

The Importance of Extracurricular Activities for Primary School Students.

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Abstract: It is increasingly apparent that the contemporary educational system has inadvertently restricted many students' opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, primarily due to the overwhelming volume of academic assignments they are required to complete. Simultaneously, many parents perceive such activities at the primary school level as unnecessary or even counterproductive. However, scientific research presents a different perspective, affirming that extracurricular activities are, in fact, vital in achieving a broad spectrum of educational, social, and psychological objectives. These activities serve as indispensable components of the educational process, contributing significantly to students' personal growth. They enable students to explore and identify their interests, talents, and abilities, fostering their development. In addition to nurturing self-confidence, these activities promote mental well-being, enhance academic learning, and instill essential values and ethical principles. They also play a crucial role in shaping students' character, which, in turn, supports behavioral modifications in the classroom and facilitates better psychological and academic adjustment.

key words: Extracurricular Activities, Student.

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Introduction:

Psychologists and educators alike underscore the importance of play in relation to attention and academic success. Research highlights that play and educational games play a significant role in enhancing students' cognitive development, particularly in terms of concentration, observation, and attention.

it is evident that extracurricular activities provide substantial benefits to students. They help cultivate mental and emotional stability, promote more positive interactions with peers, teachers, and parents, and encourage the development of leadership skills. Additionally, these activities foster emotional resilience, enhance social engagement, and contribute to the creation of well-adjusted individuals. Through these experiences, students are not only able to excel academically but also develop into well-rounded, responsible members of society.

According to Sohair Ali Maarouf (2008), such activities have a profound impact on enriching students' knowledge and fostering critical psychological processes that are key to their overall academic success. and, extracurricular activities become an essential complement to the educational mission of schools. Their core objective is to provide students with cognitive and educational experiences that contribute significantly to their holistic development. By engaging in these activities, students are better prepared for life beyond school, as these activities guide their behavior towards positive and constructive outcomes.

Education, in its most comprehensive sense, is not confined to the classroom but extends to diverse settings such as libraries, farms, museums, factories, and various other environments that are intrinsically linked to the curriculum. These

varied learning contexts serve to enrich the educational process and further students' personal growth (Sana Farouki Qahouji, 2009).

2-Theoretical foundations : Algeria is making significant strides in focusing on children, particularly those at the primary school level, as this stage is recognized as pivotal in the overall developmental trajectory of childhood. The importance of this period in shaping future generations

cannot be overstated, and, as a result, the education sector in Algeria has been undergoing continuous improvement across multiple domains.

These advancements encompass a wide range of initiatives, including the enhancement of educational systems, the refinement of curricula, as well as the construction, equipping, and renovation of school facilities. Recent developments have also emphasized the provision of basic needs for students during their time at school. This includes improvements in classroom ergonomics, alongside the establishment of school cafeterias in every educational institution across the country.

All these efforts are aimed at facilitating a more effective educational experience, ensuring the success of the teaching and learning processes, and safeguarding students' safety and well-being. The initiatives also focus on supporting students' mental, physical, and health development, alongside promoting their emotional and academic adaptation. By fostering a conducive environment that helps students concentrate and manage distractions, these improvements seek to optimize the learning experience and prevent potential hindrances to academic success. Ultimately, these initiatives are aligned with the broader goals of national development and progress, which the Algerian state is steadfastly working toward (Miryah Fatima Zahra, 2017, p. 106).

As emphasized by Dawoud (2006), the role of schools in preparing young people for life is essential, not only in terms of academic instruction but also in facilitating their integration into society and equipping them to confront future challenges. Through the educational process, schools transmit cultural heritage

from one generation to the next, cultivate behavioral patterns, and foster critical thinking skills. Furthermore, schools aim to nurture habits, social attitudes, values, and ideals while helping students develop the methods and approaches needed to fully realize their potential and talents (Dawoud Abdelbari, 2006, p. 524).

In light of the recent modifications to curricula and the growing emphasis on academic achievement within relatively constrained timeframes, coupled with the limited hours primary school students spend in school, noticeable disparities are emerging. These disparities are becoming increasingly

apparent in how students manage the time allocated for both academic lessons and various extracurricular activities.

Such discrepancies have a profound impact on their academic performance, their engagement with the curriculum, and, ultimately, their grades. While these differences may stem from individual student capabilities, they are also often a result of an inability to effectively manage and allocate time between different educational demands.

Psychologists and educators alike underscore the importance of play in relation to attention and academic success. Research highlights that play and educational games play a significant role in enhancing students' cognitive development, particularly in terms of concentration, observation, and attention.

These activities not only support academic learning but also facilitate the development of a student's broader understanding of their environment, both within and outside the school context. According to Sohair Ali Maarouf (2008), such activities have a profound impact on enriching students' knowledge and fostering critical psychological processes that are key to their overall academic success.

