

The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Developing Students' Life Skills

Ousama Saki

Ibn Zohr University, Agadir, Morocco

saki.ousama@gmail.com

Hanane Darhour

Ibn Zohr University, Agadir, Morocco

h.darhour@uiz.ac.ma

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i3.1413>

APA Citation: Saki, O. & Darhour, H.(2023). The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Developing Students' Life Skills. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*.5(3).213-227. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i3.1413>

Received:

15/08/2023

Accepted:

25/09/2023

Keywords:

Extracurricular activities, life skills, high school, Morocco .

Abstract

This study explores the views of teachers and students regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on the development of life skills for Moroccan high school students. To achieve this objective, the study uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods design and adopts UNICEF's Life Skills and Citizenship Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (2017). The study collected quantitative data from 257 public high school students and 68 public high school teachers through anonymous surveys. Qualitative data were collected from 47 students and 16 teachers through focus groups. Quantitative data were analysed statistically using SPSS Version 20, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The overall results reveal that extracurricular activities promote life skills almost moderately, though it is often unintentional. The study concludes with some recommendations for education stakeholders on how to use extracurriculars to promote life skills for Moroccan high school students.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to prepare high school students for success in all aspects of life, it is crucial to prioritise their holistic development. This means that education should not only focus on imparting academic knowledge but should also promote the acquisition of life skills. These skills are integral in helping students navigate the personal, academic, and professional complexities of this day and age. Life skills encompass a wide range of skills and competencies that are not usually taught in conventional classroom settings. Therefore, extracurricular activities (ECAs) can offer educational institutions a promising avenue for cultivating life skills and promoting the overall growth of students. Extracurricular activities can also provide students with a platform where they can engage in various real-life activities that can better prepare them for their future roles as adults. Forneris et al. (2015) explain that extracurricular activities 'represent promising environments that lead students to engage in school and to develop skills that promote a successful transition to adulthood' (p. 2).

While previous research has generally focused on the role of extracurricular participation in promoting civic engagement and enhancing educational performance, there is

still a notable dearth of comprehensive understanding regarding the impact of extracurricular participation on life skills development. Additionally, the existing scholarly literature on life skills education centres primarily on Western contexts, with limited research conducted in diverse geographic regions like Morocco. Chiu et al. (2018) contend that 'little is known about extracurricular participation in non-Western cultures' (p. 477). It is thus imperative to conduct more scientific studies on this topic.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the views of high school teachers and students regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on the promotion of life skills among high school students. The following questions will guide this study:

- 1) To what extent do teachers target promoting life skills for high school students through the extracurricular activities they organise in their schools?
- 2) To what extent do students develop life skills through participating in extracurricular activities in their schools?

To achieve the objectives of this study in a systematic manner, this article begins with a thorough review of the existing body of literature on this topic. The article then provides a detailed description of the research methodology and presents quantitative as well as qualitative results. The discussion section compares and interprets the results. Lastly, the article summarises the key results and makes some recommendations to promote life skills in Moroccan high schools through extracurricular activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extracurricular activities are becoming increasingly significant in the realm of education as they provide students with learning opportunities and real-world experiences that extend beyond academic knowledge. Regular involvement in extracurricular activities can enable students to explore their interests and develop valuable skills. Some interesting studies have examined the relationship between extracurricular involvement and the acquisition of various skills. By reviewing these studies, we can better understand the potential benefits of such involvement in different cultural and educational settings.

To begin with, Howie et al. (2010) conducted a study to partly investigate whether children's social skills are enhanced by participating in activities outside-of-school hours. The researchers grouped participation in these activities into three categories: 1) sports teams/lessons, 2) clubs/organisations, and 3) sports and clubs. Data were collected from the 2003-2004 National Survey of Children's Health, which included 25,797 American children aged 6 to 11 years. The study found that children who participated in sports and clubs scored higher in the social skills index than those who did not participate in any outside-of-school activity. The researchers also confirmed that their findings were consistent with previous studies, highlighting the positive impact of participation in outside-of-school activities on social competence.

