

*Comparative Assessment On Learning Outcomes Achievement Among Students Participating In Uniform Bodies Programs In A Malaysian Public University*

(Penilaian Perbandingan Pencapaian Hasil Pembelajaran antara Pelajar yang Terlibat dalam Program Badan Beruniform di Universiti Awam Malaysia)

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*ABSTRACT*

*Extracurricular activities are extra activities outside the classroom, besides curriculum. It is also known as co-curriculum. University students are encouraged to participate in co-curriculum activities as it can help students improve their soft skills. AIM: A cross sectional survey was conducted to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes among students who participated in various uniform bodies programs in a Malaysian public university. Furthermore, this research wanted to assess the reasons students participated in the uniform bodies programs and evaluate the effects of such involvement in the extra-curricular in terms of academic performance, time management and social life. The skills that student's learnt from the extra-curricular were also evaluated. METHOD: A set of validated questionnaire was used as a research tool. The uniform bodies that participated in this survey were ROTU, SUKSIS, BSMM and SISPA. The total number of respondents was 333 students. Statistical Package (SPSS) version 20.0 was used for analysis of data. RESULTS: The study found that majority of students participated in uniform bodies programs because of their own interest the programs (31.5%). There were positive correlations between participation in uniform bodies programs and revision hours ( $r = 0.256$ ) and also with and social hours ( $r = 0.147$ ) but there was negative correlation between time spent in uniform body programs and GPA ( $r = -0.140$ ). There were differences in the soft skills that student's achieved from different uniform bodies programs. CONCLUSION: In conclusion, we found that students learnt and obtained various soft skills when they participated in uniform bodies programs. This will be useful for their later development especially when they are seeking employment upon graduation.*

*Keywords: Student, co-curriculum, generic skills, high education. Uniform Bodies Programs*

*ABSTRAK*

Aktiviti kurikulum tambahan adalah aktiviti tambahan di luar kelas, selain kurikulum. Ia juga dikenali sebagai ko-kurikulum. Pelajar universiti digalakkan untuk mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti kokurikulum kerana ia dapat membantu pelajar meningkatkan kemahiran insaniah mereka. Matlamat: Satu kajian keratan rentas telah dijalankan untuk menilai pencapaian hasil pembelajaran di kalangan pelajar yang mengambil bahagian dalam pelbagai program badan beruniform di sebuah universiti awam Malaysia. Tambahan pula, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai sebab-sebab pelajar mengambil bahagian dalam program badan beruniform dan menilai kesan penglibatan tersebut dalam kurikulum tambahan dari segi prestasi akademik, pengurusan masa dan kehidupan sosial. Kemahiran insaniah yang diperolehi oleh pelajar dari kurikulum juga dinilai. KAEDAH: Satu set soal selidik yang telah disahkan digunakan sebagai alat penyelidikan. Badan-badan beruniform yang menyertai kajian ini ialah ROTU, SUKSIS, BSMM dan SISPA. Jumlah responden adalah seramai 333 pelajar. SPSS versi 20.0 digunakan untuk analisis data. HASIL: Kajian mendapati bahawa majoriti pelajar mengambil bahagian dalam program badan beruniform kerana minat mereka terhadap program (31.5%). Terdapat kaitan positif antara penyertaan dalam program badan beruniform dan tempoh ulangkaji ( $r = 0.256$ ) dan juga dengan masa bersosial ( $r = 0.147$ ) tetapi terdapat kaitan negatif antara masa yang digunakan dalam program badan beruniform dan GPA ( $r = -0.140$ ). Terdapat juga perbezaan dalam kemahiran insaniah yang dicapai oleh pelajar dari pelbagai program badan beruniform. KESIMPULAN: Kesimpulannya, kami mendapati bahawa pelajar belajar dan memperolehi pelbagai kemahiran insaniah apabila mereka mengambil bahagian dalam program badan beruniform. Ini berguna untuk perkembangan mereka terutama ketika mereka mencari pekerjaan setelah tamat pengajian.

Kata kunci: Pelajar, ko-kurikulum, kemahiran generik, pendidikan tinggi. Program Badan Beruniform

## INTRODUCTION

For many years students have been taught using lecturer-oriented approach in a classroom setting and their performance has been assessed based on criteria set by lecturer which is more on written examination (Othman Hussain et al., 2008). This method can be obstacle to effective learning process and to develop generic skills among students (Jumali et al 2012). They need to be involved in extracurricular activities (ECA) to obtain soft skills that are not taught in lectures. Extracurricular activities can be defined as extracurricular, extra class, non-class, school-life, and student activities (Tan & Pope, 2007). University students are encouraged to participate in co curriculum activities as it can help students improve their soft skills, like ability to communicate, leadership qualities, working in a team, solving problems during a crisis and so on as they need this basic knowledge apart from the books to enter the job market (National Research Council 2009, Stuart et al 2011, Chang 2016). Among the extracurricular activities that were offered to university students in Malaysia includes uniform bodies programs such as the Malaysian Red Crescent (PBSMM), Reserve Officer Training Unit (ROTU), Police Undergraduate Voluntary Corps (SUKSIS) and Undergraduates Civil Defence Corps (SISPA).