In this context, extracurricular activities become an essential complement to the educational mission of schools. Their core objective is to provide students with cognitive and educational experiences that contribute significantly to their holistic development. By engaging in these activities, students are better prepared for life beyond school, as these activities guide their behavior towards positive and constructive outcomes.

Education, in its most comprehensive sense, is not confined to the classroom but extends to diverse settings such as libraries, farms, museums, factories, and various other environments that are intrinsically linked to the curriculum. These varied learning contexts serve to enrich the educational process and further students' personal growth (Sana Farouki Qahouji, 2009, p. 10).

As emphasized by Abu al-Ata (2006), extracurricular activities, across their wide range of forms and domains, significantly contribute to the development of students' personalities, particularly in moral, social, psychological, physical, and intellectual dimensions. These activities equip

students with the skills and attributes necessary for future life challenges. At times, the impact of these activities can even exceed that of traditional classroom learning. Abu al-Ata (2006, p. 43) asserts that extracurricular engagement plays a pivotal role in preparing students for life, fostering a well-rounded personality and instilling essential qualities for success.

From the discussion above, it is evident that extracurricular activities provide substantial benefits to students. They help cultivate mental and emotional stability, promote more positive interactions with peers, teachers, and parents, and encourage the development of leadership skills. Additionally, these activities

foster emotional resilience, enhance social engagement, and contribute to the creation of well-adjusted individuals. Through these experiences, students are not only able to excel academically but also develop into well-rounded, responsible members of society.

On this basis, Shahat Hassan (2004) emphasizes that extracurricular activities, across their diverse domains, significantly contribute to improved academic performance and play an essential role in shaping students' behavior in a positive and desired direction. These activities are instrumental in helping students develop a wide array of beneficial attitudes, such as precision, cleanliness, honesty, respect for others, a strong work ethic, and the protection of public property. What makes these activities particularly valuable is that they provide students with the opportunity to explore their interests and talents, which are often constrained by the rigid structure of the traditional academic curriculum.

Shahat Hassan (2004, pp. 39–42) argues that conventional academic settings frequently limit students' ability to engage in spontaneous activities that align with their personal passions, thus impeding the natural development of their talents. In contrast, extracurricular activities create an environment in which students can more freely explore and nurture their unique capabilities.

In primary education, subjects such as language, mathematics, history, and geography can be effectively taught through a variety of interactive and engaging methods, such as storytelling, dramatization, educational games, field trips, and hands-on activities. It is anticipated that, in both the present and the near future, educators in the Arab and Islamic world will adopt a

guiding principle that advocates for a more integrated approach to learning: “Work as you play, and play as you work” (Makbal, 2012, pp. 27–29). This approach not only encourages students to learn but also ensures that the learning process is enjoyable, dynamic, and engaging, moving beyond the constraints of traditional, one-dimensional educational methods.

Magda Saleh, in this context, raises a critical concern about the detrimental effects of traditional schooling on children’s mental and psychological well-being. Even before entering school, many children begin to suffer from the suppression of their innate abilities and creativity due to the restrictive nature of overcrowded classrooms. These environments, devoid of joy and spontaneity, hinder children's natural inclination to explore and learn freely.

In stark contrast, educators around the world are increasingly focused on nurturing creativity and fostering innovation in children, often starting well before birth, through various early childhood development programs. This growing emphasis on creativity is a direct challenge to the rigid, creativity-stifling educational systems still prevalent in many parts of the world (Majda Saleh, 2012).

Thus, it can be concluded that extracurricular activities play a crucial role in enhancing academic outcomes by providing emotional and psychological support, as well as guiding students toward positive behaviors within the classroom. These activities contribute to students’ overall development by fostering their cognitive, emotional, and social well-being, and by creating an environment conducive to learning.

Scholars have long debated the nature of human behavior, personality traits, and the factors that influence them. While there is no consensus on all aspects, there is broad agreement on several foundational elements that shape whether a student's actions can be considered a behavior. These elements include the student’s environment and heredity (Muhammad Awad, 1971, p. 56).

As a result of these environmental influences, students may experience various emotional, behavioral, and educational challenges. These challenges often arise when there is a misalignment between the student’s actions and the expected norms within the school environment. For instance, research by Perrot (2006) found that students’ behavior tends to be more erratic on

Mondays, likely due to the disruptions caused by the weekend break. In contrast, behavior on Tuesdays and Thursdays is generally more stable and balanced, reflecting the adjustment students make as they re-engage with their academic routines (Perrot, 2006).

Additionally, a study conducted by Abdel Sattar (2005) revealed that the primary motivators for students' participation in extracurricular activities include the opportunity to gain new knowledge, develop hobbies and talents, and enhance their academic performance. Similarly, Nasrallah (2000) concluded that extracurricular activities are fundamental in the formation of critical habits, skills, values, and cognitive strategies necessary for continued learning. These activities, ranging from school trips to radio broadcasts and school journalism, serve to further academic achievement by improving students' overall ability to succeed and perform (Nasrallah, 2000).

