



The Dual Engine of Growth: Assessing the Impact of Student Club Activities on Academic Performance in West Africa: Côte D'Ivoire In Focus

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Abstract

The pursuit of academic excellence in West African higher education often creates a false dichotomy between rigorous scholarly work and extracurricular engagement. This study challenges this paradigm by investigating the symbiotic relationship between student club activities and academic performance, with a specific focus on Côte d'Ivoire. Grounded in the theory of experiential learning and social capital development, this research theorizes that structured extracurricular involvement acts not as a distraction, but as a "dual engine" that concurrently fuels soft skill acquisition and cognitive academic outcomes.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this study collected quantitative data through GPA comparisons and surveys from over 500 students across three major Ivorian universities, paired with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with student leaders and faculty advisors. The analysis specifically examines clubs related to professional development (e.g., Finance, Marketing), leadership (Student Government), and community service.

Preliminary findings reveal a significant positive correlation between active club participation and higher GPAs, contradicting the traditional view of extracurriculars as a liability. Key mechanisms identified include: the enhancement of time-management and organizational skills; the application of theoretical knowledge in practical, real-world scenarios; and the formation of peer-supported study networks. Furthermore, the research highlights the role of these activities in fostering crucial graduate attributes highly valued in the West African job market, such as leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving.

This presentation will conclude by offering a strategic framework for university administrators and policymakers to intentionally integrate and champion student club activities as a core component of the academic curriculum. By doing so, Ivorian and wider West African institutions can cultivate more holistic, employable, and academically proficient graduates, ultimately contributing to a more robust and innovative regional knowledge economy.

Keywords: Student Development, Extracurricular Activities, Academic Performance, Experiential Learning, Higher Education, West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire.