

## **Academic self-esteem and its relationship to practicing extracurricular activities among university students**

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### **Suggested Citation:**

Abdel Aal, H. M. M. (2022). Academic self-esteem and its relationship to practicing extracurricular activities among university students. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. 17(11), 4288-4298  
<https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i11.8306>

Received from July 25, 2022; revised from October 19, 2022; accepted from November 28, 2022.

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### **Abstract**

This research aims at determining the level of academic self-esteem among female university students and identifying the differences between students practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in their academic self-esteem level. A group of two hundred female university students of different academic levels and disciplines (kindergarten, special education, computer sciences, home economics, Arabic language, and Islamic Studies) was selected after applying the form of practicing extracurricular activities. For data collection, the academic self-esteem scale was applied to them. Results revealed a low level of academic self-esteem among the research sample and a low level of practicing extracurricular activities. Besides, results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of both students practicing and not-practicing extracurricular activities in their academic self-esteem in general and in its three dimensions (awareness of academic capabilities, academic self-image, and expectations of academic success and failure). Research results were discussed in light of the previous related literature and further research suggestions were provided to researchers and stakeholders.

*Keywords:* academic self-esteem, extracurricular activities

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## 1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities are one of the components of any academic content presented to students at all levels because of their significant role in developing the individual's personality in all psychological, social, and academic aspects. They enhance the student's fieldwork skills and break the barrier between the academic and the practical dimensions. Extracurricular activities are defined as all activities that students do voluntarily outside the classroom, either individually or collectively in different fields to develop their personalities in these dimensions: skill, cultural, recreational, social, and sports (Hilali, 2015).

Literature called them (non-methodological) activities because it falls outside the scope of specific curricula and (extra-curricular) as it is conducted outside the classroom. The types of extracurricular activities include theatrical activities, seminars, gifted care activities, various events, artistic activities, student clubs, debates, sports activities, magazines, and electronic activities. Within the university setting, it reflects various activities that are not included in the courses implemented by the Deanships of Student Affairs and the units of student activity in the faculties, and what students practice voluntarily according to prior planning to achieve the university's mission and develop the student's personality in the light of specific goals in a certain time.

The extracurricular activities seek to achieve different objectives including satisfying students' moral, psychological and social needs, developing self-management, discovering different talents, abilities, and preparations of students, refining them, developing them, directing them in the right direction, and linking them to the needs of the labor market, expanding their knowledge of them and developing the students' collective spirit through involving them in group work, in which they contribute together at the same time, training students to respect others with different opinions, breaking the psychological barrier between it and society, and filling the students' free time with useful work (Ogbeiwi, 2018; Al-Qarni, 2018).

Extracurricular activities have a role no less important than the academic role practiced with the student body, this research also exposed the role of student group supervisors in increasing the structural and preventive value of extracurricular programs implemented by members of student groups, and identified the knowledge and skills that must be available in group supervisors. Students and extra-curricular activities ensure their practice and development and make good use of their positive effects on the development and maturity of students (Saleh, 2020).

Nguyen (2022) explained that young people at the university level still lack personal skills, and the only solution to this is extracurricular activities to strengthen and enhance their skills and build a generation of self-reliance. The time students spend in extracurricular activities has positive effects on students' academic achievement, school experience, motivation, and self-esteem, as students who participate can develop different types of skills depending on the type of activity they are participating in (Berkley, 2021).

The extracurricular activity must achieve the mission and goals of the university and be with the full desire of the students of any kind and not fall within the objectives of the academic courses or be under the full supervision of the faculty members specialized in student activity (Al Faradi, 2020; Berkley, 2021)). Extracurricular activities contribute to the student's better grades in educational and cognitive achievement and belonging to the university and possessing a higher concept (Filippello et al., 2021). They increase their awareness of academic, cognitive, and social abilities and self-awareness. Moreover, they increase their awareness of the value of self-evaluation, the realism of life self-goals, and optimism for the professional and social future (Zarrin et al., 2020).