In conclusion, extracurricular activities not only serve to enrich students' knowledge and experience, but they also play a crucial role in their personal development. These activities provide invaluable opportunities for growth that extend far beyond the confines of the traditional classroom environment. They are instrumental in helping students realize their full potential academically, emotionally, and socially.

When we examine the state of schools today, it becomes evident that many institutions place a disproportionate emphasis on academic achievement while often neglecting the importance of extracurricular activities. These activities are frequently viewed as burdensome additions to the curriculum and distractions from educational performance.

In some cases, teachers continue to associate the learning process exclusively with formal classroom settings, confined within the four walls of the school. As a result, extracurricular activities are often relegated to mere entertainment or leisure. There remains a failure among some educators to recognize that education, in its truest sense, should be a holistic process, one that nurtures not only intellectual development but also emotional and behavioral growth.

In fact, students need more than just theoretical instruction; they require hands-on, experiential learning opportunities to fully grasp academic content. There exists a persistent gap between the knowledge and skills

students acquire within the classroom and the practical competencies they need to thrive in the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century. To truly prepare students for their future roles in society, it is crucial to bridge this gap. Students must be provided with real-world examples and applications of the theoretical knowledge they receive, both inside and outside the classroom, to ensure they are fully equipped for life beyond school (Niost, 2009, p. 5).

The key point here is not whether schools should increase or decrease the number of extracurricular activities, but whether they are thoughtfully considering the educational goals underlying each activity. It is essential that schools define clear objectives, engage in careful planning, and implement extracurricular programs in ways that encourage the development of students' insight, critical thinking skills, and overall abilities.

Schools must also assess and evaluate the effectiveness of these activities to ensure continuous improvement and educational value (Ališ Fella, 2016, p. 4). Therefore, the organization of extracurricular activities should be strategically aligned with the school timetable to maximize their impact on student learning.

2-1-Research Objectives: This research seeks to achieve several important objectives that are critical for primary education. Specifically, the objectives are:

- To explore the significance of engaging in extracurricular activities outside the classroom for students.
- To emphasize the need for providing the necessary resources and opportunities for students to participate in educational or cultural activities during their free time.

2-2-Importance of the Research Problem: The motivation behind selecting this research topic arises from several key considerations, based on field observations and a careful evaluation of current practices. These considerations include:

- The significance of the target group, children, who require training and guidance to mitigate learning deficits caused by attention problems and academic delays observed in primary schools.

- This research aims to identify and analyze the factors that influence students' academic performance, particularly in relation to their engagement in extracurricular activities.

3-Definition of Extracurricular Activities:

Fatima Khalil (1981) defines extracurricular activities as those activities undertaken by students outside the formal classroom setting, encompassing a broad range of intellectual, psychological, physical, and social dimensions. These activities serve to complement the formal curriculum by providing students with opportunities to engage in creative and critical thinking, while also aligning with their personal interests and needs (Khalil, 1981, p. 7).

Al-Suwaidi (1997) further emphasizes that extracurricular activities are experiential in nature, where students actively participate in structured programs designed to achieve specific educational goals. These activities are typically organized as part of the school program and include a variety of pursuits such as sports, music, arts, and scientific endeavors. In addition to these, students may participate in cultural, social, and sports clubs, all of which take place outside the classroom environment. Al-Suwaidi (1997, p. 141) also notes that these activities can be co-curricular, meaning they are directly related to the academic curriculum and serve as complementary learning experiences.

Shibli et al. (1997) argue that extracurricular activities represent purposeful efforts undertaken by students to meet their intellectual needs while simultaneously acquiring a range of skills that significantly enhance their cognitive abilities. These activities not only contribute to the development of critical thinking skills but also foster the cultivation of positive attitudes and values. According to Shibli, Ahmed, et al. (1997, p. 106), such activities are essential for the comprehensive growth of students, as they offer more than just academic learning, they promote holistic development.

Al-Bouhi and Mahfouz (2001) further assert that extracurricular activities provide an ideal environment for students to immerse themselves in, allowing them to interact with others and develop essential values, culture, and experiences. By directly engaging with different fields of inquiry, students are afforded the opportunity to critically analyze the information they encounter. This engagement, in turn, facilitates the development of a well-rounded and distinctive personality, one that is equipped with both

intellectual depth and social awareness (Al-Bouhi, Farouk, & Mahfouz, Ahmed, 2001, p. 14).

From these definitions, it can be concluded that extracurricular activities are intentional efforts, either mental or physical, that students engage in, all designed around a well-structured plan aimed at achieving specific educational outcomes. These activities take place outside the traditional classroom setting, whether within the school's grounds or beyond. The goal is to extend learning opportunities that complement and enhance the formal curriculum, fostering a broader development of the student.

However, there exists some variation in the terminology used to describe these activities. Several terms are often employed interchangeably, including "extracurricular activities," "non-curricular activities," "co-curricular activities," and "out-of-classroom activities." These variations reflect different perspectives on the role and scope of activities outside the formal curriculum.

