



# Contribution of Extracurricular Activities on Students' Retention: A Focus on Public Secondary Schools in Bariadi District, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which extracurricular activities contribute to student retention in public secondary schools. The study employed a mixed research approach, and a convergent parallel design. Closed and open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interview guide and non-participatory observation method were used for data collection. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were utilized in securing a sample of 116 respondents who were involved in the study as source of data. These included 100 students, 5 Heads of school, 5 sports and games teachers, 5 discipline teachers from five public secondary schools in Bariadi district council, including one District Secondary Education Officer. Quantitative data were analyzed through the help of SPSS version 21, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that student participation in extracurricular activities like sports and games, scouts, social clubs as well as student leadership, make them get more engaged, enjoy school life and persevere in their studies. The study also established that extracurricular activities are excellent means of motivating students, which is crucial to their retention. The study recommends governmental and non-governmental leaders to invest more on constructing facilities in schools which can be used for extracurricular activities which promote students' socialization and sense of belonging which in the long term promotes student retention. To avoid being too monotonous in extracurricular activities, school leaders and teachers should endeavor to be more innovative in introducing a variety of activities which are more attractive and engaging to students.*

**Keywords:** *Extracurricular activities, Sports, Social clubs, Scouts, Student leadership, Student retention, Tanzania*

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## 1. Introduction

In a nutshell, extracurricular activities refer to all those activities which students are engaged actively and productively outside the classroom. Such activities may include artwork, sports and games, clubs, scouts, leadership activities, gardening and any other related activities as maybe found relevant according to the school context. Extracurricular activities are crucial because through them, students get to engage actively with their

fellow students in doing different things through which they come to discover their potentials and who they want to become as they grow up. Hence, it can be argued that extracurricular activities, though often taken for granted and not given the importance they deserve, they are undeniably a means of reinforcing students' perseverance and success in their learning process. This is since they offer unique opportunities for students to engage in activities that motivate and encourage students to stay at school as they develop new knowledge and skills which

are not easily acquired during the regular class hours. It is no wonder that the Government of Tanzania, like other governments across the world, has made it a requirement for every school to have extracurricular activities facilities that would enable every student to be involved and the specific days for such activities to be included in the general school timetable (MoEVT, 2007). It is also true that extracurricular activities are indispensable because as Christison (2013) argues, extracurricular activities contribute to nurturing students as social human beings as well as developing their character. Additionally, such activities contribute to students' advancement in time management, development of leadership skills all of which lead to academic success. Moreover, as Christison (2013) further argues, students who actively participate in extracurricular activities tend to acquire some important skills such as "ability to follow instructions, persistence, motivation, goal setting, and problem solving all of which are transferred to their everyday life including academic success" (p. 17). With this in mind, it is fair to conclude that extracurricular activities have significant contribution to students' retention.

Historically, extracurricular activities started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe with the intention of monitoring and supervising students after class hours. At that time, they were famously known as after class activities (Park & Zhan, 2017). The first extracurricular activities included literacy clubs (Debates), fraternities and sororities, which were practiced at Harvard and Yale University and later athletics clubs initiated in American schools (Casinger, 2011). As time advanced, extracurricular activities in USA contributed to students in various aspects including moral and academic development, where students became obedient, punctual as well as increased higher academic achievement in their studies (Mahoney, 2014). Similarly, Oliver (2005) argues that in Mexico, individual participation in extracurricular activities creates students' interests in school, enlarge their sense of identity and enhance them greater comfort ability of staying at school. Based on potentiality of extracurricular activities, Sauer (2015) insists that although extracurricular activities put emphasis on helping students in academic programs, they are also useful to students in other ways like improving attendance. Moreover, extracurricular activities are known for their significant contribution to students' motivation which in turn contributes to making them enjoy schooling, which is fundamental to effective learning and academic achievement. It is undoubtedly one of the reasons that have led many countries across the globe, especially those which are financially capable to invest highly on ensuring availability of resources necessary for effective implementation of extracurricular activities (Emanuel, 2020). It is also true that extracurricular activities are known for acting as a catalyst

that keeps students active as they continuously interact with schools. In some cases, extracurricular activities have been noted for enhancing attendance of learners in schools and enabling some schools to be multifunctional institutions (Mubanga, 2011).

In Tanzania, like in other developing countries, extracurricular activities in secondary schools have existed since the period of the colonial era (Jeremiah, 2018). According to Ndunguru (1973), extracurricular activities were authorized to be included in school programs in 1961 after initiating Ministry of National Education, where reforms of curriculum were established. Additionally, extracurricular activities in Tanzania were given priority after introducing the policy of education for self-reliance (ESR) where the education system by then, encouraged all learners to develop and realize their interests and skills in various activities for the betterment of the whole society (Nyerere, 1967). However, it must be noted that, at that time, the education policy emphasis was more on manual labor activities than other activities like sports and games. Although ESR was part of curriculum content; it gave room to extracurricular activities to take over even when the policy of ESR came to an end. In other words, the mentality of developing students' characters and talents for the betterment of the society remains in the educational programs from then until now (URT, 2019). Thus, the potentiality of extracurricular activities in Tanzania was given more priority by both the government and educational stakeholders. As efforts to increase students' retention were being made, what followed was to address other areas which have a contribution on the matter. These included improving school infrastructure and other school facilities such as; hostels, provision of materials that promote extracurricular activities and financial support as well as provision of meals program (Manyinyi, 2014).

Despite the effort done by the government to improve students' enrolment which has gained a noticeable success, it is unfortunate that despite the increase in enrollment, students' dropout has to date remained persistent. For instance, in 2020 Tabora reported to be the first Region with high students drop out followed by Simiyu, Geita, Lindi and fifth was Katavi. The reported reasons for dropouts are truancy by 92.0 percent, pregnancy at 5.5 percent and death which is 0.6 percent (BEST, 2020). Based on the reported reasons and the efforts done by the government of Tanzania with the purpose of improving students' retention success has remained a nightmare. It is realized and recommended that students should be mentored so that they can acquire extra knowledge and develop the kind of skills which they require as an alternative to shape their behaviors.

Like in many other countries across the continents, in Tanzania, the issue of student retention is a matter of high concern. For this reason, efforts such as introducing extracurricular activities that can attract and make students to like and enjoy school for the purpose of retention as well as success have been introduced. Moreover, as noted in the URT (2019), the government is well informed about the significant number of students who drop-out of school before they complete their studies as expected. According to Manyinyi (2014), the government of Tanzania is not silent about the situation, it has rather made intentional and significant strategic efforts to ensure attendance of students in secondary schools including creating conducive learning environment, providing free education, financial support and feeding programs (Manyinyi, 2014). Unfortunately, despite such efforts, students' retention rate in Tanzanian public secondary schools is still alarming. For example, in a survey which was carried out in three neighboring districts, the rate of students who dropped out from school in the year 2019 was as follows: In Igunga district 18.4 percent, Momba district 16.2 percent, Bariadi District 15.4 percent (BEST, 2020). Among other reasons that led to students' school dropout by more than half was truancy and teen pregnancy (BEST, 2020). Hence, based on the nature of the reasons leading to students' school drop-out despite strategic efforts by the government of Tanzania, private sector and non-governmental institutions in ensuring students' retention, it is important that more informed efforts are made to address the problem as it has deleterious impact on the nation's efforts for social economic stability. It is from this background that we conducted this study with the purpose of finding out the extent to which extracurricular activities as practiced in some selected public secondary schools in Tanzania contribute to students' retention.

## Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions:

- i. What are the extracurricular activities that students participate in public secondary schools?
- ii. What is the relationship between participating in extracurricular activities and students' retention in public secondary schools?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Concept of Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are crucial in education and yet there is lack of agreed definition. This demise has the likelihood of limiting the ability of both the researcher and readers to capture the analysis and make sense of the

findings. For this reason, providing a brief overview of the concept of extracurricular activities was warranted. The term extracurricular activities have been conceptualized by various scholars in different ways. For instance, Holloway (2005) described extracurricular activities as any activities that take place outside the classroom and are not part of the regular curriculum. Unlike other learning activities, extracurricular activities are voluntary and they are not evaluated at the end of program. This explanation entails that extracurricular activities are provided with the aim of complimenting the work carried out during the normal school days. Furthermore, Keser, Akar & Yildirim (2011) describe the concept of extracurricular activities as being part of non-formal curriculum that are provided in a school setting, including school tours, voluntary work, religious activities, students' organization, social clubs, recreation that are provided outside the classroom that contributed to make students enjoy school life in the process of their learning. This is to say teachers do arrange programs out of classrooms where students are to participate after class hours. According to Mahoney (2014), point of view, extracurricular activities are those activities which are not part of the regular school curriculum that may take place after and during school programs depending on the arrangement and organization of a particular school.

### 2.2 Extracurricular Activities in Schools

Extracurricular activities are complex and significant aspect of schooling, which is provided in secondary schools with the intention of ensuring students are fully engaged with something interesting that makes them find school enjoyable. Even though the emphasis of extracurricular activities is almost the same, the nature of participation varies between countries, regions, districts as well as schools. The variation of these activities is due to various reasons, including availability of resources, finance, as well as the availability and quality of the space in each school that determine the type of extracurricular activity to be provided by a particular school. However, in Tanzania, particularly in Bariadi District where this study was conducted, some extracurricular activities such as sports and games, students' clubs, students' leadership, debate, scouts, music, students' tours as well as religious activities were found to be commonly practiced in most schools.

#### 2.2. 1 Sports and Games Influence Students Retention

Various studies revealed that schools that participate in sports and games activities, have students who are more likely to advance their interest in schooling. For example,

in a study conducted by Nakazawa (2014) in Japan, the findings clearly revealed that when students engage actively in sports as part of required co-curriculum activities which include judo, brass band, football, tennis, swimming, baseball as well as athletics the students would develop strong ties with the school and would always wish to stay. This implies that, in Japan, the weight of extracurricular activities is equal to co-curriculum and students must participate in sports activities which create an interest to students to stay at school. Similarly, as stated in Sumiya and Muto (2001), in European countries, sports and games activities including athletics, basketball, volleyball, darts as well as music are performed in schools. However, in some of the European countries, extracurricular activities are not compulsory as seen in other countries like Japan. Likewise, the study of Chengula (2015) revealed that most schools in Tanzania students participate in extracurricular activities including sports like football, netball, volleyball, handball and athletics. The findings indicated that during sports and games season, the attendance of students increased comparing to days when chances to participate in sports are limited or not provided at all. This implies that sports and games are part and parcel of learning process since students who participate in sports and games become physically and mentally fit which contributes to students' active engagement in school's core function (Isuja, 2010).

