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# **INDIVIDUAL FACTORS AND STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

## **Abstract**

The study focuses on how individual factors affect students' involvement in Extra Curricular activities at the university. Primary data are collected through a Questionnaire from 100 undergraduates selected using Systematic Sampling from 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Years of the Management Faculty, University of Kelaniya. Hypotheses are tested using the critical value approach and the p-Value approach using the PHStat software of MS Excel. It is concluded that there is no association between the individual factors - gender, ethnicity, religion, school attended, home town and family income level, where as there is an association between relationship status of undergraduates and involvement in extracurricular activities. Further, it is needed to investigate whether extracurricular activities available at university develop the employable undergraduate required by the world of work. As otherwise it is no point in continuing student engagement in them as they do not develop anything for the benefit of them and the society.

## **Introduction**

Universities began as places of universal learning and in rudimentary form they are identified as schools of knowledge of every kind, consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter (Newman, 1854). They are not only places of knowledge creation and dissemination but operate with a broad mission: a place which develops and moulds a “whole student”. While authors have shown that the innovative capacity is positively associated with the quality of higher education there is a paradox that unemployment among graduates is rising in many countries (Fernando, 2007). It is argued that this is mainly due to the fact that graduates are not employable and contributory to cater to the requirements of the world of work.

Extracurricular activities are activities performed by students, which fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum. This informal aspect of education has a good deal to contribute in developing good citizens, developing healthy minds in healthy bodies, directing their use of leisure time, developing a set of moral and ethical values, developing social competency, discovering special interests and capacities and developing creative expression (Fung & Wong, 1991). In addition it is believed that participation in extra activities produce higher academic performance, contribute to personal and social growth of students and peer acceptance.

## **Background of the Study**

Students enjoy a greater freedom within the university system which allows them to make most of their decisions based on individual choice. The same freedom applies in student participation in extra activities as well. There are a variety of opportunities present for undergraduates to participate in these types of activities which are introduced with the objective of improving learning across the curriculum. There are no much studies available on this and the limited amount of research available also focuses on student involvement in outside the class

activities during school but not at university. Even those are from international context and here is a lack of research in the area in the Sri Lankan context, demanding scholars and especially academics within universities to investigate on this. The demand is further emphasized by two facts,

1. Research available discuss on the results caused by the student involvement in extra activities taking it as the independent variable.

2. There are no studies conducted considering the factors affecting the student involvement in Extra Curricular activities

Therefore this study is conducted to fill the gap in knowledge by studying about the individual factors affecting student involvement in extracurricular activities within the university system.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study addresses only the individual factors that affect the involvement of students in extracurricular activities. The study expects to focus on undergraduates in the state university system and since author has influence only over implementing findings at the University of Kelaniya, the study is only limited to University of Kelaniya. The initial effort focuses on the undergraduates of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies – University of Kelaniya. The 1<sup>st</sup> Year undergraduates are too new and unfamiliar with the university system and therefore do not engage much in these activities. Most management degree programmes require students to go for internships during the last year of the degree, the Final year undergraduates also do not have much time and involvement with extra activities. Circumstances therefore justifies that this study should be conducted among the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Year undergraduates to get real information and to be able to make generalizable recommendations.

**Problem Statement**

**How do individual factors affect the students' involvement in Extra Curricular activities within the university system?**

**Objectives**

- 1) To identify the individual factors affecting undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities at university and their association between individual factors and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities at university.
- 2) To recommend strategies in encouraging student involvement in extracurricular activities at university.
- 3) To recommend strategies on streamlining extracurricular activities available for students within the system to develop them to be more employable.

**Significance of the Study**

The educational values of extracurricular activities have long been recognized (Fung & Wong, 1991). It is important to study quite a lot in this area in restructuring the higher education system of the country to cater to the demands of the corporate world. This study is done with the objective of making a national contribution by giving suitable recommendations to enhance the quality of the higher education system of the country. Further this will indicate the barriers which prevent students from engaging in extracurricular activities, so that authorities could take possible steps in removing these barricades as much as possible. In addition, this will also be useful for the students who are already in the university system in understanding about the opportunities available for them to engage in extra activities. Further this would be of use for students who are to enter to the university system in understanding the opportunities available for them.

## **Review of Literature**

According to Hass (2004), student involvement in extracurricular activities is a good example of the mind-world interaction at its best. A study among the high school students in America on their participation in extracurricular activities and their SAT scores indicate that these activities benefit minorities and disadvantaged high school students who are often ill-served by the traditional academic curricular in those countries (Everson & Millsap, 2005). Though there is no such a situation of discrimination prevailing in Sri Lanka, the students who do not excel in academic performance but have other hidden talents can excel better through engaging in these types of activities. It is also important that authorities in the academic field also take measures to encourage students to engage in these activities to make them multi-skilled versatile candidates in the job market. These programs are identified by Everson and Millsap (2005) as supplementary education programs because they also are a part of the educational system adding to the development of competencies of students in the same way as the normal class room curriculum.

Different researchers use Individual Factors as the independent variable of their research in different areas. According to Brown and Peterson (as in Noor and Muhamud, 2005) individual factors include both demographic and dispositional variables. It is observed that the individual factors taken into consideration depend on the type of the study. Socio-economic characteristics or variables of a population, such as age, gender, education level, income level, marital status, occupation, religion, are identified as demographic factors according to the definition of [businessdictionary.com](http://businessdictionary.com). Health Status Report (2005) identifies age, ethnicity, and gender as individual factors in one of their studies. Since this study focuses on student involvement in extracurricular activities, only demographic factors are taken into consideration.

In this regard the focus will be on gender, ethnicity, religion, school, home town, economic capacity and marital or relationship status *inter alia*, since they are believed to be having a more serious association with the dependent variable according to the author's general understanding. Gender is a major factor in the typical Sri Lankan culture that needs to be considered regarding student involvement in extra activities. Nadler (1985) argues that there is no association between gender differences in participating or not participating in extra-curricular events. Being a multi ethnic and a multi religious country Sri Lankan universities have students representing all major ethnicities and religions. Dagkas & Ben (2006) expresses that Muslim ladies face restrictions in participating in extra-curricular activities for cultural and religious reasons. As such they identify the need for cross national studies on involvement in extracurricular activities.

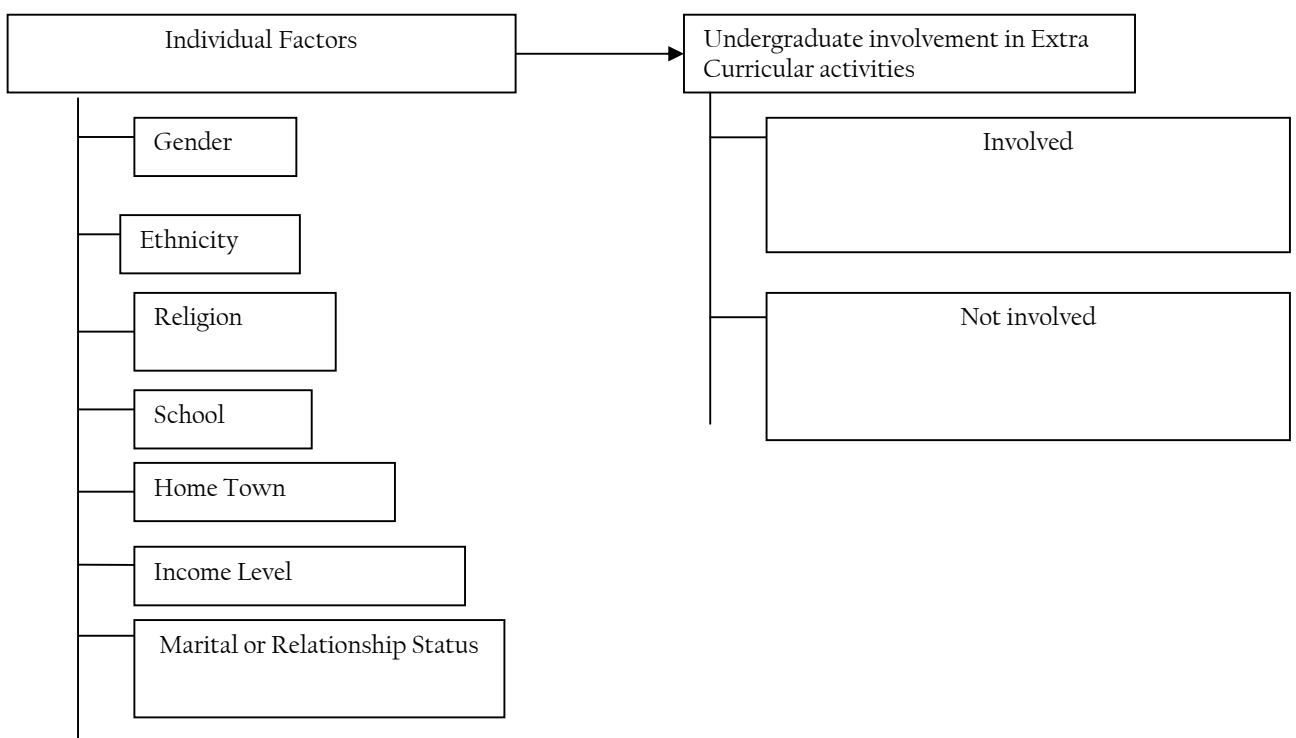
There is a huge possibility that students are used to engage in extracurricular activities in school due to encouragement from their teachers and they naturally tend to engage in such activities also while at university. Further the students coming from schools where there are no much opportunities to participate in such work may naturally appear backward in engaging in such activities. The home town has a major impact in developing personalities of people and creating enthusiasm among students to engage in out of the class activities. Higher education incurs a greater cost and requires students to incur a large amount of expenditure. Since they follow full time degree programs which restrict them from engaging in employment, economic reasons also appear to be a major influential factor in involving in extracurricular activities. Sometimes the student might not engage in such activities since they fear that involvement in those also might incur some cost. Love affairs or associations between girls and boys are very

much common within the university system and they may affect both positively and negatively in student involvement in such activities.

### Conceptual Framework

The following schematic diagram depicts the Conceptual Framework developed by the researcher for the study. The focus is on two main variables, namely the independent variable: 'Individual Factors' and the dependent variable which is student involvement in extracurricular activities. Out of the various individual factors relevant for each context, the most suitable ones in this regard are selected as sub variables of the independent variable. The dependent variable is divided in to two sub dimensions as involved and not involved.

### Conceptualization of Variables



### Hypothesis of the Study

- 1)  $H_1$  – There is an association between gender and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.



- 2)  $H_1$  – There is an association between ethnicity and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.
- 3)  $H_1$  – There is an association between religion and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.
- 4)  $H_1$  – There is an association between school studied and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.
- 5)  $H_1$  – There is an association between location of home town and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.
- 6)  $H_1$  – There is an association between family income level and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.
- 7)  $H_1$  – There is an association between marital or relationship status and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.
- 8)  $H_1$  – There is an association between individual factors and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.

Data representing demographic characteristics of people are easily obtained or measured through posing direct questions due to the fact of not being abstract (Sekaran, 2010). Independent Variable and its Sub Variables belong to the objective category which enables precise measurement and the dependent variable also belongs to the same based on how it is divided. Sekaran (2010) argues that operational definitions are necessary to measure only abstract concepts which fall into the category of subjective areas and objective variables such as age or educational level which are easily measured through simple straight forward questions do not have to be operationally defined. As all the variables and the sub variables of the study

belong to the objective category, operational definitions are not developed based on the above argument of Sekaran.

## **Data Collection**

### **Primary Data**

Primary data for the study are collected through a self developed, personally administered structured Questionnaire which comprises of 8 questions.

### **Measurement**

According to Levine, Krehbiel, Berenson & Viswanathan (2010) data are the observed values of variables or the responses of a survey. Categorical variables yield categorical responses such as “yes”/ “no” answers or even can yield more than two possible responses (Levine, Krehbiel, Berenson & Viswanathan, 2010). Based on the above interpretation all the sub variables coming under the independent variable and the dependent variable appear to be categorical variables and a nominal scale is used to measure all of them. Simple, convenient category labels such as code numbers with no intrinsic value are used in entering data to the data sheet for all questions. Questionnaire consists only of closed questions which ask respondents to make choices among a set of alternatives given. It helps to code the information easily for subsequent analysis.

### **Secondary Data**

In addition to the literature, the researcher uses only statistical figures on undergraduates and the information available about extracurricular activities at the university and the Internet as secondary data.

### **Population**

The population of this study comprises of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Year undergraduates in the Management Faculty of the University of Kelaniya. Each 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate in the Management Faculty are population elements. As there are 1,000 undergraduates in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of the Management Faculty in total there are 1,000 population elements.

### **Sample, Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

A subset of the population which comprises of some members from the population will be selected as the sample as it is not possible to collect data from all the elements of the population. For administrative convenience a sample of 100 undergraduates is selected for the study. Systematic Sampling method is used. The first item to be selected at random from the first 10 items is selected from the frame. Then the remaining 99 (n-1) items are selected by taking every 10th item thereafter from the Faculty register.

### **Data Analysis**

Inferences are made about the relationship between individual factors and the undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities by testing the hypotheses developed. Hypothesis Testing is done using the Chi-Square Test as it is the statistical tool suitable in testing hypothesis of interdependence dependence in the joint responses to the two categorical variables – Individual Factors and Undergraduate Involvement in extracurricular activities. The study was conducted under 95% level of confidence. The hypotheses are tested using both the critical value approach and the p-Value Approach by using the PHStat software used along with the versions of MS Excel.

