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The Effects of Extracurricular Activity and Physical Activity on Academic Success: A Literature Review

Braden Tanner

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INTRODUCTION

- Due to the ever-increasing importance of education, it is important to understand how to foster an environment conducive to academic success.
- Extracurricular activity is one of many factors that influences the academic environment.
- This review examines literature published since 2010 concerning extracurricular activity's effect on academic success.
- Seeing that sports make up such a large portion of the extracurricular spectrum, the review also examines studies analyzing the effects of physical activity on academic performance.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & ACADEMICS

- **Positive effects**
 - Studies found that extracurricular activity contributes to academic success in the following ways:
 - **Providing balance** (a balanced life, generally speaking helps maintain optimal efficiency)
 - **Promoting self confidence** (achieving personal goals leads to confidence that carries over into the academic realm)
 - **Sense of contribution and duty** (students desire to represent the school well)
 - **Sense of belonging** (students are more likely to succeed when they feel they fit in)
- **Negative effects**
 - Similarly, extracurricular activity can detract from academic success in these ways:
 - **Overload** (excessive amounts of activity can demand so much time that the student is unable to keep up in academics)
 - **Skewed identity** (excessive activity can also lead students to define themselves primarily by such activities while placing little focus on their main roles as students)

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & ACADEMICS

- Most studies published examined the direct relationship between physical activity and academic success
 - Outcomes of these studies were fairly evenly split between positive and negative .
 - These studies seemed to lack a layer of depth, indicating a more complex relationship between the two variables than simply a direct correlation.
- Such complexity suggests the need to examine the relationship based on confounding variables .
 - A few studies looked at **confounding variables**:
 - **Age** (physical activity tends to have no correlation with physical activity among middle school students)
 - **Intensity of activity** (higher intensity activity seems to correlate with better academic performance)
 - **Type of activity** (activities promoting cardiorespiratory capacity and motor abilities have been shown to increase academic performance, while muscular strength activities yield no such correlation)
- Much more research is needed in this area,

CONCLUSIONS

- Extracurricular activity seems to do more benefit than harm, provided that students don't allow them to run their lives.
- Extensive research is necessary examining confounding variables affecting the relationship between physical activity and academic success.
- Future research should include a more holistic approach to the relationship between extracurricular activity and academics. It is the combination of many different factors that make up a child's academic success.
- The use of objective measures, rather than self report (especially in the case of physical activity), would help to solidify research.