Extracurricular activities build the university female students' personalities, as the university educational work is not limited to the teaching process only but extends to the development of all aspects of the personality, such as sports, cultural, skill, recreational programs, professional, and social life experiences. Extracurricular activities are optional programs that are not included in the academic courses,

and participation in them is optional by the student (Al Mutairi, 213). Practicing them helps students to acquire interpersonal, communication, management, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, self-reflection, respect, responsibility, and self-confidence skills (Jamal, 2012; Wilson, 2009).

The way in which the individual values himself is extremely important for his mental health, psychological balance, ability to achieve at work, and in defining his goals, ambitions, and attitudes towards his career and social future. A person's relationship with himself reflects a clear picture of his relationships with the outside world positively and negatively. Hence, positive human self-esteem as a comprehensive concept is a necessary issue for living psychologically, mentally, socially, and professionally.

Self-esteem is an assessment the individual sets for himself and works to maintain. This assessment includes the individual's positive and negative attitudes toward himself. It includes attitudes and beliefs that an individual invokes when facing the world around him, concerning expectations of failure, success, acceptance, and personal strength (Al Habib & Al Saqri, 2016).

The individual views every experience that is inconsistent with his idea and self-esteem as a threat to him and his self-unity (Al Safiri, 2021). Therefore, the individual denies the perception that contradicts his self-esteem or may distort it so that he can accept it (Kamel, 2015). Self-esteem exceeds just answering the question of Who am I? It is associated with the evaluative factor, as the person issues a judgment or appreciation on his merits and competencies, and self-esteem is linked to the emotional value that the individual associates with his performance. (Hussain & Abdul Yama, 2011).

Academic self-esteem is a specific psychological and social construct for some outputs such as academic, cognitive, and cultural achievements and the way of interacting with various issues and is reflected in most of the individual's behavior in work relationships (Harris et al., 2018). It includes the individual's academic convictions about himself and his cognitive abilities, whether this is related to the fact that the level of academic performance is high or low (Abdi, 2020).

Academic self-esteem directs the individual's social cognitive behavior towards specific goals to reach the best levels of self-satisfaction, academic performance, and the acquisition of information and skills (Sawalhah & Al Zoubi, 2020). It controls the awareness of the individual's cognitive self-formation emotionally, especially in the youth stage because they enjoy organizing themselves and their behavior, which contributes to the refinement of the individual's personality in the future. From this point, he always reconsiders the amount of experience and skills he needs, and through the social environment in which he lives, modification and change are made for the better (Gouda, 2018).

Various studies explore the positive effects of academic self-esteem on university students as it is positively correlated with high multiple intelligence degrees (Zaidan, 2020), and high expectation confirmation, which indicates that individuals seek to achieve self-prediction or behavioral affirmation (Al Anzi, 2019). High academic self-esteem is one of the mitigators of negative outcomes of academic pressures and the cognitive load that the university student is exposed to. It also strongly affects psychological adjustment to university life. The main key to feeling positive self-esteem is self-awareness and self-acceptance (Farhat, 2017). It is also a strong predictor of university students' academic engagement and high achievement levels (Filippello et al., 2021; Smith-Snook & Plummer, 2021).

Different factors affecting and determining academic self-esteem as the family environment, evaluations of others, self-ideas, perception of concepts, social relations, academic specialization, and the

economic level of the family. Moreover, there are three aspects in which the individual builds his academic self-esteem, which are cognitive sufficiency, social sufficiency, and physical sufficiency (Al Kafawin, 2019).

Students with high academic self-esteem love themselves, are self-aware, know what they want, and are mentally healthy. They constantly set new goals for themselves and think positively in every situation and are less prone to anxiety. They behave with skill and flexibility, enjoy challenges, and are less sensitive to criticism and they are responsible and have conviction in their ideas. In general, they are positive people in their community (Al Samadi & Al Saud, 2018; Al Safiri, 2021).

While as those with low academic self-esteem are characterized by a loss of self-confidence and abilities, pessimism, lack of emotional control and impulse control, the inability to face daily problems and maximize them, and an increased feeling of psychological unity within the group, and they have a constant feeling of failure and defeat and an expectation that future academic and professional success will not be achieved (Sherien & Ibrahim, 2014; Al Anzi, 2019; Saud, 2022). Low academic self-esteem may affect some other psychological variables for the student, as Zaidan's (2020) study showed that the level of academic self-esteem may affect the total score on the multiple intelligence scale.

