

# CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF MOROGORO MUNICIPALITY, TANZANIA

## ABSTRACT

This study explored the challenges faced in implementing extracurricular activities (ECAs) in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, and how these challenges hinder students' development of practical skills necessary for solving societal problems. The research employed a case study design, utilizing both simple random sampling for students and purposive sampling for teachers. Data was collected through interviews with 17 teachers and focus group discussions with 72 students. The findings revealed two main themes of challenges: student attitudes and backgrounds as barriers, as well as teacher and parental support issues. Student attitudes and backgrounds encompassed inappropriate attitudes towards ECAs, home upbringing influences, and gender-biased perspectives. Teacher and parental support issues involved inadequate teacher guidance and lack of parental involvement. Based on these findings, the study recommends increased Tanzania government funding to provide necessary resources for ECAs in secondary schools, as well as the implementation of awareness campaigns aimed at changing negative perceptions about ECAs. These initiatives are crucial for fostering an environment that promotes skill development and equips students with the abilities needed to solve pressing societal problems.

Keywords: Extracurricular activities, skill development, students' attitudes, Teachers, parent support

## 1. Introduction

Extracurricular Activities (ECAs) are a variety of activities conducted outside the formal academic setting, including sports, community service, music, arts, and clubs such as debate, environmental, and science clubs. These activities play a crucial role in skill development by

providing students with opportunities to engage in diverse, hands-on experiences. ECAs foster essential skills like problem-solving and critical thinking by challenging students to approach real-world situations creatively. They also promote time management, leadership, and teamwork, as students learn to balance responsibilities and collaborate with others. Additionally, ECAs enhance social skills through interaction with peers, contributing to well-rounded personal development (Mahoney & Vest, 2023; Fredricks & Eccles, 2020). However, the implementation of ECAs in secondary schools faces significant barriers across various countries, hindering students' skill development and their ability to address societal issues. In the United States, recent research has highlighted the on-going challenges in implementing effective ECAs. A study by Mahoney and Vest (2023) found that despite the recognized benefits of ECAs, many schools struggle with budget constraints and resource allocation, leading to inequitable access to extracurricular opportunities. This disparity particularly affects students from low-income backgrounds, potentially widening the achievement gap and limiting skill development for a significant portion of the student population. In Japan, a country known for its rigorous academic culture, the implementation of ECAs faces unique challenges. Yamamoto and Sato (2022) reported that the intense focus on academic achievement often overshadows the importance of extracurricular activities. Their study revealed that many Japanese secondary schools struggle to balance academic demands with the need for diverse skill development through ECAs, leading to limited participation and potential burnout among students who do engage in these activities. Moving to Europe, a comprehensive study in Germany by Schmidt and Weber (2024) identified systemic challenges in ECA implementation. They found that while German schools recognize the importance of ECAs, there is a lack of standardized guidelines and support structures for their implementation. This results in significant variations in the quality and availability of ECAs across different regions and schools, potentially creating disparities in students' skill development opportunities.

Shifting focus to Africa, a study conducted in Kenya by Ochieng and Kimani (2023) revealed that while there is growing recognition of the importance of ECAs, many secondary schools face severe resource constraints. The researchers found that a significant number of schools lack basic facilities and equipment necessary for conducting effective ECAs, particularly in rural areas. This shortage of resources severely limits the range and quality of extracurricular activities available to students, potentially impacting their overall skill development. In Tanzania, recent research has shed light on the challenges facing ECA implementation in

