



JOURNAL

OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH,
INNOVATION, AND
MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

An Academic Journal Publication



Website: | <https://jerimspublication.com>

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS



PRINT ISSN

3116-5559



ONLINE ISSN

3116-5567

Volume 1, Issue 6, pp 10-17, August 2026

Research Article

Beyond the Classroom Walls: Students' Stories of Academic Growth

Sheena Rhea A. Atay

Department of Education

ABSTRACT

Article History:

Submission: July, 2026

Revised: July, 2026

Accepted: August, 2026

Published: August, 2026

Originality: 96%

Similarity Index: 7%

Grammarly Score: 96%

*Corresponding Author:

sheena.rhea@deped.gov.ph

Recommended Citation:

Atay, S.R., (2026). Beyond the Classroom Walls: Students' Stories of Academic Growth. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(6), 10-17.

<https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.06.D2K8WL>

This study examined the lived experiences of Junior High School students regarding academic achievement through participation in co-curricular activities at Misamis Occidental National High School during School Year 2025–2026. Using a descriptive phenomenological design, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected participants actively involved in various activities, and data were thematically analyzed. Results revealed core experiences including managing dual roles, academic–activity balance, physical and mental strain, personal growth, social interaction, and experiential learning. Students encountered challenges such as time management difficulties, workload congestion, fatigue, and academic pressure. Despite these, they employed strategies like goal setting, effective time management, seeking peer and teacher support, and practicing self-care. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of supportive school environments in helping students balance responsibilities and maintain well-being and academic success in everyday school contexts.

Keywords: *academic achievement, co-curricular activities, experiential learning, lived experiences, and student engagement*

Copyright Notice:

2026 Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

Introduction

Holistic development is a primary goal of educational institutions. This means that learning should not be limited to formal classroom instruction but should also include meaningful experiences outside the classroom that allow students to apply what they have learned. Structured co-curricular programs aligned with the curriculum provide opportunities for students to develop essential life skills, explore their interests, and strengthen their engagement in academic learning. Research suggests that meaningful learning occurs not only within the classroom but also in broader contexts where students engage socially, develop emotional competencies, and participate in authentic experiences that support academic achievement (Darling, 2005; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Participation in co-curricular activities is treated as an important variable reflecting students' engagement beyond the classroom, while academic achievement is considered the primary outcome. From this perspective, the study examines students' perceptions of academic achievement in relation to their involvement in co-curricular activities, recognizing that learning is shaped through both academic and experiential contexts.

Other research shows that co-curricular involvement has a favorable effect on students academically and in other areas of life. As evidenced by Fredricks and Eccles (2020), the authors wrote: "involvement in organized school activities when academic motivation and engagement is enhanced, then learning outcomes are improved" Facilitating Academic Performance: In a similar strand of thinking, Marsh and Kleitman (2021) demonstrated that students involved in co-curricular programs attain discipline and skills necessary for better academic results. They are also encouraged by international organizations. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2022), structured activities cultivate non-cognitive skills including persistence and self-regulation that are fundamental to school success. Two types of processes, cognitive and non-cognitive, mediate the link between co-curriculars and academic performance.

In the Philippine context, the significance of co-curricular activities is bolstered by policies of the Department of Education that advance holistic and learner-centered education. Under DepEd, Order No. 36, s. 2016 as the learning derived from participation in school programs that address both academic and non-academic development of learners (Cited in David et.al., 2023). Related DepEd Order No. 34, s. 2022– Amendments on Period of School Year to 218 integrate academic and co-curricular activities with In-Session Days within the context of Lesson Delivery period in delivering Quality Basic Education (QBE). In addition, DepEd Order No. 003, s.2023 emphasizes the need for student participation programs that foster wellness and active participation among learners. These policies reflect the educational systems commitment to holistic student development.

While the benefits of co-curricular activities are well documented, there is a dearth of quality research examining students' lived experience and how they frame participation in such activities with regard to its impact on academic achievement. Quantitative-based studies are common in the Philippines, often concentrating on specific indicators like grades, attendance and test scores (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2020). Though useful, these studies are limited in that they can illuminate the statistics, but fail to tell the story of student's experiences including both the challenges that they experience and what it means for them to participate. This disparity is especially pronounced in public schools where resources and student demographics provide a context under which co-curricular practices are experienced (World Bank, 2022).

