

**THE IMPACT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' INVOLVEMENT IN
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

By

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WELKOM

SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Dikeledi Vanessa Mashabe, student number _____, certify that the research project below, which I submitted to the Central University of Technology, Free State, for the Master of Education degree, is my own; it adheres with the Central University of Technology's Code of Academic Integrity and other pertinent policies, procedures, rules, and regulations; and it has never been submitted to any other institution by me or anyone else in full or in part to fulfil the requirements for obtaining any qualification.

Signature of student

Date: 30 September 2025

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved husband, Moses Pitso, whose unwavering support, love and care enabled me to pursue my academic endeavours. Your sacrifices and encouragement gave me the courage to persevere. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my mother, Baratang Mashabe, for her unconditional love and support. Your unwavering belief in my abilities has been a constant source of motivation. To my aunt, Boitumelo Monyane, I express my deepest appreciation for your selfless support and guidance. Your assistance in caring for my children during my studies allowed me to focus on my research without undue distraction. To my children, Bokang, Boholo and Bohang, I acknowledge the sacrifices we made together during my academic journey. I hope that the completion of this dissertation will serve as a testament to the importance of perseverance and hard work. I am also grateful to my extended family members, including my children's uncle, Kamogelo Makgowe, and my sisters, Mantibi Makgowe, Mabolte wa Makhulu, and Elections Ncoco, for their support and assistance throughout my studies. Thank you all for being my pillars of strength and for believing in me.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance. The study was underpinned by the institutional theory and was guided by the following question: How does involvement in extracurricular activities impacts learners' academic performance? This research was conducted in five public secondary schools located in the Lejweleputswa area of the Free State Province. The study sample consisted of six participants, three learners and three teachers. The researcher used purposeful sampling to select interviewees. The research utilised a qualitative methodology as its design. The study indicates that learners in secondary schools within Kutloanong township encounter restricted opportunities for extracurricular activities, as some schools provide only soccer and netball. Furthermore, the lack of extracurricular activities impedes learners' involvement, resulting in ennui, disconnection and adverse consequences such as dropout, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. However, participants revealed that extracurricular activities are crucial for overall development since they enhance discipline, academic achievement, self-confidence and the relationships between teachers and learners. The findings also identified socioeconomic barriers that keep learners from engaging in extracurricular activities, a lack of parental and school administration support and a lack of resources. This study recommends that schools in Kutloanong Secondary Township should expand extracurricular activities, bring back dormant sports clubs, and ensure facilities and resources are available. Incentives and training for teachers are also recommended, as is financial assistance for learners from low-income families and increased parental support through involvement and encouragement. Finally, by putting these suggestions into practice, educational institutions might support learners' academic achievement, personal development and holistic growth.

Keywords: Barriers, extracurricular, investigation, involvement, performance

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Every day, learners are expected to participate in extracurricular events all over the world (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015). Many people do not consider these activities to be harmful to the environment because they see them as typical aspects of growing up. It is crucial that learners participate in extracurricular activities because they give them a chance to explore their passions and interests outside of the normal school curriculum. Extracurricular activities allow learners to behave more appropriately and achieve better academically. Bauyon, Espiritu, Oreta and Segui (2025) suggest that extracurricular activities help learners to learn new things and unearth new abilities they never knew they had while allowing them to concentrate on their areas of interest. Furthermore, Bandala (2022) asserts that extracurricular activities supplement classroom instruction and enable learners to put their academic knowledge to use in the real world. Therefore, this implies that extracurricular activities are crucial for helping learners to enhance their academic performance.

Realising that each learner has distinct skills and weaknesses is crucial since it enables learners to succeed in many fields. It is agreed upon by Bauyon et al. (2025) that participating in extracurricular activities offers a variety of opportunities for learning and improvement. However, if it takes up too much time and interferes with academic endeavours, experts caution that it could negatively impact academic success (Nassar, Abbas, Al-Saify & Ali, 2025). Why, then, are these extracurricular activities and events still a regular part of adolescents' lives if this is the case? Does a teenager's participation in extracurricular activities affect their capacity to develop in a positive or negative way? Bandala (2022) investigated these concerns and offered suggestions for the best approaches to incorporate extracurricular activities into learners' daily lives. Extracurricular activities' effects on social behaviour and academic achievement are receiving increasing attention. Furthermore, Nassar et al. (2025) address both sides of the debate; some academics promote the benefits of participation, while others emphasise its drawbacks. Although the exact causes of these outcomes are unclear, each party claims that the extracurricular activity's results are a direct result of the activity. There are not many resources available that cover both the benefits and drawbacks of engaging in extracurricular activities. This study examines how

learners' involvement in extracurricular activities affects their academic performance in the township secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study investigated how learners in the township secondary schools are involved in extracurricular activities towards improvement of their academic performance in the Lejweleputswa District. The findings of this study would be significant in improving practice regarding how extracurricular activities can be used for learners to improve their academic performance. Furthermore, new knowledge gained from this study would provide principals and teachers with new strategies on how learners can be involved in extracurricular activities to improve the academic performance. The findings would also contribute to directing the principals and the school governing bodies on how best they can formulate school-based policies to ensure that learners are involved in extracurricular activities to enhance their academic performance. Moreover, the recommendations of this research would ignite other researchers to embark in further research on the contributing factors that either impede or allow involvement of learners in extracurricular activities towards improving their academic performance.

1.3 Problem Statement

It is perceived that lack of extracurricular activities at most schools contributes to behavioural and disciplinary problems, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, gangsterism and poor academic performance (Fujita, 2015). Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) add that the lack of extracurricular activities may lead to misbehaviour among energetic learners. This has an adverse effect on both learners and the public generally. There is an abundance of extracurricular activities that teachers should engage learners, and yet they are not prioritised in the schools' budget (Lang, 2021). Some schools only provide a small number of activities, which might not be sufficient to meet different learners' needs and interests. The budget meant for extracurricular activities is used for other purposes (Fujita, 2015). To raise funds for academic programmes, several school districts have reduced or abolished extracurricular programmes (Nassar, et al., 2025). Since every school's budget is tailored towards achieving best learners' performance, schools are constantly looking for ways to improve learner performance, often reducing funding for extracurricular activities that

have no clear connection to academic success but may nevertheless contribute to it (Yeban, 2023). Researching the effects these programs have on learner achievement is, therefore, necessary before schools eliminate non-essential academic programmes.

This study investigated how participation in extracurricular activities affects academic performance.

1.4 Research questions

The following are the main and sub-research questions for this study.

Main research question:

- How does involvement in extracurricular activities impact learners' academic performance?

Research sub-questions

- How can learners' involvement in extracurricular activities contribute to their academic performance?
- What are the effects of learners' lack of involvement in extracurricular activities?
- In which ways are learners hindered from taking part in extracurricular activities?

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The following are aim and research objectives for the study.

Aim

This study aimed at investigating how learners in the township secondary schools are involved in extracurricular activities towards improvement of their academic performance in the Lejweleputswa District. The following objectives emanated from the main research question.

Research objectives

- Determine how learners' involvement in extracurricular activities contributes to their academic performance.

- Establish the effects of learners' lack of involvement in extracurricular activities.
- Investigate how learners are hindered from taking part in extracurricular activities.

1.6 Preliminary literature review

This section provides a short review of the literature on how learners' involvement in extracurricular activities affects their academic performance in secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District. It covers extracurricular activity definition, national and international views on extracurricular activity involvement in schools, and advantages of extracurricular activity participation.

According to Sitkowski (2018), extracurricular activities are those activities which learners voluntarily participate in, are not required for graduation, and that enhance the regular school curriculum. Activities that are "external to the core curriculum" are referred to as extracurricular activities (Yeban, 2023). Extracurricular activities were defined as academic or non-academic activities that are conducted under the auspices of the school but occur outside of normal classroom time and are not part of the curriculum (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015).

Extracurricular activities come in many different forms, including sporting activities, clubs, government, student newspapers, music, art and drama. Learners who do not wish to join in extracurricular activities are under no obligation to do so (Freeman, 2017). As stated by Habib (2018) extracurricular activities serve the same purposes and goals as the curriculum's obligatory and elective courses. They do offer experiences, though they are not part of official educational programmes. They provide learners the chance to put what they have learned in earlier subjects to use and learn about democratic principles.

According to Metsapelto and Pulkkinen (2021) there are three different categories of extracurricular activities that schools support. The first group, which has a curricular focus, includes discussion boards, journalism and other forms of publication. Since the educational opportunities in this category are covered by the regular school curriculum, learners may occasionally receive credit for them. Extracurricular activities are those that learners must complete outside of class and after school.

The second category is co-curricular activities, which frequently include artistic pursuits like drama, music, dancing, and debating. These activities are add-ons to or extensions of the core curriculum, and they occasionally require participation after school. The third group does not include any extracurricular activities. It includes organisations like sports teams, cheerleading squads, and organisations, as well as clubs with a variety of interests, like language lessons, girl scouts and boy scouts. The school offers a third category of extracurricular activities that are either competitive in nature or enjoyable for the participants and offer educational opportunities not provided by the normal curriculum (Raffo & Forbes, 2021). This section also discusses the theoretical framework.

1.7 Theoretical framework

An analysis of the connections among organisations is the foundation of the institutional theory (Risi, Vigneau, Bohn & Wickert, 2023). The theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and academic success is provided by the institutional theory (Selznick, 1957). It also examines the constraints that some organisations impose on other groups. The sports departments in the schools must be transformed into distinct entities that are under the jurisdiction of the individual schools and school districts to apply this concept to participation in extracurricular activities in the educational environment. Interaction with the learners who take part in extracurricular activities is required of the administrators of those activities. Jepperson and Meyer (2021) claim that the institutional theory was expanded to consider both the cultural and cognitive aspects of how organisations interact with one another.

After the theory was developed, theorists put the organisation's validity, not only its presence, in the forefront of their novel change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The Theory of Institutionalism postulates that the conduct of an institution and the institution are related. According to this notion, extracurricular activities and learners' achievement are related. It is based on the idea that these programmes need to be monitored by schools and school districts and that they might have either positive or negative effects on learner achievement (Reeves, 2008).

1.8 Research paradigm

This research is grounded in interpretivist paradigm. According to Keeves (2017), the interpretative research paradigm supports an intersubjective epistemology and the ontological perspective that reality is socially constructed because they think that people's subjective perceptions of the outside world comprise the truth. A paradigm is a widely accepted way of looking at a study phenomenon or the universe (Burns, 2014). The three different kinds of research paradigms are positivism, interpretivism or constructivism and pragmatism (Keeves, 2017). Positivism primarily stresses the observable and holds that reality is given objectively, whereas interpretivism is a philosophical viewpoint that depends on qualitative techniques and natural settings, which holds that individuals acquire knowledge through their experiences and environment (Avramidis & Smith, 2015). However, based on Allemang, Sitter and Dimitropoulos (2022), pragmatists hold that rather than rigorously following a specific methodology or philosophy, research should be directed by the research question and the objectives of the study.

Since the researcher wished to have in-depth conversations with the participants and conduct one-on-one interviews with them, the interpretivist research paradigm was applied to this study. According to Burns (2014), research that adheres to the Interpretivist theory frequently possesses the following characteristics: the admission that a person cannot comprehend society from a personal viewpoint. Multiple worlds are believed, and reality is socially constructed, having an awareness that interactions between the researcher and study subjects cannot be avoided. Knowledge and understanding depend on the grasp of the context. The notion that discoveries produce information may be value-laden; so, the values must be made explicit.

1.9 Research approach

There are two ways to verify a research path from the start to the end of writing the research report. These methodologies are used in both qualitative and quantitative research (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). The researcher chose the qualitative method because it was appropriate for social research that might have exhausted the participants' natural surroundings (Punch, 2015). This type of primary research, referred to as qualitative research, entails collecting data straight from people (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine & Walker, (2019). As a result, the study was classified as qualitative.

The fundamental characteristics of qualitative research include conducting it in the participants' surroundings, relying on interviews conducted rather than books, being an insightful way to learn about people's perspectives and maintaining a dynamic design as new data and additional sources become available (Silverman, 2013). Because the researcher was curious about the participants' opinions, sentiments and experiences regarding the influence of extracurricular involvement on pupils' academic achievement in township secondary schools, the researcher employed a qualitative method for this study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The researcher was able to better understand people's perceptions, opinions, actions, behaviours, perspectives and values thanks to this approach (Martens, 2015).

1.10 Research design

Devlin (2018) asserts that research design might very well serve as the starting point for the creation of different knowledge collection strategies. The researcher's decisions and actions within the qualitative design result in the research design that is most appropriate to the study throughout the research process (Devlin, 2018). The term "design" in a qualitative study refers to the entire research process, from the early stages of conceptualising a subject to writing strategy (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The qualitative study design is adaptable, unique and changes along with the methodology. As a result, there are no prescribed techniques that must be used and that cannot be exactly repeated (Devlin, 2018).

In this study, a phenomenological design was employed. The researcher used or put into practice a phenomenological plan. Phenomenological design is a method of study that pinpoints the essence of participants' human experiences regarding development (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The researcher used this strategy because it was suitable for the specific subject matter. The study investigated the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance. Since phenomenological design may be utilised to outline the key elements of a development, it was effective for this study.

1.11 Research methods

This section discusses the population sampling methods employed in this study.

1.11.1 Population sampling procedures

A population is a group of people, entities, or other objects from which samples are taken to conduct measurements (Cohen et al., 2018). Both learners and teachers from township secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District participated in this study. According to Bergin (2018), a sample is a group of survey takers or participants chosen from a larger community. The research sample should be representative of the community to guarantee that the results can be broadly applied to the population. Furthermore, Bergin (2018) defines a sample as a subset or gathering of a larger cluster that is being studied.

Purposeful selection was used in this investigation. ARC (2015) defines "purposeful sampling" as an intentional effort to create representative samples by including groups or typical locations in a sample. Cohen et al. (2018) claim that before choosing a sample case, researchers assess its typicality or the existence of the required elements. The deliberate selection of samples is commonly used in qualitative research. They do this to create an example that satisfies their specific requirements. According to Panke (2018), purposeful sampling is used for a variety of research types, including to achieve representativeness, to permit comparisons, to focus on specific, unique subjects or cases, and to develop theory through the continued growth of data from various sources.

This technique was utilised because the researcher conducted the study with a specific aim and objective in mind. The total population of this study consisted of five secondary schools in Kutloanong Township, with a greater percentage of learners who are not involved in extracurricular activities. The sample for the study consisted of six individuals (three teachers and three learners) from the selected secondary schools. The selected participants were chosen because they had valuable information regarding this study.

1.12 Data collection instruments

Methods of data collection were employed in this study to produce findings with high levels of quality. One method of data collection that was used were interviews.

Therefore, interviews were employed since the participants were able to freely express themselves, allowing the researcher to learn more in-depth about the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, interviews were simple to conduct and yielded accurate findings. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner for this research. In semi-structured interviews, participants are contacted directly and requested to respond to questions about the research issue (Panke, 2018).

For this study, semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they gave participants the freedom to voice their opinions on any subject brought up during questioning in a direct and understandable manner. Bogdan and Biklen (2018) claim that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to examine how participants feel about how extracurricular involvement affects a learners' academic performance in township secondary schools, as well as how they communicate their opinions.

1.13 Data collection procedures

The researcher scheduled the participants' visits and study sessions. The researcher personally gave the instrument to each participant who agreed to participate in the interviews. The researcher set up face-to-face individual interviews, built rapport with the participants, asked the prepared questions, listened carefully to the participants' responses, and, depending on the situation, urged clarification or elaboration. Participants at different schools participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Each interview, which lasted roughly 30 minutes, examined participants' opinions regarding extracurricular activities and how they affect learners' academic achievement. A cell phone was used to record the interviews, and field notes were gathered to record other observations and feelings. Exploring related subjects was made flexible by the semi-structured method. The researcher had the data obtained from the interviews transcribed. Eight weeks were used to collect the data for this investigation.

1.14 Data analysis procedures

To discover the answers to study questions, Ormrod (2023) defines thematic analysis as categorisation, manipulation and summary of knowledge. The perception, perspectives and experiences of the participant regarding the influence of

extracurricular participation on learners' academic performance in township secondary schools are usually described in great depth in qualitative analysis. The researcher can then translate the recorded conversations (Ormrod, 2023). Terrell (2021) highlights six stages involved in analysing and interpreting qualitative data: gathering and organising data, describing results, reporting findings, defining the importance of the findings, and verifying their accuracy. The researcher used these given stages in this study.

1.15 Quality measures

The degree to which a check gauges what it purports to measure is known as validity (Markus & Borsboom, 2024). Truth is the degree to which conclusions drawn from an analysis of the data at hand accurately depict the phenomenon being studied. To guarantee the validity of the tool, the analysis objectives are periodically compared with the relevant data throughout the analysis instrument (Markus & Borsboom, 2024). The researcher provided the supervisor with analytical tools. So, they were able to evaluate their quality, construct validity and substance as associate degree specialists in research.

1.16 Ethical considerations

Owing to ethical considerations, the researcher adjusted to the traditional professional standards of study. Maree (2020) believes that ethics should influence views about what is correct and incorrect, proper or improper, sensible or unhealthy. When gathering information for a qualitative study, a researcher searches for a detailed account of a development. Additionally, participants are encouraged to discuss details of their ongoing, personal life experiences. High levels of participant disclosure and a tolerable degree of confidence are necessary for this strategy (Maree, 2020). The basic tenets of the research hold the researcher accountable for their moral choices, which include the following:

1.16.1 Informed permission

Throughout this procedure, people frequently make decisions about whether to (or not to) request a portion of the investigation after being informed of the information that

could possibly affect their choices. Participants have the option to refuse to offer half or to withdraw once the research has begun (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2016). The researcher provided participants with an informed consent form; so, they were aware of all the details of their involvement.

1.16.2 Privacy rights

A person's right to privacy includes the freedom to decide whether they want to take part in the study, fill out a questionnaire, or have an interview (Salkind, 2018). The more delicate the subject matter, the more protection is required for participant anonymity (Hwang, 2023). The researcher provided the participants with all the details regarding the research and clarified that participation is entirely voluntary, and that they had the right to decline without penalty.

1.16.3 Anonymity

Participants should not be able to be identified by the material they shared. Therefore, if the researcher or another person cannot identify the participants or the issue, they are regarded as anonymous (Hwang, 2023). The researcher did not gather any identifiable information about participants or associate their responses with their identities.

1.16.4 Confidentiality

This could be a method to safeguard a participant's privacy through confidentiality. This is a promise to protect participant information from being used in any manner that could lead to their identification or change how their identity can be deduced (Pascale, Lineback, Bates & Beatty, 2022). The study adhered to the suggestions given (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015). Moreover, researchers should avoid study locations where participants might feel coerced into participating. Therefore, the following should be borne in mind.

- Be mindful of participants' private rights.
- State the day and hour the researcher will arrive for the interview.
- Preserve their identity a secret.

The necessity for anonymity and confidentiality was explained to the participants, and they were urged not to disclose their names. The purpose of this study was also explained so that the participants would feel free to offer factual and trustworthy data. In this regard, the researcher did not reveal the names of participants or any other private information.

1.17 Limitations of the study

Research limitations are the possible flaws in a study (Drew, 2023). Every study has certain constraints, if researchers' disclosure of limitations is well-considered and presented, it does not always have to be a bad thing. The findings drawn from this study will not apply to other secondary schools because it was limited to Kutloanong Township secondary schools. The methodology of this study is another drawback. Owing to time constraints, only a limited number of participants were able to participate in the qualitative technique, which required interviewing people to gather data directly from them. Finally, the study had challenges in the availability of learners from various years because Grade 12 learners are not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities owing to their reduced academic year and daily extra classes brought on by the heavy workload.

1.18 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations, which reflect the deliberate choices researchers make to restrict the scope of their study, specify these boundaries (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The opposite of constraints, delimitations describe the thoroughly thought-out boundaries that specify what the study will and would not cover, whereas limitations draw attention to possible flaws. The effect of learners' participation in extracurricular activities on their academic achievement in secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District was investigated in this study. Therefore, this study leans towards educational psychology. Additionally, information from five chosen secondary schools in the Kutloanong area was collected. Since students in Grade 12 are required to remain in class until late at night, the data were collected from students in grades 8 through 11. Even though there are many parties involved in the schools, only the opinions of learners and teachers were considered.

The researcher deliberately included teachers who teach grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 as participants to establish an overview of how learners are affected across all grades, even though this study was focused on learners from grades 8 through 11. Teachers who were interviewed had extensive knowledge of curriculum and social issues, which expanded the research's reach because the focus was more psychological.

1.19 Chapter outline

This study is structured into five chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction - Provides an overview of the research, setting the stage for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework - Explores the underlying theories and existing research that inform this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology - Outlines the research design, methods and procedures used to collect data.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis - Presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data collected.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations - Summarises the key findings, provides recommendations and draws conclusions based on the research.