### **2.2.2 Students' Social Clubs: A means for Social Development**

Students' social clubs is conceptualized as an organization of students with a common interest of sharing ideas related to social affairs (Gatto, 2005). As a result of students with common interest participating in something of their interest that socializes them, the result of such participation is social development, which will eventually lead to the development of a strong sense of belonging which students require in order to persevere in the school successfully. It is probably from this background that the Tanzanian Education system puts emphasis on social clubs to be included in school timetable because of the meaning they carry to students (URT, 2019). Hence, students' social clubs such as anti-corruption, anti-drugs, environmental protection and sustainability and anti-AIDS clubs are encouraged in Tanzanian schools by Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The main purpose for the variability of extracurricular activities is to ensure that every student participates in at least one club or more as the means through which students will broaden their knowledge and develop skills, attitude, values and teamwork spirit. Likewise, such activities are also useful in creating sense of self-confidence and in inspiring students in such a way that they discover who they are and who they want to

become after they are done schooling (MoEVT, 2007). In other words, students' involvement in social clubs contributes to building positive attitudes in the sense that the school that puts emphasis on social clubs will most likely have little trouble in dealing with truants and indiscipline cases among students. The explanation for this can be associated with the fact that extracurricular activities such as students' clubs are motivational and they help students in shaping their characters in such a way that they eventually build their self-identity and work towards achieving it through the day after day learning process in school. Similarly, participation in social clubs, give students an opportunity of establishing long-lasting relationships with both their peers as well as adults who act as their mentors in the social clubs in which they are involved. Christison (2013), clearly articulates the importance of students' participation in extracurricular activities by arguing that such activities build adolescents social skills by creating a sense of belonging, building positive networks of friends, and building relationships with supportive adults" (p. 18). Based on this argument, it is therefore right to conclude that, extracurricular activities are a powerful means for students' retention in schools.

### **2.2.3 Students Participation in Scouts: Benefits**

Tanzania, like many other nations, the education system promotes the practice of scout in public schools as an alternative means of molding students with sense of self-confidence, creativity and respect for human dignity, human right and readiness to work hard for self-advancement as well as national development (Mubanga, 2011). The mentioned knowledge cannot only be attained in class hours; hence students' needs to have extra time to participate in extracurricular activities like school scouts which helps them building character, teamwork and self-confidence. According to Gragg (2016), scouts' programs are normally introduced in the primary school when the participants are at the age of between 5 to 13 years. During this time, both girls and boys are expected to actively take part in scout's activities under guidance of scout teachers. This is to say that when students transition from primary to secondary schools, they are already endowed with preliminary scout's skills, which lessens the work of secondary school teachers to monitor such students. Scout in schools is generally found to be self-disciplined, good leaders, hard workers, punctual and creative. This is realized after class hours and during lunch time, scouts are found rehearsing formation and reciting the Scout's Promise to always do their best; this makes them be punctual, smart as well as creates a sense of patriotism which makes them to be good students and good citizen later (Sauer, 2015). In Tanzania, scouts are

generally involved several activities in schools and outside schools. Such activities may include participating in national activities like freedom torch, Independence Day, Union Day as well as appearing in stadiums when significant leaders visit a particular place. By being involved in such occasions, the participating students get the deep feeling of being valued and appreciated which contributes to advancing positive self-concept and self-worth both of which are necessary for a student to persevere in pursuing education as the key to success in life. Furthermore, the skills and values that the students gain by actively participating in scouts contribute to preparing them for life in their current situation and for their future wellbeing. This being the case, it is therefore right to maintain that scouts as one of the extracurricular activities, if well conducted, has a significant contribution to students' school retention.

### **2.3 Extracurricular Activities and Students' Retention**

The issue of secondary school students' retention is rather complicated and demanding. In order to successfully retain students in secondary schools, school leaders have a critical role to play which demands creativity and innovative thinking as a means of coming up with a relevant and effective strategy. According to Manyinyi (2014), engaging secondary school students in some interesting and up-to-date extracurricular activities is the best alternative means of minimizing the kind of challenges that lead to school dropout and high retention. According to Mahoney (2014), students in secondary school are generally at the age of adolescents. By the very nature of this stage in life, students require much support and maximum care to transition safely. The best way to do this is by providing them with extra-activities which can motivate them and keep them actively engaged. This is to say that students' involvement in extracurricular activities offers important opportunities to develop peer positive relation, moral development as well as life skills which make students creates sense of belonging (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2011). Similarly, Ramon, Hernandez and Jimenez (2020) stressed that students who participate actively in extracurricular activities benefit in developing desired personality as well as advancing their sense of belonging, sense of satisfaction, sense of self-awareness as well as building friendship with peers all of which contributes to promoting sense of comfort in school environment all of which can lead to students' retention.

#### **2.3.1 Students' Character Development**

Extracurricular activities are generally regarded as catalysts in nurturing student with characteristics such as high self-discipline, high morality and high self-esteem all

of which are useful to them in making proper life decisions and building self-consciousness which eventually contributes to minimizing the risk of dropping out from school (Mahoney, 2014). Moreover, extracurricular activities as viewed by Massoni (2011) are the alternative means of reducing undesired behaviors among students. As further argued by Massoni, students who engage in extracurricular activities such as sports, students' clubs and scouts are likely to be highly self-disciplined. This kind of outcome can be associated to the fact that by participating in extracurricular activities, which are normally organized within the school core activities, students will automatically learn to be disciplined in the management of their time, by doing the right things at the right time. In other words, they will learn how to budget their time well and do the most valuable things first. By so doing, they will develop leadership skills which are necessary for their own success and for helping others. Hence, it can be argued that extracurricular activities also contribute to character formation because through their participation in various activities, they will eventually develop a sense of tolerance, honesty, punctuality and high integrity which are a prerequisite for involvement in extracurricular activities. As such characteristics do not easily go away once formed, they then contribute to character formation, and they are useful in influencing the life of that person in all life circumstances.

