

Narratives of Grade 8 Students on Extracurricular Activities in Public Secondary High Schools

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Abstract. Beyond the classroom walls, extracurricular activities ignite passions, foster growth, and shape the next generation of leaders, innovators, and changemakers. However, balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular pursuits can be daunting. This study explores the experiences and coping strategies of grade 8 students engaged in extracurricular activities. Through a qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher was able to gather unique narratives about the experiences and coping strategies regarding extra-curricular activities. The participants were ten (10) grade 8 students from a secondary school from the division of Tagum City. Through in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions, three recurring themes emerged as student experiences: conflicting demands, time constraints and overload, and emotional wellness. Additionally, three themes were identified as coping strategies: goal-setting, soliciting guidance, and personal drive and resilience. The study also uncovered three insight-driven themes: empowerment and resilience, growth and development opportunities, and supportive environment and resources. The findings highlight the significant role extracurricular activities play in students' lives, showcasing their determination to pursue their goals despite challenges. This study underscores the importance of extracurricular activities in student development and the efforts students make to overcome obstacles.

KEY WORDS

1. Extra-curricular activities
2. Academic Management
3. Resilience
4. Empowerment
5. Overload

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1. Introduction

Benjamin Franklin is credited with coining the proverb written above. This old-age adage captures the idea of learning through involvement, which is the foundation of extracurricular activities in any academic institution. While academic pursuits are the cornerstone of educational systems, the experiences beyond the classroom often shape and define a learner's educational journey. This phenomenological research study explores the experiences of grade 8 students in public secondary schools through

their personal narratives in an effort to understand how extra-curricular engagements shape their lives, learning, and overall experiences. The phenomenon of interest in this study is the subjective experiences of eighth-grade students participating in extra-curricular activities and how these experiences contribute to their personal academic development. My curiosity is sparked by the obvious differences in extra-curricular program participation and outcomes between students from various socioeconomic

backgrounds, particularly when comparing public and private school environments. This led to growing interest in learning more about how these activities are seen and used by students in public schools with limited resources. What are the experiences of the grade 8 students on extra-curricular activities? What are the challenges they faced and how did they cope with it? In order to better understand the significance extra-curricular activities, have in the lives of public secondary schools, this study aims to investigate these questions. With the help of this study, educators and administrators in public secondary schools will be able to customize extra-curricular activities better to meet the needs of their students and increase their level of engagement. The results can be used by policymakers to support the creation of policies and better resources for extra-curricular activities, which could lead to a rise in community support as parents and the general public become more aware of their benefits. Students ultimately stand to gain the most from having more enriching and relevant extra-curricular options that enhance their academic achievement and personal development. In a published multidisciplinary journal, extra-curricular activities are widely acknowledged for being essential in the overall development of students, providing skills that enhance academic performance (Lastra et al., 2024). Research conducted globally has demonstrated the positive effects of these activities on students' social skills development, academic performance, and self-esteem. Even with the recognized advantages, extra-curricular activity participation and types vary significantly between educational systems and cultural contexts. Because of this variability, there is a chance to investigate how these activities are viewed and experienced around the world. As cited in a journal of Educational Psychology (Lei et al., 2025), research across various countries highlights the benefits of extra-curricular activities on student outcomes. In the

United States, students often struggle to balance their academic workload with extracurricular activities, leading to increased stress, burnout, and reduced study time. Excessive involvement in extracurricular activities can also result in physical exhaustion, compromised health, and diminished academic performance due to lack of sufficient rest and downtime. This balancing act can be particularly challenging for students, highlighting the need for effective time management skills to avoid negative consequences on academic performance (Tompson et al., 2020). Additionally, as cited in an International Journal of Multidisciplinary Proceedings, the strain of juggling multiple activities can lead to heightened stress, waning motivation, and burnout. Overcommitting to extracurricular activities can ultimately harm students' lives. While extra-curricular activities offer benefits, excessive participation can yield adverse effects. Striking a balance is key to reaping the rewards without succumbing to negative outcomes. (Shamshad, 2024) Meanwhile, public secondary schools in the Philippines are emphasizing the value of extra-curricular activities as essential parts of the curriculum more and more. Advocating for well-rounded development, national policies propose a shift toward extra-curricular activities that are more inclusive and diverse. However, balancing act between extra-curricular activities and academics can be particularly challenging for Filipino students. This highlights the need for effective time management skills to avoid negative consequences on academic performance. Students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to develop better time management and discipline, but over involvement can still hinder academic progress. The Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes the importance of extracurricular activities in promoting holistic student development, but students must balance their activities with academic responsibilities (Ramos, 2021). In an article published in Tagum City

Sports Development Office (Choresca, 2023), the public secondary schools provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are well-supported, from clubs focused on science and technology to sports and the arts. This dedication is reinforced by improved facilities and specialized coaching, which create an environment that is favorable for the holistic development of students. In order to understand how grade 8 students' participation in these activities affects their academic motivation, social interactions, and personal development, this study will examine the personal narratives of these students. The purpose of the research is to better understand the effects of these extra-curricular programs by gaining insight into the lived experiences of students through these narratives. Although existing article highlights a positive correlation between extra-curricular activities and both academic achievement and social development, there is a gap in understanding the personal, lived experiences of students from public high schools. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the individual experiences of grade 8 students from different secondary schools in Tagum City concerning their participation in extra-curricular activities. By gaining insights into these personal experiences, educators, parents, and legislators will be better equipped to make informed decisions about the integration and funding of extra-curricular programs in secondary schools. This, in turn, could lead to a more holistic approach to student development, ensuring that these programs effectively support a broader range of student needs and goals.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—This phenomenological study aims to investigate and

comprehend the lived experiences of grade 8 at the Division of Tagum City's public secondary high schools who participate in extra-curricular activities. In order to understand the essence of these students' participation in these activities, this research dived into their personal narratives, paying particular attention to how they handle difficulties and the insights they acquire from taking part. By looking at these factors, the study aims to determine how extra-curricular activity affects students' academic and personal growth, offering insightful viewpoints on the efficiency of the support systems in place and possibly influencing future educational policies and practices to improve the experiences and results of students in extra-curricular activities. The primary focus of the data collection was the lived experiences of grade 8 students in the Division of Tagum City and how they cope with the challenges they encounter in their extra-curricular activities (ECAs). The results of this phenomenological study helped us comprehend the different narratives of grade 8 students while participating in extra-curricular activities and how they cope with the challenges along the way. The insights collected from this study served as a foundation for evidence-based practices, allowing schools to improve their instructional offerings and support systems for grade 8 students, resulting in a more positive and well-rounded educational experience.

1.2. Research Questions—This study sought to investigate the influence of extra-curricular activities on the social skills development and behavioral patterns of grade 8 students through their unique first-hand narratives. The research was executed with the purpose of addressing the following inquiries:

- (1) What are the lived experiences of grade 8 students participating in extra-curricular activities?
- (2) How do grade 8 students cope with the challenges they encounter in extra-curricular activities?
- (3) What insights and lessons learned can be drawn from the findings of the study?

Therefore, taking into utmost consideration the cited problem situation indicated in the previous sections and stipulated in the research questions adds to the urgency and timeliness of the study. This brought the necessity for the researcher to conduct a study about the influence of extra-curricular activities on the social skills development and behavioral patterns of grade 8

students.

1.3. Review of Significant Literature —

This section presents a synthesis of studies on two main concepts: (1) students' experiences in extra-curricular activities (ECAs), and (2) coping strategies used to address challenges in these activities.

1.3.1. Experiences of Students in Extra-Curricular Activities—Extra-curricular activities have been shown to enhance student engagement, academic performance, and well-being (Thouin et al., 2020; Winstone et al., 2020). The level of involvement—such as intensity, frequency, and type of activity—greatly influences these outcomes (Munir Zaheer, 2021). Participating in ECAs builds a sense of belonging and community, particularly for marginalized or international students (Buckley Lee, 2020; De Sisto et al., 2021).

Several studies report positive psychosocial benefits of ECA involvement, including improved interpersonal relationships, reduced stress, and greater school satisfaction (Balaguer et al., 2020; Onoda Omi, 2023; Bouchard, 2022). However, the academic impact varies—Carbonaro and Maloney (2019) found minimal socio-emotional gains, suggesting that misalignment between classroom and ECA skills may hinder holistic development.