secondary schools. A study by Msonde and Mtahabwa (2022) conducted across several regions, including Morogoro, identified multiple barriers to effective ECA implementation. These include inadequate funding, insufficient training for teachers in facilitating ECAs, and a lack of awareness among students and parents about the importance of these activities. The researchers noted that many Tanzanian secondary schools struggle to integrate ECAs into their curriculum effectively, often treating them as optional or less important than academic subjects. Furthermore, Mwakasege and Ngonyani (2024) highlighted the impact of socio-economic factors on ECA participation in Tanzania. Their study found that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often face additional barriers to participating in ECAs, such as the inability to afford necessary equipment or transportation costs for off-campus activities. This economic disparity creates an uneven playing field, potentially limiting the skill development opportunities for a significant portion of the student population. Therefore the objective of this study was to explore the challenges faced in implementing ECAs in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, and how these challenges hinder students' development of practical skills necessary for solving societal problems.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilized a case study research design to explore the challenges during implementation of ECAs in Morogoro Municipality's secondary schools and their influence on students' problem-solving skills. The case study design was applied due to its ability to provide a holistic view and enable the examination of ECAs in their natural setting. This design is particularly suited for investigating complex phenomena within real-life contexts, making it ideal for understanding the nuanced relationship between challenges during implementation of extracurricular activities and students' problem-solving skills in the specific environment of Morogoro's secondary schools (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher employed both simple random sampling for students to ensure unbiased representation and purposive sampling for teachers to gather insights based on their expertise (Kumar, 2011). Data collection involved interviews and focus group discussions (Creswell, 2009). The researcher organized focus group discussions with 72 students in 9 focus groups, each involving 8 students (4 girls and 4 boys) from diverse backgrounds to facilitate open-ended conversations and exchanges of ideas. In two selected secondary schools, one conducted 5 focus groups, while the second conducted 4 focus groups due to

data saturation (Gundumogula, 2020). Additionally, focus groups were conducted in various locations within the school context, such as the classroom, library and laboratory. During the focus groups, participants shared their perceptions, experiences and opinions related to ECAs, problem-solving tasks, and the effectiveness of current practices in enhancing students' problem-solving skills. Focus group sessions lasted for 65 minutes and did not exceed 70 minutes (Kumar, 2011).

Correspondingly the researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions that explore teaching experiences, challenges faced, successful strategies, and overall perceptions of the impact of ECAs on developing problem-solving skills (Wingate & Bourdage, 2024). Specifically, interviews were conducted with 17 teachers in Morogoro Municipality. The interviews were face-to-face, involving one teacher per interview, making up 17 interviews. Additionally, interviews were conducted in various locations within the school context, such as the office, library and laboratory. The interview sessions lasted between 45 and 60 minutes (Kumar, 2011).

Adhering to ethical standards was fundamental in this study to ensure the protection and respect of all participants. Key ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants, who were thoroughly informed about the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and risks and ensuring their participation was voluntary and based on a clear understanding of the study's context (Kumar, 2011). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting, with personal identifiers removed to protect participants' identities. Data was securely stored with limited access to authorized researchers and participants were assured their responses would be used solely for research purposes, with the option to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Emphasizing voluntary participation fostered an environment of trust and openness, which is crucial for gathering honest and reliable data (Mirza et al, 2023).

Additionally, a research permit of seven weeks was obtained from the government authority (Regional office) to authenticate the study's genuineness and ensure compliance with legal requirements. Ethical considerations are defined as principles that ensure research is conducted with integrity, respect for subjects' rights, and adherence to ethical standards. Such include informed consent, confidentiality, minimizing harm and transparency in practices (Lazarus, 2022).

### 3. Findings and discussion

This study focused on exploring various barriers to the development of students' problem-solving skills through the implementation of extracurricular activities (ECAs) in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. It particularly examined the challenges faced in implementing ECAs and how these challenges hinder students from developing the practical skills necessary for solving societal problems as follows.

#### 3.1 Challenges in Implementing Extracurricular Activities.

The objective of this study was to explore challenges in implementing extracurricular activities that hinder the development of problem-solving skills in students. Data from this study was collected through interviews and focus groups. The data obtained was transcribed and coded, and the merging themes are presented and discussed below. It should be remembered that this study was guided by one objective: The themes that emerged from the collected data include; Student Attitudes and Backgrounds as Barriers, as well as Teacher and Parental Support issues.