**1)  $H_1$  – There is an association between gender and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

After performing the Chi-Square Test, it is visible that the test statistic of 3.65 is smaller than the critical value of 3.84 and the test statistic falls within the non rejection region. Further, the p-Value calculated which is 0.05 is also equal to alpha of 0.05 confirming that the null hypothesis should not be rejected.

**2)  $H_1$  – There is an association between ethnicity and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

The Chi-Square Test indicates that the test statistic of 4.59 is smaller than the critical value of 5.99 and the test statistic falls within the non rejection region. The p-value of the Chi-Square test is 0.1 which is greater than the level of significance further confirming the non rejection of  $H_0$ . As such the null hypothesis should not be rejected.

**3)  $H_1$  – There is an association between religion and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

The Chi-Square Test indicates that the test statistic of 5.09 is smaller than the critical value of 9.48 and the test statistic falls within the non rejection region. When comparing the level of significance of 0.05 with the p-Value it denotes that the p-Value of 0.27 is greater than the alpha value. As such the null hypothesis should not be rejected. The above indication demands to continue the belief in the Null Hypothesis of the proposition.

**4)  $H_1$  – There is an association between school studied and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

The Chi-Square Test indicates that the test statistic of 5.65 is smaller than the critical value of 5.99 and therefore the test statistic falls within the non rejection region. Since the p-Value in this occasion is also equal to the significance level the null hypothesis is not rejected. The above indication demands to continue the belief in the Null Hypothesis of the proposition.

**5)  $H_1$  – There is an association between home town and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

It is indicative by that the chi-square statistic of 1.98 is far smaller than the critical value of 5.99. As such that the test statistic falls to the non rejection region and the null hypothesis should not be rejected based on the sample information of the study. This is further confirmed by the comparison of p-Value with the alpha where p-Value is 0.37 which is higher than 0.05.

**6)  $H_1$  – There is an association between economic reasons and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

When considering the association between the undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities and their family income levels it is indicative by the chi-square statistic of 9.27 is smaller than the critical value of 9.48. As such the test statistic falls to the non rejection region and the null hypothesis should not be rejected based on the sample information of the study. If the p-Value approach for Hypothesis Testing is used rather than the Critical Value approach it also confirms the same result denoted above. As p-Value is equal to the alpha the null hypothesis should not be rejected.

**7)  $H_1$  – There is an association between marital or relationship status and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

The chi-square statistic of 16.41 is greater than the critical value of 5.99. Further the p-Value of 0.000 is also smaller than the alpha and therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The test statistic falls to the rejection region and the null hypothesis should be rejected based on the sample information of the study. There is sufficient evidence in this case to accept the alternative hypothesis.

**8)  $H_1$  – There is an association between individual factors and undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities.**

Based on the above Data Analysis it can be identified that there is no association between majority of the individual factors and the undergraduate involvement in extra activities and therefore the evidence is insufficient to reject the null hypothesis.

**Findings**

The Data Analysis indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, in the first six propositions the null hypothesis is not rejected indicating that the alternative hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is no association between the sub variables selected, under individual factors – gender, ethnicity, religion, school attended, location of home town and the family income level. There is insufficient evidence to prove that there is an association between gender, ethnicity, religion, school attended, location of home town and family income level and the undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities during the university life. However at 0.05 level of significance, the last proposition identifying the association between the marital status of undergraduates and the involvement in extracurricular activities indicate that there is an association between the two, which requires the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. The study indicates that overall a majority of the students are involved in at least one extracurricular activity during university where a minority is not involved.

**Conclusions**

The objective of identifying factors affecting undergraduate involvement in extracurricular activities was achieved by collecting information through available sources of literature and observations. The Objective 2 of finding the association between the individual

factors and undergraduate involvement in extra activities was achieved where it resulted in the conclusion that there is no association between the individual factors of gender, ethnicity, religion, school attended, location of home town and family income level where as there is an association between the relationship status of undergraduates and their involvement in extracurricular activities.

### **Recommendations**

As shown through research it is important to encourage all the university undergraduates to involve in extracurricular activities at university as it is the time they enjoy the maximum freedom of life. Therefore every undergraduate should be at least involved in one activity. The authorities of the universities can make it compulsory for students to at least involve in one or two activities showing active participation. This can be done by encouraging them through rewards such as awarding a medal at the convocation to the Most Outstanding Student. This should be awarded based on evaluations not only considering academic performance but out of the class performance as well. Further it needs to investigate whether the extracurricular activities available for students at university develop the employable undergraduate required by the world of work. As if it is not delivered there is no point in continuing student engagement in them as they do not develop anything for the benefit of both the student and the society. This creates a ground for further research and investigation.

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