Likewise, the study conducted by Bonaventure (2020) in Rwanda reported that there is a close relationship between participating in extracurricular activities and students' character development. In other words, students who are involved in extracurricular activities are likely to behave well, build positive relationship with their teachers and maintain their attendance to school. Because discipline is closely related with academic performance, Turkson, Britwum and Yeboah, (2021) suggested that both structured curriculum and unstructured (extracurricular activities) should have the same weight in shaping the students in both intellectually as well as morally which finally makes intellectual students with moral aspects. This is to say that students who participated in activities like students' clubs, scouts as well as religious activities developed characters which created sense of consciousness to interact with school.

#### **2.3.2 Social Skills Development**

Society needs people with positive mind who in one way or another contribute to facilitating change. Extracurricular activities helped students with social network which resulted from frequently participating in these activities. Students who are participating in extracurricular activities tend to build sense of teamwork and communication skills, which are very crucial for any

group of people who live together. In relation to this, Shulruf (2010) argued that students who are involving in extracurricular activities, developed positive relationships and interaction that influenced positive networks for learners. This indicated that extracurricular activities give room for students to create connections with others who share the same interests.

Likewise, Fredricks (2011) viewed extracurricular activities as a tool that creates opportunities to students in building relationships with peers, teachers as well as community surrounding. This indicated that Students' participating in different types of extracurricular activities benefited them with different social skills which helped them interacting in the society. According to Wanjohi (2016), each activity is different; therefore, students with different background meet in different activities where they build connection and network. This is to say that extracurricular activities give students the opportunity to establish friendships with new people, thereby expanding their social network and also lean to work as a teamwork.

### **2.3.3 Building Positive Relationship with Peers**

Schooling, which is regarded as a journey of self-formation and of acquiring knowledge, and skills for success in life, cannot be accomplished by one person alone. It requires working with others and building relationships with peers with whom they search for the right knowledge and develop relevant skills. Hence, as found out by Shulruf (2010), participating in extracurricular activities is crucial to students because they contribute to giving them access to create relationship and networks which influence positive outcome among them. This implies that participating in extracurricular activities like social clubs and scouts, among others, contribute to building strong friendship among the students which are beneficial to all. It is also true that students who involved in extracurricular activities are very likely to develop a sense of togetherness in the classroom and after class hours in such a way that, they are very likely to support each other in difficulties times and so remain focused (Shehu, 2001). Hence, it is fair to argue that extracurricular activities contribute to building positive relationships among students which contribute to ensuring student retention.

## **3. Methodology**

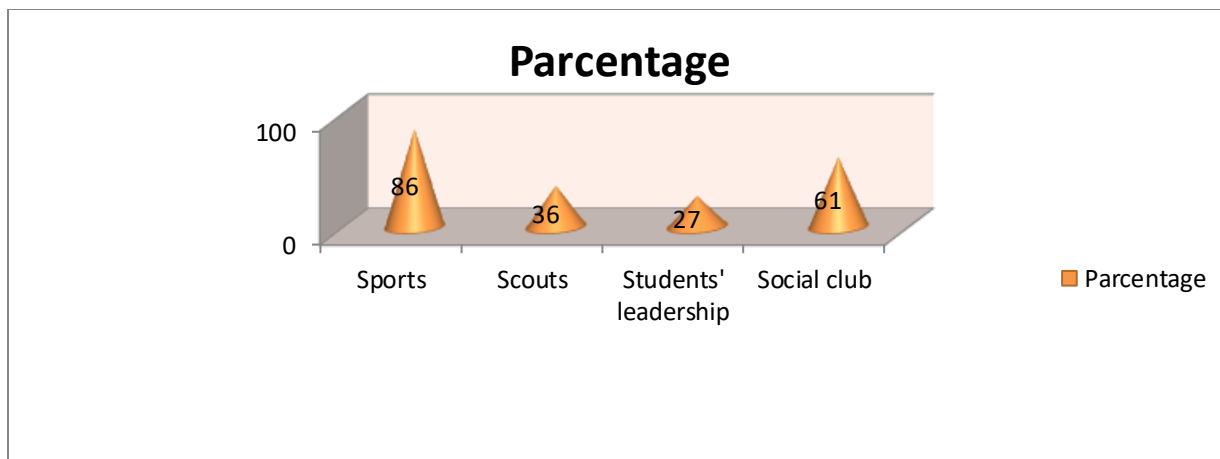
This paper emanates from empirical research which was conducted as a prerequisite for the award of a degree of Master of Education Management and Planning at St.

