



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Factors affecting student participation in extra-curricular activities: A comparison between two Middle Eastern dental schools



Asim Al-Ansari ^a, Fahad Al-Harbi ^b, Wafaa AbdelAziz ^c, Maha AbdelSalam ^d,
Maha M. El Tantawi ^{a,*}, Ismail ElRefae ^e

^a Department of Preventive Dental Sciences, College of Dentistry, University of Dammam, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

^b Department of Substitutive Dental Sciences, College of Dentistry, University of Dammam, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

^c Department of Pediatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health, Faculty of Dentistry, Alexandria University, Alexandria, Egypt

^d Department of Biomedical Dental Sciences, College of Dentistry, University of Dammam, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

^e In Private Practice, Cairo, Egypt

Received 30 November 2014; revised 31 March 2015; accepted 26 May 2015

Available online 21 October 2015

KEYWORDS

Extra-curricular activities;
Dental students;
Dental schools;
Sports;
Volunteers;
Social participation

Abstract *Objective:* This study was conducted to assess the level of participation of dental undergraduate students in extracurricular activities (ECAs) and the factors affecting this participation.

Methods: The study included dental students enrolled in undergraduate programs at the Faculty of Dentistry, Alexandria University, Egypt, and the College of Dentistry, University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia. A questionnaire was developed to collect background information about students, their participation in ECAs, and time allocated for these activities. Students were asked about their perceptions of the relationship between ECAs and academic studies, and their reasons for participating in and satisfaction with ECAs.

Results: The study included 199 students from Alexandria and 146 students from Dammam, with response rates of 99.5% and 73%, respectively. The percentages of those reporting ECA participation were 27.1% and 43.8%, respectively, mostly in community service, sports, and social activities. About 60% of students did not think that ECAs affected their studies, although the perceived difficulty of balancing ECAs and academics was associated with lower odds of participation (odds ratio = 0.51). Most students participated in ECAs to socialize and make friends, and the majority was dissatisfied with school-organized ECAs (52% and 59%, respectively). Gender and/or

* Corresponding author at: College of Dentistry, University of Dammam, P. O. Box 1982, Dammam 31411, Saudi Arabia. Tel.: +966 138574928x216; fax: +966 138572624.

E-mail address: mmtantawy@ud.edu.sa (M.M. El Tantawi).

Peer review under responsibility of King Saud University.



Production and hosting by Elsevier

perceived relation between ECAs and academic studies affected actual participation in ECAs in one school but not the other.

Conclusions: ECA participation among these students was low. Gender and perception of ECAs in relation to academic studies affected ECA participation differently in the two schools. Better planning and management of ECAs that incorporate students' preferences and reasons for participation is needed. Gender issues and the relationship between ECAs and academic performance should be addressed in relation to school and social characteristics.

© 2015 The Authors. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of King Saud University. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) are defined as activities that students undertake apart from those required to earn a degree. They may include hobbies and social, sports, cultural, or religious activities. They have some benefit and possess some structure/organization. ECAs are expected to enrich students' experience, develop students' soft skills, help them cope with stress, and provide them with added advantages to increase their employability (Veronesi and Gunderman, 2012; Thompson et al., 2013).

In some studies, ECA participation has been associated positively with academic achievement (Miller et al., 2005; Baker, 2008; Derous and Ryan, 2008). However, students may refrain from participating in ECAs for fear that it will affect their grades (Thompson et al., 2013), and may drop ECAs when their attention is needed elsewhere (Roulin and Bangerter, 2013). Some qualities of graduates may be inferred from ECA participation; for example, those who belong to organizations/clubs are assumed to have more interpersonal skills, whereas those who volunteer for community activities are judged as being more extroverts than others (Roulin and Bangerter, 2013). ECAs are also important for higher education institutions and form a part of their public image, adding to their prestige and reputation.

Dental schools aspire to improve the educational experience they offer by adhering to accreditation criteria (Schneider et al., 2014). Historically, none of these improvement activities have addressed ECAs (Hans, 1999). In dental schools, characterized by high stress levels (Al-Omari, 2005; Pau et al., 2007), ECAs can serve a double purpose by offering a means of stress management and serving as an informal teaching tool for the development of generic/employability skills (El Tantawi et al., 2014). However, the extent of dental students' participation in ECAs has not been reported internationally or in Middle Eastern countries, possibly due to the demanding nature of these academic environments. Although the general features of dental schools in different Middle Eastern countries are similar, variations in cultural background and educational systems do exist. For example, Musaiger et al. (2013) reported differences among a number of Middle Eastern countries in barriers to physical activity, whereas Abdel-Khalek and Alansari (2004) reported differences in anxiety level among undergraduates from 10 Middle Eastern countries.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia are two countries with similar attributes, which may lead policy makers in these countries to apply similar solutions to problems in educational institutions. Yet, several educational and cultural differences do exist

between them. Students in Egypt exhibit noticeable diversity of gender and nationality; classes in dental schools include male and female students of various nationalities. In Saudi Arabia, dental education is fully sponsored by the government and is available only for Saudi nationals. In addition, classes are gender segregated according to cultural norms. Many middle-class Egyptian families share values related to engaging their children in ECAs at an early age, as social capital to improve their employability (Bathmaker et al., 2013). In Saudi Arabia, sports club memberships, team practices, and outdoor activities in general are restricted to males, while females are encouraged to engage in other social activities.

The aim of the present study was to assess the extent of dental students' participation in and satisfaction with ECAs in two Middle Eastern dental schools in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The study also investigated factors related to students' participation in ECAs, including their backgrounds, academic status, and perceptions of ECAs. The results provide information to aid the establishment of realistic expectations for this area of the educational environment and the development of appropriate ECAs that respond to students' needs and the characteristics of educational settings.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study design and setting

A descriptive cross-sectional study was used to collect data. It was conducted in two dental schools; one school is located in Egypt (Faculty of Dentistry, Alexandria University) and the other is located in Saudi Arabia (College of Dentistry, University of Dammam). Data were collected from January to March 2014.

2.2. Study sample

The study targets were undergraduate students in the two dental schools. In Alexandria, the Bachelor of Dentistry program is 5 years long (including one preparatory year). Average class size is 300–350 students, including males and females in the same class, with a total of about 1500 students in the entire program. In Dammam, the Bachelor of Dental Sciences program is 6 years long (including one preparatory year). The average class size was about 20–25 students until the 2010–2011 academic year, when the college began to accept female students. Concomitant expansion of class sizes for male and female students led to an average size of about 50 students. Following cultural norms, male and female students are physically segregated. A sample of 200 students was selected from

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2683228>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2683228>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)