1.20 Conclusion

By addressing the study's introduction, significance, research issue statement, research purpose, questions, and objectives, this chapter has given the reader an overall overview of the study. A concise literature review, research design and methodology and the study's methodological limitations were also included in the chapter. The theoretical framework and literature review on the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in the extracurricular activities on their academic performance were covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the research gap, research questions, and objectives. The benefits of extracurricular activity engagement on secondary learners' academic progress are reviewed in this chapter's research. Agyekum (2021) asserts that extracurricular activities influence learners' academic success, and schools in the area should be conscious of this and take it seriously. Therefore, understanding the benefits of extracurricular activities for learners' academic progress in elementary and secondary education is more important than ever (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2021). This implies that secondary schools must ensure that learners are involved in extracurricular activities since it is evidenced that this exercise would enhance their academic performance.

Schools should investigate the effects of extracurricular activity programmes and how they might affect learners' academic performance before deciding to eliminate non-essential academic programmes. The primary goal of this project is to investigate the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in the extracurricular activities on their academic performance. Extracurricular activity definition, national and international views on extracurricular activity involvement in schools, effects of lack of involvement in extracurricular activities, and benefits of extracurricular activity participation and the theoretical framework for the study would be unpacked below.

2.2 Definition of extracurricular activity

Morris (2016) defines extracurricular activities as those that are not compulsory for academic credit but have a substantial positive impact on the learning environment. Sports, singing, music, debating, dancing, theatre, volunteering and other endeavours are examples of extracurricular activities. Schools may have a big impact by channelling the enthusiasm of both physically able and average youngsters toward extracurricular activities that will help them grow as people.

Habib (2018) argues that extracurricular activities are ones in which learners choose to engage, supplement the main curriculum and are not necessary for graduation.

Extracurricular activities are those that take place outside of the regular curriculum. Morris (2016) further defines extracurricular activities as academic or extracurricular activities that happen outside of regularly scheduled class times but are supported by the school and are not included in the curriculum.

There are many various kinds of extracurricular activities, including sports, clubs, government, learner publications, music, art and drama. There is no requirement for learners to be involved in extracurricular activities (Habib, 2018). However, Freeman (2017) argues that extracurricular activities have the same objectives as required and optional courses in the curriculum. However, they do provide opportunities that are not a part of recognised educational schemes. They give learners the ability to apply what they have learnt from earlier courses and learn about democratic ideals.

Metsapelto and Pulkkinen (2021) contend that schools offer three main categories of extracurricular activities. Discussion boards, journalism and other types of publication are included in the first group, which has a curricular focus. Learners could occasionally gain credit for the educational opportunities in this category since they are included in the normal school curriculum. Learners are required to be involved in extracurricular activities after school and outside of the classroom. However, co-curricular activities, which typically include artistic hobbies like drama, music, dancing and debating, fall under the second category. Some of these extracurricular activities, are supplements or extensions of the core curriculum, and call for learners' involvement after school hours (Habib, 2018).

The third category does not include any extracurricular activities. This includes groups like sports teams, cheerleading squads, and organisations, as well as clubs with a variety of interests, like language lessons, girl scouts and boy scouts. Conversely, Morris (2016) maintains that the school provides a third category of extracurricular activities that are either entertaining for the participants or competitive in character and provide educational opportunities not offered by the regular curriculum.

2.2.1 Background of extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities have always been a feature of teenage activities (Freeman, 2017). It has been established via numerous forms of research that extracurricular activities encompass a variety of activities like clubs, athletics, art, music, theatre, etc.

(Habib, 2018). School athletics, marching band, chorus, orchestra, social groups, academic clubs, dance music and theatre, and religious organisations are some of the extracurricular activities that have further been mentioned by Metsapelto and Pulkkinen (2021) as having an extensive impact on academic achievement in both primary and secondary schools. Morris (2016) asserts that involvement in extracurricular activities aids in the development of new abilities (such as time management, organisation and planning), the reinforcement or development of attitudes (such as discipline and motivation) or the receipt of social rewards that have an impact on personality traits in teenagers. Adolescents can accomplish both academic and extracurricular goals with the aid of all these advantages (Freeman, 2017).

2.3 The concept of academic performance

Education is considered a valuable public benefit because an educated population is seen as beneficial at the individual, public and community levels (Frame, 2019). Education makes it necessary for educational institutions to assist learners in their learning, since teaching and learning are generally seen as the two primary goals of modern schools. Teaching and learning have made it necessary to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of education, which is a recurring philosophical and practical challenge (Reynolds, 2019). Academic achievement as measured by grades received and a final degree conferred remains a major concern for stakeholders like learners and parents, notwithstanding this disagreement. Its importance is demonstrated by the volume of research studies that focus on the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic achievement.

Jansen (2016) contends that that test results are usually used to evaluate a learner's academic progress. The word "academic success" refers to the abilities and information that learners have acquired. Tests, portfolio evaluations and performance reviews are typically used to assess these (Reynolds, 2019). Increasing test results, which are used to gauge academic success, is one of the primary goals of a school. Jansen (2016) further argues that improving academic performance is the driving force behind the creation of schools and their purpose of educating the learners. Nonetheless, even with the emphasis on global conceptions of success, academic achievement is still quite important. It goes without saying that imparting academic

information is the primary goal of education. Nevertheless, since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* 20 years ago, there has been subpar performance during the present reform period (Klesse, 2019).

A person's performance with respect to the goals that centre activities in instructional environments, particularly schools, is measured by their academic achievement. When educational institutions define cognitive goals, they typically cover multiple subject areas, like critical thinking, or they cover the acquisition of knowledge and comprehension in a specific intellectual domain, like reading, science, numeracy, or history. Therefore, academic achievement should be understood as a multifaceted construct encompassing multiple learning areas (Jansen, 2016).

The meaning of academic success will change based on the measurements used because academic achievement is a broad term that includes a range of educational outcomes (Klesse, 2019). Indicators of academic success can be based on many different things. These include declarative and procedural information acquired through educational institutions, more curricular knowledge such as grades or test results, and cumulative knowledge such as degrees and certifications.

All criteria are roughly indicative of an individual's intellectual aptitude because they each reflect intellectual activity. In industrialised cultures, academic achievement is essential for all individuals. Ramey, Lawford and Rose-Krasnor (2019) contend that learners must demonstrate academic accomplishment, as determined by their Grade Point Average (GPA) or by standardised assessments like the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), to continue their education, such as by enrolling in a school. A person's capacity to pursue a profession following graduation is mostly dependent on their academic performance. It also has an impact on the degrees conferred to learners and their eligibility for postsecondary education.

In addition to its importance for the individual, academic accomplishment is essential for the wealth and development of a country. The strong correlation between a society's level of academic achievement and favourable socioeconomic development serves as one justification for conducting international studies on academic achievement, such as the Program for International Learner Assessment (PISA) run by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Fujita, 2019). The results of these studies include information on a variety of performance

indicators, which are used to assess the advantages and disadvantages of a nation's educational system and inform policy decisions. The GPA is typically considered when someone refers to "academic performance." However, a variety of factors may have an impact on a learners' academic success. Even though certain learners may not have graduated first in their class, they may excel on assessments like the SAT and serve as leaders in several learning communities (Ramey, et al., 2019).

2.4 Extracurricular activities and academic performance

It is crucial to consider how engaging in extramural activity might benefit learners while examining the variety of after-school activities they have available to them. Wiggins (2016) argues that involvement in extracurricular, voluntary activities boosts academic performance. This occurs because of the facilitation of the following:

- a) The development of social skills and positive social norms;
- b) Participation in pro-social peer groups; and
- c) A greater emotional and social connection to one's school. Extracurricular activities may boost learners' academic performance, involvement in school and overall well-being.

Therefore, extracurricular activities enhance their long-term educational success and discover that involvement may lessen problematic behaviours (Kanar & Bouckenoghe, 2021). It is also crucial to realise that taking part in extracurricular physical activities can improve learners' mental health by lowering stress, keeping them physically fit and making them feel better about their appearance in general (Wiggins, 2016). Those who are involved to participate in these activities expressed considerably improved evaluations of themselves than those who did not. Another argument for involvement of learners to participate in extracurricular activities that it might help them feel more confident about their physical and possibly social identities.

Involvement to participate in regulated extracurricular activities fosters social and academic growth in addition to academic success. Involvement to participate in the school's music program, as postulated by Reynolds (2019), reduces learners' feelings of alienation, encourages personal development, and provides a connection between home and school. Adolescents may benefit from having a social network and support

system tied to their schools (Wiggins, 2016). However, various factors, including the type of extracurricular activity, affect how well learners perform academically. For instance, learners who join athletic clubs typically have higher math, science and reading scores (Marsh & Kleitman, 2021). Extracurricular art and craft engagement also improve working skills and academic performance (Greenbank, 2015). Furthermore, involvement in intellectual clubs' results in improved academic achievement (Wiggins, 2016). Teachers can help learners to reach their own academic objectives by helping them to understand how engagement in a range of activities affects academic growth.

Metzl and Shookhoff (2020) point out that involvement in athletics is linked to several positive outcomes, including a higher grade point average, fewer disciplinary referrals, lower absentee rates, a decline in dropout rates, a stronger sense of school loyalty, a better opinion of the school, enrolment in academically challenging courses, a higher likelihood of attending classes full-time and graduation with higher aspirations for further education. Engaging in various activities, such as sports, has these positive effects. Conversely, Wiggins (2016) posits that when learners become overly preoccupied with extracurricular activities, parents and teachers may worry that learners will lose focus on their academics. Learners who are overbooked may be overcommitting to their education, which may result in them spending less time studying and getting ready for class. Sports competitors run the risk of suffering injuries that alter their lives. This represents an additional adverse consequence of engaging in extracurricular pursuits.

2.5 International perspective on learner participation in extracurricular activities

As mentioned previously that schools depend on their environments, teachers find it incredibly challenging to organise instructional programmes in township centres (Hass, 2020). Numerous studies have shown how township schools manage issues such as high staff turnover, low academic performance and achievement, major discipline issues among learners, drug trafficking, racial violence and high learner turnover (Fredricks, 2021). Therefore, to address some of these issues, maintain learners' interest in their studies and keep them safe, educational leaders incorporate a variety of extracurricular activities into the curriculum (Metzl & Shookhoff, 2020). It

is made abundantly evident how important extracurricular activities are to township secondary schools in the paragraphs that follow by the numerous case study talks.

On the contrary, offering extracurricular activities at schools has a long history in certain countries (Hass, 2020). European educational policy and practice have only recently begun to place a greater emphasis on the quality of extracurricular activities. For instance, Germany started pushing the all-day school in 2003, and since then the nation-wide distribution of such institutions has grown. The integrated school day, which incorporates planned extracurricular activities as part of the curriculum, had just been established in Finland to reduce learners' alone time. During this time, extended services at schools, such as extracurricular activities, were introduced in England to encourage cooperation between schools and families (Fredricks, 2021).