School-level data further emphasize the need to examine this issue. Reports indicate that some students involved in co-curricular activities experience difficulty maintaining academic focus due to challenges in time management and balancing responsibilities. This is consistent with findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, which show that Filipino students face challenges in sustaining motivation and regulating their learning (OECD, 2022). Noting how challenges and contextual factors interact with students, these findings indicate that such a particular host of subconscious challenges may shape educational experiences and outcomes significantly.

Given these concerns, this research will investigate the experiences of Junior High School student regarding their academic performance as an implication of participating in co-curricular activities. The study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and feelings regarding the effects of the activities affecting their academic achievement using a qualitative method. The results are predicted to offer

crucial information for educators and school administrators who wish to construct robust co-curricular packages that assist students' overall development.

Methods

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Junior High School students at Misamis Occidental National High School regarding their academic achievement while participating in co-curricular activities. Ten (10) Grades 7 to 10 students who were actively involved in at least one co-curricular activity were selected through purposive sampling and participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The validated interview guide focused on their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of how co-curricular participation influenced their academic achievement. The interviews were audio-recorded with permission, transcribed, coded, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) Thematic Analysis, with further interpretation through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify recurring themes and meanings from the participants' experiences. Ethical standards were strictly observed through school and division approval, parental consent, student assent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Results and Discussions

Theme 1: Balancing Academic and Co-Curricular Responsibilities

The first theme reveals that students experience considerable difficulty in balancing their academic responsibilities with their participation in co-curricular activities. The participants describe their experiences as managing two roles at the same time: being regular students who attend classes, complete assignments, prepare for examinations, and accomplish academic requirements, while also serving as athletes, researchers, journalists, competitors, or members of school organizations. This situation requires students to continuously shift their attention and energy between academic and co-curricular responsibilities. One participant described the experience as "living two lives," emphasizing the constant transition from academic tasks to training and other activities. Another participant explained that co-curricular participation makes the daily schedule busier but also provides something meaningful to anticipate each day. These experiences show that participation is not simply an additional school activity; rather, it becomes an important part of students' daily lives that requires commitment, discipline, and continuous adjustment. The findings support Role Strain Theory, which explains that individuals may experience difficulty when they simultaneously perform multiple roles with competing expectations and demands.

Time management becomes particularly important because students frequently encounter overlapping schedules, deadlines, training sessions, competitions, examinations, and academic requirements. Participants report situations in which research activities coincide with quarterly examinations or when performance tasks and activity requirements occur at the same time. These situations create pressure because students have limited time to accomplish responsibilities that demand equal attention. Some participants cope by completing schoolwork at night, studying during breaks, making schedules, or prioritizing the most urgent tasks. However, these strategies sometimes result in cramming, procrastination, and insufficient rest. The findings therefore suggest that effective time management involves more than simply creating a schedule; it requires students to determine priorities, regulate their attention, and make decisions regarding which responsibilities must be accomplished first. This finding is consistent with Self-Regulation Theory, which emphasizes planning, goal setting, prioritization, monitoring, and regulating one's behavior as essential processes in managing academic responsibilities successfully.

The challenge becomes more serious when participation requires students to miss regular classes and subsequently catch up on lessons, assignments, quizzes, and other requirements. Participants indicate that attending competitions, training sessions, and other school activities sometimes causes them to miss classroom discussions, requiring additional independent study after returning to class. For example, participants describe having to catch up on lessons on their own, exert extra effort to complete missed activities, and sometimes cram requirements to meet deadlines. Although some students successfully complete their requirements and maintain satisfactory academic performance, the additional workload can create learning gaps and increase academic pressure. This indicates that balancing academics and co-curricular activities should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of students. Schools, teachers, advisers, and activity coordinators also play important roles in

coordinating schedules, providing reasonable opportunities to complete missed requirements, and ensuring academic continuity. The finding reflects the principles of Constructivist Learning Theory, which recognizes learning as a continuous process of building knowledge through meaningful and connected experiences; interruptions in classroom participation may therefore affect how learners develop and connect new understanding.