Keser et al. (2011) investigated whether extracurricular activities promoted citizenship values and competencies among students in a private school in Ankara, Turkey. Their sample included 489 students and 22 teachers and counselors involved in implementing and evaluating extracurricular activities. The findings of this study revealed that the students who engaged in ECAs at school developed some values, competencies, and skills to a certain extent. The researchers identified six themes, which they referred to as the six blossoms of extracurricular activities in active citizenship education. These themes encompass active citizenship

perception, social accountability, intercultural awareness, awareness of democracy and human rights, thinking and research skills, and interaction and intrapersonal skills. The study concluded that school-based extracurricular activities effectively promoted active citizenship values and skills among students.

In another study, Li (2017) explored the relationship between Chinese students' extracurricular participation and its impact on active citizenship and lifelong learning. The study aimed to identify the reasons why students join student societies and groups and how extracurricular activities affect their studies, relationships, attitudes, and socio-political engagement. The study found that most participants joined student groups and societies to learn and develop skills while contributing to the development of their communities. The participants noted that extracurricular activities provided them with several learning opportunities. Through repeated project planning and execution, they were able to improve their time management and managerial skills, analytical and research abilities, higher-order thinking skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making capabilities, particularly when confronted with unfamiliar circumstances. The participants also acknowledged that the skills they learned from extracurricular involvement helped them in their academic pursuits and other areas. Furthermore, the participants admitted that they gained, through hands-on experiences and real-life interactions, a better understanding of the job market and the type of career they wanted to pursue in the future. Li (2017) concludes that ECAs can allow students to gain knowledge, cultivate attitudes and values, and develop skills necessary for active citizenship and lifelong learning.

In the Moroccan context, Idrissi (2020) investigated the impact of 'The Friends of Nature' extracurricular program on students' knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes. The study sample comprised 30 middle school students (7th, 8th, and 9th grades) and two teachers from a private school in Rabat, Morocco. Qualitative data were collected through three months of observations and interviews. The analysis of the data was conducted using content analysis techniques. The study found that the students who participated in 'The Friends of Nature' extracurricular program were able to develop and enhance essential interpersonal and intrapersonal skills while interacting with their team members both in and out of school. Some of the skills they acquired were self-confidence, self-esteem, organisation, communication, presentation, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and time management.

While previous studies have demonstrated a positive association between extracurricular activities and the promotion of various skills, more research is needed to understand the extent to which extracurricular activities contribute to developing these skills. Moreover, a limited body of scholarly research has been produced in the Moroccan context. Therefore, this study is an attempt to address this gap by providing valuable insights into the unique Moroccan cultural and educational context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Conceptual Framework

This study is informed by the Life Skills and Citizenship Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (2017), which was developed by UNICEF as part of the Middle East and North Africa LSCE Initiative in order 'to address the challenges faced by children, youth and all learners in an environment marked by 21st-century requirements and MENA's failing educational systems, as well as the region-specific growing violence' (UNICEF, 2017, p. 17). According to this framework, life skills are 'cognitive and non-cognitive, higher-order, transversal and transferrable skills for learning, for employability, for personal empowerment, and for active citizenship' (p. 29). This framework identifies 12 core life skills for learners in the MENA region. These skills are grouped into four groups, with three core skills in each

group. The first group comprises civic participation, empathy, and respect for diversity. The second group encompasses creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The third contains cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making. The last group includes communication, resilience, and self-management.

3.2.Design

Creswell and Clark (2007) refer to research design as the ‘procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies’ (p. 58). Essentially, a research design is a range of research techniques and methods that researchers employ to address their research questions and attain the overall objectives of their study. This study uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. In this design, researchers collect quantitative and qualitative data almost simultaneously but analyse them separately. When data analysis is complete, the findings from both methods are compared, contrasted, and interpreted. It is worth noting that this design does not prioritise any method or dataset but gives equal importance to both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2011).

3.3. Participants

The participants of this study included teachers and students from public high schools located in the region of Souss-Massa, Morocco. They were recruited using various convenience sampling methods. Tables 1 and 2 provide a summary of the demographic characteristics of the teacher and student samples.