Nevertheless, in Switzerland, the Swiss educational system has undergone similar changes over the past ten years, even though this trend first appeared in the United States of America (USA) in the 1990s. After-school programmes are a common form of extracurricular enrichment in most of the countries featured in the special edition of the Journal for Educational Research Online (Himelfarb, Lac & Baharav, 2019). The recurring after-school activities are regularly managed by adults. They include both extracurricular activities like remedial classes and recreational activities like gardening, acting and athletics (Blomfield & Barber, 2019). Community service programmes are offered at schools by youth organisations like the scouts. No curriculum is typically followed by any of these activities and participation is not graded.

2.6 A South African perspective on learner participation in extracurricular programmes

The local community and its inhabitants have an impact on schools in South Africa, just like they do in secondary schools in townships around the world. The learner population in township secondary schools in South Africa has been shaped by the diverse populations that have moved to the country's townships since 1994. These populations include those who have moved there for other reasons, such as refugees, asylum seekers (also known as forced migrants), rural-urban migrants, documented and undocumented migrants, and others (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015).

Schools have been compelled to create remedies for the dangers of the neighbourhood because of the complexity of the ongoing influxes of individuals that have badly influenced the area around the school. Gang violence, crowded classrooms, xenophobia, low academic achievement, low extracurricular activity, damage to school property and substance abuse are some unfavourable aspects of South Africa that have gotten worse since 1994 (Chan, 2016).

Many township principals may find it difficult to develop academic and extracurricular programmes when township secondary schools must cope with such major external challenges (Fujita, 2015). This is because regulating the dynamics of the internal school environment can be difficult. It has been observed that it is vital to make the most of learners' interests, potential and spare time to reduce lethargy, which encourages bad conduct that is supported by the surrounding environment. Participation in extracurricular activities in secondary township schools is significantly influenced by the availability of such options.

Township schools do not have the funding necessary for learners to engage in extracurricular activities like sports, in contrast to suburban schools, which are well-resourced and receive larger tuition fees, additional support and contributions from private donors (Reynolds, 2019). Utilising suburban school facilities can be beneficial for city schools. However, the cost of getting to sporting events may be out of reach (Fujita, 2015). This is because many schools in the township rely on their capacity to retain learners for their long-term viability and financial stability. This objective is met by providing as many engaging sports and extracurricular activities as possible to encourage enrolment and retention (Chan, 2016).

Nevertheless, Camacho and Fuligni (2015) emphasize that even though principals in township secondary schools focus on learners' involvement in extracurricular activities and give learners the option to participate in extracurricular athletics, many learners still drop out of school. This is caused by a dearth of chances for outdoor sporting events and open area for sports fields.

2.7 Theoretical framework

The Institutional Theory provides the theoretical framework for studying how involvement in extracurricular activities influences academic success. A study of how

one organisation interacts with another served as the foundation for the Institutional Theory (Selznick, 1957). It also looks at the limitations and restrictions certain organisations place on other groups.

School sports departments need to be restructured as independent organisations under the jurisdiction of the individual schools and school districts to implement this strategy for extracurricular activity participation in the educational context. Learners who are involved to participate in extracurricular activities have a responsibility to interact with their authorities. Jepperson and Meyer (2021) claim that the Institutional Theory was expanded to consider both the cultural and cognitive aspects of how organisations interact with one another.

After the theory was developed, theorists put the organisation's validity, not only its presence, in the forefront of their novel change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The Theory of Institutionalism postulates that the conduct of an institution and the institution are related. According to this notion, extracurricular activities and learners' achievement are related. It is based on the idea that these programmes need to be monitored by schools and school districts and that they might have either positive or negative effects on learner achievement (Reeves, 2008).

Camacho and Fuligni (2015) claim that academics are becoming increasingly interested in how institutional logic, the concrete practices, presumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and rules that characterise a given social world, shape and coordinate behaviour. The effects of logics on macro-level results have been the subject of useful findings from research to date. For instance, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have shown how modifications in logics can result in alterations to organisational procedures and the establishment of new trade organisations. Existing research relies on a theoretical model that attempts to incorporate several levels of study, even though it largely focuses on macro-level outcomes. Blomfield and Barber (2019) support this perspective by specifically arguing that logics direct the attention of individual actors, which in turn influences macro-level results (Selznick, 1957). Nevertheless, most of these analyses (Reeves, 2008) do not investigate the psychological mechanisms by which logics alter individual attention and subsequent action, nor do they delve into the micro-level explanations.

Learners are typically provided with knowledge regarding appropriate behaviour and a range of possibilities for reacting in institutional settings, which moulds their own preferences and aims, according to the institutional logics' perspective (Selznick, 1957). It is crucial to explain the psychological processes people use to acquire and apply cultural knowledge to comprehend how people learn it and apply it to specific circumstances (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Moreover, to deepen the understanding of this process, Blomfield and Barber (2019) distinguished three mechanisms: identities, goals and schemas. These procedures link micro-level interactions with macro-level entities. Reeves (2008) has investigated how identities mediate individual interpretation of institutional logics (Selznick, 1957) and how institutional logics give goals that affect future action to better understand these mechanisms.

There is specific function that schemas play in this process, however, they have been the subject of far less inquiry. Therefore, a more thorough theoretical justification is required to explain how institutional logics relate to schemas and impact individual behaviour, given the pervasiveness and complexity of schemas in human activity (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

The Institutional Theory (Friedland & Alford, 1991) serves as an inspiration for the Institutional Logics Theory. Although the institutional theory was extensively considered, it also focused looked at the relationships between people, groupings of organisations and society. According to the Institutional Logics theory, every organisation has a core objective, language, set of values, motivation and identity (Friedland & Alford, 1991). The idea might be used for learners who participate in extracurricular activities. Learners can form an identity and a strong bond with the school through connecting with other learners and members of the community.

2.8 Structured extracurricular activities versus non-structured

It is crucial to distinguish between scheduled and unstructured extracurricular activities (Marginson, 2016). These fall into one of two categories: formal or casual. Formal or structured activities include things like school clubs, marching bands, chorus, team sports, and other extracurricular activities. Informal activities include things like hanging out with friends and watching television (Vukic & Zrilic, 2016).

The after-school activities that learners engage in might be either structured or unstructured. Blomfield and Barber (2019) define structured activity as an organised activity with an educational goal that is planned, directed and appropriate for the learners' developmental stage. Extracurricular activity (ECA) participation is just one of several decisions teenagers make with relation to their free time (Vukic & Zrilic, 2016). However, some of the learners who are involved to participate in extracurricular activities also take part in organised community activities like sports teams, learners' organisations or hobbies. Others hold down paying employment or devote more of their time to supporting their families by looking after younger siblings. On the contrary, unstructured activities, which are self-directed and typically take place while youngsters explore their environment, make up a significant portion of learners' lives.

Learners enjoy spending their leisure time talking to their peers about interesting topics such as the actions of other group members, fashion, music, and television shows in person or over the phone (Marginson, 2016). The connection that supports so many leisure activities is a keyway for friendship networks to form and a motivating factor for doing things (Blomfield & Barber, 2019). Learners gain social skills, safety and support, and a sense of happiness through friendships (Dunn, Dorsch, King & Rothlisberger, 2016). Furthermore, learners may benefit from a variety of chances for growth enhancement through participation in structured extracurricular activities that are not always present in the more confined context of education (Vukic & Zrilic, 2016). On the contrary, some unstructured activities can help learners to achieve their social, psychological or physical goals (i.e., their overall well-being) or even forecast their difficulty adjusting and unfavourable results.

Learners' involvement in extracurricular activities, both organised and spontaneous, has a significant impact on their overall development. Extracurricular activities, in the opinion of Singh (2017), aid in learners' personal growth and prepare them for challenging homework and an uncertain future. Learners in the townships engage in a range of extracurricular activities after school, including sports, reading, private instruction and group projects. Reading, trading, attending social gatherings, cleaning, and speaking on the phone with friends are the remaining activities. Therefore, it is imperative to look at how their involvement in various activities, both scheduled and impromptu, affects their academic performance (Marginson, 2016).

Normally, learners participate in extracurricular activities that help or hinder their growth. When learners engage in extracurricular activities such as completing homework, reading novels, or reading the daily newspaper, it will affect their academic performance (Marginson, 2016). It is believed that circumstances in which learners become addicted to playing football, watching cartoons on television, and many other equally "unprofitable" pastimes impair their academic performance in school. Furthermore, Singh (2017) contends that most learners that engage in extracurricular activities do so because they have good habits. Additionally, Gilliam (2018) that a learner's involvement in extracurricular activities may be contingent upon their academic standing and adherence to school rules. For example, schools may require athletes to meet a minimum course grade of a specific grade point average to be eligible to play a certain sport (Gilliam, 2018).

Learners who engage in organised extracurricular activities generally receive higher grades and perform better on academic assessments (Ryan, Dorsch, King & Rothlisberger, 2016). Compared to learners who participate in formal activities, learners who engage in a high volume of informal extracurricular activities have worse work habits and do poorly on tests (Marginson, 2016). Above all, Yarkwah (2020) emphasize that because learner athletes on school sports teams must dedicate a significant amount of time to practices, tournaments, fundraising and off-season training, learners enrolled in tough classes would not have the time to maintain high grades.

Conversely, along with a range of unstructured activities like hanging out with friends, doing housework, watching movies, listening to music, and taking part in social events like beach parties and traffic jams, learners participate in a variety of structured after-school activities. These include sports teams, drama clubs, group studies, reading books and writing poetry. As learners, their consistent engagement in these activities has an impact on their academic achievement (Marginson, 2016).

2.9 Types of extracurricular activities

The classification of activities into five categories by Dearman (2017) include pro-social activities, performance activities, team sports, school engagement, and intellectual clubs. Clark, Marsden and Whyatt (2015) have shown that engaging in

positive activities at school and in the community can help learners to succeed academically and develop their social and emotional skills in their early years of adulthood. However, there are varying viewpoints on the effects within each group.

2.9.1 Pro-social activities

Chan (2016) outlines that pro-social activities include those that involve religion, community service or volunteer work. Even though they are not explicitly related to schools, many learners prefer to partake in these activities. Clark et al. (2015) contend that these kinds of activities helped learners to create strong connections to their communities and high rates of leadership and pro-social normative experiences. It is important to note that although taking place inside of a school, these events are not sanctioned by the institution.