Theme 2: Physical and Mental Strain

The second theme highlights the physical and mental strain experienced by students while managing academic and co-curricular demands. Although participation provides valuable opportunities for learning and development, students describe considerable tiredness resulting from long hours of classes, training, competitions, projects, and academic work. Physical exhaustion becomes particularly evident among participants engaged in physically demanding activities. One participant explains that concentrating on a research paper at night becomes difficult after experiencing physical soreness from training, while another describes feeling exhausted when research responsibilities and quarterly examinations occur simultaneously. These experiences indicate that physical fatigue does not remain limited to the body; it can also influence students' concentration, motivation, and capacity to accomplish academic tasks effectively. The findings demonstrate that when students continuously perform demanding responsibilities without sufficient recovery, their physical energy gradually decreases and their academic engagement may also suffer. Thus, co-curricular participation needs to be properly balanced so that its developmental benefits do not come at the expense of students' physical well-being.

Mental and emotional strain also emerges when students experience continuous pressure from competing expectations. Participants describe feelings of burnout, stress, mental fatigue, and frustration, particularly when deadlines and responsibilities accumulate. One participant explains that poor performance in a game affects the motivation to study, while receiving a low academic grade creates a feeling of failure as a student. This illustrates the interconnected nature of students' academic and co-curricular experiences: difficulties experienced in one area may influence confidence, mood, and performance in another. Another participant directly acknowledges that co-curricular involvement negatively affected mental well-being when responsibilities became overwhelming. At the same time, some students recognize that stressful experiences teach them responsibility, discipline, and resilience. This demonstrates the complex nature of co-curricular participation because the same experiences that create pressure may also contribute to personal development when students receive sufficient guidance and support. The findings are consistent with the study's discussion of Student Engagement Theory, which recognizes that meaningful engagement can promote development, but excessive demands without appropriate support may contribute to burnout and negative academic outcomes.

Lack of sleep further intensifies both physical and mental strain. Participants report studying during breaks, staying awake late at night to complete papers, and attending morning classes despite insufficient sleep. One participant explains that staying up late to finish academic work makes it difficult to remain alert during morning lectures. Such experiences suggest a cycle in which limited time forces students to sacrifice sleep, insufficient sleep decreases concentration and energy, and reduced concentration may subsequently require more time to complete academic responsibilities. Mental fatigue also becomes evident when students continuously think about unfinished tasks or problems even while attending to unrelated subjects. These findings emphasize the importance of recovery, adequate rest, and reasonable workload management in sustaining students' academic and co-curricular participation. Schools therefore need to consider students' overall workload when scheduling competitions, training, projects, and academic requirements. Providing coordinated schedules, appropriate academic accommodations, wellness support, and opportunities for rest can help ensure that co-curricular engagement remains beneficial rather than becoming a source of excessive physical and psychological burden.

Theme 3: Growth, Skills, and Meaningful Learning Through Challenges

Despite the challenges encountered, the third theme demonstrates that students perceive co-curricular participation as an important source of personal growth and achievement. Participants commonly describe their experiences as exhausting and challenging yet fulfilling. For instance, students involved in research activities explain that training, competitions, and preparation can be hectic, but successfully completing these experiences gives them a strong sense of accomplishment. Others describe the satisfaction of winning awards, completing difficult projects, producing successful outputs, or contributing meaningfully to group goals. These findings

suggest that students do not necessarily view difficulty as entirely negative. Instead, challenges become meaningful when students recognize that their effort results in improvement, accomplishment, or personal development. This interpretation is consistent with Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes that meaningful learning develops through concrete experiences, reflection, adjustment, and the application of lessons gained from experience. Thus, the struggles encountered in co-curricular activities can become important learning experiences when students are provided opportunities to reflect on and learn from them.

The experiences also contribute to the development of important personal and academic skills, including discipline, responsibility, time management, leadership, teamwork, decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Participants report becoming more disciplined and responsible because they are required to fulfill commitments in both academic and co-curricular settings. Some students develop specific strategies such as setting goals, prioritizing tasks, preparing lists of responsibilities, and using structured time-management techniques. Others identify improvements in leadership, teamwork, and decision-making because co-curricular activities require them to collaborate with peers, assume responsibilities, and respond to actual problems. Critical-thinking abilities are likewise strengthened through research, journalism, robotics, competitions, and other activities that demand analysis and problem-solving. These findings demonstrate that co-curricular activities provide learning opportunities that extend beyond conventional classroom instruction. The development of these competencies is consistent with Self-Regulation Theory, which emphasizes that learners gradually improve their ability to manage thoughts, behaviors, goals, and actions through continuous practice, reflection, and self-monitoring.