The concept of student activity programs has evolved significantly over time. It reflects an ongoing effort to identify more suitable terminology that accurately captures this aspect of the school's broader responsibilities. Historically, many teachers and educators have referred to these activities as "school activities" or "extracurricular activities," assuming that they occur outside the formal curriculum and are therefore supplementary.

This terminology has been widely adopted because it suggests that these activities are optional, often viewed as distractions from the core educational mission of the school. However, modern educators increasingly recognize that these activities are not merely optional or superfluous but are, in fact, integral to the overall development of students. They now view extracurricular activities as essential components of a comprehensive educational experience (Makbal, 2012, p. 44).

In conclusion, schools today must consistently strive to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the various activities within their programs. This evaluation process should ensure that there is a well-thought-out balance between the academic content delivered within the classroom and the broader set of activities that contribute to students' personal development. Schools must recognize that while academic instruction is crucial, the

integration of extracurricular activities is equally important for fostering a well-rounded, adaptable, and capable student body (Makbal, 2012, p. 56).

Generally, the term "extracurricular activities" refers to those activities undertaken during students' free time, outside of the prescribed curriculum. These are often referred to as non-curricular activities, which form a broader spectrum of educational experiences practiced within the school setting but occurring outside of the formal classroom.

4-Types of Activities Students Engage In: Yakoubi (1989) identifies two main categories of activities that students engage in, as follows:

- **In-Class Activities:** These activities take place within the classroom or laboratory environment and are directly tied to the academic curriculum.
- **Out-of-Class Activities:** These activities occur outside of the classroom, whether on school premises or in external settings (Yakoubi, 1989, p. 22).

The **Student Activities Guide** further elaborates on various types of activities based on their nature:

- **Out-of-School Activities:** These are either scientific or non-scientific activities that students participate in outside the formal curriculum, often driven by their personal interests and inclinations. These activities are typically conducted in groups, clubs, or student associations.
- **In-Class Activities:** These activities are closely related to the course content and take place either inside or outside the classroom. Their purpose is to deepen students' understanding of the educational material, often serving as the practical application of academic concepts.
- **Non-Classroom Activities:** These are voluntary, free-choice activities that are offered outside the formal curriculum. They typically take place during designated periods within the school day or after school hours. These activities are often organized into structured programs involving student groups, clubs, or teams (Student Activities Guide, 1428, p. 12).

5-Importance of Extracurricular Activities for Students: Islam has long placed significant emphasis on the development of habits, values, and positive attitudes from an early age. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reflect this philosophy, particularly through his approach to interacting with children. He would greet them as they were engaged in play, demonstrating his profound respect for their developmental process. This gesture, rooted in his noble character, helped instill self-confidence and a strong sense of identity in young Muslims, thereby reinforcing the development of their Islamic character (Al-Hashimi, 1983, pp. 124–125).

This example illustrates the critical role of effectively utilizing students' free time through various activities. These activities are not only beneficial for imparting knowledge but also for nurturing essential habits, skills, and attitudes that span multiple facets of life.

Abu Al-Fotouh et al. (1978) further emphasize that out-of-class activities play a pivotal role in providing experiences that are often unattainable within the traditional classroom setting. These include crucial life skills such as socialization, empathy, responsibility, self-control, and teamwork. Extracurricular activities also offer students a valuable outlet for self-expression, enabling them to alleviate any frustrations they may harbor regarding their academic experiences (Abu Al-Fotouh et al., 1978, p. 193).

Ahmad Al-Luqai (1999) underscores the fallacy of limiting the educational process to the classroom environment. Scientific research has demonstrated that approximately 80% of a student's learning occurs outside of the formal classroom setting, extending even beyond the school environment. This aligns with the fundamental educational principle that learning is preparation for life, and therefore, it must take place within real-world contexts. When education is confined to traditional, passive methods, where the focus is merely on absorbing textbook knowledge without critical engagement, it becomes shallow, unproductive, and disconnected from the realities of the world that students will face in the future.

Al-Lagani (1999, p. 220) stresses the importance of an active, experiential approach to learning that enables students to engage meaningfully with the world around them. This argument further reinforces the value of extracurricular activities, which help students develop essential communication skills, such as reading, speaking, and listening, especially

during the formative years of their academic journey (Al-Lagani, 1984, p. 205).

In a similar vein, Mukhtar (1999) highlights the importance of diverse and engaging school activities in preventing school dropout. He advocates for extracurricular activities that offer students multiple opportunities for healthy social interaction, enabling them to develop important life skills such as collaboration, teamwork, and relationship-building outside the confines of the family environment. This type of engagement not only addresses academic concerns but also helps students feel more connected to their school community, potentially mitigating the risk of school avoidance (Mukhtar, 1999, p. 130).

Moreover, Ryan (1989) emphasizes the crucial role of extracurricular activities in promoting students' physical well-being. Activities such as sports, scouting, volunteer work, and participation in organizations like the Red Crescent provide valuable lessons related to physical education, health principles, first aid, and accident prevention.