2.9.2 Performance activities

Performance-based events make up a sizable portion of high school activity participation. The school band, theatre and or dance are examples of these extracurricular activities (Alvarez-Bueno, Pesce, Cavero-Redondo, Sanchez-Lopez, Garrido-Miguel & Martinez-Vizcaino, 2017). Many refer to this group as being in the fine and performing arts, as well as art groups (Chan, 2016). Among the most prominent members of this group are the dancing line team, the autumn musical group and the marching band of the school. Owing to the increased recognition of clubs, various clubs relating to the arts, such as those for pottery, photography and painting, may also be included.

Chan (2016) has found that involvement in the performing arts was associated with both a higher GPA and a higher level of school enjoyment during the high school years. Participants also had a higher likelihood of enrolling in and finishing school (Clark et al., 2015). Furthermore, it has been noted that participation in performing arts programmes was associated with increased rates of alcohol consumption in the years after high school, as well as increased rates of suicidal thoughts and visits to psychologists by the time the learners were older.

2.9.3 Team sports

One of the most popular extracurricular activities in many high schools is sports or athletic teams. Participating in a team sport at a school can be characterised as team sports (Alvarez-Bueno, et al., 2017). Swimming, baseball, football, and tennis are a few examples of these, along with many other sports. According to Chan (2016), 62.1% of the Illinois high school respondents reported playing sports, which was a statistic that was consistent with many studies in the literature. There are several advantages to high school learners participating in sports. In addition to having a higher GPA and longer years of higher education, Chan (2016) found that people who participated in sports valued school more.

Participants had higher GPAs and stronger expectations for their schooling in general (Chan, 2016). Athletes showed lower levels of depression and greater levels of self-esteem than non-athletes, (Alvarez-Bueno, et al., 2017). Learners who expressed greater levels of initiative, emotional control and collaborative experiences were among the other findings (Chan, 2016). According to these learners, they discovered how to push themselves and that their emotions had an impact on how well they performed. Sports participants reported feeling this way 61% of the time compared to 36% of the time in other activities. Another encouraging point is that physical activity significantly reduced the likelihood of learners quitting even when there were several academic risk factors present (Clark et al., 2015).

2.9.4 School involvement activities and academic clubs

Owing to their similarities, research investigations have demonstrated that school participation activities and academic clubs should be combined. Academic clubs include things like debate, foreign language, math, science, and academic topic tutoring, whereas school involvement activities include things like learner governance, pep clubs and/or cheerleading (Freeman, 2017). These are sometimes combined into school clubs, and cheerleading is now frequently categorised under athletics. However, Clark et al. (2015) suggest that involvement in school clubs has been associated with improved academic adjustment, higher GPAs and junior year educational experiences. Being a part of these learner clubs also meant engaging in political activism as well as social and charitable activities. Not to mention, children had a higher chance of completing high school and going on to college.

On the contrary, it was shown by Fredricks, (2021) that when additional developmental experiences were considered, learners who participated in school involvement activities performed poorly compared to other extracurricular activities. The major difference in terms of emotional regulation experiences was compared to 19% of learners participating in academic-related activities, 34% of learners participating in all other activities said they had learned how to control their anger. Nevertheless, there are some extra benefits, but many studies concentrated on academic performance as the main advantage of school involvement and intellectual groups. However, Klesse (2019) also argue that individuals discover how to control their anger by engaging in academically related activities (Clark et al., 2015). Additionally, it was discovered that taking part in these activities had no effect on how frequently people used drugs, drank or skipped class. In a different instance, involvement in school clubs and extracurricular activities was solely linked to successful academic performance (Morris, 2016).

2.10 School climate

School climate and extracurricular activities Safety, social, teaching and learning, and environmental aspects of school climate are the four key elements emphasised by Martinez, Coker, McMahon, Cohen and Thapa, (2016). Various extracurricular activities may create a pleasant school climate, according to a review of the extracurricular research. Some extracurricular activities, however, might encourage certain aspects of the school's atmosphere more than others. The components of school climate that we expressly address here are safety, interpersonal relationships and school environment.

2.10.1 Safety

Within the school context, safety is referred to as a sense of social, emotional and physical security. Safe schools are characterised by low rates of physical aggression, verbal abuse, teasing and collective isolation (Martinez et al., 2016). Threats to safety might cause learners to skip class, which can hinder their capacity to study.

Ashbourne and Andres (2015) claim that partaking in extracurricular activities is related to lower rates of school misbehaviour and wrongdoing, even though little research has studied the association between extracurricular activities and feelings of

safety. Additionally, Klesse (2019) have found that in contrast to learner athletes, learners who participated in extracurricular activities connected to the classroom (band, learner government, yearbook, newspaper) are more likely to experience bullying. Therefore, taking part in particular activities may result in peers treating learners differently, which could alter how safe learners feel in a school.

2.10.2 Interpersonal relations

Interactions between people and a person's sense of connection are part of the relational aspect of the school atmosphere (Klesse, 2019). Higher self-esteem, better grades and psychological well-being are all linked to peer and teacher support (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015). Through extracurricular activities, learners can connect with like-minded peers and encouraging adults, which can lead to better learner outcomes (Martinez et al., 2016). There has not been much research done, though, on how particular extracurricular activities could influence these relational aspects of school environment, such as sympathetic or cooperative interactions with learners and adults.

2.10.3 School environment

Feeling taken care of and like an associate of the school community are two aspects of the environmental dimension of school climate (Martinez et al., 2016). In the study literature, the terms school connectedness and school belonging have been used interchangeably (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015). However, Klesse (2019) refers to school connectivity. According to Ashbourne and Andres (2015), on school connectivity, schools with higher rates of extracurricular activity involvement report having better levels of school connectedness.

Five activity clusters have been examined by Ashbourne and Andres (2015) using cluster analysis. These include activities centred on sports only, sports plus other activities, little to no involvement, mostly school-based, and mostly faith-based. Students who engaged only in sports reported feeling more connected to their school. However, the survey did not differentiate between different types of school activities, such as clubs or arts-based programmes. However, Sports-related activities have received the most attention in the literature on extracurricular activities, partly because they are the most popular among high school learners (Martinez et al., 2016).

However, given that learners engage in various activities like clubs and the arts, it is necessary to conduct a study on how involvement in a variety of activities affects learners' impressions of their sense of school connectivity and belonging.

2.11 The benefits of participation in extracurricular activities

In comparison to many other nations, an increasing number of learners in townships partake in extracurricular activities before and after school, but only a small proportion of learners in the Lejweleputswa District do so. The learning environment in schools has been greatly improved by extracurricular activities (Kulp, Pascale & Grandstaff, 2019). The growth of well-rounded learners is one of the many advantages that extracurricular activities provide. Participation in extracurricular activities can benefit learners in several ways.

First, learners who participate in extracurricular activities have chances to advance crucial abilities like time management, collaboration, leadership and problem-solving. The experiences of learners' improvement from partaking in extracurricular activities typically have a favourable effect on their intellectual, social and interpersonal development. For instance, when learners collaborate, they gain skills in leadership, negotiation, communication and conflict resolution. They also learn the value of critical thinking, time management, academic and intellectual competence, and other skills (Shaffer, 2019).

Second, extracurricular activities can give learners a respite from their academic schedule and a chance to recharge and relax. Participating in extracurricular activities aids in learners' brain development and improves their emotional health. Additionally, it supports their academic achievement for a long time (Kulp et al., 2019). Activities outside of the classroom also lessen behavioural and disciplinary issues. Learners can lower their stress levels, improve their mental health and boost their motivation for their studies by engaging in activities they enjoy.

Learners' may encounter issues that hinder their ability to study, such as issues with their schoolwork, being suspended from class and being prevented from moving on to the next grade level (Habib, 2018). Freeman (2017) investigated the improvement of self-concept brought on by physical activity. Physical extracurricular activities help to relieve the stress brought on by rigorous study habits. Learners maintain their mental

and physical fitness. Additionally, their bodies are in terrific form, which boosts their confidence and improves how they perceive their appearance. In addition, persons who engage in no physical activity at all do not possess these attributes.

In a study conducted by Alvarez-Bueno et al. (2017) 126 children aged eight to nine who participated in extracurricular physical activities were chosen at random. At least once a week, either during lunch or after school, each of these participants participated in a physical extracurricular activity sponsored by the school (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015). In addition, 63 more learners made up the second group, which did not engage in any physical activity. Those who engaged in frequent physical activity had a better self-perception. The researchers discovered a link between engaging in different types of physical activity and having a favourable impression of oneself. Furthermore, Chan (2016) also draws attention to the association between involvement in extracurricular activities and better-quality racial associations, a sense of agency over one's life and lower delinquency rates. To handle school-related delinquencies, extracurricular activities facilitate the development of crucial qualities like self-efficacy and responsibility.

Thirdly, extracurricular activity engagement among learners can lower a higher probability of participating in criminal activity and teenage pregnancy in adolescents. Fredricks (2021) contends that a lack of interesting extracurricular activities for learners is a major contributing factor to the high rate of violence in secondary township schools. It is being questioned how extracurricular activities affect violence in these schools. However, few studies have specifically explored the link between involvement in particular extracurricular activities and a drop in violent behaviour because it is simpler to pinpoint violent acts than to develop solutions.

Many academics, though, have looked at the connection between learners' effective academic and behavioural outcomes and their participation in extracurricular activities in general. For example, Chan (2016) have discovered that learners who participated in extracurricular activities and other pro-social endeavours consistently attained high academic standards and low rates of engaging in risky behaviour. Extracurricular activities may also help learners to stay away from risky conduct, including drug use, gang membership and other bad tendencies (Fredricks, 2021). The prevalence of

violence among learners in inner cities is caused by drug misuse, which extracurricular activities help to reduce.

Fourthly, learners who participate in extracurricular activities have an increased sense of community. Participating in extracurricular activities can provide learners a sense of community and belonging outside of their academic classes. A key element that favourably affects someone's psychological growth is belonging (Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017). According to Klesse (2019) academic achievement and school engagement were found to be positively impacted by school belonging. Learners could experience a loss of connection and a potential sense of isolation without this interaction. Learners who participate in extracurricular activities have more opportunities to engage with others outside of their immediate social group, which promotes the growth of friendships and social confidence. Learners who participate in extracurricular activities tend to be more prosocial and academically motivated than nonparticipants, and they are well-suited to encourage the formation and maintenance of friendships with well-adjusted peers (Dickinson & Adelson, 2016). Participation in extracurricular activities develops a peer group culture of shared values and objectives in addition to fostering friendships.