Regionally, studies from the Philippines (De Vera Queroda, 2020; Martin Tugguin, 2020; Calanoga et al., 2020) confirm that ECAs, when well-managed, can reinforce student discipline, leadership, and classroom performance. In high-risk contexts, consistent participation in ECAs has been linked to lower dropout rates (Thouin et al., 2020) and higher life satisfaction (Hanks, 2018).

Globally, Kravchenko and Nygård (2022) found that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to benefit more from ECAs,

pointing to structural inequalities. Despite the benefits, students commonly report conflicts with academic workload and time demands (Buckley Lee, 2020; King et al., 2020; Agarahim Rahimova, 2022). Institutional limitations—such as lack of support, facilities, and inclusivity—further hinder participation (Devi et al., 2021; Khasawneh, 2021; Clement Mwila, 2023).

1.3.2. Coping Strategies in Addressing ECA Challenges—Students employ diverse strategies to manage the demands of ECA participation. Time management is a primary tool, enabling them to juggle academics and extracurriculars effectively (Buckley Lee, 2018; Khasawneh, 2021). Seeking support from peers, teachers, or mentors enhances resilience and academic balance (Kahu, 2020; Larson, 2022; Holt, 2020).

Goal-setting has also been highlighted as an effective coping mechanism. Students who plan and prioritize tasks demonstrate better academic outcomes and increased well-being (Zimmerman, 2019; Hansen, 2022; Ecclestone et al., 2020). Self-regulation and motivation are particularly crucial during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where student engagement declined but older students with higher self-regulatory capacity coped better (Zaccoletti et al., 2020).

Contextual support from institutions is essential. DepEd Order No. 49, s. 2010 emphasizes the importance of ECAs in youth development, aligning with the K to 12 curriculum's

advocacy for experiential and values-based education. Institutional strategies—such as flexible scheduling, training programs, and inclusive planning—facilitate student success in ECAs (Romanov Zavertyayeva, 2020; Thompson et al., 2019; Mkude Mubofu, 2020).

Moreover, social and civic engagement through ECAs builds introspection, social awareness, and leadership skills, reinforcing academic motivation (Díaz-Iso et al., 2019; Achar Fujii et al., 2022). In developing regions, limited facilities and financial constraints present barriers, but creative adaptation, community support, and school engagement foster participation (Nhut Vinh, 2021; Rahayu Dong, 2023).

1.4. Theoretical Lens—This study was anchored on Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory (1979 as cited in Ahmad, 2016). This Theory offers a strong framework for comprehending the various ways different environmental systems affect personal growth, making it especially applicable for studying extra-curricular activities among grade 8 in public secondary schools. The microsystem, which includes the immediate surroundings like family, school, and peer interactions, is essential to this theory. Students have important opportunities for social interaction and skill development outside of the traditional classroom setting through extra-curricular activities embedded within this microsystem. Through these exercises, students can improve social skills like leadership, teamwork, and communication. The mesosystem connects these experiences, demonstrating how abilities acquired in extra-curricular activities can improve social behaviors and academic achievement. The availability and character of these activities are also greatly shaped by the larger exosystem and macrosystem, which comprise cultural norms and school policies, and they have an impact on how students interact with them. The chronosystem component of Bronfenbrenner’s theory also takes into ac-

count how time affects students’ participation in these activities, taking into account developmental shifts from freshman to sophomore year, among other things. The study was further supported by Holland and Andre’s Developmental Theory (1987), which highlights the important role extra-curricular activities play in students’ development, particularly in academic and personal growth. This theory believes that engaging in competitive sports and other activities improves self-concept, educational aspirations, and behavior management in addition to academic performance. Students who participate in these programs typically receive better grades, grow more self-reliant, and have fewer behavioral problems. According to this theory, extra-curricular activities give adolescents undergoing major developmental changes essential support networks and constructive criticism. Such engagement supports the formation of values, the changing of behaviors, and the development of critical social skills. The study’s goals, which was to investigate how extra-curricular activities support students’ holistic development, are well-aligned with Holland and Andre’s theory, which emphasizes the wide influence of extra-curricular activities. This viewpoint emphasizes the significance of extra-curricular activities within the educational framework and is essential for analyzing their various effects. Overall, Holland and Andre’s Developmental Theory and Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory offer a theoretical framework for investigating how extra-curricular activities affect students’ development. Holland and Andre highlight particular advantages like higher academic performance, an improved self-concept, and better behavior management, while Bronfenbrenner’s approach emphasizes the role of environmental interactions in fostering social skills and leadership through extra-curricular activities. The goal of examining how extra-curricular activities affect grade 8 students’ experiences in pub-

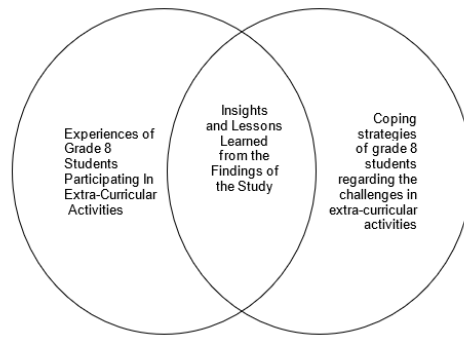


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

lic secondary schools is in line with these theories, which collectively emphasize the critical role extra-curricular activities play in holistic student development.

1.5. Methodology—This chapter effectively addressed the specific objectives of the study by outlining the systematic procedures and methodologies used in phenomenological research. It also explained the selected research design and the roles played by the researcher throughout the study’s implementation. Moreover, it offered thorough insights into the research subjects, clarifying their procedures and selection standards. The chapter concluded by exploring the techniques used for data collection, analysis, and strategies used to uphold ethical standards during the research.

1.6. Philosophical Assumptions —A study’s philosophical and qualitative presumptions were vital in steering the investigation. Four fundamental assumptions form the bedrock for comprehending qualitative research: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. These assumptions established the groundwork for the research design and inform the researcher’s approach to the study. A paradigm is a broad framework or perspective that guides and shapes how researchers approach their studies, formulate research questions, gather data, analyze findings, and interpret results. It encompasses a set of beliefs, assumptions, methodologies, and theoretical foundations that influence how researchers conceptualize and conduct their research (Zukauskas et al., 2018). In this research, paradigm guided the choice of methodology, methods, and techniques, shaping overall re-

search process and ensuring coherence in the study. **Ontology** – This section of the study focused on the relationship between the problem and reality. Creswell (2013) asserts that the research participants’ perceptions of reality are varied and subjective. This study recognized the complexity and diversity of the realities faced by grade 8 students who engage in extra-curricular activities. Every student’s story added to a diverse yet collective understanding of their experiences. It was my sole responsibility to use theme analysis to capture these various realities and provide a thorough picture of the experiences, difficulties, and coping strategies that students have in extra-curricular activities. **Epistemology** – Epistemology dealt with the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known. According to Guba and Lincoln, as referenced by Creswell (2013), the researcher made an effort to reduce the gap between them and the participants based on the

epistemological premise. By engaging directly with the students, I became an "insider," facilitating a more authentic and nuanced collection of data. This approach supports the gathering of firsthand experiences and insights, which are critical in exploring the subjective realities of the students. Axiology – It concerned the influence and importance of my values as a researcher in this study. According to Creswell (2013), acknowledging and openly discussing the researcher's values that shape the study is crucial. The values which influenced how data were interpreted and presented are explicitly acknowledged in the research process. As a researcher, I handled each participant's narrative with care and integrity, and I always have the utmost respect for the information they provide. This commitment guarantees that the experiences of the students are communicated truthfully, mirroring both their individual and research values. Methodology – According to Crotty (2020), this is "the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes." Its objectives are to explain, assess, and defend procedures (Wellington, 2015). This study explored grade 8 students lived experiences in extra-curricular activities using a qualitative methodology. In order to support the ontological and epistemological tenets, certain techniques like in-depth interviews are employed, enabling a thorough and sympathetic examination of students' stories. These techniques were chosen because they can successfully convey the complexity and depth of the participants' experiences.

Rhetoric – In research, rhetoric is the skillful and convincing use of language, communication strategies, and presentation tactics to effectively communicate concepts, claims, and conclusions in order to sway the audience's opinion and comprehension of the study (Begiri, 2018). I utilized an engaging and respectful narrative style

that honors the voices of the participants while effectively communicating the significance of the findings. This method not only makes the research easier to read but also guarantees that the interpretations are strong and based on the experiences of the participants.