3.3.1. The Participants in the Quantitative Part

Table 1: *Descriptive Characteristics of the Teacher Sample*

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	49	72.1
Female	19	27.9
Age range		
29 and below	18	26.5
30-39	23	33.8
40-49	19	27.9
50 or over	8	11.8
Work experience		
5 years or less	21	30.9
6 to10 years	12	17.6
11 to15 years	13	19.1
16 to 20 years	10	14.7
21 years or over	12	17.6
Directorate		
Agadir Ida-Outanane	25	36.8
Inezgane-Aït Melloul	25	36.8
Chtouka-Aït Baha	4	5.9
Taroudant	5	7.4
Tiznit	1	1.5
Tata	8	11.8
School area		
Rural area	8	11.8
Urban area	43	63.2
Semi-urban area	17	25

Table 2: *Descriptive Characteristics of the Student Sample*

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	99	38.5
Female	158	61.5
School grade		
Common core	42	16.3
1st year bac	116	45.1
2 nd year bac	99	38.5
School location		
Rural area	72	28
Urban area	124	48.2
Semi-urban area	61	23.7
Directorate		
Agadir Ida-Outanane	90	35
Inezgane-Aït Melloul	79	30.7
Chtouka-Aït Baha	27	10.5
Taroudant	1	0.4
Tiznit	21	8.2
Tata	39	15.2

3.3.2. The Participants in the Qualitative Part

Table 3: *Descriptive Characteristics of the Teacher Sample*

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	8	66.66
Female	4	33.33
Age range		
29 and below	1	8.3
30-39	5	41.66
40-49	5	41.66
50 or over	1	8.3
Work experience		
5 years or less	1	8.3
6 to 10 years	2	16.66
11 to 15 years	4	33.33
16 to 20 years	4	33.33
21 years or over	1	8.3
Directorate		
Agadir Ida-Outanane	5	41.66
Inezgane-Aït Melloul	3	25
Chtouka-Aït Baha	3	25
Taroudant	1	8.3
School area		

The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Developing Students' Life Skills

Urban area	8	66.66
Semi-urban area	4	33.33

Table 4

Descriptive Characteristics of the Student Sample

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	12	37.5
Female	20	62.5
School grade		
Common core	7	21.87
1 st year bac	18	56.25
2 nd year bac	7	21.87
School location		
Urban area	21	65.62
Semi-urban area	11	34.37
Directorate		
Agadir Ida-Outanane	10	31.25
Inezgane-Aït Melloul	11	34.37
Chtouka-Aït Baha	11	34.37

3.4. Instruments

In order to collect data on the effect of extracurricular activities on the promotion of life skills for high school students, questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from both teachers and students. As to the questionnaires, they contained two main parts. The first one collected the participants' demographic information. The second one asked the participants about the extent to which extracurricular participation promoted life skills. The questions of the second part were based on UNICEF's Life Skills and Citizenship Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (2017). A 4-point Likert scale was used to measure the items in the second part. The questionnaires were translated into Standard Arabic—the official language of Morocco. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient tests were carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20 to assess the internal consistency of the items of the questionnaires. Both questionnaires have excellent reliability as they both obtained scores above 0.9.

Interviews were the other data collection tool used for this study. Like the questionnaires, the interviews too contained two main parts: the first part collected participants' demographic information, and the second part asked about the impact of extracurricular activities on promoting students' life skills. The interviews were conducted with measures taken to ensure validity and reliability. For instance, an interview protocol was followed to ensure consistency in questioning different participants. The questions were carefully designed to align with the research objectives. Moreover, the interviewees were assured confidentiality and anonymity to encourage truthful and honest responses.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Because this study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. An online questionnaire was created to collect quantitative

data from teachers, and the link to the questionnaire was sent to prospective participants through emails and Moroccan teacher social media groups. Meanwhile, a paper-based questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data from students. In order to collect qualitative data, semi-structured focus groups were conducted with both teachers and students.

Each data type was analysed separately using the appropriate data analysis techniques. Quantitative data were analysed statistically using SPSS Version 20 in order to generate descriptive statistics. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Qualitative findings were reported in a narrative form and supported with quotes from the interviews. After data analysis, quantitative and qualitative results were integrated and cross-analysed to identify similarities and differences.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Quantitative Results

4.1.1. Results from the Teachers

The first question asked teachers about the frequency of targeting the promotion of civic participation, empathy, and respect for diversity through the extracurricular activities they organised in their schools. Data analysis shows that a quarter of the participants (25%) never targeted promoting these skills, while 22.1% targeted them to a small extent. A significant proportion of the participants (36.8%) reported a moderate promotion of these skills, whereas a relatively small minority (16.2%) reported that they promoted these skills to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.04$) and mode score of 3 demonstrate that teachers' responses fell between small and moderate promotion of these skills.

