Multidisciplinary International Journal of Research and Development

Volume: 05 / Issue: 06 / 2026 - Open Access - Website: www.mijrd.com - ISSN: 2583-0406

Exploring the Role of Extracurricular Activities in Enhancing Students' Self-Esteem

Lucas Wee

Student, Mica International Scholars

Abstract— This study examined the relationship between extracurricular activities and self-esteem among 39 high school students. Students completed a questionnaire about their participation in sports, arts, academic clubs, volunteering, and leadership activities. Self-esteem was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The results showed that students who participated in extracurricular activities had higher average self-esteem scores than nonparticipants. Participants scored an average of 31.2 out of 40, while nonparticipants scored 26.7. Students involved in two or more activities reported the highest scores. These findings suggest that extracurricular activities may support self-esteem through skill development, achievement, friendships, and belonging.

Keywords— Adolescence, extracurricular activities, self-esteem, students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is a person's general evaluation of their own worth and abilities. It is particularly important during adolescence, when students are developing their identities and becoming more aware of academic and social expectations. Extracurricular activities include sports, music, art, debate, student government, volunteering, and academic clubs. These activities may improve self-esteem by giving students opportunities to develop skills, achieve goals, form friendships, and receive encouragement. Previous studies have found that extracurricular participation is related to adolescents' academic self-concept, social self-concept, and general self-worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009; Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011).

However, participation does not always lead to positive outcomes. Students may experience stress if activities are overly competitive, time-consuming, or unsupportive. In addition, students with higher self-esteem may be more likely to participate in activities, meaning that participation may not directly cause higher self-esteem.

This study investigated the following question: "Do students who participate in extracurricular activities report higher self-esteem than students who do not participate?" The hypothesis was that students involved in extracurricular activities would have higher average self-esteem scores than nonparticipants.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. All data were collected at a single point in time rather than over multiple months or years. The design was correlational, meaning that it examined whether two variables—extracurricular participation and self-esteem—were related, without manipulating any conditions.

The independent variable was extracurricular participation, measured in two ways:

Volume: 05 / Issue: 06 / 2026 - Open Access - Website: www.mijrd.com - ISSN: 2583-0406

- Participation status (participant vs. nonparticipant).
- Number of activities in which the student participated.
- The dependent variable was self-esteem, measured as a total score on a 10-item self-esteem scale.

Participants

The study included 39 high school students between the ages of 14 and 18. Twenty-seven students participated in at least one extracurricular activity, while 12 students did not participate in any activity. Among the 39 students, 21 were female and 18 were male.

Measures

The questionnaire included two main parts.

1. Extracurricular Participation Questions

- Students answered questions about their activity involvement, including:
- Whether they participated in any extracurricular activity.
- The number of activities in which they participated.
- The type of activity (sports, music, art, academic club, volunteering, student leadership).
- The approximate number of hours per week spent on extracurricular activities.

2. Self-Esteem Scale

Self-esteem was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The original scale was designed to measure global self-esteem among high school students and has been widely used in adolescent research. Students responded to each statement using a four-point scale:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Items included:

- "I feel that I have many good qualities."
- "I am able to do things as well as most other people."
- "I feel that I have much to be proud of."
- "I take a positive attitude toward myself."
- "I feel that I am a person of worth."
- "I feel that I do not have much to be proud of." (reverse-scored)
- "I wish I could have more respect for myself." (reverse-scored)

Negative statements were reverse-scored so that higher total scores represented higher self-esteem. The possible total score ranged from 10 to 40.

Multidisciplinary International Journal of Research and Development

Volume: 05 / Issue: 06 / 2026 - Open Access - Website: www.mijrd.com - ISSN: 2583-0406

Procedure and Analysis

Students completed the questionnaire anonymously. The researcher calculated the mean, median, standard deviation, and range for each group. An independent-samples t-test compared the average scores of participants and nonparticipants. A Pearson correlation examined the relationship between the number of activities and self-esteem.