##### 3.1.2 Student Attitudes and Backgrounds as Barriers

Student Attitudes and Backgrounds as barriers come to light as the second theme when analyzing data for study objectives. This barrier entails inappropriate attitudes towards ECAs, student background issues, home upbringing, gender-biased perspectives and disrespect. One of the challenges that arose was the students' inappropriate attitudes towards cleanliness and environmental activities. Teachers report that a significant number of students view cleanliness as a punishment rather than a part of learning and skills development. As one teacher pointed out, *“There is a student who has grown long nails; now, with those nails, how will they slash grass at home? Or how will they plant trees and tend to the garden at home?”*

One student added, *“I grow my nails because I have no intention of becoming a farmer or a cleaner.”* The response from the students indicates that she has a poor perspective on hands-on activities such as agriculture and cleaning (mopping and slashing). This negative attitude becomes an obstacle, preventing students from acquiring skills that enable them to solve problems. This finding is tied to study by Van den Berg et al. (2020) validates that Farmer field schools improved participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence in agricultural practices.

Furthermore, the background of the students also contributes significantly. Students come from different communities with varying traditions, customs, and parenting styles. At the beginning of their schooling, students are often inexperienced in manual labour such as sweeping, mopping, or planting trees. As one teacher explained, *“Home upbringing affects how a student participates at school. If they are pampered at home, it will be difficult for them to accept doing tasks here”*.

This indicates that a student raised in an environment where everything is done for them finds it challenging to accept and understand the importance of engaging in ECAs at school. This finding is in congruence with a study by Morah (2021) indicates that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping the lifestyles of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, authoritative parenting was associated with higher levels of participation and engagement in extracurricular activities among students.

Parents and families play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of students. The family's attitude towards cleanliness and environmental conservation is passed on to the student. One teacher mentioned, *“The way parents raise a child at home is what they will exhibit at school. If they are well-taken care of at home, they will also like the environment here”*.

This demonstrates that the importance of home upbringing is reflected in students' behavior at school, highlighting the need for cooperation between schools and parents in building good habits in students toward the acquisition of problem-solving skills. This is not a latest idea; for instance a study by Okoro (2020) in Nigeria noted that good parenting at home and a good relationship between teachers and parents contribute to the academic development of students.

Another challenge that arises is the presence of gender-biased perspectives regarding the execution of tasks. The gender perspective shows that some cleanliness tasks should only be done by specific genders, and this gender perspective is inherent in students from their home environments, making it difficult for teachers to educate students about equality in responsibilities regardless of gender as explained by one teacher; *“When you tell a boy to clean the toilet, he refuses, but the problem is the difference in perspectives that comes from gender bias”*.

This conveys how gender-biased perspectives contribute to reducing the effectiveness of school activities and hinder the goals of education, especially in empowering students to

solve social problems. This finding supported by Hussaini and Hussain (2023) highlights how environmental factors, including gender-biased perspectives, negatively impact students' educational outcomes and hinder their ability to develop problem-solving skills, aligning with findings on the detrimental effects of gender biases in education.

To address these challenges, various strategies have been adopted by teachers, especially in educating students on the importance of cleanliness and other skill-building exercises. Many teachers have been using methods of involving students in discussions and providing detailed explanations to help them understand the importance of cleanliness and other problem-solving activities such as grass cutting, sports activities, planting trees and gardening. For instance, one teacher noted; *“We use the method of talking to students and explaining the benefits of sports, and the benefits of cleanliness”*.

This indicates that education is essential in changing students' attitudes towards cleanliness and environmental sustainability, also this indicates teachers applied effective action in assisting students to acquire a positive perception of clearness. This finding corresponds with studies by Sayyd et al. (2021) and Lyoba&Mwila (2022), which support the notion that education plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes towards cleanliness and environmental sustainability. Teachers' effective actions can help students develop positive perceptions about cleanliness.

