, sports, and literature may receive limited support and acknowledgment. While academic performance remains important, it does not fully capture the range of a student's full potential and talents. This academic centered perspective can shape how students with strengths beyond traditional subjects understand and value their abilities. Examining how these learners perceive their extracurricular skills is essential for understanding their ability, self-confidence, and motivation in an academically focused environment.

While numerous studies examine the focus on academic achievement in Philippine schools, there is limited research on how students with strengths in non-academic areas perceive their value in academically competitive environments. There is insufficient understanding about how students in science-focused schools, such as TCSHS, develop their identity and sense of self-worth when their talents lie outside traditional academic measures. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating how TCSHS students interpret the value and evaluate the significance of their non-academic abilities within an academic-centered system.

These study on TCSHS students whose talents beyond academics receive limited recognition and whose skills are often overlooked. Examining how their skills are perceived and valued within a classroom setting and how this affects their sense of identity.

According to Yohana et al. (2020), the school environment, such as the provision of extracurricular organizations like clubs, groups, and programs, and the level of support provided by their teachers and parents, is considered an essential factor in the development of the non-academic talents of the students. Their work, "School Environment and Support as Factors in Developing Students' Non-Academic Talents," emphasized the importance of the provision of institutional encouragement in the development of the non-academic talents of the students. It showed that through the provision of enough extracurricular programs, the students are able to explore different activities that will enable them to develop their talents. Through these exploratory activities, the students are gradually able to build their confidence in themselves as they are recognized for their non-academic talents.

Yohana et al. (2020) work is very much related to the present study, as they emphasize the role of the school environment in the awareness and appreciation of the students' talents. In the competitive academic environment, as in the case of the TCSHS, the primary importance of the students' academic performance is emphasized. This could lead to the feeling of the students, particularly those whose talents are outside the academic environment, that their talents and abilities are not as appreciated as their academic performance. It emphasized the role of the school conditions in the development of the students' non-academic talents is very important in the understanding of the perceptions of the students. Based on Yohana et al. (2020), the level of the students' appreciation of their extracurricular abilities could depend greatly on the level of encouragement they receive.

Recent Philippine studies highlight the important role of extracurricular activities in shaping students' personal development and appreciation of non-academic talents. A study of De Vera and Queroda (2020) entitled "Effects of Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities on Intermediate Pupils" revealed that there is a positive impact of participation in extracurricular activities on the discipline, motivation, and social skills of students. Although this



study is focused on elementary pupils, it is essential to consider its implications on recognizing and appreciating the talents of students at an early stage of education. This study is related to the present study "Voices from the Margins: Students' Perception on the Value of Their Extracurricular Talents" as it supports the idea of recognizing the positive impact of participation in extracurricular activities on the growth of students and appreciating talents that may not be recognized through academic achievements.

The study that was done by Khan et al. (2022) entitled "The Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Students' Academic Performance and Development" showed that students who were involved in extracurricular activities showed better academic engagement and confidence compared to students who did not partake in extracurricular activities. This is relevant to the current study since it shows how extracurricular activities help in the academic and personal development of students. In addition, the current study focuses on how students perceive and value their extracurricular talents since it is essential for their development and confidence.

The study carried out by Fredricks and Eccles (2018), titled "Adolescents' Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Identity Development," focused on understanding how adolescents' participation in extracurricular activities affects their motivation, identity formation, and engagement in school. From the longitudinal study carried out by Fredricks and Eccles, it is evident that adolescents who consistently participated in organized extracurricular activities showed an increase in self-definition, competence, and motivation in school. From this study, it is evident that there is an environment within an extracurricular activity where an adolescent is able to form an identity and understand his or her abilities, even when such abilities may not be recognized within a traditional academic environment. Such a study is directly related to the current study, as it is evident that participation in an extracurricular activity plays an essential role in an adolescent's formation of self-identity. Furthermore, it is evident that the current study is related to the study carried out as it is focused on understanding how an adolescent is able to perceive the value of his or her extracurricular talents and how it plays a role in his or her self-identity.

In the United Kingdom, Bohnert, Fredricks, and Randall (2017) carried out a study whose title was "Patterns of Extracurricular Involvement and Adolescent Socio-Emotional Adjustment." The study focused on exploring the impacts of participation in organized extracurricular activities like sports teams, arts organizations, and clubs by students. The study found that students who took part in extracurricular activities showed higher levels of self-esteem, improved relationships with others, and enhanced social skills compared to those who did not participate in such activities. The study noted that in extracurricular activities, there is a conducive environment where students can enhance their self-esteem and build relationships with others. This study is relevant to the present study in that it shows that extracurricular activities are platforms where students can showcase their talents and strengths, which may not always be evident in classwork. Similarly, the present study aims to explore how students view the significance of their talents developed in extracurricular activities.