The transformation of higher education system, the economic change as a result of globalization and the demand from company/agency/organization to have 'highly qualified' or quality workers to work in their institutions influenced university to enhance generic skills among students to be more dynamic, progressive and empowering. A student driven approach is used to replace the old approach of lecturer-oriented. Students has been given more freedom to choose and carry out activities or projects they like to get more or specific knowledge and enhance generic skills they wish for (Jumali et al 2012). Research indicates that there is a relationship between involvement and GPA with student organization officers earning a significantly higher GPA than regular members of the organizations, and student organization members earning a significantly higher GPA than the general student population (Hawkins 2010).

Participation in student organizations can also lead to the development of social and leadership skills, higher retention rates, heightened self-confidence, improved satisfaction with college, the ability to see course curriculum as more relevant and further success after college. Kaufman and Gabler (2004) found that extracurricular activities such as music and dance, public service, interscholastic team sports and student

government improved students' likelihood of getting into college. While activities such as voluntary work, and particularly university-linked ECAs (such as team sports and committees), help to distinguish graduates in the job market and provide job security (Stuart et al 2011). Employers also want evidence of students making the most of their university experience beyond academia, with a willingness to step outside comfortable and familiar situations (Hinchliffe and Jolly, 2011).

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes among students who participated in the uniform bodies programs in a Malaysian public university. This research also aimed to determine the reasons students participated in the uniform bodies programs and evaluated the effects of such involvement in the extra-curricular in terms of academic performance, time management and social life. The skills that student's learnt from the extra-curricular were also investigated.

## METHODS

Respondents of this study were students who participated in various uniform bodies programs in a public university in Malaysia namely the Reserve Officer Training Unit (ROTU), Civil Defence Undergraduates Corps (SISPA), Undergraduates Police Corps (SUKSIS) and the Malaysian Red Crescent Society (BSMM).

In our study, we used Jumali et al. 2012 questionnaire. It contained 92 items which were divided into three types of question; close ended question, open ended question and indirect questions. Indirect questions were based on 5 point Likert Scale which is used to examine student's perception on how uniform bodies programs can affect their social skills. Skill that are being assessed are communication skills, information management skills, lifelong learning etc. The questionnaire has been tested its reliability, validity and consistency by using Cronbach's alpha test. Three hundred and thirty-three students (n=333) were selected to participate in this study. The respondents were students that participated in UKM uniform bodies programs which were ROTU, SISPA, SUKSIS and BSMM. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondent from the list of names provided by the uniform bodies. All respondent gave their consent prior to their participation in the study.

After data was collected, SPSS was used to analyse data. Spearman Rho's and Pearson correlation were used to see if there are any association between GPA, revision hours, social hours and time spent in

uniform bodies programs. One-way ANOVA test was also used to measure the skills that students' obtained from their extra-curricular involvement. Variables that were measured are:

1. Social skills and responsibility
2. Communication skills

3. Information management skills and lifelong learning
4. Values, attitudes, ethics and professionalism
5. Critical thinking, problem solving and scientific approaches skills
6. Leadership and teamwork's skills
7. Creative and innovative skills

Table 1. Demographic of respondents

Variables	N = 333	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	91	27.3
Female	242	72.7
Race		
Malay	228	68.5
Chinese	89	26.7
Indian	4	1.2
Others	12	3.6
Year of study		
Year1	202	60.7
Year 3	131	39.3

On the other hand, there were 18.6% of respondents from ROTU, 43.5% of respondents BSMM, 20.7% and

17.1% of respondents took part in SUKSIS and SISPA respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of students according different uniform bodies programs

Uniform bodies programs	N = 333	Percentage (%)
ROTU	62	18.6
BSMM	145	43.5
SUKSIS	69	20.7
SISPA	57	17.1

Grade-point Average (GPA) of the respondents was used as a tool to measure the academic performance

of the students. More than three quarter (87%) of the respondent have GPA above 3.0 (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of GPA among students according different uniform body programs.

		GPA				
		2.00 - 2.49	2.50 - 2.99	3.00 - 3.49	3.50 - 4.00	Total
Uniform bodies programs	ROTU	4.8%	14.5%	66.1%	14.5%	18.6%
	BSMM	1.4%	11.7%	46.2%	40.7%	43.5%
	SUKSIS	1.4%	13.0%	60.9%	24.6%	20.7%
	SISPA	24.6%	36.8%	29.8%	8.8%	17.1%
Total		6.0%	17.0%	50.0%	27.0%	100%

Almost one third (31.5%, n =195) of the respondents participated in uniform bodies programs due to their own interest to the programs, 25.2% to increase their knowledge and 10.5% of respondents join the programs in order to train themselves to be more

discipline. This were followed by other reasons such as to fill free time (8.7%), merit (8.1%), to get allowance that were given (5.1%), encouragement from friends (1.2%) and due to other reason (9.6%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Reasons of participating in the uniform bodies programs among the students.