These activities offer students the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, including outdoor games, problem-solving abilities, and resilience in overcoming challenges, skills that also positively impact their academic progress (Ryan, 1989, p. 76). This sentiment is echoed by Ata (1992), who points out that engaging students in extracurricular activities helps to break down psychological and physical barriers that may exist between teachers and students. These activities promote a more relaxed and open environment, allowing for better rapport and communication between the two groups (Ata, 1992, p. 32).

In light of the above, it is clear that extracurricular activities offer substantial benefits to students. They help foster mental tranquility and emotional stability, contributing to a positive attitude in interactions with peers, teachers, and family

members. Furthermore, these activities provide students with opportunities to develop leadership qualities, emotional resilience, and essential social skills, all of which are vital for their overall personal growth and development.

6-Criteria for Selecting Extracurricular Activities: There is a significant difference between an activity that achieves educational goals and one that merely serves to waste time through play and idle activities. Rashidi et al. (1999) have outlined a set of criteria for selecting extracurricular activities that genuinely benefit students:

- Activities should align with the local context and meet the specific needs of students.
- Activities should correspond to the student's physiological, psychological, and social readiness, ensuring that learning is most effective when the student is prepared.
- Activities should be appropriate for the developmental level of the students.
- Activities should provide benefits proportional to the time and effort invested.
- Activities should help balance personal development with societal requirements.
- It is crucial to select activities that connect the student's learning to real-life experiences, making the learning process more meaningful (Rashidi et al., 1999, p. 42).

Additionally, Makbal (2012) adds that the targeted extracurricular activities must be beneficial for the student. They should be grounded in specific educational principles and structured in a way that serves the student's needs, ensuring both their personal and academic growth:

- **Goal Definition:** The activity should be directed toward a clearly defined, desired goal. This goal must be well understood by the teacher, and students should be actively involved in its identification and creation. This process encourages the students' desire to engage. However, goal setting is not enough. It must be followed by a well-organized plan for action, execution, and production. This plan should be co-developed by the students, who will bear the responsibility of carrying it out with the guidance and mentorship of the teacher.

- **Connection to the Curriculum:** The activity must relate to classroom learning. For example, a problem discussed in class may lead to further research or study outside the classroom, such as during a field trip or through role-playing exercises. Alternatively, an issue raised during an extracurricular activity could be discussed back in the classroom. In this way, some aspects of the activity are born from the classroom but extend beyond it for further exploration. This creates a seamless connection between classroom learning and extracurricular activities, making them complementary rather than separate, and ultimately breaking down traditional barriers between the two. The classroom, traditionally seen as rigid and formal, and the extracurricular space, often viewed as playful and informal, should instead foster a dynamic and responsible interplay of learning and activity.
- **Educational Value:** The educational value of the activity should be assessed based on its developmental and pedagogical benefits, not on material outcomes. Through engaging in various activities, students cultivate desirable qualities, attitudes, skills, and values. At the same time, they enhance their capacity for thinking, planning, and executing tasks. This contributes to their respect for work and encourages a love for hands-on activities. Furthermore, such activities lay the foundation for future practical endeavors, whether pursuing a profession or a hobby that can improve their livelihood or creatively occupy their free time.
- **Variety of Aspects:** The activity should encompass a range of dimensions so that students have multiple opportunities to express their interests and satisfy different needs. It should contribute to holistic personality development, not focusing solely on one area, such as the arts, sports, or academic clubs. A balanced approach ensures that students are engaged in multifaceted growth that nurtures them as well-rounded individuals (Makbal, 2012, p. 20).

The aforementioned points underscore that selecting extracurricular activities is not a trivial task. It requires thoughtful consideration of the nature of the activity, the objectives it seeks to achieve, the developmental characteristics of the students, the available time, resources, and support

systems, as well as the broader socio-economic context and individual differences among the learners.

7-Connection Between Extracurricular Activities and Educational Outcomes:

7.1-Influence on Primary Education: The early years of a child's education, particularly in primary school, are formative. During these years, children are introduced to the educational environment and begin to develop essential academic and social skills. According to Abu Abdallah (2014), diversity in extracurricular activities is critical during this phase, as it ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage in experiences that match their capabilities, interests, and developmental needs.

Teachers play an important role here by fostering an environment where students can freely participate in planning and expressing their ideas for these activities, even if their contributions are not perfect. Encouraging students to experiment, explore, and develop their cognitive, physical, and emotional capacities through play is essential to their overall development (Abu Abdallah, 2014, p. 96).

Makbal (2012) emphasizes that play is a defining characteristic of childhood and is considered nature's method of education. It serves as the foundation for preparing children for the serious work they will undertake in the future. Modern psychologists agree that the primary vital function of activity is to train children in the physical and cognitive skills they will need as adults. Thus, activity is not only a factor of growth but also the natural method for growth during childhood. Moreover, comprehensive activity, encompassing both physical and mental functions, remains the optimal means of learning in early childhood.