Accordingly, the psychological status of female students is considered a basic indicator for understanding the conditions of that stage, and since the female university student segment is one of the most significant social segments in building society, it is necessary to identify their interests and help them correctly build their personalities (Hashem, 2021; Sukky & Al Sammak, 2012). Given the existing literature and previous studies reviewed above, it is seen that academic self-esteem has been linked in most of the research with the academic and cognitive aspects and there is no study- within the limits of what the researcher has seen- links between academic self-esteem and practicing extracurricular activities. Besides, it is seen that extracurricular activities are a very effective variable that may enhance university female students' self-esteem levels Through the researcher's work in the Wadi Al Dawasir region in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia that has a specific nature, she noticed the low level of female students' participation in extracurricular activities that accordingly affect many psychological aspects such as their self-esteem. Therefore, the current research significance stems from dealing with an important segment which is female university students to help them to confront reality, bear responsibilities, be more independent, and participate actively in building their society.

. Hence, the current research aims at determining the level of academic self-esteem among female university students and identifying the differences between students practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in their academic self-esteem level. *According to these aims, the problem of the study was represented in the following questions:*

1. What is the reality of practicing extracurricular activities among students of Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University in Wadi Al-Dawasir?
2. What is the level of self-esteem among students of Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University in Wadi Al-Dawasir?
3. What is the difference between students of the research sample practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in their self-esteem level?

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1. Research model*

The quantitative research approach through descriptive research design was utilized due to its appropriateness to the current research objectives and questions as it is based on answering the question of what is happening? to describe the problem as it occurs in its actual reality, and does not stop at this

question, but also seeks to answer the question of how and why it happens? The descriptive research design deals with describing, analyzing, and interpreting the phenomena.

## 2.2. Study group

The pilot research sample consisted of 80 female students from prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in Wasi Al-Dawasir to verify the validity and reliability of the research tools. The basic research sample comprised 200 female university students from the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in Wadi Al-Dawasir specializations of (kindergarten, home economics, special education, computers, Arabic language, and Islamic studies) in different academic levels.

## 2.3. Data collection tools

### 2.3.1. Extracurricular Activities Form

The extracurricular activities practicing form was developed by the researcher to identify the students who practice or do not practice extracurricular activities. It consisted of two parts. The first part concentrated on the student's initial data and the second part contained four questions about the extent to which she practices extracurricular activities at the college or university, how keen she is to participate, and the type of activities she has participated in. It was applied to the students of the basic research sample and according to this form, students were divided into those who practice and do not practice extracurricular activities.

### 2.3.2. Academic Self-Esteem Scale

The academic self-esteem scale was prepared by the researcher. The scale in its initial form consisted of 22 items into three main dimensions: awareness of academic abilities, academic self-image, and expectations of academic success and failure for university students. The instructions ask subjects to rate on a 3-point Likert-type scale (ranging from always to never) and vice versa in the case of negative statements. A high degree indicated a high level of a student's self-esteem.

The scale was presented in its initial form to seven mental health and psychology professors as arbitrators to determine the suitability of the statements to measure the self-esteem of university students. They agreed on the questionnaire statements while paraphrasing some of them.

The questionnaire was applied to the pilot study sample consisting of (80) female students in the Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University in Wasi Al-Dawaser. The construct validity was verified by calculating the correlation of the degree of each item with the dimension it belongs to. The correlation coefficients ranged between 0.412 and 0.765, which were statistically significant at (0.01).

The scale factorial validity was verified after ensuring the suitability of the sample and the scale nature for this statistical method, where Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test were calculated as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1. Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test Results

Dimension	Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	Sig.	Bartlett's Test	Sig.
Awareness of academic abilities	0.712	0.001	600.70	0.001
Academic self-image	0.626	0.001	302.446	0.001
Expectations of academic success and failure	0.670	0.001	138.781	0.001

The factorial analysis of the scale statements (22) was conducted using the Hotelling Principal Components method. The researchers followed the "Guttman" criterion to determine the number of

factors, where the factor is essential if its latent root is one or more than one. Then the factors were rotated orthogonally by the Varimax method.