The primary focus of many educational institutions is academic achievement as a measure of students' success. As a result, other talents developed through school-related activities are sometimes undervalued or overlooked. Many students recognize that arts, sports, leadership, cultural involvement, and community engagement play an important role in shaping their identity and personal growth. However, some educational institutions still place greater emphasis on academic performance and may not fully recognize these skills.

Because of this situation, some students may feel that their talents do not meet the institution's definition of success. This may affect their motivation, sense of belonging, and self-perception. Although many schools promote the idea of holistic education, limited research has explored how students with talents beyond academics' experience recognition within an academic-centered environment. As a result, little is known about how this reality influences students' perceptions of themselves and the value of their abilities.

The purpose of this study is to address this issue by examining students' perspectives regarding the recognition and value of their non-academic skills.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do students describe their experiences in extracurricular activities?
2. What skills do students believe they developed through participation?
3. How do extracurricular activities contribute to students' self-discovery and identity?



Methodology

This section discusses the research methods and techniques used in the research. It includes research design, research environment, research participants, research instrument, and strategies used to establish trustworthiness. These research methods and techniques were selected to effectively explore the experiences of the students regarding the value of their non-academic talents from an academically centered point of view.

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was employed to carry out this research and understand the actual experiences of the students on the perceived value of their talents outside the classroom in an academically centered school setting.

Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to explore the lived experiences of individuals and understand the ways they make sense of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike other research approaches that emphasize the importance of numbers, the phenomenological research methodology seeks to explore the personal stories and ways people make sense of their experiences on a shared phenomenon.

Phenomenology was appropriate to be employed in this research study to explore the ways students experience the recognition or non-recognition of their non-academic talents, which include their skills in the arts, sports, leadership, and other non-academic activities outside the classroom. In academically centered schools like TCSHS students may develop their perceptions of self-worth based on how their talents are recognized or overlooked within the academic-centered school community.

Phenomenological research is particularly appropriate for studies that aim to understand how individuals interpret their lived experiences and construct meaning from social and educational environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019; Aspers & Corte, 2019; Tomaszewski, Zarestky, & Gonzalez, 2020).

This research design was employed to explore the actual experiences of the students on the perceived value of their talents outside the classroom in an academically centered school setting because the students naturally make sense of their actual experiences. Their involvement in non-academic activities outside the classroom affects their self-perception of themselves and their sense of belonging to the academically centered school community. Phenomenology was utilized to study the actual experiences of the students regarding the value of their talents outside the classroom in an academically centered school to enable the researchers to listen to the voices of the students and to comprehend the way their actual experiences shape their self-worth, self-motivation, and self-confidence.

Research Environment

This environment is of interest to the researcher to observe because it is the embodiment of the dichotomy that exists in the world of academics and the holistic development of the students. TCSHS is a case study that reflects the effect that highly academic schools have on the motivation, self-worth, and identity of the student.

The culture of the school, which is greatly defined by the staff, the students, and the activities that the student is exposed to, has a direct correlation to the way in which the student identifies themselves as a result of their non-academic talents. The researchers seek to understand the way in which the academic school system affects the way in which the students identify themselves, specifically as it relates to their non-academic talents, through the students at this school.

The reason why the school is of importance to the researchers is because it shows the strengths and weaknesses of the very academic school system itself. It is the right place to examine the development of the students in relation to their talents, as well as the way the study would be of importance to the development of the students themselves. The reason why the school environment is important to the study is because it is the common struggle of academic-centered school systems, as well as the development of the whole child itself. By examining the student body of this particular school, the researcher would be able to get a better idea of the way the academic school system affects the way the students identify themselves based on their non-academic talents. TCSHS is an example of the way the highly academic school system affects the motivation, self-worth, and self-identity of the students themselves.



This school culture, often shaped by the teachers and peers around the students and the activities they offer within and outside the classroom, has a direct correlation to the way students feel about their non-academic abilities. By examining this specific group of students in this specific context, the study aims to identify the way these students in this highly academic school value their non-academic abilities.

Research Participants

This study made use of the purposive sampling method in selecting the respondents.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which the respondents are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research (Etikan & Bala, 2018). Purposive sampling is a method of selecting respondents who have direct and firsthand knowledge and experience of the research phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling is particularly useful in qualitative research to ensure the respondents could provide significant and meaningful information concerning the research inquiry (Campbell et al., 2020).

Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for this study since the respondents had to have direct and actual experience and involvement in extracurricular activities and had to have personal experiences concerning the non-recognition and the recognition of non-academic talents. The participants for this study were selected using the purposive sampling method from the students at Tanjay City Science High School (TCSHS).

To qualify as participants, students must be a.) be officially enrolled at Tanjay City Science High School. b.) Actively participate or have participated in at least one extracurricular activity (e.g., sports, arts, journalism, music, or leadership organizations). c.) Have experience related to recognition or lack of recognition of extracurricular talents. d.) Be willing to voluntarily participate in interviews.

These criteria were established to ensure that participants possess meaningful experiences relevant to the phenomenon under investigation and can provide detailed descriptions of their lived experiences (Ames, Glenton, & Lewin, 2019).

Research Instrument

The main research tool utilized in the research process is the interview guide, which is a set of systematically designed open-ended questions that guide the research process and are aligned with the purpose and goals. An interview guide is a research tool that provides a structured and organized way of conducting a research process, particularly in qualitative research. According to Creswell (2014), it provides a way for maintaining focus and organization while, at the same time, enabling the research participants to freely express themselves. On the other hand, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) contend that, through the use of a semi-structured interview, it is possible for a research process to explore research themes in a more in-depth manner.

Considering the above, it is evident that the interview guide is the most suitable research tool for the research process since it seeks to explore and investigate the perception of students, particularly those who have felt unrecognized, about the value of their talents within the school setting. The research process seeks to explore and investigate the perception and understanding of the research participants, which makes it more suitable for an interview guide. According to Merriam (2009), interviews enable a research process to understand how research participants interpret their experiences within a social context.

Moreover, the interview guide is very relevant for the research process since it seeks to explore and investigate the perception and understanding of the research participants, particularly those who have felt unrecognized, about the value of their talents within the school setting. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), it is essential for a research process to utilize qualitative research tools in accessing research participants' subjective realities and amplifying their voices, which makes it more suitable for the research process. In this regard, it is evident that the interview guide has ensured that the research process remains very close and aligned with the research purpose and goals.

Lastly, the interview guide has been validated by experts prior to its use in the research process, which ensures that it is very clear, coherent, and aligned with the research purpose and goals. The interview guide has also been pilot tested with a total of three students from the same year level and those that were not part of the research participants.



Rigor of the Study

In qualitative research, rigor is essential to establish the trustworthiness of the findings. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on statistical measures of validity and reliability, qualitative studies ensure rigor through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were introduced by Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985) to ensure that findings accurately represent participants' experiences experienced. In this phenomenological study, specific strategies were employed to uphold these standards and faithfully represent the voices of the participants.

Credibility refers to confidence in the truth of the data and the accurate representation of participants' meanings and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It ensures that the findings genuinely reflect the participants' perspectives. To strengthen credibility, member checking was conducted. After the interviews were transcribed and initially analyzed, participants were given the opportunity to review their responses to confirm accuracy and clarify any ambiguities. This process ensured that interpretations remained aligned with the participants' intended meanings.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study may be applicable to other similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, qualitative research provides sufficient contextual detail to allow readers to determine whether the findings can be transferred to comparable settings. This study ensured transferability through the use of thick description, a concept introduced by Clifford Geertz (1973). Detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and experiences were provided to enable readers to understand the context of and assess the relevance of the findings to other academically centered schools.

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the research process over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It requires that the procedures of the study be clearly documented and logically organized. To ensure dependability, detailed documentation of the research process was maintained, including participant selection, interview procedures, data collection, and thematic analysis. An audit trail was preserved to provide transparency in how themes and interpretations were developed.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the participants' responses rather than researcher bias or personal assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It ensures objectivity and neutrality in qualitative inquiry. To establish confirmability, the researcher practiced reflexivity and grounded interpretations in direct participant statements. Verbatim quotations were included in the analysis to demonstrate that conclusions were derived from the participants' actual responses.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data-gathering process of this study is conducted in three phases: Before Data Gathering, Actual Data Gathering, and After Data Gathering. These procedures were followed to ensure that the process of collecting participants' experiences was conducted ethically, smoothly, and credibly.

Before data gathering. Before the actual implementation of the interview process for this study, a series of steps was taken to ensure that the study was properly organized and conducted ethically. A formal letter requesting approval of the study was prepared and submitted to the administration of TCSHS. This approval from the school administration paved the way for the researchers to move forward in selecting the participants for the study. Following this, an interview guide for this study was carefully crafted following the objectives of the study. This interview instrument was subjected to expert validation to ensure that the questions included in the instrument were clear, relevant, and pertinent to the purpose of the study.