Educators have long recognized that play offers a valuable opportunity for productive learning. They have advocated for allowing children to engage with nature, understanding that the benefits of these activities are achieved through practical application. Modern educational methods, including project-based learning and thematic units, are grounded in natural inclinations like play. Play, as one of the most instinctual tendencies in humans, particularly in children, is fundamental to their development. From an early age, children are drawn to play, and the lessons they learn through play resonate deeply, satisfying their needs while nourishing their body,

mind, and spirit. Primary schools, in particular, should capitalize on this innate tendency to learn, creating environments where play and structured learning complement one another. This approach facilitates not only physical growth but also intellectual development and the acquisition of strong, positive character traits.

Furthermore, certain psychologists and educators emphasize a strong link between play and attention, as well as academic achievement. They assert that educational games play a crucial role in enriching a child's knowledge and developing critical psychological processes such as concentration, observation, and attention. These games also help students understand their lives both inside and outside of school (Soheir Mohamed Ali Ma'ruf, 2008).

Numerous studies and research have underscored the importance of using educational games as tools for developing skills such as attention, auditory and visual discrimination, and attentional processing in children (Soheir Mohamed Ali Ma'ruf, 2008, p. 54).

If schools provide a nurturing environment that understands the psychological drives of children and knows how to harness them, the school can become a supportive and comforting space. In such an environment, teachers can manage students with ease, solving problems efficiently and creating a natural, enjoyable learning experience.

It is now possible for different subjects in primary school to be taught through the spirit of play. For example, subjects like language, mathematics, history, and geography can be learned through storytelling, role-playing, games, work, field trips, and visits. This approach would make learning more engaging and effective. It is hoped that, in both the present and the near future, every educator in the Arab and Islamic world will adopt the motto: "*Work while you play, and play while you work.*" (Makbal, 2012, pp. 27–29).

Ahmed Adel Al-Shishani (1992) explains that the midbrain, particularly the anterior hypothalamus, plays a key role in regulating biological rhythms. This includes alertness, attention, sleep, body temperature, eating, drinking, and spontaneous physical activity. The hypothalamus also controls the endocrine system, influencing a wide range of physiological processes through hormones. These hormones can either activate or suppress physiological functions, which directly affect a child's ability to focus and

concentrate. The regulation of biological rhythms, influenced by light and darkness, significantly impacts a child's performance and engagement in learning tasks (Al-Shishani, 1992, p. 29).

Additionally, Mohamed Osman (1994) notes that daily biological rhythms, including energy levels, peak performance times, and alertness, vary throughout the day. The timing of these rhythms significantly impacts a child's learning and performance in academic settings. When educational activities are aligned with these natural rhythms, they enhance a child's ability to focus and perform tasks more effectively (Osman, 1994, p. 634).

In summary, the integration of play, biological rhythms, and a holistic approach to education can significantly enhance a child's academic and developmental experience. The natural inclination to play, combined with the right environmental and physiological support, can foster a more effective and enjoyable learning process for children.

7.2- The Relationship Between Extracurricular Activities and the School Curriculum: The curriculum has shifted its focus to the student, placing them at the center of the educational process. This approach emphasizes understanding and addressing the student's interests, needs, abilities, and readiness, while also providing opportunities for them to engage in activities that align with these factors. Through such activities, students not only acquire knowledge and skills but also develop habits and attitudes. This means that the curriculum is adapted to the student, rather than the student being forced to conform to a rigid curriculum (Al-Wakeel & Al-Mufti, 2007, p. 296).

Ibn Tayeh (1995) asserts that educational research has confirmed the importance of extracurricular activities and recommended their inclusion as a key element of the curriculum. Modern education has shifted the perspective on learning, recognizing that the student is not merely a passive receiver. Rather, students learn through both their minds and bodies simultaneously, engaging actively in the learning process.

Therefore, curriculum planners must increase the presence of school activities both inside and outside the classroom. They should ensure that sufficient time is allocated for these activities and recognize that such activities are integral parts of the curriculum. These activities should have clear, desirable, and well-defined objectives for both teachers and students.

Moreover, they provide a valuable opportunity for teachers to assess the students' interests and personalities, enabling them to guide and supervise them effectively (Shanashan, Mohammed, et al., 1989, p. 127).

The relationship between the school curriculum and extracurricular activities is inseparable. They are two essential components that complement each other. If a school aims to provide a holistic education, it must make extracurricular activities a foundation for acquiring knowledge and experiences from the curriculum. At the very least, these activities should serve as a necessary means of enhancing and applying the knowledge gained in the classroom, helping students practice and benefit from it in real life (Ahmed, 1998, p. 192).

Building on this, John Dewey argued that schools must rely on students' activities and involve them in work to make the school a microcosm of social life. For Dewey, education is not an abstract concept but is intrinsically tied to the life that must be actively lived (Saada & Ibrahim, 2001, p. 131).