Augustine university of Tanzania (SAUT). The main purpose of the study was to assess stakeholders' perception on the role of extracurricular activities in increasing students' retention. The study was conducted in Bariadi district council, Simiyu Region - Tanzania. The study employed a mixed research approach, which adopted a convergent parallel research design. A sample of 116 respondents who included 5 heads of school, 5 sports and games teachers, 5 discipline teachers from five secondary schools, 1 District secondary education officer as well as 100 secondary school students who sampled using stratified and simple randomly sampling from five public secondary school in Bariadi district council. To ensure validity and reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted in one of the secondary schools in Bariadi district. The study employed close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interview and observation guide as the data collection tools. Split half technique was applied to test the reliability of research instruments and the correlation coefficient was 0.7. To ensure trustworthiness of qualitative data, triangulation of data from different sources was applied. Quantitative data were analyzed through the help of SPSS (Version 21) to compute frequencies, percentages and charts, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically by creating themes and subthemes which acted as a guide in making sense of the findings.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Extracurricular Activities in Schools**

In order to find out how extracurricular activities in Bariadi Public secondary schools could be contributing to students' retention, it was necessary to first establish the kind of activities the students are involved in and the magnitude of their involvement. To do this a list of questionnaires with different indicators of extracurricular activities were distributed to respondents who were asked to tick only one indicator which they found appropriate to their schools. After the respondents had filled and returned the questionnaires which were then analyzed, the findings indicated that most the respondents' selected sports and social clubs as the most contributing extracurricular activities that were more appealing and attractive to most of them. The results of this inquiry are as summarized below.



**Figure 1: Students' Participation in four Extracurricular Activities**

\*Frequencies are from multiple responses

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

According to the findings as presented in figure 1 above, 86 percent of the students who participated in this study were involved in sports and games. This high number of students involved in sports and games is as a result of the fact that sports involve various activities such as; football, handball, netball, volleyball, basketball as well as athletics. According to the findings, most students are attracted to various types of sports especially the ones just listed compared to other extracurricular activities like, social clubs, scouts and leadership.

Furthermore, from the qualitative data, which were gathered by means of in-depth interviews, the finding confirmed that sports and games played a great role in attracting students as compared to other activities. More specifically, the study found out that all schools that participated in the study had various types of sports and games like football, netball, volleyball as well as athletics. Other sports activities like handball, basketball as well as table tennis were found to be performed in a few schools. The reason for this situation was mainly due to the inability of some school to construct relevant playgrounds of the mentioned sports. It was further reported that every school had arranged a single day for sports and games in which all students were required to use it accordingly. Furthermore, the study also noted that some sports teachers were working in undesirable environment because some of the activities were not well implemented due to the shortage of infrastructure which became difficult to accommodate both girls and boys at once because in normal circumstances they were supposed to be in different grounds (Mashhad, 2021). Apart from limited resources, which some schools were facing, participants revealed that sports and games were implemented though to a small extent and not as would be expected. Nonetheless, during the interview with one of

the school leaders, it was evidently noted that the role and the significance of extracurricular activities is well understood and valued by schools despite the shortcomings that hinder maximum effective implementation. The interviewee was quoted saying,

*My school is fully participating in extracurricular activities particularly sports and games where my students seem to enjoy either by participating or by encouraging others who are playing. I always do my best depending on the available budget given to support these activities. For example, every year I support class competition by providing four goats where students are to compete in their respective classes. These competitions which are famously known as "Mbuzi cup" socializes students in such a way that even students who seem to be bored become very active which in turn creates deep sense of belonging and attachment to school (Interviewee, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

Based on the argument of just cited from one of the interviewees, it is evident that sports and games have a remarkable influence on students. Sports and games contribute to making students to find school as an enjoyable and encouraging place to stay. They also contribute to creating unity among students and at the same time, contributing to students' self-motivation in not only during sports session but also in other school activities like learning. In other words, it can fittingly be argued that sports and games are an excellent booster of motivation which is a prerequisite of nurturing students' retention. This finding concurs with the study of Isuja (2010) whose study revealed that sports and games are a significant part and parcel of learning process. Isuja maintained that students who actively participate in sports

and games generally develop the sense of connectedness with schools the fact which is indispensable for retention. In addition to this, the various activities which were observed taking place in some of the schools where this research was conducted, were viewed as being crucial in the development of students as it gave them opportunity to test and to nurture not only their hobbies but to discover the kind of intelligence they possess, thus making them satisfied, fulfilled and comfortable. This finding is an indication that Gardener (1983) theory of multiple intelligences which maintain that learners have different intelligences in which are to be developed by teachers in the process of learning in school is being recognized and promoted. Hence, it is fair to conclude that by providing students with opportunity to learn and practice something that is of interest to them, the chances of retaining them would be high.

Furthermore, as indicated on figure 1, among the one hundred students who participated in the study, 61 percent were involved in social clubs. This percentage is slightly different from those who were involved in sports. This is a clear indication that like sport, social clubs as extracurricular activities are attractive to students which suggests that they have the potential of contributing to students' retention in schools. This is due to the fact that in social clubs students are given the opportunity to engage in various projects of their own choice. The kind of projects which students are engaged contribute to nurturing them in a manner that they eventually become more innovative, critical thinkers and develop skills which are necessary for a brighter future. Based on these findings, it can be argued that extracurricular activities play significant role in not only attracting students to schools but also promoting their physical and mental wellbeing, which are indispensable in ensuring students' retention and success. The findings from this study correlate with Chengula (2015) whose study revealed that students who actively engaged in extracurricular activities develop positive attitudes towards school and as the result they would remain in the school to the end. In relation to this finding some of the teachers who participated in the interview also explained how extracurricular activities contributes to creating bonds among students involved in such activities, the fact which contributes to keeping such students in school despite the challenges which would have led them to drop out of school if it were not for the bonds created. This explanation from teachers concurs with Barber, Mueller and Ogata (2021) whose similar study had found out that students' participation in extracurricular activities contributes to not only developing additional skills which are necessary to cope with life, but also contributes to socializing students such that they build stronger bonds with each other the fact that makes them enjoy school life and view school as a friendly and the best place worth of spending their time.