1.7. Qualitative Assumptions —Using a phenomenological research methodology, my goal was to explore the extra-curricular activities grade 8 students in Tagum City engage in. My objective was to gather information about their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in relation to the phenomenon I am studying. Utilizing phenomenology as my guiding qualitative framework, I sought to uncover the essence and significance of the roles played by these individuals, emphasizing their unique viewpoints and the intricate details of their experiences. As the study's qualitative researcher, I supported a level of investigation that goes beyond cursory observations. My research aimed to investigate the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of participants in relation to the phenomenon. I emphasized the significance of understanding the complexities of the human experience in light of the various perspectives that are shaped by unique contexts, backgrounds, and personal histories (Neubauer et al., 2019). To capture the profound and complex nature of extra-curricular activities, my study placed a strong emphasis on in-depth interviews, reflective dialogues, and the analysis of participants' narratives. I hope to contribute a thorough and contextually rich understanding of the challenges, accomplishments, coping mechanisms, and educational management insights related to the extra-curricular activity nature, all while upholding phenomenological principles.

1.8. Design and Procedure —Determining the precise approach used in a study is crucial in order to customize the best research design, data collection strategy, and data analysis approach to the study's objectives. I used a qualitative research design in this investigation. Hammersley

(2013) states that studies characterized by verbal rather than statistical analysis are appropriate for qualitative research. Since I studied the lived experiences, coping strategies, and insights of grade 8 students involved in extra-curricular activities, the qualitative design was the most appropriate. This means that rather than establishing or refuting theories, I described and elaborated on this phenomenon. There are, however, specialized methods used in qualitative research, including grounded theory, narrative, case studies, phenomenology, and ethnography. Using a qualitative-phenomenological research design, I explored the lived experiences of the participants in this particular setting. I selected this approach because, according to Asper's (2009) work, the scientific side of phenomenological research focuses on communicating the viewpoints of the subjects and the importance of their experiences, then applying scientific concepts to analyze these perspectives. Furthermore, according to Creswell (2018), a phenomenological study is a method of inquiry that describes the complex and collective experiences of the participants with respect to a particular phenomenon. A key idea in phenomenology is to reduce one's interpretations of a particular phenomenon to a description that can be applied to all situations. Therefore, my goal was to identify a phenomenon that revolves around the participants' experience engaging in extra-curricular activities. I then collected information from people who have direct experience with this phenomenon in order to create detailed and accurate descriptions.

1.9. Research Participants —Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all the perceptions leads to the attainment of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Glaser

and Strauss (2017) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends 5 to twenty-five, and Morse (1994) suggests at least 6. There are no specific rules when determining the appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 2002). The participants in this study consisted of 10 secondary students from different secondary schools in Tagum City such as Tagum City National High School, Tagum National Trade School, Tagum City National Comprehensive High School, and La Filipina National High School. There were five participants for the in-depth interview and the other five for the focus group discussion. This was done in order to unveil the phenomenon being studied. These participants were selected based on specific criteria: they had to be currently enrolled in grade level 8 at the different secondary schools mentioned above, be an active member of any club within the school that conducts extra-curricular activities, and actively participate in these extra-curricular activities. The researcher utilized the purposive sampling design since the participants were chosen based on the criteria or purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). It is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. The selection of the participants was purposefully done to ensure that the findings would be authentic (Nikolopoulou, 2023).

1.10. Research Instrument —questions was developed to ensure consistency while allowing participants the freedom to share their unique perspectives in rich detail. The use of audio recordings, transcriptions, and field notes further supported the accurate documentation and analysis of participants' experiences. As is standard in phenomenological research, my role involved not only gathering data but also interpreting the meaning behind the participants'

narratives.

1.11. Ethical Considerations —Ethical considerations are crucial because they relate to the moral principles and guidelines that govern my conduct as a researcher. These principles ensure that I carried out my investigations responsibly, treating participants with respect and striving to generate reliable and precise information. To protect participants, maintain scientific integrity, and foster trust within the research community, I adhere to established ethical standards in my research practices (Resnik, 2020). Social value – This concerns the potential benefits and favorable outcomes that research can bring to society, like addressing problems or improving people’s quality of life. I evaluated the societal value of my study by acknowledging its potential impact and importance for the larger community. This ensures that resources were directed toward research that has the potential to create significant advantages for society. Informed Consent – This involves obtaining a participant’s voluntary agreement to participate in a research study after they and their parents or guardians have been provided with sufficient information about the study’s purpose, methods, potential drawbacks, and benefits. In this research involving students, it was my responsibility to ensure that both the participants and their parents or guardians fully understood the study and their rights. This dual layer of explanation allowed them to make an informed decision about participation, thereby preserving the students’ autonomy and dignity and ensuring parental consent.

Vulnerability – The vulnerability of research participants, especially students, pertains to their increased risk of experiencing harm, exploitation, or coercion due to factors such as age, cognitive ability, or socioeconomic status. As a researcher, it was crucial for me to acknowledge and consider the potential vulnerability of these young participants and take appropriate measures to protect them. This involves providing

additional safeguards and support, such as obtaining informed consent from both the students and their parents or guardians, ensuring confidentiality, and carefully explaining their rights and the study’s procedures in a way they can understand. Additionally, I modified research methods to minimize potential adverse effects, ensuring that well-being of these students is prioritized throughout study. Risks, benefits, and safety – In research, it is essential to carefully evaluate the potential risks and benefits associated with participation in a study, as well as to implement measures that safeguard the well-being of participants. These elements involve assessing the potential disadvantages and advantages of participating in a study, along with establishing strategies to ensure the welfare of participants. In this investigation, as the researcher, I meticulously assessed and balanced these factors, ensuring that the potential benefits outweigh the risks. I put adequate precautions in place to minimize harm while optimizing the safety of participants, particularly considering the vulnerabilities of student participants. This comprehensive approach is crucial to maintaining ethical standards and protecting the participants throughout the research process. Privacy and Confidentiality – Privacy and confidentiality in research are about safeguarding participants’ personal information and ensuring their identity remains confidential unless they explicitly consent to disclosure. In the context of this study, I am responsible for implementing appropriate protocols to secure participants’ data and maintain confidentiality. This includes anonymizing data, securely storing information, and limiting access to authorized personnel only. These measures are crucial to protect the privacy of student participants and uphold the integrity of the research process. Justice – This concept relates to the equitable allocation of both the advantages and disadvantages resulting from research across various segments of society. In this study, I ensured that my research is inclusive, avoid-

ing the exploitation or exclusion of vulnerable groups. Additionally, I strive to make the benefits of the research accessible to all who could benefit from it. This approach promotes fairness and equity throughout the research process, ensuring that no group bears an undue burden or is left out of the potential gains from the findings.

Transparency – Transparency in research encompasses maintaining integrity at every phase of the study, from its conception and execution to the reporting of results. In this study, I offered clear and truthful information regarding my research methodologies and outcomes. Furthermore, I am receptive to examination and feedback. Transparency acts as a catalyst for trust, credibility, and accountability, not only within the research community but also among the general public. This commitment to openness ensures that the process and results of my research are accessible and understandable to all stakeholders involved.

Qualification of a Researcher – The qualification of a researcher relates to one's academic background, professional experience, and proficiency in a particular area of study, ensuring that one possesses the requisite abilities and knowledge to conduct the research competently. In this investigation, I held suitable qualifications that showcase my capability to conduct research, analyze data, and interpret the results. My expertise and training provide the foundation necessary to approach this study with a rigorous scientific method and critical analytical skills, ensuring the integrity and validity of the findings.

Adequacy of Facilities – This addresses the presence and suitability of the essential resources, tools, and infrastructure required to execute a study efficiently and securely. In this research, I guaranteed access to appropriate facilities for conducting the investigation. This access facilitates the creation of credible and consistent findings and mitigates potential risks to study participants. Having the right facilities ensures that the data collection and analysis pro-

cesses are conducted under conditions that uphold the highest standards of research integrity and safety.

Community Involvement – This encompasses the dynamic involvement and active engagement of community members, stakeholders, or the intended study population throughout the research journey, from initial planning to sharing research outcomes. In this study, I engaged the community to guarantee the study's relevance, acceptability, and potential impact. Additionally, this involvement fosters trust and cooperation between me and the community. Engaging with the community not only helps to tailor the research to be more effective and meaningful but also enhances the overall quality and applicability of the results.