The factor analysis resulted in three factors being identified as loaded with (20) items with a factor loading more than (0.30) and the factor loading of items ranged between 0.408 and 0.811 with latent root = 5.792. Thus, the number of the scale items in its final form is (22) items distributed into three factors. The total score on the scale ranged between (20- 60).

To ensure the scale reliability, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency and the Split-half methods were calculated on the pilot study sample of (80) female students at the Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University. The reliability coefficients were, respectively, (0.876-0.819-0.813), thus it is clear that the questionnaire has a high degree of validity and reliability that enables it to be used in the basic study.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The researcher used the following statistical methods to obtain the study results: mean, percentages, and the t-test for differences between independent samples.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. . Results of validating the first hypothesis

'Female students of the University of Sattam bin Abdulaziz in Wadi Al-Dawasir have a weak level of practicing extracurricular activities. To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the form of practicing extracurricular activities was applied to the basic study sample. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to identify students who practicing and not-practicing extracurricular activities as indicated in table 2.

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Students Practicing and Not-Practicing Extracurricular activities (n=200)

Students practicing extracurricular activities	Students do not practice extracurricular activities
N= 110 (55%)	N= 90 (45%)

Table 2 illustrates that the first hypothesis was achieved partially, as the percentage of students who do not practice extracurricular activities was 45% of the total basic research sample, which is not a small percentage in light of the significance of practicing extracurricular activities.

### 3.2. Results of validating the second hypothesis

'Female students of the University of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz in Wadi Al Dawasir have a statistically significant high degree of self-esteem. To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the statistical and default means of the research sample scores n the self-esteem scale and the t-value of the differences between the two means were calculated as indicated in table 3.

Table 3. The Statistical and Default means and the Significance of Differences between them on the Academic Self-Esteem Scale

Mean	Awareness of academic abilities	Academic self-image	Expectations of academic success and failure	The overall mean	t-value	Sig.
Statistical	14.1400	21.3800	13.200	48.7200	24.36	
Default	18	27	15	60	0.425	N. S

Table 3 illustrates that the statistical mean of the academic self-esteem scale of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University students is lower than the default means in the overall scale and its three dimensions.

Besides, the t-test value between the two means was 0.425, which was statistically not significant. Thus, the second hypothesis was not statistically achieved.

### 3.3. Results of validating the third hypothesis

'There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the research sample practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in their academic self-esteem level'. To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the t-test for independent samples was calculated as indicated in table 4.

**Table 4. The results of the t-test for the significance of differences between students practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in their academic self-esteem**

Dimension	Practicing extracurricular activities		Not practicing extracurricular activities		t	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Awareness of academic abilities	14.09	1.99	14.20	1.85	0.400	N. S
Academic self-image	21.78	3.68	20.88	2.83	1.93	N. S
Expectations of academic success and failure	13.29	1.86	13.08	1.71	0.796	N. S
The overall scale	49.16	6.59	48.17	5.50	1.15	N. S

Table 4 reveals that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in the academic self-esteem scale and its three dimensions, indicating that the third hypothesis was statistically achieved.

## 4. Discussion

In the current research, the level of academic self-esteem among female university students was explored and the differences between students practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in their academic self-esteem level were identified.

The first research hypothesis was achieved partially, as the percentage of students who do not practice extracurricular activities was 45% of the total basic research sample, which is not a small percentage in light of the significance of practicing extracurricular activities. This result can be attributed to the lack of some students' convictions of the significance of extracurricular activities, the lack of sufficient announced clear objectives of the activities from the college and the university, and the old beliefs of some students that extracurricular activities are a waste of time and effort, and that the academic aspect is the most important and that academic objective should attract all the attention of the student.