Furthermore, from the findings of this study, social clubs as one of the types of extracurricular activities practiced in most schools were viewed by participants as channels and the means to shape students' behavior in such a way that students in their clubs taught each other moral values as well as life skills. Actually, in schools setting, peer teaching is very important and powerful among students as it gives a room for discussing social issues some of which could be disheartening and which they may be experiencing them. Through social clubs students are capable of shaping each other to develop positive attitude something which teachers cannot do easily. Therefore, in most of visited schools' social clubs' activities were given equal weight with other activities which in really sense connected students together through participating in various sessions of teaching each other about social values and moral development in their respective clubs. Confirming on the extent to which schools give priority to social clubs, one of the participants argued:

*Our school has a culture of inviting guests for specific clubs. The guest comes after invitation to present on a topic chosen by the student members of the particular social club. For example, last week we had the guests from PCCB who presented about students' patriotism, honesty as well as integrity. In these discussions students are given chances to ask some questions and seek clarification. We believe that the knowledge and skills which students gain from such discussions contribute not only to academic and moral development but also to reducing school dropout rate among students (Interviewee, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

This expression is a clear indication that school values social clubs as a means through which students can gain inspiration and develop self-awareness as well as high self-esteem both of which they need as a means to remain focused in their studies. This finding concurs with Davidson (2006) whose study revealed that students' clubs are the perfect means of coaching students the ways of solving problems, create a sense of togetherness, self-awareness, cooperation and conflict resolution in a harmonious way. Therefore, students' clubs like other activities significantly contributed to students' social development and life skills which make them manage their surroundings as well as adhere to school rules and regulations.

Moreover, based on this study's findings, when students engage in extracurricular activities which are of interest to them particularly those that promote creativity and innovation such as designing and landscaping, drafting fruit trees, growing gardens and other similar activities that they engage with in the clubs were taking place in



some of the schools which participated in the study, the result was that even students that were facing academic challenges were able to remain focused. This is to say that extracurricular activities are beneficial to students who may not gain much from the theoretical learning provided in the classrooms. Hence, it is worth arguing that if students are given opportunity to learning something that they find to be meaningful, interesting and beneficial to them, they will strive to persevere even when academic performance tend to be a challenge or a stumbling block to them.

This study also found out that 36 percent of respondents were involved in scouts as part of extracurricular activities. This percentage is significantly small compared to those involved in sports and social clubs. The reasons for this discrepancy can be associated to the fact that scouts by their very nature require lots of commitment, motivation, high energy and self-discipline of both the participants and their leaders. Despite fact that those who have the chance to participate in scouts are few, their presence in the school was found to be highly needed due to their potential in influencing and shaping the characters of the participants as well as their fellow students. As argued by Kinzang and Sonam (2021), scouts are an excellent means of inspiring and motivating students as well as other youths to become more accountable. This outcome is a result of keeping them actively engaged in meaningful, enjoyable and useful life activities which are also beneficial for life now and in the future. As Kinzang and Sonam (2021), further argue, scouts' programs are excellent in empowering youth to become responsible and productive citizens. In line with Kinzang and Sonam standpoint, and with these study findings, scouts as one of extracurricular activities, is a perfect means of ensuring students develop morally and become socially responsible and accountable such that they continue with their journey of searching for knowledge that will enable them to realize their potentials and contribute to the wellbeing of the nation.

Furthermore, the findings from this study indicated that the practice of scouts in secondary schools is highly appreciated. Based on primary data which was obtained as a result of one-on-one interview with some individuals, in normal cases, scouts in schools carry great value in such a way that it prepares students to become outstanding citizen. Patriotism begins in childhood and scouts, plays a crucial role in this. It all begins with nurturing students to develop a sense of volunteering, commitment, team work as well as togetherness when still young and this is what the scout in secondary school are meant for and do. This was underlined by one of the participants who said, "Scout needs students who are very committed, self-respected, obedient, hard worker and patient. Therefore, it is lucky to be scout in this school".

According to this expression, students' involvement in scouts contributes to discipline which shapes students in such a way that it saves them from conditions which would contribute to school drop-out. In addition to that, students who engage in scouts after sometimes they establish bonding with fellow students. Due to such bonding, students who would have considered quitting school, they fail to do so due to the already established bonds. Another factor which was found to be the reason for students involved in scouts not easily quitting school is the fact that scouts worked together with discipline office to ensure safety in school. Speaking of this, one of the interviewees argued:

*Scouts as extracurricular activity contributes significantly in shaping student characters. During some activities related to scouts especially camping, contributes to nurturing students to develop morally and to advance in creating a sense of self awareness. As this group grows, they also contribute to the growth of others by cooperating with responsible offices that ensure good behavior among all students in the school. This group also tends to assume responsibility in helping others so that they can behave well according to the school rules and regulation of the school, the fact which contributes to their successful completion of studies (Interviewee, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

This statement indicates that scout in Bariadi public secondary schools is viewed as being instrumental in students' retention. It was also observed that scouts performed various activities in schools which included providing first aid service as well as providing security services within their school. This finding is in line with Ramon, Hernandez and Jimenez (2020) who conducted a similar study and established that in order to increase student retention in secondary schools where the majority are adolescents, they should be given options to engage in various extracurricular activities or leisure activities including scouts as a means to enable them develop values like solidarity, mutual help and respect which has the likelihood of transforming students behaviors and develop their inner love for school which is paramount to retention and academic success.