**On other hand,** Punishment in education, specifically within the context of selected secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, is employed primarily to ensure students adhere to rules and engage in necessary activities. It is often used as a means to enforce participation in activities that build problem-solving skills, such as cleanliness, gardening, and watering plants. For example, students who fail to maintain cleanliness or participate in designated tasks might be assigned punishment, like cleaning toilets. As explained by one teacher; *“If students have not maintained cleanliness as required or participated in activities like watering flowers and trees, they are given punishment to ensure they take responsibility.”*

One student added;

*There are times you have to make an effort to do cleanliness not because you want to, but you might get beaten with a stick or even be told to clean toilets for a whole week, so we just do it to avoid being punished.*

This means that without punishment, some students may not be willing to volunteer for important tasks. This situation leads to some students being unable to acquire skills that

would help them solve problems in society. This finding is reinforced by Heilmann et al. (2021) reveals the negative impacts of applying punishments in the learning process. Punishment consistently predicts increases in child behaviour problems over time. Therefore, continuing to apply physical punishment in educational contexts will have negative impacts on students' learning.

Additionally, teachers' trying to motivate students through rewards or praise is one way to encourage them to participate actively in activities. Some teachers have achieved positive results through this approach, as one teacher mentioned, "*Using motivation like giving money and certificate for appreciations when students perform well makes them happy and instills a sense of responsibility*".

However, motivations in ECAs can positively impact students by enabling them to gain skills that help solve societal problems such as deforestation, waste pollution, malaria, and poverty. However, this can also negatively impact student learning since there is a possibility that students engage in ECAs for rewards rather than for skill acquisition. This is evidenced by Malek et al. (2020) uncovered that financial rewards have a negative relationship with intrinsic task motivation, suggesting that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation. Therefore, if motivation is not applied effectively, it can cause students to focus only on rewards rather than on the learning process.

Also, students tend to disrespect teachers when they perceive a teacher as being younger and similar in age to them. This leads to disrespect and refusal to heed what the teacher is teaching and directing to help students acquire skills to solve societal problems. As one teacher explains,

*You know, many of these students are in adolescence, so adolescence influences them. For example, you find litter just outside the school gate. When you tell a student to pick up the litter, they ask you, 'Is this the school area?' and then they just walk away without picking it up.*

This highlights a challenge because when a student is within the school premises, they respect the teacher because it is in the school environment, but as soon as they step outside the school, they no longer see the value of the teacher and perceive teachers as just another ordinary person. Therefore, they believe they cannot be ordered by teachers to do anything outside the school. As a result, when within the school, they fail to understand why they should engage in practical activities and extra-curricular activities such as environmental

cleanliness, sports activities and tree planting, thus perpetuating the presence of students lacking skills to solve society's problems. This is not a new phenomenon, as evidenced by a study conducted by Kennedy & Sundberg (2020), which underscores the importance of balancing theory and practice within educational contexts and recommends that poor integration of theory and practice contributes to students' failure to acquire the intended skills.

Therefore, it is evident that students' attitudes and backgrounds are crucial in enhancing skills that help them solve problems in their society. These challenges require a joint strategy that includes education, good parenting from home, and collaboration between teachers and parents. In this context, it is important to instill positive attitudes in children towards learning and participating in exercises aimed at developing them into better individuals.

### **3.1.3 Teacher and Parental Support issue**

Teacher and parental assistance arose as the third theme during data analysis for the study objectives. This theme encompasses inadequate teacher guidance and lack of parental involvement. Teacher support and guidance are crucial for effectively imparting the skills necessary for students to solve problems such as deforestation, poverty, employment issues, waste management, and malaria (John & Kaganga, 2023; Ngasala, 2023). In the context of secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, educators and students face several challenges that hinder their ability to provide such support. Students complained about the issue of teachers not providing adequate support for extracurricular activities such as sports, environmental cleanliness activities, and tree planting activities. This issue indicates that schools do not prioritize activities that build students' skills to solve problems in their communities; this is evident from a student who said, *"During sports activities, we have to manage ourselves, which is not appropriate because some students are unruly. Without teacher supervision, you can get hurt intentionally and be unable to continue with your studies"*.

As highlighted by the respondent, the presence of a teacher in sports activities ensures that these activities are conducted as required and provide students with the intended skills. However, if students continue to be left without a guiding teacher, they will only understand the theoretical benefits of sports without being able to gain those benefits practically. As experienced by Bano and Jumani (2024), who described challenges in establishing green

schools, they uncovered that without proper guidance from teachers, students miss out on the experience necessary to develop these skills effectively.