Table 5: *Frequency of Targeting the Promotion of Civic Participation, Empathy, and Respect for Diversity*

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	17	25			
To a small extent	15	22.1			
To a moderate extent	25	36.8	2.44	3	1.04
To a large extent	11	16.2			
Total	68	100			

The second question asked teachers about the frequency of targeting the promotion of creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. 23.5% stated that their ECAs did not target promoting these skills at all, while 17.6% stated that they did to a small extent. A significant proportion of the participants (36.8%) reported a moderate targeting of these skills, whereas 22.1% said their ECAs targeted promoting these skills to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.08$) and the mode score of 3 reveal that teachers' views relatively leaned towards a moderate promotion of the second group of life skills.

Table 6: *Frequency of Targeting the Promotion of Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Problem-Solving Skills*

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	16	23.5			
To a small extent	12	17.6			
To a moderate extent	25	36.8	2.57	3	1.08
To a large extent	15	22.1			
Total	68	100			

The third question gathered teachers' views on the frequency of targeting the promotion of cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making skills. Out of all the teachers, 19.1% stated that they never targeted these skills at all, while 25% reported targeting them to a small extent. A significant proportion of the teachers (36.8%) reported targeting these skills moderately, whereas 19.1% reported targeting them to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.01$) and the mode score of 3 indicate that teachers' views leaned toward targeting the promotion of cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making to a relatively moderate extent.

Table 7: *Frequency of Targeting the Promotion of Cooperation, Negotiation, and Decision-Making Skills*

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	13	19.1			
To a small extent	17	25			
To a moderate extent	25	36.8	2.56	3	1.01
To a large extent	13	19.1			
Total	68	100			

The last question collected teachers' views on the frequency of targeting the promotion of communication, resilience, and self-management skills through ECAs. The results indicate that 17.6% of the teachers reported not targeting the promotion of these skills at all, while almost a quarter (26.5%) acknowledged promoting them to a small extent. Nonetheless, most teachers (36.8%) reported promoting these skills to a moderate extent, and 19.1% reported promoting them to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.99$) and the mode score of 3 suggest that teachers' views leaned towards a moderate promotion of these skills.

Table 8: Frequency of Targeting the Promotion of Communication, Resilience, and Self-Management Skills

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	12	17.6			
To a small extent	18	26.5			
To a moderate extent	25	36.8	2.57	3	0.99
To a large extent	13	19.1			
Total	68	100			

4.1.2. Summary of Results Obtained from the Teachers

Based on the analysis of the teachers' results, it was found that teachers' views leaned towards targeting the promotion of life skills to a relatively moderate extent. The total mean score of 2.536 ($SD = 0.91$) and the total mode score of 3 clearly demonstrate that.

Table 9: Frequency of Targeting the Promotion of Civic Knowledge and Life Skills

	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Life skills Promotion	2.53	3	0.91

4.1.3. Results from the Students

The first question asked the students about the extent to which they developed civic participation, empathy, and respect for diversity through participating in extracurricular activities in their schools. Out of all the surveyed students, 17% reported that ECAs did not help them develop these skills at all, whereas 8.6% expressed that ECAs helped them to a small extent. Almost a quarter (24.3%) reported that ECAs contributed to developing these skills to a moderate extent. Notably, a significant proportion of the participants (49%) admitted that ECAs helped them develop these skills to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.12$) clearly demonstrates that ECAs helped students develop civic participation, empathy, and respect for diversity to a moderate extent. The mode score of 4, representing the most frequent value, highlights the large number of students who believed that ECAs helped them develop these skills to a large extent. These results highlight the positive impact of ECAs on promoting civic participation, empathy, and respect for diversity.

