

Correlation between Participation in Student Organizations and Academic Development among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

In the educational practices of general higher education institutions, the perception that "student participation in student organizations consumes excessive time and adversely affects academic performance" is widely held. However, in reality, numerous students who dedicate substantial time to student organization work not only experience no negative impact on their intellectual achievements but also demonstrate a significant improvement in their overall academic performance. This paper systematically analyzes the underlying reasons behind this phenomenon from four dimensions-capability transfer, resource integration, self-management, and value identification-combining educational psychology with higher education management theories. Research findings reveal that student organization participation positively enhances students' "reinforced learning abilities," "expanded academic resources," "optimized time management," and "stimulated growth motivation." This creates a virtuous cycle where "practical experience empowers academic achievement." This study aims to provide theoretical references and practical insights for universities to guide students in balancing organizational involvement with academic development and to refine the "second classroom" educational system.

Keywords

General Higher Education Institutions; Student Organizations; Academic Achievement; Overall Performance; Transfer of Skills.

1. Introduction

[1] Student organizations serve as vital vehicles for universities' "second classroom" initiatives, encompassing diverse structures such as student unions, club federations, volunteer service teams, and academic societies. [2] They play a crucial role in enriching campus culture and cultivating students' comprehensive competencies. For a long time, some university administrators, faculty, and parents have harbored concerns that "student involvement in organizational work may encroach upon study time, leading to declining academic performance." Some have even advised students to "prioritize academics and reduce participation in organizations." However, the Ministry of Education's "Opinions on Accelerating the Development of High-Quality Undergraduate Education and Comprehensively Enhancing Talent Cultivation Capabilities" explicitly states the need to "promote the organic integration of formal classroom learning with extracurricular activities and strengthen practical education components."

[3] Surveys across multiple universities reveal that approximately 68% of students actively involved in organizations (averaging over 10 hours weekly) show no significant difference in academic performance (major GPA) compared to non-participants. Notably, 23% of these students even demonstrate slight academic improvement. More notably, these students' overall academic rankings (encompassing academic, moral, physical education, and practical

innovation dimensions) were on average 5-10 places higher than non-participants. This phenomenon challenges the conventional belief that "organizational involvement conflicts with academics," necessitating theoretical and practical analysis of its underlying causes to inform the development of "practice-academic synergy" educational models in higher education.

2. Core Reasons for Student Organization Participation Enhancing Academic Development

2.1. Transfer of Competencies: Organizational Practice Strengthens Core Learning Abilities

Competencies developed through organizational work-such as problem-solving, logical thinking, and team collaboration-can be transferred to academic learning, becoming a crucial pillar for stable intellectual performance. [4]This process aligns with the "theory of transfer of learning" in educational psychology (Thorndike's "common factors theory").

2.1.1. Problem-Solving Skills Enhance Learning Efficiency

Student organizations frequently encounter challenges like "difficulties in implementing event plans," "resource coordination conflicts," and "responding to unexpected situations." [5]For instance, when organizing campus cultural festivals, student councils must coordinate multiple aspects including venues, personnel, and publicity. If issues arise-such as "last-minute guest cancellations" or "equipment malfunctions"-they must swiftly devise alternative solutions. This "identify problem → analyze cause → formulate countermeasures → implement and validate" thinking pattern aligns logically with academic approaches like "constructing problem-solving strategies" and "optimizing experimental designs." optimizing experimental protocols." Similarly, students managing clubs may approach complex academic concepts by breaking them down into manageable steps. When writing course papers, they can leverage the structured thinking from event planning to clarify paper structure and organize argumentation logic, thereby boosting learning efficiency.

2.1.2. Team Collaboration Skills Optimize the Learning Process

Student organizations typically operate in teams. For instance, volunteer groups organizing "community elder care activities" require division of responsibilities for "participant recruitment, material procurement, and event execution," with members coordinating and collaborating to accomplish tasks. This collaborative experience transfers to academic settings like "group study" and "research projects": Students involved in organizing are better at defining roles, listening to others' perspectives, and avoiding the inefficiency of "going it alone" during group assignments. In lab courses, they efficiently coordinate with teammates to complete the full "data collection-analysis-reporting" process, minimizing operational errors. Research indicates that students involved in organizing activities score 12% higher on "group course reports" than their non-involved peers, primarily due to the learning process optimization achieved through "transfer of collaborative skills." [6]

2.2. Resource Integration: Organizational Platforms Expand Academic Support Channels

As pivotal nodes for resource integration in higher education, student organizations provide academic support resources such as "faculty connections, information access, and academic exchange." These complement classroom learning limitations and become key variables in overall academic improvement. [7]

2.2.1. Direct Access to High-Quality Faculty Resources

When organizing activities like "academic lectures" and "faculty meet-and-greets," student organizations coordinate with faculty members, creating opportunities for students to connect

with professors outside the classroom. Academic clubs (e.g., Mathematical Modeling Association) invite faculty as advisors, allowing students to consult on "academic challenges," "graduate school specialization choices," and "research project participation." Student council officers assisting professors in organizing "professional internship orientation sessions" gain early insight into internship requirements and industry demands, clarifying learning priorities.

2.2.2. Accessing Targeted Academic Resources

As bridges between the university and students, student organizations gain priority access to academic resources like course selection advice, exam review priorities, and competition registration information. Academic organizations like the Learning Department regularly compile "study tips from top seniors" across majors, distributing curated materials to members. Volunteer teams collaborating with external enterprises gain access to "cutting-edge industry trends," [8]offering directional guidance for specialized studies. Students involved in these organizations leverage such resources to avoid issues like "blind course selection" and "ineffective exam preparation."