Lastly, informed consent from all the selected participants for this study was obtained. The researchers explained the purpose of the study, the importance of participant consent, the confidentiality of the responses of the participants, and their right to withdraw at any time during the course of the study.



Actual data gathering. In the actual data gathering process, the researchers used the semi-structured interview as a tool to collect the needed information. Personal interaction with the participants was employed to encourage them to open up and express themselves to the researchers.

The interview was conducted in a quiet and comfortable environment to encourage the participants to express their thoughts and feelings openly regarding their active involvement in extracurricular activities, their own self-development, and their perception regarding the recognition of their talents in an academically inclined school environment.

The participants were encouraged to narrate their lived experiences, such as their moments of appreciation and lack of recognition, the challenges they encountered, and the personal meaning of their active involvement in extracurricular activities. With the participants' permission, the actual interview process was audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information gathered from the participants. Additionally, brief notes were taken to capture the essential information from the interaction.

After data gathering

The researchers have transcribed the recorded responses to maintain the originality and actual meaning of the participants' responses. The responses were reviewed to ascertain the accuracy and completeness of the information to be gathered from the participants. Moreover, member checking was done to allow the participants to read their responses to ascertain that their ideas were well represented. The actual information was then stored in its complete and accurate form to be used in the analysis process. The participants were coded to maintain their confidentiality throughout the study. The actual responses were the major source of information to be used in the analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the participants was subjected to thematic analysis, a qualitative analysis of the patterns, meanings, and similarities among the obtained data. This analysis was used by the researchers to assess the perception of the students regarding the value of their extracurricular skills in an academically focused school setting. The analysis was carried out by researchers by adhering to the six phases of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019). Each step assisted the researchers in structuring, understanding, and presenting the lived experiences shared by the participants.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data. In this step, the researchers became fully acquainted with the collected data. In this regard, they listened repeatedly to the interview recordings and simultaneously read the participants' responses. By repeatedly reading and analyzing the participants' responses, the researchers were able to understand and interpret the participants' experiences and their emotional responses more profoundly. Initial thoughts and ideas regarding extra-curricular activity participation, recognition, and development were generated in this step.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes. In this step, after becoming fully acquainted with the collected data, the researchers identified significant statements and important ideas expressed by the participants in their responses. In this regard, significant statements and important ideas expressed by the participants were highlighted and given specific labels in the form of codes. Codes were generated by highlighting significant words and important ideas expressed by the participants regarding their experiences and responses, such as enjoyment, building confidence, teamwork, skill development, motivation, and appreciation or neglect.

Step 3: Searching for Themes. At this stage of data analysis, the codes were combined and linked to one another to identify common themes and meanings expressed by the participants. The codes were combined based on the meanings expressed by the participants regarding their experiences. For instance, the codes associated with the theme of enjoyment and emotional satisfaction were combined to form a theme of positive engagement, whereas the codes associated with the theme of improvement and discipline were combined to form a theme of skill development.

Step 4: Reviewing the Themes. The identified themes were reviewed to ensure that the identified themes correctly reflected the participants' experiences. This was achieved by comparing the identified themes with the participants'



code extracts to determine the relevance of the identified themes. Overlapping themes, ambiguous categories, and unassociated data were discarded to ensure that the identified themes correctly reflected the participants' experiences.

Step 5: Defining the Themes. After the themes had been identified, the researchers defined the themes to determine the essence of the theme, as well as its scope.

The identified themes by the researchers in the study are as follows:

1. Positive Engagement Skill and Performance Development
2. Character Growth
3. Social Connection and Collaboration
4. Self-Discovery and Identity Formation

Each of the identified themes indicates the contribution of the students to their confidence, relationship, personal development, and self-abilities.

Step 6: Producing the Report. The final step was to present the findings of the researchers in the study. The researchers presented the findings of the study by interpreting the findings of the researchers.

The findings of the researchers were linked to the objectives of the researchers as well as the theories of the study to determine the ways in which the students construct the meaning of their experiences in an academically oriented environment.

Ethical Consideration

In the process of carrying out this research, the guidelines set for the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of all respondents were strictly followed. Before the actual research was conducted, permission from the school administration of TCSHS was sought to conduct the research in the school.

Before the actual interview with all the respondents, they were informed about the intention and objectives of the research. The respondents were also informed about the procedure and process of the research, the nature of the questions to be asked, and the duration of the interview. The respondents were also informed that they had the right to choose whether or not they wanted to participate in the research and that they had the right to choose whether they wanted to answer the questions at any particular time without any negative consequence.