Table 10: The Frequency of Developing Civic Participation, Empathy, and Respect for Diversity

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
To a small extent	22	8.6			
To a moderate extent	65	25.3	3.06	4	1.12

The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Developing Students' Life Skills

To a large extent	126	49
Total	257	100

The second question asked the students about the extent to which they developed creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills through participation in ECAs. Of all the students surveyed, 16.7% reported that participation in ECAs did not contribute to developing these skills at all, while 13.2% indicated that extracurricular participation helped them to a small extent. A considerable percentage of participants (30.7%) acknowledged that extracurricular participation moderately impacted their development of these skills. Notably, the majority (39.3%) admitted that their participation helped them to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.09$) suggests a moderate promotion of these skills. The mode score (4) highlights that most students believed that ECAs contributed to developing these skills to a large extent. The overall results suggest that extracurricular participation considerably impacted students' development of creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Table 11: *The Frequency of Developing Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Problem-Solving Skills*

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	43	16.7			
To a small extent	34	13.2			
To a moderate extent	79	30.7	2.93	4	1.09
To a large extent	101	39.3			
Total	257	100			

The third question asked the students about the extent to which they developed cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making skills through participation in ECAs. The survey results show that 13.2% of the participants reported that ECAs did not help them develop these skills at all, while 13.6% reported that ECAs helped them to a small extent. A considerable proportion of participants (28.4%) admitted that extracurricular participation helped them moderately, whereas a majority of 44.7% stated that ECAs helped them to a large extent. The mean score ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.05$) and the mode (4) indicate that ECAs played an important role in helping students develop cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making skills.

Table 12: *Frequency of Developing Cooperation, Negotiation, and Decision-Making Skills*

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	34	13.2			
To a small extent	35	13.6	3.05	4	1.05

To a moderate extent	73	28.4
To a large extent	115	44.7
Total	257	100

The last question asked the students about the extent to which extracurricular participation helped them develop communication, resilience, and self-management skills. The survey results show that 16.7% reported that ECAs did not have any impact at all, while 11.3% believed that extracurricular involvement helped them develop these skills to a small extent. Notably, a significant proportion of students reported that participating in ECAs helped them develop these skills to a moderate extent (32.7%) or to a large extent (39.3). The mean score ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.08$) and the mode score of 4 imply that, on average, ECAs considerably helped the students develop communication, resilience, and self-management skills.

Table 13: *Frequency of Developing Communication, Resilience, and Self-Management Skills*

	n	%	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Not at all	43	16.7			
To a small extent	29	11.3			
To a moderate extent	84	32.7	2.95	4	1.08
To a large extent	101	39.3			
Total	257	100			

4.1.4. Summary of Results Obtained from the Students

This statistical summary of the results obtained from the students provides valuable insights into the impact of ECAs on the promotion of life skills for students. The total mean score ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.90$) indicates a moderate promotion of life skills. The mode of 4, which stands for the most recurrent value, indicates that most students reported that ECAs helped them to a large extent. Overall, the students believed that ECAs played a significant role in promoting their life skills.

Table 14: *Frequency of Developing Life Skills*

	Mean	Mode	Std. deviation
Life skills promotion	2.99	4	0.90

4.2. Qualitative Results

4.2.1. Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences

Through qualitative analysis of the data obtained from teacher focus group interviews, a deeper understanding was gained regarding teachers' views on the impact of extracurricular activities on promoting life skills among high school students. This theme explores the

discussions held during teacher focus groups, with a particular focus on teachers' perceptions and experiences.

Based on the teacher focus group discussions, it was found that extracurricular activities promoted life skills to a moderate extent. The participants highlighted many instances where life skills were promoted among students. One teacher stated that the students who regularly participated in his clubs' activities often developed communication, negotiation, and organisational skills, especially when they were sent to external institutions to collaborate on some projects. He said, 'Prior to sending students to an external institution, I teach them how to communicate and negotiate. When my students want to organise an event, I encourage them to meet regularly, listen attentively to each other, and respect each other's ideas. These practices enhance mutual respect and promote collaboration and organisational skills.' Other focus group participants agreed and shared the same ideas. However, most participants admitted that life skills were often promoted unintentionally.