Reasons	N = 333	Percentage (%)
Filling free time	29	8.7
Increase knowledge	84	25.2
Encouragement from friends	4	1.2
Interest	105	31.5
Discipline training	35	10.5
Merit	27	8.1
Allowances	17	5.1
Other	32	9.6

We also found significant negative correlation ( $r=-0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between time spent in uniform bodies programs and GPA. This might indicate that spending more time in uniform bodies programs might have slight effect on academic performance if the student cannot manage their time properly or becoming too tired. Interestingly we then found that spending more time in uniform bodies programs will lead to more numbers of hours in revision ( $r=0.256$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and social hours ( $r=0.147$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding implies that students who spend more time in uniform bodies programs spent more time revising their study and spent more time socialising.

Analyses were also done to identify the skills that student learnt and obtained participating in the uniform bodies programs. The results showed that there were significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the soft skills obtained among the various kind of uniform bodies programs the term of social skills and responsibility (D1), values, attitudes, ethics and professionalism(D4), and critical thinking, problem solving, and scientific approaches skills (D5) (Table 5).

However, all students perceived that achieved all the soft skills required by participating in the programs.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, the achievement of learning outcomes among students who participated in the uniform bodies programs in a Malaysian public university was assessed. We found significantly negative but weak correlation between time spent in uniform bodies programs and GPA. On the contrary, a study conducted by the U. S. Department of Education revealed that students who participate in co-curricular activities are three times more likely to have a grade point average of 3.0 or better than students who do not participate in co-curricular activities (Stephens & Schaben, 2002). While the other study conducted by the National Educational Longitudinal Study, found that “participation in some activities improves achievement, while participation in others diminishes achievement” (Broh, 2002). The negative effect on academic study may be determined by individual characteristics and circumstances. Achieving a good balance between study and ECAs is challenging, and some students are unsure how best to prioritise their time (Thompson et al 2013). Since the results for relationship between amounts of time spend in extracurricular and CGPA were contradicting, hence its effect is still being debated.

The learning outcomes of soft skills that student’s obtained from the extra- curricular were similar with other study (Jumali et al 2012) which

Table 5: Soft skills achievement by participating in uniform bodies

Uniform bodies programs	ROTU	BSMM	SUKSIS	SISPA	F	Sig.
Frequency, N	62	145	69	57	-	-
D1: social skills and responsibility	4.2198	4.0431	4.2319	4.1842	2.864	0.037
D2: communication skills	3.9718	3.8638	3.9819	3.7807	1.768	0.153
D3: information management skills and lifelong learning	3.8925	3.7586	3.9807	3.7719	2.465	0.062
D4: values, attitudes, ethics and professionalism	4.2137	3.9448	4.1957	4.1711	5.493	0.001
D5: critical thinking, problem solving, and scientific approaches skills	4.0108	3.8230	4.0531	3.9298	3.112	0.027
D6: leadership and teamwork skills	3.7204	3.5218	3.5894	3.5380	1.559	0.199
D7: management and entrepreneur skills	3.9718	3.9310	3.8949	3.9298	0.224	0.879
D8: creative and innovative skills	4.0484	3.9333	4.0338	4.0936	1.317	0.269

include social skills and responsibility, develop values, attitudes, ethics and professionalism and critical thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and scientific approaches skills. Extracurricular activities are important to enhance students' academic confidence, social development and their sense of well-being at schools and facilitate development of interpersonal skills and positive social norms (Stuart et al 2011). It also provides students with the opportunity to develop social capital, mentoring or coaching relationship and personal bonding with schools (Feldman and Matjasko, 2005). These experiences should enhance mental health, school engagement and academic performance (Chan 2016) as well as valuable workplace skills and attributes which are desired by employers (Harvey and Morey 2003)

From the results, the reason highest chosen by students participate in the Uniform bodies programs is interest. Engagement seems central to happiness and well-being; ECAs are pursued primarily for interest and enjoyment, which is enhanced because they provide social support. (Thompson et al 2013). Enjoyment

is critical for unstinting and persistent involvement. Nevertheless, many students are willing to engage in ECAs, which is hard work, in order to do something worthwhile or to develop skills.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the result of this study shows that the main reason why students choose to participate in the Uniform Bodies Programs is interest. Involvement in extra-curricular activities showed some effects in terms of academic performance, time management, and social life thus it is imperative for students to balance and manage their time carefully. Various soft skills that students can obtain from participating in this extracurricular activities including social skills, responsibility, values, attitudes, ethics, professionalism, critical thinking, problem solving, and scientific approaches skills. The attainment of such skills are valuable attributes that might lead to better prospect in the future.

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