During the visit in school D, scouts were observed rehearsing Scout's promises which underline their commitment to always do their best in living according to the best standards of life as youth. As the scout students chanted their promises, their faces were seen dazzling and glowing with joy. This observation was a clear sign that the students were genuinely happy and proud to be in school. In general, school life appeared to be enjoyable to the students who were involved in scouts. Likewise,

during this study, it became evident that students who were engaged in performing various physical exercises, they all seemed to be enjoying school more than others and they were most likely to persevere in their studies. It was also true that students who engage in extracurricular activities are also more likely to be punctual, smart in appearance as well as outstanding in creating a sense of solidarity which makes them to be good students and ambassadors from whom others would learn to value education and so persevere in their search for knowledge.

Another extracurricular activity in which students who participated in this study were involved is school leadership which also contributes to student retention. As indicated on figure 1 above, 27 percent of the respondents indicated that they were involved in various student leadership positions. Although not many students can get the chance to participate in official leadership activities, like other activities including scouts and sports, leadership also significantly contributes to promoting student retention. This finding concurs with Kashan and Shah (2019), whose study established that students' involvement in school leadership contributes to academic achievement. This is to say that students who participate in school leadership are most likely to create bonds with not only the students that they are leading but also with the entire school as a community. As a result, their perseverance in school is warranted. Furthermore, as argued in Kashan and Shah (2019), students who engage in schools' leadership, advances their leadership competencies which as a result "enables them to create sympathetic and shared educational climate through the use of effective leadership skills" (p. 53). Such a situation, therefore, undoubtedly contributes highly to student's retention. It should, however, be noted that the benefits of students' leadership is not only for the concerned student

but rather for all students who are being led. Student leaders understand better the situation of their fellow students and they also know how to intervene to save their fellow students accordingly. Kesser (2011) once argued that, although student leaders are very few in schools, they play a great role in organizing their fellow students towards following the school rules and regulation which makes them behave properly to overcome the dangers of discontinuation. It is also true that student leaders in school are highly valued and are regarded role models for others. By being so, they contribute to increasing students' retention by being closer and friendly to those who might be going through difficulties which without intervention could have led to school dropout.

## **4.2 Extracurricular Activities and Students' Retention**

This study also sought to find out the relationship between participating in the extracurricular activities and students' retention. In order to establish the existing relationship between participating in the extracurricular activities and students' retention in Bariadi district, a table with five levels was provided. The respondents were asked to tick only one level which they found appropriate. Level one was 'strongly disagree', level two was 'disagree', level three 'Undecided', level four 'agree' and level five 'strongly agree'. The result from this survey indicated that the majority of the respondents were of the view that there is a strong relationship between participating in extracurricular activities and students' retention as most of the respondents selected level four and five (agree and strongly agree). The findings further indicate that extracurricular activities are also indispensable to making students physically and mentally fit. More elaborated findings are as indicated on Table 1

**Table 1: Students' Response on the Relationship between Participating in Extracurricular Activities and Students' Retention (n= 100)**

**Note:** 1 - Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Undecided, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly agree.

Benefits of extracurricular activities in relation to students' retention	Responses					Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	
Extracurricular activities make you feel comfortable in school and build positive relationship with your teachers	-	1	3	34	62	100
Extracurricular activities encourage you to attend to school	2	5	4	26	63	100
Extracurricular activities make you physically and mentally fit	6	3	7	13	71	100
Extracurricular activities create sense of self-awareness, belongingness and school satisfaction	4	1	9	32	54	100
In sports and games season, the attendances of students increased	-	3	6	19	72	100
Participating in extracurricular activities in school, it is wastage of time	45	39	5	8	3	100
Students who participate in extracurricular activities performs poor in academics	37	31	7	14	11	100
Extracurricular activities help students who were likely to dropout to stay at school	16	9	12	29	34	100

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

As indicated on table 1, the majority of the students who participate in this study, 72 percent, agreed strongly that extracurricular activities such as sports and games contributed in increasing students' attendances. It was also noted that 45 percent strongly disagreed that participating in extracurricular activities is wastage of time. As a result, because of participating in extracurricular activities students are likely to build positive relationship among them as well as their teachers who guide them in the process of learning until they accomplish their study. For that reason, extracurricular activities become a bridge which connects students to each other and teachers as well. Based on these findings, it can be argued that sports and games are an excellent means of attracting many students to fall in love with school and to persevere with the process of learning. During the interview, it was reported that during the sports season the attendance of students increased significantly. This is a clear sign that extracurricular activities have a strong relationship to student retention, it means that if such activities are constantly available in schools, students would very likely stay in school to the end. This finding correlates well with that of Nakazawa (2014) who maintains that when students engage actively in sports as part of required co-curriculum activities, they will establish strong ties with the school such that they can hardly live before their school period ends. This

makes sense that, sports and games connect students together and makes them forget troubles that they faced in the process of learning which may lead them to see school as a wrong place to spend their precious time.

Moreover, in finding out how extracurricular activities encouraged students to attend school, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement. Based on the finding table 1, most of students agree that extracurricular activities encouraged them to attend schools. This is since extracurricular activities make students relax and enjoy after spending a number of hours in the classroom learning some theoretical issues. This finding concurs with that of Mahoney (2014) who revealed that provision of extracurricular activities in schools rescue students who were likely drop out of school due to being bored by the learning process.

Based on the qualitative data which was collected through face-to-face discussions with individuals with a similar intention of finding out about the relationship between extracurricular activities and students' retention, the findings confirmed that there is a strong relationship. Most of participants were also of the view that extracurricular activities connected students in schools in such a way that students who were at risk of dropping out because of peer pressure, were encouraged to stay in

schools. It is obviously known that mind needs to be refreshed especially to students who having many hours learning quietly. Hence, based on this finding, it is fair to say that the more students participated in extracurricular activities that are of interest to them, the more they are likely to stay in school to the end of their studies. It is also important to note that since most of secondary students are at the age of adolescent stage where they are undergoing several changes in their life as human beings, they require some activities which can socialize them and at the same time contribute to their ability to develop social skills as well as self-awareness and self-esteem skills which are paramount in making right decision. This need was clearly explained by one of the participants who while insisting said:

*Most of the students in this school are at the age called foolish age which needs special attention and care to rescue them from various challenges including dropping out from schools. If students stay idle after class hours, there is the great possibility of engaging in groups which are not good and can jeopardize their immediate future life. I really appreciate how extracurricular activities contribute to keeping students connected to each other. It makes them keepers of each other the fact which makes them to not get tempted to quite school, which is great. That is why in my school we are always insisting students to participate in extracurricular activities which keep them away from engaging in other activities like drug and alcohol abuse which may have long lasting negative impacts. (Interviewee, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

The finding indicates that extracurricular activities is valued and appreciated as a medium of connecting students together regardless of their life experiences. Moreover, as argued by Sauer (2015) and as found by this study, extracurricular activities played great role in the lives of students in several ways such as moral development and self-consciousness both of which are important in overcoming temptations of quitting school. Speaking in relation to the benefits of encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities, one of the participants had this to say,

*We know that we have some students who prefer extracurricular activities than to attending lessons in class, in order to help them to stay in school; we are using extracurricular activities as a trap to keep them. This method seems to work perfectly in retaining students and surprisingly, some of them perform well in the examinations. (Interviewee, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

This argument is not in any ways surprising, for it is well known that extracurricular activities such as sports activates not only the body but also the mind which is responsible in understanding concepts which students could be learning. Hence by activating the ability to understand is also a means to encourage students to remain in school. That is to say that, when students perform well academically, the likelihood of remaining in school is also high. For this reason, students should be encouraged to engage in various extracurricular activities which are important in stimulating their brains for academic work. Also as argued in Mahoney (2014) students' participation in extracurricular activities should be promoted due to their ability contribute to students' character formation which is critical to retention and above all to life success. In addition to what has been discussed so far, extracurricular activities are also an excellent means of promoting students. As a result, students will tend to remain in school because of the experience of self-fulfillment which they get as a result of participating in such activities. To conclude this discussion, this study maintains that in order to Tanzania students get maximum benefits from extracurricular activities, more should be done by the government and schools in creating a more conducive and safer environment for various forms of sports and games as well as other activities.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This empirical study which sought to assess the contribution of extracurricular activities on students' retention in public secondary schools, has established those extracurricular activities have a remarkable influence on students' retention which is due to the socializing effects which results into the establishment of long-lasting bonds among peers. Such bonds contribute significantly to their continuous stay in school. Moreover, based on the findings, it is fair to conclude that extracurricular activities have the power to inspire, to motivate and to keep students, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually fit such that, they come to view school as a place worth living as it contributes to their wellbeing for the present life and the future. Therefore, based on the various benefits which students acquire through their participation in extracurricular activities such as, self-discipline, time management, self-confidence among others, it is fair to conclude that extracurricular activities contribute significantly to students' retention. In other words, extracurricular activities are like a magnet that attracts and retains students to the successful completion of their studies. Henceforth, schools should continuously seek to promote various extracurricular

activities in order to ensure not only students' retention but also to warrant their academic success.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, extracurricular activities despite their variability, they all have a powerful impact on student's retention. Hence, based on this finding the following recommendations are made for action to be taken by various stakeholders including government leaders, school leaders, teachers and students themselves as a means of ensuring that extracurricular activities are given the priority they deserve and that they are promoted adequately as a means of ensuring students' retention in public secondary schools. The following are the suggestions for action to be taken by the listed stakeholders.

1. The government as the most important agent of education which also is responsible of allocating funds to all schools should endeavor to ensure that all secondary schools have at least the minimum required facilities to enable all students to participate in extracurricular activities that can contribute to making school more enjoyable and so persevere in their studies.
2. School leaders as people responsible of planning and budgeting school funds, should make sure that sports facilities are given equal priority in the budget and that facilities purchased meet sports needs and the passion of the students.
3. Teachers as people responsible of ensuring students' retention should also strive more towards encouraging and motivating students to see school as another home out of their real homes by making sure that each student is actively engaged in some extracurricular activities.
4. As it was revealed in this study, that there is close relationship between participating in extracurricular activities and students' retention, curricular developers as key people responsible for determining what students should be taught and the methodology, this study recommends that they consider reviewing the current curriculum so that it can accommodate students with different intellectual abilities such as, Kinesthetic, musical, sports and the like. By considering individual learner's needs and giving the opportunity to get involved in extracurricular activities of their interest, it is likely that it can contribute to giving students chance to engage in something which makes learning meaningful and useful for their own future wellbeing and for their community locally and globally.

5. Students as implementers of extracurricular activities are also recommended to promptly participate in extracurricular activities that are available in their schools and also to be more innovative in developing or suggesting alternative extracurricular activities which they are passionate about and those that contribute to keeping them physically and mentally fit as well as making them enjoy school as they develop bonds among themselves and schools, the fact which would lead to not only perseverance in their academic journey but also to their success.

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