From this, it is clear that the learning process does not occur in a vacuum. It is a response to a set of interconnected elements that work in harmony with one another. Activity is a crucial element of lesson plans and is closely linked to all aspects of the educational process.

7.3 Link Between Free Time Activities and Academic Success: It is the right of students to spend their free time in ways that bring them satisfaction and psychological comfort. They must have time for activities of their choice, such as playing, chatting, or reading, rather than being forced into activities they dislike. A student's free time belongs to them, and it is unjust to deprive them of it. Just as they need academic instruction, they also require leisure, play, physical activity, and hobbies. Before entering school, a child's life is predominantly filled with unstructured free time, and this free time should continue to play a crucial role in their school years, as it has a significant impact on their development.

Spending free time engaged in play is not wasted, as some might think. On the contrary, when children play with their peers, they engage in social interaction, acquire life skills, and develop key aspects of their personality. During different stages of childhood, free time is essential for developing social behaviors, norms, and values that help them adapt to life in society.

As Magda Saleh points out, many children are deprived of mental and emotional health even before entering school, due to the constraints imposed by rigid and overcrowded classrooms that lack joy and creativity. These conditions stifle their natural learning abilities. In contrast, educators worldwide are now focusing on nurturing creativity and innovation, beginning even with the unborn, and highlighting the importance of fostering these qualities from the very start of life.

Research indicates that students who spend their free time in purposeful, structured activities tend to perform better academically. These students are often among the top achievers in their schools, demonstrating a strong connection between extracurricular activities and academic progress. This reinforces the idea that variety in the activities students engage in outside of school hours is essential for academic success.

Makbal (2012) further affirms that children who spend their free time engaged in guided activities are the high achievers in their schools. The correlation between extracurricular activities and academic performance is evident. These activities may include sports, school trips, museum visits, attending exhibitions, and engaging in hobbies like acting, music, photography, and drawing. Such activities should be organized and supervised by skilled mentors to maximize their educational value (Makbal, 2012, pp. 20–24).

Research by Sikilier et al. confirms that students who engage in structured and guided extracurricular activities tend to perform better academically (Abu Abdallah, 2014, p. 56). Al-Ja'bari's study also shows that participating in diverse school activities increases students' academic achievement (Al-Ja'bari, 1993, p. 15). Similarly, Nassr Allah (2000) found that school activities help develop essential habits, skills, values, and thinking styles needed for continued learning and education. These activities, including school trips, school radio, and student journalism, contribute to a student's academic performance (Suheir Mohamed Ali Ma'arouf, 2008, p. 34).

From these insights, it is clear that schools have a significant responsibility to guide and organize students' free time in a way that meets their needs. Parents, teachers, and educators must carefully consider how children spend their free time, ensuring it serves as a means to shape their social and psychological development, fostering responsible and wise freedom.

Therefore, extracurricular activities, whether inside or outside the classroom, are valuable tools for improving students' academic performance. They are often used to help students who may be struggling to reach the desired academic level (Mohamed, 1991, p. 152).

In this context, Abdullah Alwan explains that educators, both parents and teachers, must fill the free time of children, especially adolescents, with activities that benefit their bodies, strengthen their muscles, and enhance their physical and mental vitality. If they fail to provide spaces for play, recreational clubs for sports, training facilities like swimming pools, and leisure outings that offer constructive activities, it will likely lead to behavioral problems and deviations.

Alwan further emphasizes that Islam, with its noble guidance, has addressed the issue of free time through practical means that build strength, vitality, and energy in children. (Makbal, 2012, pp. 20–24).

This is echoed by a study conducted by Kobbie (1996), which aimed to explore the extent of teachers' involvement in engaging elementary students in Kent, UK, with free-time activities and identifying the factors influencing their participation. The study revealed that teachers were more inclined to involve students in free-time activities if they had previously participated in such activities during their free time, and if they had achieved high academic grades. (Abu Abdallah, 2014, p. 154).

However, a glance at today's schools shows that most focus primarily on academic achievement, often neglecting extracurricular activities, which are seen by many as burdens on the curriculum rather than vital components of student development. Some teachers continue to associate teaching with the classroom's four walls, overlooking the significance of activities that should be part of students' experiences.

They perceive these activities as mere entertainment or leisure, not realizing that education is a holistic process that develops a student's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. Students need direct sensory experiences when learning academic content. There remains a gap between the knowledge and skills learned in school and those required to navigate life in the 21st century. Students need academic learning through real-world examples, applications, and experiences both inside and outside the classroom. (Niost, 2009, p. 5).

8-Features of Extracurricular Activities in Late Childhood: Abu Abdallah (2014) notes the significant role that activities play in shaping students' personalities and their overall development at all educational stages. These activities enrich students' experiences from one stage to another, following a logical and psychological progression. Each educational stage builds upon the previous one, contributing to holistic student growth.