Plagiarism and Fabrication – Researchers should strictly follow principles of academic honesty and integrity. This entails giving proper credit to the work of others, presenting original contributions, and verifying the accuracy and authenticity of data. In this study, I employed tools like plagiarism detectors and maintain thorough documentation of my research procedures to ensure that my work is devoid of plagiarism and that all data and discoveries are authentic and reliable. By upholding these principles, I enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research community.

Role of the Researcher – As an unbiased research facilitator and promoter, I am responsible for ensuring that the research process is conducted fairly, objectively, and without personal bias, prejudice, or influence from outside sources. I created an environment that encourages the open and honest exploration of ideas and promotes fairness in data collection and analysis. This commitment to impartiality helps to uphold the integrity of the research process and ensures that the findings are reliable and representative of the true phenomena being studied. As an expert in qualitative methods, I am familiar with various qualitative research techniques, such as interviews. I possessed the skills

and knowledge necessary to design, conduct, and analyze qualitative studies, ensuring that the research question is satisfactorily addressed and that the results are legitimate and dependable. My expertise in these methods allows me to deeply explore complex social phenomena and capture the nuanced experiences of participants, contributing to the validity and reliability of the research findings. As a data collector and keeper, I gathered information from various sources such as interviews or observations, and I ensured accurate and secure storage of this information. I followed ethical guidelines, safeguard participants' privacy, and ensure that data is structured and available for later examination and understanding. This careful management of data helps maintain the integrity of the research process and supports the production of credible, reliable findings that can be reviewed and utilized by others in the academic community. As a data analyst, I analyzed the gathered data to discover trends, patterns, and valuable perspectives in accordance with the research query. I utilized meticulous qualitative data analysis methods like coding and thematic analysis to extract significant findings and enrich the knowledge base within my discipline. This approach allows me to deeply understand the data, providing insights that are not only relevant but also contribute significantly to the field, enhancing scholarly discussions and practical applications related to the study topic. Finally, as an organizer and presenter of data, I am tasked with synthesizing and communicating the research findings concisely and coherently. This entails skillfully conveying the study's objectives, approaches, outcomes, and ramifications through written documents, presentations, or alternative means of transmitting information. I ensured that the research results are easily accessible and comprehensible to the designated audience. This approach helps to maximize the impact of the findings, ensuring they are not only shared but also understood and utilized by others in

ways that can further knowledge and influence practice in the field.

1.12. Data Collection —In the gathering of data, this study employed a systematic procedure. Several steps were taken in adherence to the proper data collection procedure. This was done in order to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the data collection. The following is the step-by-step process of gathering the data needed. Securing endorsement from the Dean of Graduate School, the Schools Division Superintendent, and the School Principal – To initiate the data collection process, I secure endorsements from key stakeholders including the Dean of the Graduate School, the Schools Division Superintendent, the School Principal, and the parents of the participants. This process involves submitting formal letters outlining the research objectives and methodology, accompanied by any supporting documents. This crucial step is scheduled to take place within the last two weeks of August 2024, ensuring that all necessary permissions are in place before proceeding with the collection of data. This proactive approach not only facilitates compliance with ethical standards but also fosters a cooperative environment among all parties involved. Asking Permission from the Schools Division Superintendent – Upon receiving the endorsement, I request permission from the school's division superintendent. This requires submitting a formal letter detailing the research proposal and its significance to the educational community. Along with the letter, I attached Chapters 1 and 2 of my thesis and the research instrument, clearly explaining the study's objectives and the process of participant identification. Moreover, I waited for the response from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) before proceeding with the data collection. This step was undertaken on October 25, 2024, ensuring that all necessary approvals are in place to conduct the research ethically and effectively. Asking for Permission from the School Heads – Once per-

mission is granted, I sought approval from the school heads of the selected institutions. This step involves submitting formal request letters to each school head, outlining the research's purpose and the expected data collection timeframe. I asked for permission to conduct the study from December 03, 2024 to the last week of the same month. Obtaining Consent from the Participants and their Parents – With the school heads' approval, I asked consent from the research participants, who are students, through informed consent forms that are also provided to their parents or guardians. These forms clearly explain the research purpose, participant rights, and confidentiality measures. This dual-layered consent process ensures that both students and their parents or guardians are fully informed and agree to participate. Asking consent from both the participants and their parents or guardians was done on the second week of December 2024. Conducting the Interview – Upon securing consent from all participants, I scheduled and conducted the interviews using a structured or semi-structured interview guide to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection. The interviews took place in the first week of January 2025. Transcribing the Responses of the Interviewees – Following the interview sessions, I meticulously transcribed the interviewees' remarks, taking diligent account of non-verbal cues and contextually relevant details. This procedure used audio recordings and field notes to comprehensively capture the breadth of participants' reactions. The transcription of interviewee responses was scheduled for the last week of January 2025.

1.13. Data Analysis —After collecting the data, I embarked on data coding and thematic content analysis. This involves methodically structuring the transcribed data into categories, subcategories, and themes from the interview dialogues. By discerning patterns and connections within the data, I formulated conclusions and glean insights directly related to the re-

search objectives. This process allows me to interpret the data effectively, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives of the participants. In this study, I employed Creswell's Thematic Analysis approach, which is particularly suited for encompassing a range of perspectives and portrayals in participants' feedback. Adopting thematic analysis authenticates the portrayal of individual components and facilitates the categorization of identified patterns within the provided responses. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique used to recognize, scrutinize, and interpret patterns or themes present within qualitative data in textual, visual, or other formats. As a qualitative research approach, thematic analysis allows researchers to systematically arrange and dissect complex data sets. It involves searching for overarching themes that encapsulate the narratives embedded within the data. This process necessitates the identification of themes through meticulous examination and repeated review of transcribed data (Dawadi, 2020). This methodical approach helps ensure that the analysis is both comprehensive and reflective of the data collected, providing deep insights into the study's objectives. Therefore, I used Creswell's Thematic Analysis in my research, which necessitated extensive theming and transcript interpretation. According to Caulfield (2020), there are multiple essential phases in Creswell's Thematic Analysis, including familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and labeling themes, and writing up. I became fully immersed in the intricacies and subtleties of the content as I become acquainted with the data to begin this process. After that, I started categorizing the data using semantic richness to group different informational components. I created themes that encapsulate the main ideas of the data using these codes. After that, these themes are examined and improved upon to make sure they appropriately depict the dataset. Every theme

has a definition and name that elucidates the fundamental ideas. The last step entails combining the themes and insights into a cohesive article that clearly conveys the study's conclusions. This methodical approach guarantees a comprehensive examination and enhances the comprehension of the information.

1.14. Analytical Framework —The analytical framework in phenomenological research is a methodical and structured approach to data analysis, interpretation, and presentation. In this research study, I made use of Colaizzi's method to analyze data from the interviews and discussions with the participants regarding their lived experiences in extra-curricular activities. According to Morrow et al. (2021), Colaizzi's (1978) method features a distinctive seven-step process that offers a rigorous analysis, closely adhering to the data at each stage. This method culminates in a concise yet comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study, which is validated by the participants who experienced it. The effectiveness of this approach relies on rich first-person accounts of experiences, which can be collected through various means. Although face-to-face interviews are common, data can also be gathered from written narratives, blogs, research diaries, online interviews, and other forms. This method enables researchers to uncover emergent themes and explore the intricate relationships between them (Wirihana et al., 2018). *Data Familiarization* – By reading and rereading the transcripts several times, I aim to fully understand the meanings conveyed by the participants and gain a global sense of the phenomenon being studied. This thorough review process is crucial for fully grasping the nuances of participants' statements, enabling a deeper analysis of their experiences.

Identifying Significant Statements – I carefully identified every statement in the narratives that is directly related to the phenomenon I am studying. In order to identify and highlight

phrases and descriptions that shed light on the particular experiences under study, a thorough examination of the gathered data such as written narratives or transcripts of interviews must be conducted. This step is essential to ensuring that my analysis stays on topic and provides a strong basis for future thematic development.

Formulating Meanings – After carefully examining the important statements, I determined meanings that are pertinent to the phenomenon. Although Colaizzi admits that complete bracketing is never truly possible, I have to reflexively "bracket" my own presuppositions to stick closely to the phenomenon as experienced. To guarantee that the analysis stays rooted in the participants' real experiences, this process entails putting aside my own interpretations as much as is practical. *Clustering Themes* – I ensured a rigorous analysis that remains true to the participants' experiences by grouping the identified meanings into themes that are shared by all accounts. Throughout this process, presuppositions must be bracketed, especially to avoid any possible influence from existing theories. By letting the themes naturally arise from the data rather than being influenced by outside forces, this preserves the integrity of the analysis. *Developing an Exhaustive Description* – incorporated every theme generated in the previous step into a comprehensive and all-encompassing description of the phenomenon that I write. By identifying common themes from the participant accounts, this thorough description seeks to convey the essence and complexity of the phenomenon. By taking this step, it is ensured that the final representation presents a comprehensive perspective of the experiences that each participant has had.