2.3. Self-Management: Time Pressure Drives Optimized Study Planning

The "time compression effect" has not reduced academic time allocation but instead compels students to enhance time management skills. By "increasing efficiency per unit time" and "allocating time rationally," they ensure academic progress—a reverse application of Parkinson's Law: "The tighter the schedule, the higher the productivity."

2.3.1. Significant Improvement in Time Planning Skills

Students involved in organizations prioritize clear time schedules to balance "organizational duties" with "academic studies." [9]Research shows 85% of these students maintain "daily/weekly time plans," clearly dividing blocks for "classes, self-study, organizational work, and rest" to prevent "procrastination" and "time wastage."

2.3.2. Enhanced Focus Maximizes Time Value

Time constraints drive these students to prioritize concentration during study sessions, avoiding inefficient habits like multitasking with phones. Psychological research indicates that focused learning under time pressure activates the prefrontal cortex, boosting information processing efficiency. Sun, a physics major at a university, served as class president while managing extensive administrative duties. [10]He compressed his "self-study time" to 2-3 hours daily. By adopting a focused approach—silencing his phone and eliminating distractions—his learning outcomes equaled 4-5 hours of study by non-organizational students. His major course grades consistently ranked in the top 10% of his class.

2.4. Value Recognition: Organizational Participation Fuels Academic Growth Motivation

The "sense of accomplishment, belonging, and responsibility" gained through organizational work can be channeled into intrinsic motivation for academic learning. This shifts students from "passive learning" to "active learning," ultimately driving comprehensive academic improvement. This process aligns with the motivational elements of "autonomy, competence, and relatedness" outlined in Self-Determination Theory.

2.4.1. Achievement Strengthens Learning Confidence

Achievements in organizational work—such as "successful event execution," "university-level recognition," or "positive feedback from beneficiaries"—deliver profound accomplishment. This psychological experience transfers to academics, bolstering learning confidence. For instance, after organizing a "rural teaching support program," some student council members gained confidence from receiving thank-you letters from participating students. This motivated them to actively contribute in class discussions, diligently complete course assignments, and

consequently improve their grades. Additionally, such practical experiences are documented in comprehensive quality assessment reports, serving as significant bonus points in the moral education and practical experience dimensions.

2.4.2. Sense of Responsibility Clarifies Learning Goals

The "job responsibilities" within student organizations (e.g., president, department head, executive) reinforce students' sense of responsibility, making them realize that "organizational work requires corresponding abilities, and skill development must be grounded in academics." For instance, a student serving as the college student union president gains clearer insight into "the importance of professional competence for future development" through interactions with faculty, thereby setting specific learning goals and formulating long-term plans. [11]When facing "academic-work conflicts," they use this "sense of responsibility" to drive rational time allocation, avoiding academic decline due to "neglect." Research shows that 72% of student leaders report that the responsibility of "not wanting peers to question their competence due to poor grades" motivates them to study harder, resulting in significantly more stable academic performance compared to ordinary members.

3. University Support Strategies for Balancing Organizational Participation and Academic Development

3.1. Building an Integrated "Practice-Academic" Development System

Universities should break down barriers between formal classroom learning and extracurricular activities by incorporating student organization practices into "comprehensive quality development programs":

First, establish "organizational practice credits," allowing students to convert organizational contributions and honors into "practical innovation credits" that count toward overall academic performance; Second, promote "alignment between course content and organizational practice." For instance, the Management course may require students to complete course papers using "organizational event planning" as case studies, while Sociology courses may encourage students to conduct social surveys through "volunteer services," achieving mutual enrichment between practice and academics.

3.2. Strengthen Guidance and Management of Student Organizations

Universities should assign "professional advisors" (e.g., counselors, faculty members) to guide student organizations toward "enhancing quality while reducing workload":

First, advise organizations to develop "scientific work plans" to avoid "overloaded and scattered activities" that drain student energy; Second, conduct training in "time management and skill enhancement" to help students master methods for "balancing work and academics." For example, one university holds a "Student Leader Experience Sharing Session on Balancing Academics and Work" each semester, inviting outstanding student leaders to share insights, with notable results.

3.3. Establish Dynamic Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms

Universities can utilize "student academic early warning systems" to dynamically monitor students heavily involved in organizations: if "academic performance declines by over 5%," advisors should promptly communicate with students to analyze causes and adjust workload intensity. Simultaneously, regularly collect student feedback on "the impact of organizational participation on academics" to optimize activity design and prevent "formality-driven activities" from wasting student time.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

The phenomenon where students at general universities spend considerable time on organizational activities without negatively impacting their academic performance-and even seeing improved overall results-essentially reflects the "positive empowerment of classroom learning through extracurricular practice." The core reasons are: the "problem-solving and teamwork" skills cultivated through organizational practice are transferable to academic learning, enhancing study efficiency; the "faculty and information" resources provided by organizational platforms expand academic support channels; time pressure compels students to optimize self-management, ensuring learning quality; and the "sense of accomplishment and responsibility" derived from organizational participation stimulates motivation for academic growth. This finding validates the feasibility and necessity of "integrating formal classroom learning with informal extracurricular activities."

Moving forward, general higher education institutions must challenge the entrenched perception that "organizational involvement conflicts with academics." By "establishing integrated development systems, strengthening organizational guidance, and implementing monitoring mechanisms," they can guide students to enhance capabilities through organizational practice while reinforcing foundational knowledge in academic learning. This approach ultimately achieves the educational goal of "coordinated development of comprehensive qualities and professional competencies." Simultaneously, research scope should be expanded to deeply analyze how different types of student organizations (academic, service-oriented, and arts-focused) impact academic performance, providing more precise foundations for personalized education.

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