Sports and music are two examples of extracurricular activities that frequently have structures that encourage positive peer interactions and the growth of friendships (Schwartz, Cappella & Seidman, 2015). Youth often cite the chance to engage with peers as a key benefit of engaging in sports, band and other activities (Koretz, Yu, Mbekeani, Langi, Dhaliwal & Braslow, 2016). Interestingly, friendships between the youth who are involved in the same extracurricular activities are more likely to last than friendships with peers who are not involved in such activities (Schwartz, et al., 2015). This could be because of the structured activities' regular participation schedules (Dearman, 2017).

Lastly, extracurricular activities are vital in providing a healthy balance between work, play, and other personal hobbies. These can be maintained in a life that is said to be balanced. Life balance and recreational pursuits are good indicators of academic success in developing teenagers and may aid learners in maintaining an ideal level of productivity (Chan, 2016). Dearman (2017) argues that extracurricular pursuits may play a significant role in a learner's overall life balance. Learners can also socialise,

let off steam, and have fun by taking a vacation from their academic pursuits. The hypothesis that extracurricular activities really do create this balance needs more in-depth research to be proven, but it is conceivable that these activities do, in fact, foster the balance that is essential to their development and crucial for maximum academic effectiveness.

Amand et al. (2017) contend that participation might help learners feel more confident about their physical and possibly social identities. A learner's identity is greatly influenced by their social competency, and many of them emphasise the importance of friendships and socialisation in their lives. Learners who engage in extracurricular activities are often better able to form friendships, interact with others and develop their social skills. Therefore, learners' involvement to participate in extracurricular activities may also be seen as a sign of maturity and of self-affirmation. Dickinson and Adelson (2016) maintain that those who take part appear to have a strong sense of responsibility and dedication. As a result, it is argued that people who engage in extracurricular physical activities have a more positive impression of themselves than those who do not (Viau & Poulin, 2015).

Yeung (2015) discovered the advantages of learners' involvement in extracurricular activities and how it affects academic achievement. André et al. (2017) found that children who participated in extracurricular activities showed higher levels of academic achievement, better grades, more positive self-concepts, and higher test scores. Additionally, it has been discovered that participating children exhibit reduced rates of inappropriate behaviour, delinquent behaviour, drug and alcohol use, and school dropout (Yeung, 2015). Additionally, participating in activities allows learners to develop crucial abilities, like cooperation or leadership, which may benefit them later in life. Those who engage in activities are more likely to make friends easily, adapt to a new environment and demonstrate leadership based on their experience in extracurricular activities their schooling journey. Learners who participate in activities are less likely to engage in risky behaviours. For instance, Amand et al. (2017), have shown that learners who participate in pro-social activities from 2 to 8 p.m. are less likely to commit crimes or become victims of them.

Extracurricular activity participation can be seen as a sign of maturity and as self-affirming conduct. Learners who participate are very committed and have many

responsibilities. In this regard, it is unequivocal that extracurricular physical activity participants have a better level of self-awareness than non-participants (Urlings-Strop, Themmen & Stegers-Jager, 2017). Social skills are a significant component of a learner's identity, and many people report that friendship and socialisation are significant parts of their lives. Learners who participate in after-school activities frequently have more chances to interact with others, form friendships and gain social trust. Coinciding with this assertion, Camacho and Fuligni (2015) posit that learners who participate in extracurricular activities get better marks, perform better on standardised tests, are more educated, attend more regular classes, and have better self-images.

Additionally, Anderson and Mezuk (2015) report that participants had lower rates of drug and alcohol usage, dropping out of school, acting improperly in public, and criminal conduct (Habib, 2018). Participating in sports can give learners unique learning opportunities that improve their social perceptions. Athletes may perform better academically because of heightened academic expectations (Shaffer, 2019). Learners are more likely to experience poor outcomes, such as dropping out of school, suicide, substance misuse, or behavioural issues, if they are unable to identify with groups or are linked to criminal social groupings (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015).

2.12 Physical benefits of extracurricular activities in secondary school learners

Improved physical fitness and motor skills development are the two most physical benefits of extracurricular activities identified in secondary school learners, and they are explained in detail below.

2.12.1 Improved physical fitness

An active and healthy existence for a youngster is significantly influenced by participation in extracurricular activities. To raise a healthy generation today where obesity and inactivity are widespread, it is more important than ever to get learners interested in sports, make them like sports and help them develop a lifelong sports habit. Sports teams and dance troupes are only two examples of extracurricular activities that frequently entail physical activity.

Learners can strengthen their muscular strength and endurance, cardiovascular health, and overall physical fitness with these exercises. Maintaining a healthy weight,

preventing chronic diseases and enhancing general welfare all depend on frequent exercise. More importantly, there are compelling arguments that physical inactivity contributes to childhood obesity. There is evidence connecting physical inactivity to the onset of obesity in both adults (Kanar & Bouckenooghe, 2021) and children (Frame, 2019).

Schools have been emphasised as being crucial in helping children develop physical fitness and providing chances for physical activity, even while parents and communities are urged to take more responsibility in promoting youth physical activity (Reynolds, 2019). The consensus is that the best way to promote physical activity in the classroom is through physical education.

2.12.2 Motor skills development

Some extracurricular activities, like gymnastics or martial arts, put an emphasis on enhancing balance, coordination and motor skills. These movements are exact and need the development of fine motor, gross motor and hand-eye coordination. The improvement of these abilities can lead to greater physical agility and motor control in general.

2.13 Social and emotional learning impacts of extracurricular activities

Although most learners focus on the educational effects, learners' participation has numerous other benefits and advantages. Extracurricular activities highlight a variety of factors for participants, including a sense of community, connections with peers and adults, non-cognitive abilities and favourable effects on mental health (Bradley & Conway, 2016). Each of these things helps learners to gain social and emotional skills by helping them control their emotions, build and maintain relationships and accomplish their goals.

The entire social-emotional learning of learners encompasses both the abilities and qualities of the learners as well as the equally significant elements of a sense of school atmosphere, a sense of belonging and adult connections (Reynolds, 2019). Reviewing the effects of extracurricular activities on school-related variables, non-cognitive skills, mental health, peer and adult connectivity, and a sense of belonging will be covered.

2.13.1 Sense of belonging

Although there are various reasons why learners participate in extracurricular activities, belonging to a group, team, or organisation is a significant motivator for many of them. It provides an opportunity to spend time with friends or maybe meet new ones. It can also be a means for learners who are new to a school to make friends. A learner's social and emotional well-being is largely dependent on their sense of belonging, and this sense is also associated with superior academic, psychological and physical outcomes (Bradley & Conway, 2016).

Frame (2019) maintains that a sense of belonging is characterised by sentiments of inclusion, acceptance and support within the school setting. Additionally, it is noted that when learners feel more a part of their school, it helps to support their academic motivation, engagement and success as well as their sense of general connectedness. Snyder, Hemmeter and Fox (2015) found that participation in at least two activities increased learners' sense of connection to others at school and their sense of belonging. Additionally, Reynolds (2019) also discuss a sense of belonging and note that participation in extracurricular activities gives people whose prior commitment to their school is neutral, the chance to develop both a positive sense of belonging and an all-around voluntary connection to it.

Another study of Snyder et al. (2015) indicates that quality and character of school life are used to define school climate. Four factors have been taken into consideration while examining the school climate: safety, interpersonal interactions, teaching and the general setting. These four elements are what give a learner a sense of belonging and connection to their school. Compared to their peers who are not engaged, learners who take part in extracurricular activities feel more connected to and attached to their school. Further, Frame (2019) explored the interaction between involvement in clubs, athletics and the arts is conducted by Overall, it was discovered that there was no "stacked effect," which calls for a mixture of the different activities to make one feel more a part of the school.

2.13.2 Mental health

The learners' mental health has always been a major worry, and over the past several years, it has become increasingly common. Extracurricular activities can affect learners in a variety of ways, and more research is now being conducted to determine how they affect the overall learner. Bradley and Conway (2016) investigated psychological adaptation, reduced stress, increased self-esteem, and the effects of physical activity. It is also feasible that research may change in response to the pandemic in 2020, although no literature on this issue could be found after a search of the literature.

One of these methods involves a study on psychological adjustment (Snyder, et al., 2015). Bradley and Conway (2016) found that psychological adjustment is advantageous for athletes. Frame (2019) argues that high school athletes' good mental health in their junior year is probably brought on by their increased public profile and elevated status (Reynolds, 2019). Snyder et al. (2015) confirm that sports engagement is associated with lower levels of social isolation. Conversely, Klesse (2019) maintains that learners in their early twenties who regularly played sports reported improved mental health, lower stress levels and less depressed moods than those who never played sports (Bradley & Conway, 2016).

Sports seem to offer a clearer picture of favourable mental health characteristics, but engaging in other activities also demonstrates benefits. In fact, up to eight years following participation, prosaically behaviours led to improved self-esteem. But according to this study's findings, Klesse (2019) involvement in performing arts is also associated with greater rates of visits to a psychologist by the age of 24. Additionally, Reynolds (2019) have examined extracurricular activities from the viewpoint of a school psychologist. In general, they hold that extracurricular activities can all help learners to develop better mental health, including higher levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction, and social competence. Learners emphasise that this is most advantageous when learners are influenced by supportive social networks and capable adults.

Finding a hobby or activity in which learners are interested and willing to participate, especially if doing so gives them a sense of social status, is another crucial aspect.

When a learner is forced to participate in an activity or when that activity is chosen for them, the outcome may ultimately be the reverse, and our learners would not have a great experience. For school learners, exercise has a variety of advantages, including improvements in a few psychological and social aspects. Because of their better lifestyles, learner athletes specifically expressed higher levels of self-esteem than those who do not participate in athletics. Additionally, these learner-athletes reported better mental and emotional health ratings than non-athletes, indicating that they frequently felt at peace, happy and tranquil (Bradley & Conway, 2016).

Snyder et al. (2015) claim that learner athletes outperformed non-athletes in terms of social functioning. This scale evaluates learners' capacity to engage in social interactions free from the interference of either physical or emotional issues. The chance of injury was the only disadvantage identified for athletes when compared to non-athletes as argued by Snyder et al. (2015). In addition to having an impact on learning and physical exercise, Mosha (2017) assert that school closures have a range of negative consequences on mental health and well-being because of social isolation and a decline in social support. However, Snyder et al. (2015) further argue that while academic instruction has been maintained and even enhanced, mental health is now seen as a secondary concern. Reynolds (2019) believes that the social isolation policies in place have caused noticeably lower levels of physical activity. Bradley and Conway (2016) conclude that health and sports programmes should keep emphasising physical activity's advantages and providing solutions because of their study.