This result in general is consistent with several studies indicating that many difficulties impede the participation of students, including the ambiguity of the goals of extracurricular activities, the large number of study loads such as projects, research, and duties, and the absence of publicity for different types of extracurricular activities (Al Hilali, 2015). In addition, many students and stakeholders do not admit the value and impact of extracurricular activities on the personality and future of students with the absence of academic and discretionary moral or material incentives to practice extracurricular activities (Nguyen, 2022; Kravchenko & Nygard, 2022). For this reason, studies recommended the necessity to hold training courses for faculty members to train to provide extracurricular activities using different educational techniques and to prepare a clear guide to the importance of each presented activity, how to

practice it, its objectives and its relationship to the professional and future reality of the students (Al Shehri, 2016; Smith-Snook & Plummer, 2021).

The second hypothesis results illustrate that the statistical mean of the academic self-esteem scale of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University students is lower than the default means in the overall scale and its three dimensions. Besides, the t-test value between the two means was 0.425, which was statistically not significant. This result may be attributed to the nature of the Wadi Al Dawasir region, where women do not communicate with the outside community except in a limited range, which results in poor academic and life experiences and practice of social life. Therefore, when they join the university, they may refuse to engage in activities if there is direct contact with the outside community, leading to a low level of academic self-esteem.

This result is consistent with the results of several studies, pointing out that the most significant reasons for low academic self-esteem are the ideas of the society surrounding the student and the circle of social relations within the educational institution of which he is a part, which leads to a feeling of low academic self-worth and makes him in a permanent defensive position for himself. Besides, academic self-esteem is built from several basic aspects, the most important of which are cognitive, social, physical, and academic (Al Kafawin, 2019; Suad, 2022; Al Habib & Al Saqri, 2016).

Results also demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students practicing and not practicing extracurricular activities in the academic self-esteem scale and its three dimensions. This result may be attributed to the reality of extracurricular activities presented to the students at Prince Sattam University which did not affect the personality of the students. Besides, these activities are separated from the needs and interests of the students and the applied aspects of the academic disciplines and their professional future. The extracurricular activities work on the one hand and the teaching lectures on the other hand are not compatible with the goals of the integrated development of the university student's personality.

The results of this hypothesis agree with the results of previous studies, illustrating that the student who is deprived of practicing extracurricular activities, whether by choice or because of the conditions of the university community or the family, is deprived of the development of social skills, experiences, diversity, and flexibility of patterns of thinking and cognitive self-formation (Jamal, 2012; Al Mutairi, 2013). Furthermore, Nguyen (2022) emphasized that practicing extracurricular activities raise students' self-esteem as they build a generation that appreciates responsibility and is good at self-learning. Hence, students are internally motivated to engage in an activity, provided that they find in it the satisfaction of their needs, desires, and interests, taking into account the individual differences between them while achieving a sense of fun and excitement (Al Dalami, 2014).

## **5. Recommendations**

The result of this research is an indicator in evaluating the reality of the participation of university students in extracurricular programs and activities, and then developing appropriate plans according to the results to attract the largest number of university students to participate in the programs and practice extracurricular activities to raise the efficiency of professional and self-professional graduates and qualify them for the labor market. An evaluation study of the extracurricular activities presented to female students should be carried out in all respects. In addition, equal opportunities for all students to practice extracurricular activities and not be satisfied with presence only should be provided. There should be a link between academic self-esteem and extracurricular activities through activating the applied and field aspects in different disciplines in different faculties in extracurricular activities to be reflected on the academic performance, the professional and social aspects of the students, and thus increasing their academic self-esteem. It is also important to direct training for faculty members to understand and explain



the importance of female students' participation and urge them to engage in extracurricular activities and their great importance in influencing their future professional, social, and personal skills.

## 6. Limitations

The results of this research were limited to its population, which was 200 female university students from the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in Wadi Al-Dawasir specializations of (kindergarten, home economics, special education, computers, Arabic language, and Islamic studies) of different academic levels. Further research is recommended to validate the presented research hypotheses. The study also does not identify the effect of some mediating variables, such as the student's educational and socio-economic status. Consequently, further research is recommended to provide suggestions to activate students' participation in extracurricular activities.

## Acknowledgment

The researcher thanks Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for the support and funding of this research project. This study was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University Alkharj in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under project No. 2021/02/18999.

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