Producing the Fundamental Structure – I broke down the lengthy explanation into a succinct, concise statement that highlights the key elements that I believed are crucial to understanding the phenomenon's structure. The essence of the participants' experiences is ef-

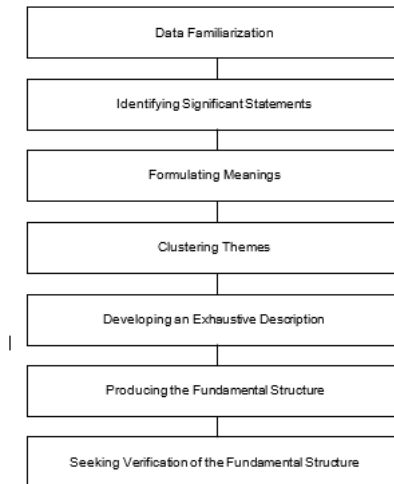


Fig. 2. Analytical Framework of the Study

fectively and concisely communicated through this succinct synthesis, which concentrates on the essential components that are necessary for comprehending the phenomenon. Seeking Verification of the Fundamental Structure – I asked participants if the fundamental structure statement accurately reflects their experience, either by returning it to all participants or, in larger studies, to a subsample. I might go back and

change the earlier stages of the analysis in light of their comments. Through this iterative process, the validity and credibility of the findings are increased and the analysis is kept firmly based on the perspectives of the participants. The following figure illustrates this rigorous process, highlighting each step to comprehensively explain the actions taken to comprehensively analyze the data.

1.15. Trustworthiness of the Study —The trustworthiness of a study is about how reliable, sensible, and authentic the research results are, ensuring that the conclusions are trustworthy and accurate. In qualitative research, factors like credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability are often used to evaluate how reliable the study is. These considerations are further described below, according to Guba (1981). Credibility – Building credibility entails proving that the results are accurate. Credibility is important for this study because it evaluates if the results accurately represent the realities and experiences of grade 8 students who participate in extra-curricular activities. I conversed with the participants for a long time in order to gain a thorough understanding of their experiences and to increase my credibility. I also used trian-

gulation, gathering information from a variety of sources, including observations, interviews, maybe questionnaires. In order to confirm interpretations, I gave a preliminary version of the findings as part of checking. Transferability – The degree to which the results of this study can be used in different situations or with different populations is referred to as transferability. While the particular insights are closely linked to grade 8 students' experiences in a specific educational environment, I gave thorough explanations of the research context and methodology. The study's transferability is increased because this thorough, rich narrative enables others, including educators, school administrators, and researchers, to assess how well the results apply to comparable contexts. Confirmability – Confirmability deals with study's objectivity by

making sure that respondents, not my personal prejudices or biases, shaped the findings. I kept thorough audit trail that detailed every step of research process, from data collection to data analysis decisions, to ensure confirmability. This methodological transparency makes it possible for other researchers to evaluate the research's objectivity by following the study's development and going over the choices made. Dependability – Dependability in this study was attained through meticulous documentation of the entire research procedure, including the methods used for data collection and analysis. By

ensuring that other researchers can duplicate the study and possibly produce consistent results, such documentation validates the dependability of the research. By following these standards, the research not only offers valid and trustworthy conclusions regarding the effects of extra-curricular activities on grade 8 students, but it also offers a framework that researchers and other educators can use to compare similar learning environments. This methodology enhances the study's standing in the academic community and provides insightful information for upcoming studies and instructional design.

2. Results and Discussions

This chapter unveils the outcomes derived through the scrutiny of data acquired from interviews, encompassing the identification of themes and an extensive discourse that addresses the study's objectives. The emerging themes derived from the collected data are thoroughly examined in this chapter. The findings provide a detailed account and background information about the participants, accompanied by pseudonyms assigned to safeguard their identities. The emerging themes for the experiences of grade 8 students pertaining to extra-curricular activities are: academic challenges, time constraints and overload, and emotional wellness. Meanwhile, the emerging themes for the coping mechanisms are: goal-setting, soliciting guidance, and personal drive and resilience. The following are the themes for the values: empowerment and resilience, growth and development opportunities, and supportive environment and resources.

2.1. Experiences of Grade 8 Students Participating In Extra-Curricular Activities—In the 21st century, learning extends far beyond the traditional confines of the classroom walls. Students can experience growth and improvement in a wide range of contexts and situations, from formal education to extracurricular activities and real-world experiences. Many high school students enthusiastically participate in clubs, sports, and other activities that align with their passions and interests. These pursuits not only foster camaraderie and teamwork but also provide opportunities for students to develop valuable skills, explore their creativity, and build confidence. However, this involvement also carries potential risks. Some students have shared in the interview that balancing these activities

with academic responsibilities posed significant challenges, often requiring them to juggle competing demands on their time and energy. This is evident in the following extracted statements.

2.1.1. Conflicting Demands—Juggling academics and extracurricular activities are a formidable challenge that many high schools' students face. Striking a delicate balance between these two vital aspects of student life can be daunting, requiring careful time management, prioritization, and sacrifice. Academic responsibilities, such as homework, projects, and exams, demand a significant amount of time and energy, while extracurricular activities offer opportunities for growth, socialization, and skill-building. In the interviews, the participants candidly shared their experiences of

navigating this complex balancing act, revealing that their involvement in extracurricular activities sometimes led to academic challenges, such as managing workload and meeting deadlines. In the interview, participants have shared how they have struggled in striking a balance between academic and extra-curricular activities. In the same page, Buckley and Lee (2020) discussed the time-consuming nature of ECAs, the respondents were concerned about the time commitment required by these activities, noting that it often led to neglected academic duties. Corroborating the above assertion, King et al. (2020) also identified balancing academic responsibilities as a great obstacle for students. Also, Agarahim Rahimova (2022) also pointed out that balancing academic workloads, along with managing time effectively, and ensuring activities are aligned with educational goals to foster students' holistic development, as additional challenges experienced by the students Devi et al. (2021) further supports this theme by discussing several challenges related to extra-curricular involvement, including the management of multiple activities alongside regular academic lessons, coordinating conflicting schedules, and ensuring optimal organization and delegation to enable effective implementation and evaluation of these activities. In the same vein, Rahayu and Dong (2023) discussed juggling these activities with academic obligations as a hindrance for students along with navigating infrastructure and resource limitations, effectively managing time, overcoming language barriers, speaking up for diversity and inclusion, and offering suggestions for improvement. Students prioritize their participation in extra-curricular activities, adjust to resource limitations, effectively manage their time, look for language support, promote inclusivity, and offer feedback to improve the extra-curricular experience as a whole in order to overcome these obstacles. Students aim to optimize their involvement and reap the bene-

fits of extra-curricular activities by employing these coping strategies, even in the face of potential challenges. The analysis of narratives from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions reveals the challenges students face in balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities. The students' personal accounts highlight the difficulties of managing competing demands on their time and energy. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which underscores the complexities of navigating multiple commitments and responsibilities during adolescence. The convergence of our participants' experiences and the supporting literature emphasizes the need for effective strategies and support systems to help students achieve a healthy balance between academics and extracurricular pursuits.

2.1.2. *Time-constraints and Overload—*

Students often face intense time pressure as they juggle academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities. The demands of meeting assignment deadlines, completing homework, and working on projects can be overwhelming, leading to packed schedules and long study sessions. As shared in the interviews, many students experience hectic daily routines, frequently staying up late to keep pace with their academic obligations. The following narratives are the extracted statements from the interview. They have shared that: The theme align with Khasaneh's (2021) research, which highlights the time management challenges students face when balancing extracurricular activities with academic responsibilities. According to Khasaneh, students who successfully navigate this balance demonstrate strong time management and prioritization skills, thereby minimizing adverse effects on their academic performance. By striking this balance, students can reap the benefits of extracurricular activities, including developing essential skills like teamwork, problem-solving, and communication, which are vital for academic success and future employability. This

underscores the importance of cultivating effective time management strategies to maximize the benefits of extracurricular engagement. In the same thread of thought, Buckley and Lee (2018) explores the impact of extra-curricular activities on students' experiences, emphasizing several key benefits that enhance their higher education journey. They highlighted several challenges students face due to their involvement in extra-curricular activities, primarily related to time management and the balance between these activities and academic responsibilities. Students often find it difficult to manage their commitments to both, which can negatively affect their academic performance if not properly handled. Moreover, balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities poses a significant challenge for students, primarily due to the demands on their time management skills. Findings of Afalla (2020) shown that effective time management enables students to meet assignment deadlines, collaborate on group projects, and participate in extracurricular activities while maintaining good grades. However, students often struggle to balance these competing demands, leading to potential negative impacts on their academic performance.