The focus group participants acknowledged that promoting life skills was often unintentional for many reasons. First, the participants acknowledged that life skills education was a relatively new concept to them, resulting in a limited emphasis on explicitly organising ECAs to promote these skills. One teacher said, 'My school has made promoting life skills a primary school project, but we have encountered several challenges in achieving this objective because of the teachers' unfamiliarity with the topic.' Second, the participants acknowledged that the lack of professional development opportunities in life skills education prevented them from explicitly targeting the promotion of these skills through ECAs. Another critical remark made by the interviewees was that active participation in ECAs led to a more significant promotion of life skills among students. One teacher observed that 'the students who actively participate in ECAs have better chances of developing life skills than the less active students or the students who attend ECAs as a passive audience. The latter group only benefits from the entertainment aspect of ECAs.'

In conclusion, the qualitative analysis of the teachers' perceptions and experiences revealed that ECAs moderately and unintentionally promoted life skills among students. The teachers also identified some challenges that prevented their ECAs from reaching their full potential.

4.2.2. Students' Perceptions and Experiences

After conducting a qualitative analysis of data gathered from focus group interviews with students, we gained a profound understanding of the students' views regarding the impact of extracurriculars on promoting life skills. On the whole, this theme reveals a consensus among students regarding the positive impact of ECAs on the development of some life skills.

The students agreed that active involvement in ECAs helped them develop life skills they would not develop in a traditional classroom setting. All students emphasised developing some basic life skills, mainly communication, cooperation, and organisational skills. For instance, one student stated that ECAs helped her learn how to communicate and cooperate with other members of her club. Another student said, 'These skills that I have acquired from participating in ECAs have helped me in real-life situations. For example, now, I communicate better with my family members and friends. I can also listen attentively.' Another student added that participation in ECAs helped him acquire some necessary skills such as leadership, cooperation, and teamwork. Another student added, 'I used to be shy, but thanks to involvement in ECAs, I have got over shyness and have become more self-confident.' All students shared almost the same views and agreed that these skills were acquired indirectly through involvement in activities.

In conclusion, the qualitative analysis of the findings obtained from the student focus groups indicated a positive relation between ECAs and the development of life skills. The students who were actively involved in ECAs reported acquiring some basic life skills such as communication, cooperation, and organisational skills to a large extent. They also acknowledged the positive impact of participation in ECAs on boosting self-confidence and some interpersonal skills. It was also reported that the students who were more involved in ECAs had more chances of reaping the benefits of ECAs.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study explored the views of Moroccan high school teachers and students regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on the promotion of life skills. The overall results clearly demonstrate a positive association between extracurricular participation and life skills development. These findings align with previous research and contribute additional insights into the existing literature.

On the one hand, quantitative results obtained from the teacher and student questionnaires were found to be almost consistent with each other. The teachers' responses relatively leaned towards a moderate promotion of life skills, as demonstrated by the total mean score ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.919$) and the total mode score (3). Meantime, the students' responses indicated a moderate development of life skills, with a total mean score of 2.99 ($SD = 0.900$) and a total mode score of 4. Overall, the quantitative results obtained from the questionnaires administered to both teachers and students supported each other.

On the other hand, the qualitative findings obtained from interviewing teachers and students corroborated each other and provided further insights. The teachers explained that the lack of training and unawareness of life skills prevented them from promoting life skills to a large extent. Similarly, the students confessed that regular participation in ECAs and interaction with club members helped them indirectly acquire life skills. However, the students only highlighted some basic life skills such as communication, cooperation, and organisational skills, but they did not have much to say about other necessary life skills such as empathy, respect for diversity, resilience, and self-management, which the Life Skills and Citizenship Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (2017) include. This can be attributed to the difficulty of the concepts and the fact that teachers did not intend to promote these specific skills, as most life skills were only promoted unintentionally.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative results emphasise the positive association between extracurricular participation and life skills development. The results are generally consistent with previous studies conducted by Howie et al. (2010), Keser et al. (2011), Li (2017), and Idrissi (2020). The study further found that the skills students acquired through participating in ECAs were transferrable to real-life situations. Similarly, Li (2017) noted that the skills the students developed through extracurricular involvement helped them in their academic endeavours and other tasks. Moreover, our study found that life skills were promoted unintentionally due to teachers' unfamiliarity with life skills education and thanks to students' regular involvement in ECAs and interaction with each other. Similarly, Idrissi (2020) observed that the students who participated in 'The Friends of Nature' extracurricular programme indirectly developed certain skills through interaction.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored Moroccan teachers' and students' views regarding the effect of extracurricular activities on the development of life skills for high school students. This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design and was informed by UNICEF's Life Skills and Citizenship Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (2017). Quantitative and qualitative results demonstrated a moderate effect of ECAs on promoting life

The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Developing Students' Life Skills

skills among high school students. Despite the positive relationship between ECAs and skill development, the study found some challenges that teachers encountered, indicating that there is still room for improvement. This study concludes with recommendations to further promote life skills through extracurricular activities.