One of the primary developmental goals for elementary school students is acquiring the necessary motor skills for games and various types of physical activity. They also need to develop a positive self-image, learn to interact with peers, form healthy relationships, and establish values such as integrity and responsibility. Building strong habits in social groups, understanding environmental conservation, and achieving balance in daily life are also essential aspects of student growth. (Abu Abdallah, 2014, p. 62).

Badr Al-Mutawwa and colleagues (2006) indicate that modern psychological research has produced valuable insights regarding students' developmental characteristics, needs, interests, attitudes, abilities, skills, and readiness, all of which should be considered when selecting different types of activities within and outside the classroom. Therefore, the curriculum should take into account the findings from psychological research, as ignoring these results would mean neglecting the most crucial aspect of the educational process: the student. (Badr Al-Mutawwa et al., 2006, p. 43).

In light of the developmental characteristics of late childhood, we can identify the types of activities that a student is likely to engage in outside school during the elementary stage. By guiding the student, either through the teacher or the parents, it becomes possible to achieve harmony between school activities and extracurricular ones. This helps the student release emotional tension and achieve better academic performance. Among the activities that Islam encourages for recreational purposes are the following:

8.1 Horse Racing: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said:

"Everything a Muslim does for play is vain except for archery, training his horse, and playing with it, for these are from the truth." (Tirmidhi)

Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA) also said: *"Teach your children swimming, archery, and riding, and have them leap onto the back of horses."* (Bayhaqi)

Horse racing and riding were part of the activities encouraged in Islam, promoting physical fitness, agility, and mental discipline.

8.2 Running and Racing: Children at this stage are full of energy and vitality, often with the capacity for continuous movement. Running is one of the permissible recreational activities that plays a significant role in physical education. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged such activities as well: It is narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) described Abdullah, Ubaydullah, and many of the sons of Abbas (RA) and would say: *"Whoever reaches me first will receive this reward,"* and they would race toward him and jump onto his back, hugging him.

Furthermore, Jabir ibn Abdullah (RA) narrates: *"I entered upon the Prophet (PBUH), and we were invited to a meal. As we were eating, I noticed that al-Husayn (RA) was playing in the street with some children. The Prophet (PBUH) hurried ahead of the group, spread his hands, and began playfully chasing him. The Prophet (PBUH) took him in his arms, kissed him, and said: 'Husayn is from me, and I am from him. Allah loves those who love him.'"* (Tabarani) These examples emphasize the importance of play, bonding, and physical activity in the early development of children.

8.3 Archery: Archery is a sport highly encouraged by Islam. Training children in archery from a young age is very accessible today, especially with the wide availability of attractive, child-friendly toys. The mother plays an essential role in selecting age-appropriate toys for her child, especially those that relate to skills such as shooting and aiming. This activity contributes not only to physical fitness but also to developing focus, hand-eye coordination, and discipline.

8.4 Swimming: Swimming is another activity emphasized by Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA) who said: *"Teach your children swimming, archery, and riding."* (Bayhaqi) Swimming is a full-body exercise that enhances cardiovascular health, strength, and endurance. It is also a vital life skill and has been encouraged as part of a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.

8.5 Hunting: Hunting, whether land or sea-based, is another form of recreation permitted in Islam. Allah says: *"Lawful to you (for food) is the pursuit of water-game and its use for food, for the benefit of you and the travelers; but forbidden is the pursuit of land-game as long as you are in the state of Ihram (for Hajj or Umrah)." (Al-Ma'idah, 5:96)*

Children should be taught to hunt responsibly, ensuring they only target beneficial game and avoid causing harm or suffering to animals unnecessarily. Many companies also produce toys that simulate hunting activities, designed for children aged two and above, thus providing an early introduction to the concept of hunting in a safe and controlled environment. "Family Development Center in Al-Ahsa, Diploma in Family Counseling and Guidance, Developmental Psychology, pages 66-68."

9-Conclusion: In conclusion, whether at home or on the streets, children enjoy a significant degree of freedom and spontaneity in their activities. Schools should aim to preserve this freedom by creating opportunities for students to engage in activities that align with their interests, talents, and curiosities. Spontaneous and enjoyable activities often teach children more than rigid and mandatory tasks imposed upon them. Such forced activities can lead to boredom and resentment toward learning, which may result in academic underperformance or psychological distress.

Recommendations:

- _ Caring for the learner and understanding their needs within a cooperative framework between the family and the school so that the learner can understand themselves and achieve self-realization within this environment.
- _ The necessity of providing a school climate that responds to the learner's needs through training and counseling programs that they actively participate in developing and evaluating through self-assessment, while respecting the school's pace.
- _ The need to maintain existing resources and work on increasing them to improve academic achievement levels.
- _ The importance of organizing school schedules appropriately for each age group, allowing time for rest, enjoyment, and understanding the

difference between relaxation and study times, and reducing the time spent on various educational activities.

- The necessity of reducing the number of learners in classrooms, as they require more individual attention and effort. It is also essential to organize them into homogeneous groups or circles, to foster a sense of initiative, belonging, competition, and participation.

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