2.1.3. Emotional Wellness—One key reason students join extra-curricular activities is to find enjoyment and relief from academic stress. Participating in extracurricular activities provides an outlet for relaxation and self-discovery, allowing students to explore their interests and passions. Beyond the potential

challenges, joining clubs and extracurricular activities has a positive side: it fosters emotional wellness, creativity, and enjoyment. By engaging in activities they love, students can develop new skills, build confidence, and enhance their overall well-being. The narratives adhere to the findings of Journal of Youth and Adolescence (2019). They posited that students who participate in extracurricular activities often experience significant emotional wellness. By joining clubs, sports teams, or volunteer groups, students can discover their passions and develop new skills, leading to increased confidence and self-esteem. They found a positive association between involvement in non-academic activities and higher GPA scores, highlighting the benefits of extracurricular activities on academic performance. Similarly, through extracurricular activities, students can also develop essential life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and communication. These skills are valuable not only in academics but also in future careers. According to Snipes and Mwalimu (2020), participating in extracurricular activities can enhance cognitive abilities, stimulate critical thinking, and foster creativity. To further support the theme, the study of Khasanah (2021) emphasized the importance of balancing extracurricular activities with academic responsibilities to achieve overall well-being and emotional wellness. Extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities for self-expression, self-discovery, and socialization.

2.2. Coping Strategies of Grade 8 Students Regarding the Challenges in Extra-Curricular Activities—Despite the challenges, students demonstrated resilience and determination. Their passion for extracurricular activities drove them to find ways to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. By sharing their experiences, they revealed effective strategies for

managing time, prioritizing tasks, and balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular pursuits. These strategies enabled them to navigate difficulties and ultimately thrive in their chosen activities.

2.2.1. Goal-setting—Students shared that when faced with a heavy academic workload, they rely on effective strategies to stay on track.

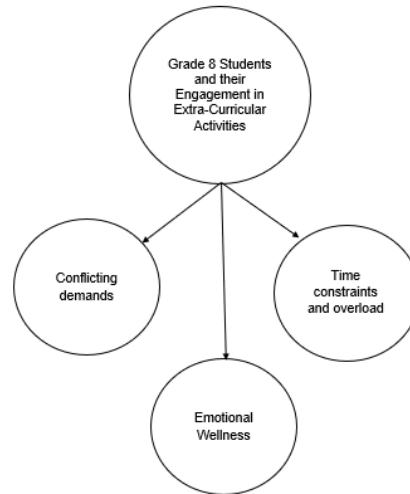


Fig. 3. Experiences of Grade 8 Students Participating in Extra-Curricular Activities

These include prioritizing tasks, managing time efficiently, and planning ahead to ensure timely completion of projects and homework. By employing these tactics, students can balance their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities and achieve their goals. The statements of the students align with the idea of Ecclestone (2020). Goal-setting is crucial for students to balance their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities. Students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to have better time management skills, improved academic performance, and increased social skills. By prioritizing tasks, setting realistic goals, and creating schedules, students can manage their time effectively and balance their academic and extracurricular commitments. In the same thread of thought, goal-setting strategies such as goal-setting, planning, and self-monitoring can help students achieve their academic goals while participating in extracurricular activities (Zimmerman, 2019). Students who set specific, measurable, and attainable goals are more likely to stay focused and motivated, leading to better academic performance. By planning and prioritizing tasks, students can allocate sufficient time for academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, it is also consistent with the findings of Hansen (2022).

Extracurricular activities can also provide students with opportunities to develop important life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and communication. By participating in extracurricular activities, students can develop these skills, which can enhance their academic performance and future career prospects. Effective goal-setting enables students to balance their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities, leading to a more well-rounded educational experience. Research has also shown that students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to have higher levels of motivation and engagement (Fredricks, 2020). By incorporating extracurricular activities into their academic schedule, students can stay motivated and engaged in their academic work. Effective goal-setting can help students achieve a balance between academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities, leading to improved academic performance and overall well-being.

2.2.2. Seeking Support—A strong support system can be a lifeline during challenging times, and for these students, having access to parents and friends proved invaluable. When faced with academic pressures and extracurricular demands, students found solace in seeking guidance from their parents, who offered valuable advice and encouragement. Meanwhile,

friendships provided an emotional outlet, allowing students to socialize, share experiences, and find relief from stress. By leaning on these support networks, students were better equipped to navigate adversity, stay motivated, and maintain a sense of balance in their lives. Adhering to the extracted narratives is the study of Kahu (2020). In the study, seeking support is a vital strategy for students to manage extracurricular activities effectively. It also has shown that students who seek support from peers, teachers, or mentors tend to have better time management skills, improved academic performance, and increased well-being. By seeking guidance and resources, students can navigate challenges and achieve their goals. Larson (2022) further supports the emerging theme. In her paper, students who participate in extracurricular activities often face unique challenges, such as balancing academic responsibilities with activity commitments. Seeking support from peers or mentors can provide valuable guidance and help students develop effective time management strategies. Through building a support network, students can share experiences, receive advice, and gain new perspectives. Seeking support can also help students develop important life skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. By working with others and seeking guidance, students can build confidence, develop resilience, and enhance their overall well-being (Holt, 2020). Effective support systems can also provide emotional support, helping students manage stress and pressure. Similarly, Wigfield (2022) found out that students who seek support tend to have higher levels of motivation and engagement. Through seeking guidance and resources, students can stay motivated, focused, and committed to their goals. Thus, seeking support is an essential strategy for students to manage extracurricular activities effectively and achieve academic success.

2.2.3. *Personal drive and resilience*—To overcome the challenges associated with extracurricular activities, students employed key strategies that enabled them to thrive. By focusing on their goals, working diligently, and managing stress effectively, they were able to navigate the demands of academics and extracurricular pursuits. Although balancing multiple responsibilities can be daunting, especially in high school, these students demonstrated resilience and determination. He posited that has shown that students with high levels of motivation and resilience tend to perform better academically and in their extracurricular pursuits. By cultivating a growth mindset and persevering through challenges, students can overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. In the same vein, Yeager (2022) further provides rapport to the emerging theme. In his study, students who participate in extracurricular activities often face setbacks, failures, and criticism. However, those with strong personal drive and resilience can bounce back from adversity and stay motivated. Through developing coping strategies and learning from failures, students can build their resilience and achieve success in their extracurricular activities. Additionally, personal drive is also linked to increased motivation and engagement in extracurricular activities. Students who are passionate about their activities and have a strong sense of purpose tend to be more motivated and committed (Hidi, 2020). By finding meaning and enjoyment in their extracurricular pursuits, students can cultivate a strong personal drive that helps them overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Corroborating the above assertion, Tugade (2020) found that students who develop resilience and personal drive tend to have better overall well-being and life satisfaction. By learning to manage stress, overcome obstacles, and stay motivated, students can build a strong foundation for success in all areas of their lives. By cultivating personal drive and resilience, students can excel in their extracur-

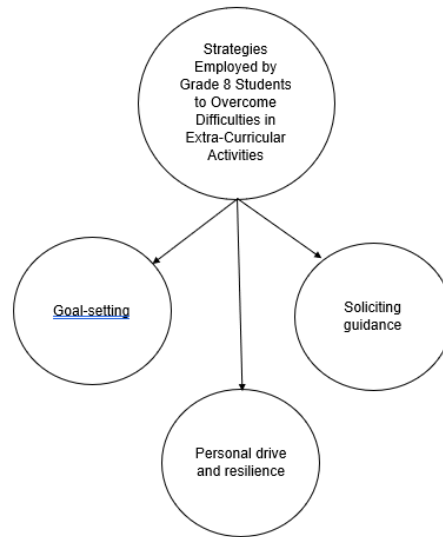


Fig. 4. Coping Strategies of Grade 8 Students Regarding the Challenges in Extra-Curricular Activities
ricular activities and achieve their full potential.