In addition, the issue of confidentiality and anonymity was maintained throughout the process of carrying out the research. This was done in a way that ensured that the participants' identities were not revealed, and instead of being referred to by their names, they were referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on. Moreover, the information that was collected while carrying out the interview was collected in a confidential manner and for academic and research purposes only.

The interview sessions were conducted in a respectful and comfortable environment to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and safe to express their experiences. Moreover, it is important to point out that there was no physical, emotional, or psychological harm inflicted on the participants throughout the process of carrying out the research.

Lastly, it is important to point out that the interview sessions were audio-recorded after seeking permission from the participants to ensure that their responses were documented accurately. Once the research is complete, it is then archived or disposed of appropriately in a manner that is acceptable in academic and research circles.

Findings and Discussion

This section includes the significant findings of the study based on the thematic analysis of the lived experiences of the students who took part in the extracurricular activities. The findings show that extracurricular activities play an important role in the holistic development of the students, including physical, social, emotional, and personal development.

3.1 Theme 1: Positive Engagement



Positive engagement could be defined as the joy, excitement, and fulfillment of the students from their involvement in the extracurricular activities. The activities were a way of giving the students an opportunity to explore their interests, learn new things, and interact with others in a positive and exciting atmosphere. From the stories and experiences shared by the students, it is clear that the activities were not only enjoyable but also fulfilling, given that they provided the students with an opportunity to grow and explore themselves. The students shared that despite the fact that the activities were physically demanding, the sense of fulfillment and the joy of sharing moments and the excitement of the change from the usual academic work made the experience very fulfilling and enjoyable. The joy and excitement of the moments shared and the sense of fulfillment from their activities are evidence that the involvement of the students in the activities was not only fulfilling but also provided them with a positive experience that impacted their school experience significantly.

Participant 1 expressed, *"Yes. Joining extracurricular activities helped improve my health. These activities gave me more energy and strength, and they also helped me avoid becoming lazy. They also improved my health and developed my social skills."* This response reflects both enjoyment and perceived balance between academics and extracurricular life.

Similarly, participant 2 said, *"Yes. I enjoyed participating in my extracurricular activities because they not only improved my athletic performance, but they also helped improve my grades. In some subjects, I was excused or given consideration because of my participation. Aside from that, they were very fun. They felt like a "side quest" during schoolwork and served as a break from regular school life without sports or extracurricular involvement."*

Moreover, participant 9 added, *"My experience was amazing. It was fun because through that sport, which is volleyball, I was able to bond with my classmates since I was a transferee. I also got to meet other students from different sections. So overall, my experience playing volleyball during intramurals was really fun."*

Even physical exhaustion was framed positively. Participant 11 shared, *"Of course, I felt tired, but it was really fun. The one time where I scored service aces in a row was really accelerating."*

Participant 12 added, *"My experience in extracurricular activities that I joined is intramurals here in our school. I enjoyed it a lot because it was a very nice experience."*

The responses from the participants reveal that extracurricular activities provide students with emotionally rewarding experiences that can help them develop intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. Participation in these activities allows students to explore their interests in things that they genuinely enjoy. When students participate in activities that align with their passions and interests, they experience a sense of enjoyment that motivates them to participate in these activities willingly. The experience of enjoyment plays a crucial role in the development of intrinsic motivation in students. The students who participate in extracurricular activities feel motivated by the personal satisfaction that they derive from these activities. The experience of enjoyment is a key motivator for students who participate in these activities willingly rather than being forced to do so.

Participation in these activities allows students to identify their talents and express their creativity and confidence in their abilities. The research suggests that students who participate in activities enjoy and feel competent and experience positive emotions and high intrinsic motivation for their personal goals. The extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities to freely express themselves and explore different aspects of their personality. The activities that students participate in during these programs allow them to channel their emotions and ideas in a productive manner.

Moreover, the achievement of milestones, such as mastering a skill, being successful, or helping a team win, makes students feel a sense of pride or fulfillment. This helps them associate success with positive outcomes, which makes them even more determined and dedicated to their interests. Research has also proven that through participation in extracurricular activities, students are likely to attain positive developmental experiences, including increased enjoyment, confidence, and emotional engagement, particularly during adolescence (Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010). In addition, Simpkins, Fredricks, and Eccles (2015) emphasized that through participation in organized activities, students are able to attain competence, which leads to positive emotional outcomes, thus increasing their intrinsic motivation.



In conclusion, it is evident that through participation in extracurricular activities, students are able to create environments that allow them to attain enjoyment, self-expression, and development, which are all aimed at increasing their intrinsic motivation and emotional satisfaction.