2.13.3 Peer and adult connections

While engaging in extracurricular activities often involves interacting with peers, every activity also involves one or more participants. Reynolds (2019) claims that involvement in any type of organised activity can predict a learner's friendships with classmates (Mosha, 2017). Learners are more likely to make connections and develop friendships the longer they engage in any one activity (Snyder et al., 2015). Participating in extracurricular activities can help learners meet a group of peers with whom they share interests and aspirations, which can strengthen existing friendships. As a result, participation can enhance a learner's sense of identity and sense of belonging to the school community.

Academic performance and participation in school-related activities have been demonstrated to be positively correlated. Administrators can use these events to foster enduring relationships with learners who are academically capable. Peers can also play significant roles with each other as models and encourage new norms and college attainment paths in school-related activities, helping to create high-achieving cultures (Reynolds, 2019).

Marsh and Kleitman (2021) assert that participating in any type of organised activity, usually has the capacity to connect children with peers who are academically motivated and have social capital, which can work as an incentive to adhere to school rules and regulations. Nevertheless, Snyder et al. (2015) contend that only sports can provide the social and emotional stability of peers, even though participating in other activities can aid in the formation of supportive peer relationships.

2.13.4 Non-cognitive skills

The non-cognitive abilities that learners acquire through involvement in extracurricular activities are one benefit that is frequently ignored. According to Morris (2016), involvement in extracurricular activities gives learners a way to develop qualities including organisation, self-control, delayed pleasure, promptness and attention to detail. All learners from all backgrounds can practice these behaviours because they can be learned independently of a learner's family background. When considering learners' academic and professional performance, Marsh and Kleitman (2021) argue that the non-cognitive abilities they acquire in school and through extracurricular activities may be even more crucial than the cognitive skills they acquire. This postulation with Morris (2016) that learners gain from having the opportunity to hone and develop these non-cognitive talents to aid them in their future academic and professional results. Furthermore, Bradley and Conway (2016) declare that extracurricular activities offer a fantastic setting for learners to hone their talents and put them into practice.

2.13.5 School factors

The school itself can undoubtedly have an impact on learners' participation in extracurricular activities. One of these is via reading the academic press of a school, which Bradley and Conway (2016) describe as the degree to which academic

accomplishment and attainment are prioritised. Fewer learners are likely to participate in extracurricular activities when the school places a greater emphasis on academic accomplishment.

In contrast, a school's environment is described as the level of comfort or security that learners or staff feel while they are there (Marsh & Kleitman, 2021). The learner body is more engaged at schools with a good school climate than it is at schools with difficulties, since the learners feel less safe to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, it has been observed by Blomfield and Barber (2019) that involvement levels in larger schools can be lower than in smaller schools. A social environment, or simply the social make-up of the learner population, is yet another factor. Even though a school's composition is not greatly influenced by it, it does have an impact. Particularly reduced involvement is seen in schools that serve underrepresented populations and those that are less affluent (Bradley & Conway, 2016).

2.14 The challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities

This section addresses the five most common challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities.

2.14.1 Structural constraints

Structural restrictions are a factor that has to do with the equipment and how the activity is set up (Metzl & Shookhoff, 2020). This component comprises the resources needed to carry out these tasks and reach their objectives, such as the equipment, facilities, resources, time, money and data. Bradley and Conway (2016) assert that the school's facilities influence learners' choices of extracurricular activities and admission to a programme.

The lack of facilities in many township schools prevents learners from participating in extracurricular activities in a range of sports. The types of extracurricular activities that a school can offer may be restricted by insufficient or inadequate facilities. For example, if a school lacks a gymnasium, it may be difficult to offer sports teams or physical education programmes (Fujita, 2019). Learners interested in those fields may have fewer options if their school does not have a science lab or art studio.

Some schools lack functional libraries, which has an impact on learners who are interested in debate, public speaking and book reviews because they must read books and conduct research on their topics to acquire helpful material. Some parents and learners choose not to participate in extracurricular activities because they are worried about their safety (Klesse, 2019). Participation in extracurricular activities may, therefore, be affected by infrastructure issues that threaten learners' safety. The infrastructure of some schools may not be utilised by learners because of dilapidated buildings, the materials are not of high enough quality, and the equipment is not in working order (Marsh & Kleitman, 2021). Most township schools' soccer fields are not well constructed and generally not safe. As a result, parents and learners may be reluctant to engage in activities held in dangerous settings.

Additionally, lack of resources and equipment can limit learners' ability to participate completely in extracurricular activities. Most schools, apart from extracurricular activities, have the necessary facilities, according to Fujita (2019). Additionally, he noted that schools do not have enough musical instruments on hand and instead rent the ones they require. Most workshops and seminars held at the district level are held in well-furnished auditoriums at some schools. Therefore, lack of adequate resources, however, has kept co-curricular activities in most schools from becoming popular. For instance, learners interested in music, sports or technology-related activities may have fewer chances if there are not enough musical instruments, sports equipment, or technical tools available.

Another barrier experienced by learners that prevents them from taking part in extracurricular activities is transportation (Abruzzo, Lenis, Romero, Maser & Morote, 2016). Learners could find it challenging to attend after-school events if a school is unable to offer transportation services. Marchetti, Wilson and Dunham (2016) contend that the type and timing of learners' extracurricular activities are influenced by the availability and cost of public transportation services. Public transportation is costly, and many parents cannot afford to pay for transport to sporting games and other extracurricular activities. Basically, schools often claim that the Department of Basic Education delays paying money into the schools' accounts, and they have difficulties funding learners' transport. Yeung (2015) emphasises that learners living in rural and outlying urban regions have the most difficulty in accessing educational opportunities, extracurricular activities and social contacts. All these elements have an impact on

how ready the school is to provide or prioritise conserving the areas and resources needed for learners to participate in specific activities.

2.14.2 Intrapersonal constraints

Intrapersonal barriers occur when a person speaks only to himself or herself while making references to something or an event. Wolniak, Wells, Engberg and Manly (2016) define this component as internal characteristics such as learner interaction, relationships among learners, or interactions between teachers and learners. When making decisions, choosing options, or outlining repercussions, these qualities will encourage a learner to speak only to themselves. In accordance with Schwartz, et al. (2015) empathy is the capacity to recognise and respect one's own feelings, desires, concerns and reasons.

Every learner has strong personal inclinations or dispositions that influence the activities they pick to do. The intrapersonal component describes the perception, consciousness and self-interest that learners utilise to select their extracurricular activities. Schwartz, (2015) have found that learners' perceptions of learning extracurricular activities are particularly negative since they are seen as uninteresting and time-consuming. This incident might make learners less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and more likely to spend their leisure time engaging in non-academic activities. Therefore, this makes learners feel pressured or disengaged, which stops them from giving the activities their complete attention (Wolniak, et al., 2016). Unquestionably, a welcoming and supportive environment can aid learners in participating in the extracurricular activities that their school or institution supports.

2.14.3 Interpersonal constraints

Bradley and Conway (2016) point out that interpersonal constraints are the existence of outside forces that have an impact on a learner, such as pressure, cultures, skills and talents. According to Mosha (2017), adolescence is a transitional stage of life that occurs when a child reaches the moment at which childhood ends and adulthood begins. As a result, people are frequently tempted by social contextualisation concepts, such as interacting with people and engaging in activities like drinking and napping during school hours or bunking classes and not participating in any school (Kinderman, 2016). This component refers to the support or influences that a learner

receives from others who are directly interacting with one another. Because learners do not interact with one another through a specific media or channel, it has a more direct nature that will help them make the right conclusions or choices. Research by Kanar and Bouckenooghe (2021) indicate that some learners would rather keep silent than muster the confidence to fully realise their potential. Parental involvement and teachers playing their role in extracurricular activities are very important.

2.14.4 Parental involvement

However, social influences, particularly those from parents, can assist learners in improving as individuals (Habib, 2018). However, most parents did not go far enough to encourage their children to take part in extracurricular activities. Research demonstrates that when families positively contribute to their child's co-curricular skill development, learners do better academically, behave better, graduate more frequently, and enrol in higher education in greater numbers (Kinderman, 2016). However, Moshia (2017) affirms that observing how their children use their leisure time, supporting their self-assurance and drive to excel academically, and getting involved in advisory, advocacy, and governance groups are ways that parents and other family members can have an impact on their children's social development. They can also have an impact on the work of schools by joining these groups.

However, many parents find it difficult to establish connections with schools at the secondary level. For instance, compared to primary schools, most middle and secondary schools have more practical impediments to parent involvement. Secondary schools are typically located far from home, larger and more difficult to navigate. Habib (2018) contends that there is frequently no obvious point of contact for parents who want to inquire about their children's co-curricular talent development or how they may assist because learners have several teachers.

Secondary schools are typically set up around subject-matter departments, meaning that learners (and their parents) have less direct contact with specific teachers and administrators. It is more difficult for the schools to form a partnership with the adults who deal with these learners outside of the classroom (Habib 2018). Secondary school learners become more independent of their parents as they transition through adolescence. Secondary schools must therefore collaborate with a wide range of

stakeholders, such as members of the community and possible employers, who have an impact on the extracurricular talent lives of these children, rather than just their parents.

2.14.5 Low economic status

Economic status is a predictor of academic performance and post-secondary success in learners. Shaffer (2019) has discovered that many learners from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds lack competency and infrequently reach high academic standing. Learners who originate from low-income families and are exposed to unfavourable social influences frequently feel helpless. Owing to this, teachers must find these learners' hidden talents and skills to help them achieve academic success (Hughes, Cao & Kwok, 2016). Shaffer (2019) has found that minority learners frequently experience social pressure to fall short of their potential. These learners can achieve measurable results by participating in extracurricular activities. Learners from low-income homes who participated in athletics tended to have higher educational aspirations than non-participants (Hughes et al., 2016).

It has been noted by Shaffer (2019) that involvement in extracurricular activities enables learners from lower-income families to interact with peers from higher socioeconomic levels. At-risk learners are exposed to peers who have more positive attitudes toward school through this encounter. The peer connections made and self-confidence developed from extracurricular activity engagement may, in turn, affect low-income learners' performance in the classroom. Burnett (2019) laments that most females are not participating in extracurricular activities because they are too focused on domestic work and home chores that are typically delegated to them by their parents or home situation. Kinderman (2016) further postulates that when young females reach puberty, they typically cease taking part in extracurricular activities. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, involvement in sports peaks between the ages of 10 and 13 and then steadily decreases until the age of 18 (Shaffer, 2019). Burnett (2019) corroborates this conclusion by pointing out that South African teenagers have alarmingly high obesity rates and are not physically active. Since adopting healthy behaviours offers a great chance for intervention, it is imperative to promote sports involvement during this stage (Habib, 2018).