2.3. Insights and Lessons Learned From the Findings of the Study—The challenges faced by students participating in extracurricular activities can significantly impact their academic performance, as evident from their candid accounts of struggles. However, their experiences also offer valuable insights into overcoming these obstacles. By examining their stories, we distilled important lessons, values, and recommendations that highlight the resilience and resourcefulness of students navigating these challenges firsthand.

2.3.1. Empowerment and Resilience—During the interviews, students shared poignant accounts of how they strive to embody resilience and empowerment in the face of challenges. Their narratives revealed a profound capacity to persevere, as they emphasized the importance of maintaining hope, dedication, and confidence. The extracted statements from the participants' narratives provides a glimpse on their shared insights. According to them: The emerging theme adheres with the idea of Deci (2020). Participating in extracurricular activities can be

a powerful way for students to develop empowerment. When students feel empowered, they're more likely to take ownership of their experiences, make informed decisions, and develop a sense of agency. This sense of empowerment can have a profound impact on their motivation, confidence, and overall well-being. Furthermore, Tugade (2020) postulated that building resilience is also crucial for students who participate in extracurricular activities. By developing resilience, students can better navigate challenges, bounce back from setbacks, and stay focused on their goals. This enables them to manage stress, overcome obstacles, and achieve success in their extracurricular pursuits. In the same thread of thought, the connection between empowerment and resilience is significant. When students feel empowered, they're more likely to develop the resilience they need to overcome challenges (Bandura, 2022). By fostering empowerment and resilience, educators can help students develop the skills and confidence they need to excel in extracurricular activities and beyond. Hence, the benefits of

empowerment and resilience extend far beyond extracurricular activities. Students who develop these qualities tend to have better academic outcomes, increased well-being, and greater life satisfaction. By promoting empowerment and resilience, educators can have a lasting impact on students' lives and help them achieve their full potential (Yeager, 2022).

2.3.2. Growth and Development Opportunities—Beyond fostering resilience and empowerment, participation in extracurricular activities offered students a platform for holistic growth and development. These experiences played a pivotal role in shaping their skills, character, and worldview, ultimately equipping them with essential life skills that extend far beyond the academic realm. By engaging in extracurricular activities, students were able to develop valuable attributes such as teamwork, leadership, time management, and problem-solving, which will serve them well in their future endeavors and enable them to thrive in various aspects of life. Hansen (2020) adheres to the emerging theme. According to him, engaging in extracurricular activities can be a powerful catalyst for student growth and development. By participating in these activities, students can acquire essential life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and communication, that benefit them in multiple aspects of life. These skills can enhance their academic, professional, and personal lives, setting them up for long-term success. Furthermore, Larson (2022) stated that extracurricular activities also provide a platform for students to explore their interests, develop their passions, and discover their strengths. Through these experiences, students can gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their capabilities, leading to increased confidence, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence. This self-discovery can have a profound impact on their personal and academic growth. In addition to fostering emotional wellness, extracurricular activities can also have a positive impact on students' aca-

demic and career trajectories, Fredrickcs (2020) has shown that students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to achieve better academic outcomes and have higher career aspirations. This is likely due to the development of valuable skills, such as time management, goal-setting, and problem-solving.

2.3.3. Supportive Environment and Resources—A supportive environment and accessible resources can significantly alleviate the burden on students participating in extracurricular activities. This can be achieved by offering seminars, wellness programs, and mentoring sessions, as well as providing guidance on balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular pursuits, ultimately empowering students to thrive in all aspects of their lives. The findings of Wigfield (2020) echoes the same narrative as shared by the participants. A supportive environment is crucial for students to thrive in extracurricular activities. When students feel supported by their teachers, peers, and family members, they're more likely to stay motivated, engaged, and committed to their activities. This support can take many forms, from emotional encouragement to practical assistance, and is essential for helping students navigate the demands of extracurricular activities. Access to resources is also vital for students' success in extracurricular activities. This includes not only physical resources like facilities and equipment but also mentorship, guidance, and training (Holt, 2020). When students have access to these resources, they're better equipped to develop their skills, build their confidence, and achieve their goals. Moreover, a supportive environment can also play a critical role in mitigating the stresses and challenges associated with extracurricular activities. Students who have access to support networks, such as peers, coaches, and mentors, tend to experience lower levels of stress and burnout (Smith, 2022). By providing a supportive environment, educators can help students develop the resilience and coping strategies they

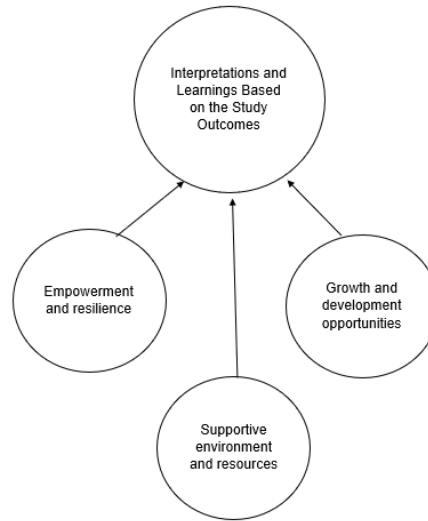


Fig. 5. Insights and Lessons Learned from the Findings of the Study

need to manage the demands of extracurricular activities. By investing in a supportive environment and providing access to resources, educators can help students thrive in extracurricular activities and beyond. This investment can pay dividends in terms of students' academic achievement, emotional wellness, and long-term success. By prioritizing support and resources, educators can help students unlock their full potential and achieve their goals.

3. Implications and Future Directions

This chapter encapsulates the study's summary, drawing implications and outlining future directions based on the findings. To meet the research objectives, I employed a qualitative phenomenological method utilizing thematic analysis. Following Creswell's (2018) guidelines, I utilized open-ended questions in interviews to gain an authentic understanding of participants' experiences. Moreover, I encouraged participants to articulate their own definitions and meanings of the explored phenomenon which is the narratives of secondary school students regarding their use of metacognitive strategies in the writing process.

3.1. Findings—This study explores the experiences and strategies of students participating in extracurricular activities, focusing on the challenges they encountered and the strategies they used to overcome them. It also examines the insights gained, highlighting valuable lessons and recommendations. The research revealed three key themes in students' experiences, three themes in their strategies, and three recurring themes in the insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The first research question explored the experiences of grade 8 students in extracurricular activities. Three themes emerged from their narratives, with the first theme being the conflicting demands of academics and extracurricular activities. Students struggled to balance academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities, often facing difficulties in managing their time. As shared during the interviews, some students resorted to pulling all-nighters to meet deadlines for requirements, projects,

and homework, highlighting the complexities of juggling these dual demands. The second theme that emerged was time constraints and overload, closely linked to the first theme of academic challenges. Students struggled with balancing academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities, leading to time pressure and feelings of overwhelm. They shared that managing their time effectively was a significant challenge, citing a sense of having too many tasks and deadlines with limited time to fulfill them. The third theme diverged from the first two, highlighting a contrasting perspective. Despite acknowledging the challenges of academic balancing and time management, students emphasized that their participation in extracurricular activities was driven by emotional wellness. This theme reveals the underlying motivation that encourages students to pursue their passions, even in the face of difficulties. The second research question explored the strategies students used to overcome challenges. The first recurring themes was goal-setting. Students who faced academic challenges developed ways to manage and overcome them. They shared approaches such as prioritizing tasks, keeping up with lessons, and maximizing their time to stay on top of their academic responsibilities. The second theme that emerged was soliciting guidance. Students revealed that when confronted with difficulties, they often sought guidance and advice from their parents, valuing their wisdom and experience. Additionally, they turned to friends for emotional support and relief, sharing their struggles and frustrations. This support network played a vital role in boosting their motivation and dedication, enabling them to stay focused on their goals and overcome obstacles. By having a support system in place, students felt more confident and empowered to pursue their passions and interests. The third theme is personal drive and resilience. A key strategy employed by students to navigate the challenges of extracurricular activities was per-