Teachers also complained about not receiving support from parents. For example, at school one; there was a system to identify students who were unable to participate in outdoor activities due to health challenges. They organized a system to give these students a red label to attach to their shirts so that the teacher would recognize the student has health issues and would be excused from activities such as cutting grass, gardening, sports, and other similar activities. Therefore, students, in collaboration with their parents, went to the hospital to obtain those permits deceitfully. The doctor wrote a note confirming that the student was and still is sick, making them a special case who does not participate in any activities when they return to school. While some students are genuinely sick, many others use this as an excuse to avoid outdoor activities as explained by one of the teachers, *"Sometimes, a student appears healthy from Form One to three, but in Form Four, they declare severe illness, supported by their parents. As teachers, we're left with few options but to accept this situation"*.

According to the teacher's account, there is no support from parents, as they collaborate with their children to provide false information, aiming to exempt them from school activities. This contributes to the student lacking problem-solving skills in society, as they avoid tasks that could build such skills. This finding correlates with study by Paccaud et al., (2021) indicated that parents who perceived themselves as actively involved in their child's education, through engagement with school activities and communication with teachers, reported greater satisfaction.

Lastly, Students perceive that those involved in making flower pots are those who cannot excel in regular classroom subjects in the curriculum. Since it's mostly students with special needs who make the pots under their teachers' guidance, other students see them as underachievers academically, posing a challenge for those without special needs to participate in such activities. As one student expressed, *"Those flower pots are made by students with special needs, those who cannot excel academically like regular students without special needs."*

As described by student, it's evident that students lack sufficient explanation or guidance from some of their teachers to have a proper perspective on the activity of making flower pots. If this were addressed, it would help students engage in beneficial activities similar to pottery while having a correct understanding of these tasks, ultimately enabling them to

address societal issues like unemployment and poverty. This finding correlates with studies by Lyoba & Mwila (2022) revealed that inadequate teacher support and the lack of effective instructional strategies hinder students from fully engaging in practical and skill-based activities.

Therefore, to ensure that students can effectively apply what they've learned in school while at home, it's crucial to foster strong communication between teachers and parents. This communication serves as a tool for facilitating the holistic development of the learner, including academic progress. Thus, fostering good support from parents to teachers empowers students to enthusiastically engage in activities that will equip them with valuable problem-solving skills in Morogoro Municipal.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings indicate that the challenges in implementing ECAs in Morogoro Municipality are multifaceted, encompassing student attitudes, teacher support, and parental involvement. Students often exhibit negative attitudes toward ECAs, viewing them as less important than academic subjects, which hinder their engagement and skill acquisition. Furthermore, socio-economic factors contribute to disparities in participation, particularly among students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Inadequate teacher support and lack of parental involvement exacerbate these challenges, resulting in a limited scope for students to develop essential problem-solving skills through practical engagement. The overall effect is a significant gap in students' readiness to tackle societal problems effectively.

#### **5. Recommendations**

To address the challenges associated with implementing ECAs in secondary schools, several recommendations can be made. First, schools should enhance awareness and attitudes by organizing campaigns aimed at changing students' perceptions regarding the importance of ECAs. Workshops involving parents, teachers, and community leaders could create a more supportive environment for active student participation. Additionally, teacher training and support are essential; professional development opportunities focused on guiding students in ECAs would equip teachers with effective strategies for motivating students and integrating these activities into the curriculum. Strengthening parental engagement through regular communication about the benefits of ECAs and offering opportunities for parents to volunteer or participate in school activities would further bolster support. Finally, addressing socio-

economic barriers is crucial; schools could explore partnerships with local businesses or NGOs to provide financial assistance or resources for students from low-income families, ensuring equitable access to these valuable activities.

## 6. COMPETING INTERESTS

No competing interests exist

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Data collection was conducted during heavy rainfall, which impacted respondent participation. Some participants were hesitant to provide information due to concerns over the confidentiality of their responses. Furthermore, the data collection concurred with exam schedules, leading to challenges in securing the full cooperation of respondents, which affected the overall efficiency of the data-gathering process (Creswell, 2009).

## DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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