3.2 Theme 2: Skill and Performance Development

Growth in physical skills, discipline, and performance skills was a constant factor in all the participants' accounts. The development of skills did not manifest as an overnight phenomenon but as a gradual process through constant training, repetition, exposure to competitions, and actual game experiences. This also seems to imply that the participants did not attribute their skills development merely to their talent but also to their hard work.

Most of the participants also pointed out that constant training helped them develop their physical skills. These included improvements in their stamina, agility, reflexes, coordination, strength, etc. Although improvements in physical skills were not merely physical changes for the participants, but also symbolized their growth as individuals. For example, they spoke about becoming faster, stronger, and more aware of their surroundings during play.

Participant 7 explained, *"It's tiring, and you can actually use your knowledge about sports; you can use your stretching in case you join an activity. You can use your agility and stamina. You will know your limits in doing this activity."*

Moreover, participant 5 said, *"I improved my social skills, and I also developed physical skills such as footwork, stamina, and strength."*

While participant 10 shared, *"I gained more energy and better reflexes, especially physically in my body."* Discipline and consistency also emerged as part of development.

Participant 2 elaborated, *"To become a good athlete, you must be disciplined and consistent. Without consistency, your performance will decline. These activities trained me to stay committed and work hard to improve myself."*

Participant 1 added, *"It helped me replace my bad habits with good ones. Because of them, I became more disciplined and focused on improving myself."*

The responses provided indicate that not only do these activities help in the development of physical skills among students, but they also play a significant role in the development of important behavioral and social skills. Involving students in different activities like sports, arts, clubs, etc., provides them with a platform for experiencing different things that are not necessarily part of the regular academic routine. In these activities, students get a chance to work together with their fellow students towards a common goal while learning how to communicate effectively in a group setting. This helps them improve their teamwork skills since they have to work together towards a common goal.

In addition, these activities help in the development of discipline among students. In these activities, students are often required to balance their activities between their academic routine and the activities they are involved in. This helps them become more responsible for their actions. In addition, these activities provide a platform for the development of leadership skills among students. In these activities, students get a chance to become leaders in different activities like team captains, club leaders, etc. This helps them become more confident since they get a chance to work independently.

Moreover, these activities help in the development of discipline among students since they have to work hard towards a common goal. In addition, these activities help in the development of leadership skills among students since they get a chance to work independently. The findings from this study are in line with the study by Mahoney et al. (2005) that highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities in the development of social skills among students. According to the study by Mahoney et al. (2005), these activities help in the development of social skills among students since they provide a platform for the development of leadership skills among students. Leadership skills are important for the development of students since they help them become more confident.



In addition, these activities help in the development of discipline among students since they have to work hard towards a common goal. Therefore, these activities provide a platform for the development of students since they help in the development of physical skills among students while at the same time helping them become more disciplined.

3.3 Theme 3: Character Growth

One of the strongest themes was that of confidence and character transformation within each of the students' experiences. There were several participants who spoke of how they started their experience with a certain level of fear, insecurity, and/or self-doubt about their own capabilities and their willingness to challenge themselves outside of their own comfort zones. However, as they became more immersed in their experiences, they began to develop a greater level of self-confidence and trust in their own capabilities and strengths. There were several participants who spoke of how their experiences were not only about building their skills but also about building their own character, and who spoke of how they were able to develop a greater level of perseverance and optimism within themselves. It was apparent at the end of each of their experiences that they had been greatly impacted by their support and encouragement and by their hands-on experiences.

Participant 1 said, *"When I first played as a table tennis player, I felt very scared because it was my first time and I did not know how to interact with others. However, as time passed, I began to enjoy playing it. Now, table tennis has become my happy place, and my fear of socializing has lessened."*

Participant 3 shared, *"I was really very shy before, but when I started that, my confidence improved, and I'm not that shy anymore."*

Participant 6 reflected, *"These activities helped me by challenging me in ways I thought I could not overcome. They pushed me to face and overcome those challenges."*

A deeper personal transformation was evident in Participant 2's reflection, *"Before, I was very lazy and not interested in doing much. After joining these extracurricular activities, I changed for the better and became more active and motivated."*

Participant 4 recounted a critical moment, *"In a tournament, when it was almost a match point, I motivated myself so I could continue and keep going. I gained confidence and in the end I won."*

The stories obtained from the participants reveal that these activities are important in helping students build up their resilience, perseverance, and self-belief. In this regard, students are actively engaged in various activities such as sports, arts, clubs, and other programs. In these activities, students are exposed to various challenges that need them to be patient, determined, and hardworking. This helps them learn how to be patient even when faced with various challenges, which eventually helps them build up their resilience. As students continue to be actively engaged in these activities and improve in their respective activities, they begin to build up their confidence in their capabilities. This helps them build up a strong belief that they are capable of overcoming various obstacles not only in their respective activities but also in other aspects of their lives.