sonal drive and resilience. By tapping into their inner motivation and determination, students were able to push through obstacles and stay committed to their goals. This personal drive enabled them to develop a growth mindset, bounce back from setbacks, and maintain their enthusiasm and passion for their activities, ultimately helping them to achieve success and fulfillment. Moreover, the third research question focused more on the insights gathered from the participants that displays valuable lessons and recommendation about the phenomenon. In the interview, participation in extracurricular activities empowered students with valuable life skills, notably resilience. Through overcoming challenges and navigating setbacks, students developed a sense of self-efficacy and confidence, realizing their capacity to adapt and thrive. The second theme is growth and development opportunities, a critical aspect supported by several educational theories. One foundational framework is Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, specifically the stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion, which occurs during adolescence. At this stage, young individuals actively explore their identity through social roles and peer relationships. Participation in extracurricular activities provides adolescents with a safe and constructive environment for experimentation, allowing them to build self-esteem, form a stable sense of self, and develop crucial leadership and social skills. These experiences contribute significantly to resolving the psychosocial challenges of this developmental stage and foster personal growth. Complementing this, is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978 as cited in the study of Chen 2025), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development. Extracurricular activities naturally create collaborative environments where students engage with peers, mentors, and community members. These interactions promote the development of communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abil-

ities skills essential to both academic success and life beyond the classroom. Moreover, extracurricular involvement offers students valuable opportunities for holistic growth, nurturing interests and passions while cultivating life skills such as time management, leadership, and accountability. This aligns with the K to 12 Curriculum Guide for Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP), which advocates for a values-based and learner-centered education that promotes not only moral development but also interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, and civic responsibility. Additionally, Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983 as cited in the study of Julita 2024), proposes that intelligence is not limited to traditional academic domains but includes musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. These diverse intelligences are often nurtured through extracurricular experiences such as sports, arts, music, and youth organizations opportunities that the conventional classroom may not fully provide. Furthermore, the 21st Century Skills Framework further supports the role of extracurricular activities in preparing students for future success as evidenced by Forneris et al. (2021). It emphasizes the development of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity all of which are cultivated through real-life, interest-driven experiences beyond the formal curriculum. These competencies are essential for producing globally competitive, socially responsible, and employment-ready learners. The third and final theme identified in response to the research question centers on the importance of a supportive environment and the availability of resources. This theme plays a critical role in fostering learner competence and helping them achieve their full potential. It is supported by several well-established educational and developmental theories. Foremost among them is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979 as cited in the study of Ahmad 2016),

which posits that human development is shaped by multiple layers of environmental systems. The microsystem which includes the school, family, and peer groups and the mesosystem, which highlights the interactions between these systems, are particularly influential. A positive school climate, active involvement of teachers, access to extracurricular programs, and the availability of learning resources are all components of these systems that significantly shape a student's developmental trajectory. In addition, the Social Support Theory reinforces the role of interpersonal and institutional support systems in enhancing psychological well-being and performance. This theory highlights the value of emotional, informational, and instrumental support from peers, teachers, and school structures. Examples of such support include school clubs, guidance services, mentorship from teachers, and strong peer networks all of which help build student resilience, motivation, and engagement in learning activities. Moreover, Constructivist Learning Theory, as proposed by Bruner and Piaget (Chand 2023), asserts that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences and interactions with their environment. A supportive educational setting that is rich with tools, opportunities, and guidance enhances the learner's ability to build understanding, particularly in non-traditional settings like extracurricular programs. These environments provide authentic contexts where students learn by doing, reflecting, and collaborating with others. The findings of the study affirmed that students clearly recognized the importance of a supportive environment and access to appropriate resources in enriching their extracurricular experiences. The presence of encouraging peers, mentors, and family members, along with adequate facilities and materials, was seen as essential to their success. This ecosystem of support not only enabled students to overcome personal and academic challenges but also empowered them to grow and excel in various areas. Thus, the

results emphasize the need for schools and communities to invest in supportive infrastructures and foster environments where extracurricular

activities can thrive and significantly contribute to students' holistic development.

3.2. Implications—Extracurricular activities are a vital component of a student's educational journey, offering a platform for growth, development, and self-discovery beyond the confines of the classroom. Through participation in these activities, students can explore their passions, develop new skills, and build meaningful relationships with peers and mentors. The experiences and insights gained from extracurricular activities can have a profound impact on a student's personal and academic life, shaping their values, perspectives, and future endeavors. The themes that emerged from my exploration of extracurricular activities highlight the complexities and nuances of these experiences. The challenges of balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities, the importance of time management and seeking support, and the role of personal drive and resilience in overcoming obstacles all underscore the need for students to develop essential life skills. Moreover, the insights gained from these experiences, including empowerment and resilience, growth and development opportunities, and the significance of a supportive environment and resources, demonstrate the transformative potential of extracurricular activities. In essence, extracurricular activities play a crucial role in providing students with a well-rounded education, allowing them to develop valuable skills, confidence, and a sense of purpose that extends beyond academics. By embracing these activities, students can reap long-term benefits, and it is essential for educational institu-

tions to prioritize and support these programs to unlock students' full potential. Going back to the foundation of this study, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, posits that individual development is shaped by interactions within various environmental systems. In the context of extracurricular activities, the themes that emerged - such as seeking support, personal drive and resilience, and the importance of a supportive environment - can be seen as reflective of the microsystem (immediate environments like family and peers), mesosystem (interplay between different microsystems), and macrosystem (broader societal influences). This implies the interplay between individual students and their environments, underscoring the need for a holistic approach to supporting students' participation in extracurricular activities, taking into account the complex interactions between personal, social, and environmental factors. In the same light, the themes found in this study on students' extracurricular activities can be understood through the lens of Holland and Andre's Developmental Theory, which suggests that out-of-class experiences contribute significantly to students' personal and academic growth. The themes highlight the role of extracurricular activities in fostering students' development and self-discovery. This theoretical perspective underscores the value of extracurricular activities in providing students with opportunities to explore their interests, build skills, and develop their identities, ultimately enhancing their overall experience

3.3. Future Directions—This study offers an in-depth exploration of the experiences and strategies for extracurricular activities employed

by secondary school students. By exploring the experiences and strategies utilized by secondary school students, valuable data was collected to

inform recommendations, suggestions, and future directions for the key stakeholders in education such as policymakers, administrators, teachers, and future researchers. The findings of this study serve as a foundation for evidence-based decision-making and provide practical guidance by informing instructional practices, curriculum development, and professional development initiatives, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of students' writing skills. Students – Students can benefit from actively seeking out extracurricular activities that align with their interests and passions, as these experiences can foster emotional wellness, skill development, and resilience. Also, embracing challenges and setbacks as opportunities for growth, students can cultivate a growth mindset and maximize the benefits of their extracurricular experiences, ultimately enhancing their educational journey and future prospects.

Teachers – Teachers can play a vital role in supporting students' extracurricular activities by offering guidance, encouragement, and flexibility in managing academic responsibilities. They can help students develop essential time management skills, provide mentorship, and recognize the value of extracurricular experiences in students' personal and academic growth.

School Administrators – School administrators can foster a supportive environment that encourages student participation in extracurricular activities by providing adequate resources, facilities, and mentorship opportunities. They can promote a culture that values extracurricular engagement, offer guidance on time management and balancing academic responsibilities, and facilitate access to support networks, including peer and adult mentors. By doing so, administrators can help students develop essential life skills, build confidence, and enhance their overall educational experience, ultimately

contributing to a positive and inclusive school culture.

Department of Education – Department of Education can provide training for teachers and advisers to better guide students in managing time, stress, and responsibilities related to extracurricular involvement. Also, they can allocate resources for schools to offer a wider range of extracurricular opportunities that are inclusive, interest-based, and developmentally appropriate. Policy Makers – Policymakers can show support on the development of infrastructure and resources to facilitate student participation in extracurricular activities, recognizing their critical role in fostering emotional wellness, academic success, and skill development. Specifically, allocating sufficient funding, providing accessible facilities, and promoting a culture that values extracurricular engagement can help create an environment where students can thrive. Additionally, initiatives that promote mentorship, guidance, and peer support networks can further enhance students' experiences, ultimately contributing to a more holistic and effective educational ecosystem. Future Researchers – Future researchers can build upon this study by exploring the long-term impacts of extracurricular activities on students' academic and personal development. Additionally, investigating the experiences of diverse student populations, such as those from varying socioeconomic backgrounds or different educational settings, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with extracurricular participation. Examining the role of specific extracurricular activities, such as sports versus arts, in shaping student outcomes could also yield valuable insights, ultimately contributing to a richer understanding of how these experiences can be optimized to support student success.

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