First, it is imperative to provide teachers with the necessary pre-service and in-service professional development. Teachers, as key players in this process, play an essential role in organising and running ECAs in their schools. Therefore, education authorities should prioritise teacher training programs that equip teachers with the skills, resources, and pedagogical tools to promote life skills among students.

Second, it is crucial for teachers to offer various extracurriculars that promote different life skills. To attain this, teachers can expand the range of activities, allowing students to choose activities that align with their interests. By diversifying extracurricular offerings, more students are likely to be involved.

Third, teachers need to set clear objectives for their extracurriculars and clearly communicate them to their students. By so doing, students will be aware of the purpose of their participation and become more engaged.

Fourth, educational authorities should create online platforms where teachers can share practical strategies, best practices, and success stories. This online platform can also serve as a virtual community where teachers can communicate, collaborate, and learn from one another.

Fifth, it is essential to incentivise teachers who invest extra time and effort into extracurricular activities. Education authorities should consider offering teachers tangible rewards to recognise their dedication and compensate them for their voluntary contributions. By offering concrete incentives, teachers are more likely to remain motivated and engaged. This may lead to an overall improvement in the quality of ECAs and encourage more teachers and students to be involved.

Last but not least, teaching and managing ECAs can be difficult for teachers since most of them already have busy timetables. To address this challenge, education authorities could consider training and hiring professionals who can take on the responsibility of managing ECAs and teaching life skills. By adopting this approach, education authorities would alleviate the burden on teachers, and ECAs would become more efficient and impactful.

REFERENCES

- Chiu, C. Y., & Lau, E. Y. H. (2018). Extracurricular participation and young children's outcomes in Hong Kong: Maternal involvement as a moderator. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 88, 476–485.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Forneris, T., Camiré, M., & Williamson, R. (2015). Extracurricular activity participation and the acquisition of developmental assets: Differences between involved and noninvolved Canadian high school students. *Applied Developmental Science*, 19(1), 47-55.
- Howie, L. D., Lukacs, S. L., Pastor, P. N., Reuben, C. A., & Mendola, P. (2010). Participation in activities outside of school hours in relation to problem behavior and social skills in middle childhood. *Journal of School Health*, 80(3), 119–125.

- Idrissi, H. (2020). Exploring global citizenship learning and ecological Behaviour change through extracurricular activities. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 39(3), 272-290.
- Keser, F., Akar, H., & Yildirim, A. (2011). The role of extracurricular activities in active citizenship education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(6), 809-837.
- Li, Z. (2017). Citizenship education ‘goes global’: Extracurricular learning in an overseas campus of a British civic university. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 36(6), 662-678.
- UNICEF. (2017). Reimagining life skills and citizenship education in the Middle East and North Africa: A four-dimensional and systems approach to 21st-century skills conceptual and programmatic framework. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/6151/file/LSCE%20Conceptual%20and%20Programmatic%20Framework_EN.pdf

AUTHORS' BIOS

Ousama SAKI is a high school English teacher. He holds a Master's in Comparative Studies from Ibn Zohr University, Morocco, and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at the same institution. He has participated in various national and international conferences. His research interests include citizenship education, life skills education, and teaching English as a foreign language.

Hanane Darhour is a professor of English, Gender and Politics at the Faculty of Languages, Arts and Human Sciences in Ait Melloul. She is a member of CLAS Lab in Ait Melloul. She published on women's political empowerment via reserved seats, gender-based violence and gender and migration. Among her publications, a book she co-edited with Drude Dahlerup in 2020 entitled 'Double-Edged Politics on Women's Rights in the MENA Region' published by Palgrave. She is currently involved in a Horizon Europe project on Irregular Migrant work