Finally, co-curricular participation provides students with meaningful opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in real-life situations while building relationships with other learners. Participants explain that these activities allow them to learn through actual practice, experimentation, teamwork, and problem-solving. For example, involvement in research develops skills in conducting and defending studies, while participation in coding and robotics allows students to apply concepts learned in Computer Science to actual projects. These experiences also help students explore possible career paths and discover their interests and strengths. At the same time, working with teammates and fellow participants expands students' social networks, creates friendships, strengthens collaboration, and promotes a sense of belonging. Therefore, the value of co-curricular participation extends beyond academic achievement alone; it contributes to the holistic development of students by integrating academic knowledge, practical skills, social relationships, and personal growth. This finding strongly reflects Experiential Learning Theory, where learning becomes deeper when students actively apply knowledge, reflect on their experiences, solve authentic problems, and connect classroom concepts with actual situations.

Conclusions

The study concludes that participation in co-curricular activities provides a dynamic learning experience where challenges and growth coexist. While students face time constraints, physical fatigue, and emotional strain in managing dual roles, these difficulties serve as catalysts for developing essential skills such as discipline, time management, leadership, and critical thinking. Co-curricular involvement also fosters social interaction, engagement, and a sense of belonging, which support academic achievement and well-being. Effective balance depends on strong support systems and coping strategies, including time management and self-care. Therefore, co-curricular activities should be viewed not as competing with academics but as a vital component of holistic education, highlighting that students' growth is shaped by both classroom learning and lived experiences beyond it.

Recommendations

The study recommends a collaborative approach among students, teachers, parents, school heads, Department of Education officials, policymakers, stakeholders, curriculum planners, and program designers to ensure that students can effectively balance academic responsibilities and co-curricular participation. Students should strengthen their time-management, goal-setting, self-regulation, and self-care practices, while teachers and parents should provide appropriate academic, emotional, and practical support. School heads and education authorities should establish coordinated schedules, flexible academic arrangements, wellness initiatives, adequate resources, and clear policies that promote meaningful co-curricular participation without compromising academic achievement. Furthermore, curriculum planners and stakeholders should strengthen

experiential and learner-centered opportunities that connect classroom learning with real-life experiences. Future researchers are encouraged to examine the long-term effects of co-curricular participation on academic performance, personal development, and career readiness and evaluate interventions that can better support participating students.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

References

- [1] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications. ([SAGE Publishing](#))
- [2] Darling, N. (2005). Participation in extracurricular activities and adolescent adjustment: Cross-sectional and longitudinal findings. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34(5), 493–505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-7266-8>
- [3] Department of Education. (2016). *Policy guidelines on awards and recognition for the K to 12 Basic Education Program (DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2016)*. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines.
- [4] Department of Education. (2022). *School calendar and activities for the school year 2022–2023 (DepEd Order No. 34, s. 2022)*. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines.
- [5] Department of Education. (2023). *An order allowing the conduct of in-person activities in schools (DepEd Order No. 003, s. 2023)*. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines.
- [6] Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. National Academy Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/10022>
- [7] Fredricks, J. A. (2012). Extracurricular participation and academic outcomes: Testing the over-scheduling hypothesis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41, 295–306. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-011-9704-0>
- [8] Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59–109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059> (DOI)
- [9] 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
- [10] Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? Concurrent and longitudinal relations. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(4), 698–713. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.698>
- [11] Goode, W. J. (1960). A theory of role strain. *American Sociological Review*, 25(4), 483–496. ([Eugene Garfield](#))
- [12] Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall. ([Google Books](#))
- [13] Marsh, H. W., & Kleitman, S. (2002). Extracurricular school activities: The good, the bad, and the nonlinear. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4), 464–514.
- [14] Orbeta, A. C., Jr., Melad, K. A. M., & Potestad, M. V. (2020). *Correlates of test performance of 15-year-old students in the Philippines: Evidence from PISA* (Discussion Paper Series No. 2020-57). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. <https://doi.org/10.62986/dp2020.57> (PIDS)
- [15] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *PISA 2022 results (Volume I): The state of learning and equity in education*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>
- [16] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *PISA 2022 results (Volume II): Learning during—and from—disruption*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a97db61c-en>

- [17] Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE Publications. ([IPA](#))
- [18] Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- [19] World Bank, & UNESCO. (2022). *Philippines: Learning poverty brief*. World Bank. ([World Bank](#))
- [20] Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64–70. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15430421TIP4102_2