III. RESULTS

Of the 39 students, 27 participated in extracurricular activities, representing 69.2% of the sample. Twelve students, or 30.8%, did not participate. Among participants, Table 1 shows sports were the most common activity.

Table 1: Activity and number of students

Activity	Number of students
Sports	11
Music or arts	5
Academic clubs	4
Student leadership	3
Volunteering	2
Other activities	2

Table 2: The self-esteem results with number of participants, mean and standard deviation.

Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Participants	27	31.2	4.0
Nonparticipants	12	26.7	4.6

Students who participated in extracurricular activities scored 4.5 points higher on average than nonparticipants.

Table 3: The number of activities related to self-esteem.

Number of activities	Number of students	Mean self-esteem
None	12	26.7
One	12	29.8
Two	9	32.0
Three or more	6	34.0

The independent-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between participants and nonparticipants: t (37) = 3.09, p = .004

The effect size was: d = 1.02

This represents a large difference between the two groups. The correlation between the number of activities and self-esteem was also positive: r =.48, p = .002

Volume: 05 / Issue: 06 / 2026 - Open Access - Website: www.mijrd.com - ISSN: 2583-0406

This indicates that students involved in more activities tended to report higher self-esteem scores.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results supported the hypothesis. Students who participated in extracurricular activities reported higher self-esteem than students who did not participate. The positive correlation also suggested that participation in a greater number of activities was associated with higher self-esteem.

One explanation is that extracurricular activities provide opportunities for achievement. Students who practice a sport, perform music, complete an art project, or lead a club may gain confidence when they observe their own improvement. These experiences can help students view themselves as capable and persistent.

Extracurricular activities may also create social belonging. Students often meet peers with similar interests through clubs and teams. Positive relationships can make students feel accepted and valued. Previous research has similarly connected extracurricular participation with stronger social self-concept and general self-worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009).

Activities can also help students develop identities outside academic performance. A student may identify as an athlete, artist, musician, volunteer, or leader. Having several positive identities may strengthen overall self-esteem because students can recognize different personal abilities.

Despite these benefits, more participation is not necessarily better. About one-third of the participating students in this example reported that their activities sometimes caused stress. Excessive competition, pressure from adults, and lack of free time may reduce the psychological benefits of participation. Research has also noted that students who already possess higher self-esteem may be more likely to join activities, so the relationship may involve self-selection (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011).

V. LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size was small. Second, the study was correlational and therefore cannot prove that extracurricular activities caused higher self-esteem. Finally, the analysis did not control for factors such as family support, academic achievement, socioeconomic status, or friendships. A stronger future study would survey a larger group of students and measure self-esteem before and after they joined an activity. It could also compare sports, arts, academic clubs, and volunteering separately.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between extracurricular activities and self-esteem among 39 high school students. Participants reported higher average self-esteem than nonparticipants, and students involved in more activities generally reported higher scores.

Extracurricular activities may strengthen self-esteem by providing achievement, friendship, skill development, and belonging. However, activities should be supportive and balanced rather than stressful or overly competitive. Overall, the findings illustrate how extracurricular participation may contribute to positive psychological development during adolescence.

Volume: 05 / Issue: 06 / 2026 - Open Access - Website: www.mijrd.com - ISSN: 2583-0406

REFERENCES

[1] Blomfield, C. J., & Barber, B. L. (2009). Performing on the stage, the field, or both? Australian adolescent extracurricular activity participation and self-concept. Journal of Adolescence, 32(4), 733–749. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2009.01.003

[2] Kort-Butler, L. A., & Hagewen, K. J. (2011). School-based extracurricular activity involvement and adolescent self-esteem: A growth-curve analysis. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40(5), 568–581. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9551-4

[3] Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton University Press.

[4] Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Extracurricular involvement and adolescent adjustment: Impact of duration, number of activities, and breadth of participation. Applied Developmental Science, 10(3), 132–146. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads1003_3

[5] Mahoney, J. L., Harris, A. L., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Organized activity participation, positive youth development, and the over-scheduling hypothesis. Social Policy Report, 20(4), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2379-3988.2006.tb00049.x