Additionally, through these activities, students are able to build up positive coping strategies that help them deal with various challenges that they are exposed to in these activities. In this regard, students are exposed to various challenges that need them to be patient, determined, and hardworking. This helps them learn how to be patient even when faced with various challenges, which eventually helps them build up their resilience. As students continue to be actively engaged in these activities and improve in their respective activities, they begin to build up their confidence in their capabilities. This helps them build up a strong belief that they are capable of overcoming various obstacles not only in their respective activities but also in other aspects of their lives. This eventually helps them build up their perseverance and confidence in their capabilities.

These results are consistent with the research conducted by Hansen et al. (2021), who found that engagement in organized extracurricular activities may contribute to positive developmental outcomes, such as the development of effective coping strategies and the enhancement of self-confidence in youth. Similarly, Fredricks and Eccles (2008)



emphasized that extracurricular activity participation offers developmental contexts for youth to develop competence, supportive peer relationships, and a sense of belonging that enhance motivation and persistence.

Additionally, Bohnert, Fredricks, and Randall (2010) emphasized that structured out-of-school activity participation is an important contributor to positive youth development as it allows youth to develop important assets like resilience, goal-setting skills, and emotional regulation strategies. More recent research conducted by Simpkins, Fredricks, and Eccles (2015) shows that sustained engagement in extracurricular activity participation is an important context for the development of self-efficacy and motivation for adolescents as they learn to navigate the demands of these meaningful activities. All these research studies support the idea that extracurricular activity participation is an important context for the development of youth resilience, perseverance, and self-confidence, which is essential for the personal and social development of students.

3.4 Theme 4: Social Connection and Collaboration

Extracurricular activities have also played a vital role in developing interpersonal relationships among students, as well as promoting teamwork among the students. Through these activities, students have learned to communicate effectively, listen to different views, and work together towards the achievement of a common goal. Students have reported that the experience of working together with other students has helped them to develop deeper friendships, as well as a sense of belonging to the groups in which they work together. These activities have not only encouraged the students to appreciate the need to work together towards the achievement of a common goal, but have also encouraged the students to appreciate the need to have a sense of empathy towards each other, as well as the different strengths that each of the members of the groups has to offer to the groups in which they work together.

Participant 9 shared, *"The skills I improved were communication skills. My communication became better because during Intramurals, sections were mixed, and we didn't all know each other. Even though I was a transferee and not close with them, my communication improved because we had to work together despite not knowing each other well."*

Participant 4 emphasized, *"Teamwork is really important. If you don't have teamwork, you can't win or you can't communicate with your teammates."*

Participant 12 described assuming leadership, *"Let's just say, in Intramurals, my skills developed during that time because we really didn't have a leader, so it was like I had to step up. I was like the leader, I was like the coach... and by that, I enhanced my skills further."*

The responses highlight that collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility are some of the major aspects of students' engagement in extracurricular activities. In addition, these activities demand that participants work together in teams, coordinate, and contribute toward a common goal, which encourages cooperation among students. The group-based nature of these activities, including sports teams, performing arts, and academic clubs, helps students learn effective communication skills among themselves. The activities also enable them to appreciate the value of cooperation among team members. In this regard, students are able to learn effective ways of sharing ideas, listening to others, and cooperating among themselves in order to accomplish tasks. The activities also enable them to learn effective ways of communication among themselves, which helps them appreciate the value of cooperation among team members.

Extracurricular activities also offer students an opportunity to learn effective ways of taking responsibility among themselves. In this regard, each member of a team is likely to have specific roles that contribute toward the success of the group. When students take up their responsibilities, they are able to appreciate the value of taking responsibility among themselves. In this regard, they are also able to learn effective ways of taking responsibility among themselves, which helps them appreciate the value of cooperation among team members. The shared sense of responsibility among students also encourages them to be cooperative, respectful, and supportive of others, which helps them strengthen interpersonal relationships among themselves. This helps them learn effective ways of cooperation among themselves, which leads to positive social interactions among students.

These findings are in line with the study by Eccles & Barber (1999), which indicated that participation in extracurricular activities helps in the development of teamwork, collaboration, and social interactions among



teenagers. In addition, Fredricks & Eccles (2006) indicated that participation in these activities helps in the development of the social competence and engagement of students since they get the opportunity to interact productively with their peers in a collaborative environment. Therefore, these studies indicate that participation in extracurricular activities plays a significant role in the development of teamwork skills among students, which is essential for their social development.

3.5 Theme 5: Self Discovery and Identity Formation

The most reflective theme is the theme of self-awareness and identity realization, as it emphasized the students' experiences of discovering themselves more deeply. Most students shared that the experience of being part of the school's extracurricular activities provided them with moments of self-reflection, during which they could become aware of themselves, including their strengths, weaknesses, values, and interests. The experience of being part of the school's extracurricular activities provided them with an opportunity to experiment, be proactive, and face personal struggles, all of which helped them become more aware of themselves, including who they are and who they want to become as individuals. The experience of self-discovery helped the students not only become more confident individuals, but also more aware of themselves as individuals, both inside and outside the school setting.

Participant 12 reflected deeply, *"Back then, I always thought that I was the one who would drag my team down, but once I played and I was on the field it was far from that. It was quite the opposite. I was one of the players raising my team up and gaining victory. So, by that, it helped me realize that I am capable of more, and that I shouldn't drag myself down too much because I am capable of doing good."*

Participant 5 stated, *"It helped me understand what I'm truly capable of and what I can do. For example, I realized my current level and what I need to improve to reach a higher level."*

Participant 9 described emotional regulation, *"During crucial games when tensions are high, I get to understand myself better by learning to stay calm and cooperate with my teammates. In situations like that, I realized that I need to stay calm because if I panic, nothing good will happen."*

Participant 7 acknowledged, *"Training... I will know my limit, win or lose I know there is a chance it will happen."*

The reflections provided by the participants clearly show that being involved in extracurricular activities helps students become more Introspective, emotionally mature, and have a realistic self-evaluation. Through their participation in activities outside the academic classroom, students are exposed to different situations that allow them to reflect on their own capabilities, actions, and personal development. This helps them become more aware of their own capabilities and limitations, thus allowing them to have a balanced and realistic self-evaluation. As students work on different activities in a collaborative manner or compete against each other in different performances or competitions, they are encouraged to reflect on their own contributions and identify areas for improvement. This helps them become more reflective on their own capabilities, thus allowing them to become better evaluators of themselves over time.

Furthermore, being involved in different extracurricular activities provides students with a platform where they can become better individuals in terms of self-management and emotional control. In most cases, different activities require students to manage different responsibilities, deal with pressure from different sources, and cope with different outcomes, whether positive or negative. This helps them become emotionally mature individuals while being exposed to different situations that allow them to become better individuals in terms of emotional control. For instance, students who fail in different competitions or performances are encouraged to become better individuals by learning different ways of coping with setbacks. This helps them become emotionally mature individuals while being exposed to different challenges that allow them to become better individuals in terms of emotional control.

Moreover, participation in extracurricular activities can also play an important role in the development of critical thinking skills regarding one's personal abilities and social relationships. By interacting with their peers, mentors, and coaches, students can receive feedback regarding their behaviors and attitudes and understand how their actions affect their groups' dynamics and outcomes. By becoming exposed to such social environments, students can develop critical thinking skills regarding their personal abilities while also becoming empathetic, cooperative, and responsible



individuals within their social groups. By becoming more critical thinkers about their experiences, students can also develop their emotional intelligence skills, which are important for their personal development.

These results are in line with those presented by Cortellazzo et al. (2021), which highlighted that experiences in extracurricular activities are important for students' development in emotional regulation, self-awareness, and reflective thinking. In addition, Denault & Guay (2017) highlighted that structured extracurricular activities are important for the psychological adjustment of adolescents. They contribute to the development of emotional and social competence that is essential for their psychological well-being. Moreover, Fredricks & Eccles (2010) highlighted that experiences in extracurricular activities create environments that allow students to develop self-regulation skills and a deeper understanding of their personal capabilities and social roles. In addition, Durlak et al. (2011) highlighted that activities that promote social and emotional learning are significant for students' emotional competence, self-management skills, and responsible decision-making. In general, these studies support the idea that experiences in extracurricular activities are meaningful developmental spaces for students' emotional maturity, reflective thinking, and self-understanding.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that extracurricular activities are vital for the holistic growth of the students in an academically focused institution like TCSHS. Though academic excellence is highly emphasized, the students feel that their non-academic talents are an important part of who they are. Furthermore, the experiences of the students prove that participation in extracurricular activities helps them develop self-confidence, hardiness, discipline, belongingness, and self-discovery.

The findings of this research prove the Theory of Multiple Intelligences developed by Howard Gardner, which states that multiple forms of intelligence go beyond academic intelligence. In the same way, the findings of this research prove the Sociocultural Theory developed by Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning and development. Therefore, this research proves the Self-Determination Theory developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

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