2.15 Negative attributes of extracurricular activities

The alleged benefits of Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) involvement cannot be realised because of the negative aspects of ECAs (Bradley & Conway, 2016). Despite mounting data highlighting the value of taking part in ECAs, Shaffer (2019) have shown that ECAs have the reverse impact. Hughes, et al. (2016) claim that participating in ECAs may have an adverse influence on academic achievement for school learners. However, based on Bradley and Conway (2016) assertion, there is no connection between learners' academic success and their ECA membership. Learners who are not participating in ECA may have poor attendance, poor academic achievement and a bad attitude about school, according to another study (Bradley & Conway, 2016). Additionally, Hughes et al. (2016) argue that ECAs may have certain negative repercussions and learners should be aware of this potential concern and difficulty. Furthermore, Fredricks and Eccles (2019) found that participation in ECAs leads learners to disregard their academic responsibilities. The literature review reveals a widespread and intimidating array of these barriers in this area (Blomfield & Barber, 2019).

2.15.1 The extent of participation in extracurricular activities

Bradley and Conway (2016) argue that assuming too few or too many ECAs may have an adverse effect on learners, making them nervous, exhausted, easily agitated and unhappy. In a similar spirit, Shaffer (2019) points out that excessive ECA engagement interferes with learners' ability to develop intellectually and personally and seriously harms their academic performance. Hughes et al. (2016) discovered that most learners who participate in organised activities four to five days a week are negatively impacted, meaning they saw their family less and had less energy. Participants in ECAs also tended to use alcohol and illegal drugs at higher rates (Habib, 2018).

Shaffer (2019) also found that learners frequently sign up for too many different ECAs and prioritise quantity over quality, which prevents them from having enough time to actively engage with, make an impact on, and learn from clubs, teams, and organisations. On the contrary, Bradley and Conway (2016) emphasise that many ECAs could lead to grades dropping. Hughes et al. (2016) claim that taking part in

ECA may cause learners to become too exhausted to finish their homework and assignments.

Morris (2016) suggests that inactive lifestyles may be a dispersed well-being hazard aspect that could have a negative impact on learners' academic performance. Bradley and Conway (2016) discovered that most learners with low levels of physical activity had inactive lifestyles. These claims that the barriers to reaching the values described are still too much learner involvement, too little involvement or no involvement in ECAs.

2.15.2 Anti-social practices

Antisocial behaviour is defined as conduct that disregards other people and has the potential to harm society, whether on purpose or accidentally. Additionally, Freeman (2017) points out that anti-social behaviour includes murder, rape, using illegal drugs, being in cliques and abusing alcohol. Cecen-Celik and Keith (2022) claim that playing sports is positively related to drinking more alcohol during adolescence and early adulthood. This implied that sports could influence both law-abiding and antisocial behaviour.

Compared to sedentary individuals, female athletes reported higher rates of alcohol and drug use (Habib, 2018). Burkhardt (2016) also found that learners who play sports have the same likelihood of drinking alcohol as learners who did not participate in any extracurricular activities. Therefore, participation in sports does not always contribute to reducing social harm (Morris, 2016). According to Burkhardt (2016), learners may be adversely affected by the classmates they interact with during ECA. Cecen-Celik and Keith (2022) have shown that while ECA is beneficial for learners, interpersonal conflicts and fights between two or more teams are frequently unavoidable (Frame, 2019).

2.15.3 Supervision

ECA may be equally demanding for staff members and or teachers who manage them, according to Frame (2019). Hughes et al. (2016) claim that because ECAs are not always properly run, they may be hazardous environments. Kanar and Bouckenooghe (2021) argue that unsupervised ECAs could provide opportunities for gender-based

violence, bullying, unsafe sexual behaviour, sex scandals, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other risky behaviours, all of which would be detrimental to the reputation of schools.

2.15.4 Economic consideration

It can be difficult for learners from lower socioeconomic situations to join or participate in some ECAs because membership dues are rather high. In this context, Habib (2018) have discovered that many learners, especially those from low-income backgrounds, do not participate completely in a well-rounded educational experience because they lack the financial resources to do so. This implies that learner groups may form because of different income levels influencing ECA involvement. Freeman (2017) contends that participation fees and other costs, like travel costs, continue to prevent learners from taking part in ECA.

Frame (2019) claims that intercollegiate athletics are expensive, which frequently prevents learners from low-income households from participating. According to Burkhardt (2016), families in poverty frequently could not afford the additional expenses for ECAs, which had a detrimental impact on their well-being. This prevents patients from taking advantage of the ECPs' benefits for their physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. According to Hass (2020) this issue might be handled more effectively in nations where learner services were viewed as an integral component of school management than in nations where these ECAs are contracted out to specialised organisations.

Learners from lower socioeconomic status categories are less likely to participate in and receive rewards from ECAs (Fredricks & Eccles, 2019). This is because these learners' social environments may not provide the kinds of cultural capital that are essential for success, such as behavioural traits, language patterns, and an orientation toward education, in addition to high expectations or encouragement of academic aspirations. No matter their financial situation, all enrolled learners in a school are eligible to use ECAs, ensuring that education is still accessible to all learners.

2.15.5 Conflicting schedule

ECAs have a detrimental impact if learners do not have the motivation or time to study. In the same vein, Hughes et al. (2016) concur that learners who take part in nearly every ECA become exhausted and have little time for academic work. Hass (2020) argue that dual involvement in ECA spreads learners' time too delicately, inevitably harming their academic performance. This could be a factor in Hughes et al.'s (2016) contention that ECA has a detrimental impact on academic attainment. Learners who engage in extracurricular activities (ECAs) like athletics may find themselves in a catch-22 situation because these activities demand time, which interferes with academic rituals (Helm, 2020). This implies that learners who engage in ECA may experience negative effects, particularly if they engage in many activities concurrently.

2.15.6 Narrow identity

Metsapelto and Pulkkinen (2021) found that learners frequently refer to themselves in terms of their ECAs identifications and give little thought to the academic duties that they play as learners. It also appears that this perception is harmful to learners' academic lives. Helm (2020) points out that the learner is most typically recognised as an athlete rather than a learner in circumstances where the association between identification and GPA is consistently unfavourable. Cecen-Celik and Keith (2022) found that successful academic players are pushed to emphasise their status as athletes more so than any other pertinent role. It is obvious that learners must constantly remind themselves of the reason they are in school, and that reason must not be overpowered by any other variables, including ECAs.

2.16 Effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities

In comparison to many other nations, an increasing number of learners in townships participate in extracurricular activities before and after school. However, the researcher has observed that only a small proportion of learners in the Lejweleputswa District do so. Research reveals that through extracurricular pursuits, learners refine skills like creativity, problem-solving and collaboration (Yongshun & Fernando, 2024). Additionally, the growth of well-rounded learners is one of the many advantages that extracurricular activities provide. As indicated by the studies currently in publication,

learners who participate in extracurricular activities have more innovative thinking outcomes (Yongshun & Fernando, 2024).

Lack of participation in extracurricular activities can affect learners in several ways. First, learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities could miss out on chances to advance crucial abilities like time management, collaboration, leadership and problem-solving (Fredricks & Eccles, 2019). The experiences learners gain from participating in extracurricular activities typically have a favourable effect on their intellectual, social and interpersonal development. For instance, when learners collaborate, they gain skills in leadership, negotiation, communication and conflict resolution. It has been demonstrated that learners who participate in extracurricular activities enhance their academic performance, foster stronger connections, foster work-life balance, and build resilience and well-being over the long run (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017).

Second, learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities do not get an opportunity to take a break from their academic schedule to recharge and relax (Cecen-Celik & Keith, 2022). This can lead to stress and emotional breakdown. Adolescents may face obstacles that make it difficult for them to learn, like problems with their assignments, being expelled from school, or not being able to advance to the next grade. Learners can lower their stress levels, improve their mental health and boost their motivation for their studies by engaging in activities they enjoy. Holdsworth, Turner and Scott-Young (2018) concur that extracurricular activities are associated with resilience and managing life stresses.

Third, it is more likely that learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities will be left to slack off, feel alone and act out. Owing to the enhanced sense of peer belonging, involvement in extracurricular activities is associated with favourable personality and social traits (Oberle, Ji, Guhn, Schonert-Reichl & Gadermann, 2019). Additionally, using the social bond hypothesis, Neely and Vaquera (2017) contend that learners pick up social norms through involvement in extracurricular activities. However, this can be accomplished through involvement in socially acceptable activities, connectedness to people, belief in society's conventional value system and dedication to traditional activities that discourage delinquent behaviour. Likewise, O'Flaherty, Baxter and Campbell (2022) believe that extracurricular activities decrease

the probability of delinquent actions by providing learners with an alternate means of occupying their free time with constructive pursuits.

Building on community involvement and appreciating community norms and rules, extracurricular activities give learners positive interactions with adults (Neely & Vaquera, 2017). These principles are in line with Hirschi's social bond theory, which contends that good interactions with teenagers offer an opportunity to improve learners' sense of belonging to the school and, consequently, lower crime rates (Cecen-Celik & Keith, 2022; Neely & Vaquera, 2017). To handle school-related delinquencies, extracurricular activities aid in the development of crucial qualities like self-efficacy and responsibility. Therefore, social skills are an essential component of a learner's character since socialization and camaraderie are also important aspects of a learner's existence. Learners who participate in extracurricular activities have more opportunities to socialise with other learners outside of their present social circle, which fosters the growth of friendships and social confidence. Engaging in these activities helps learners to develop self-discipline and maturity.

Fourthly, behaviour is another way that extracurricular activities impact learners' academic achievement. The likelihood of behavioural issues is higher among learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities. Hence, O'Flaherty et al. (2022) argue that extracurricular activities decrease the chance of delinquent behaviour by providing learners with an alternate means of occupying their free time with constructive pursuits. Furthermore, O'Flaherty et al. (2022) learners who do not take part in extracurricular activities tend to lack discipline, ranging from being destructive in class to bunking classes, and consequently, extracurricular activities help to address disciplinary and behavioural issues. However, Cecen-Celik and Keith (2022) strongly believes that learners who participate in extracurricular activities at school are initially perceived as being more capable than those who do not. When comparing similar individuals who participated and those who did not, there was minimal indication of selection effects in all the areas covered by the person-oriented study. In addition, in township schools, many sports are run by an unskilled, unqualified, and untrained teachers who also enjoy playing a sport, usually soccer (Driessens, 2015).

Finally, a lack of extracurricular activity engagement among learners is closely linked to a higher probability of participating in criminal activity, substance abuse,

absenteeism, school dropout and teenage pregnancy (Balashova-Kostadinova, 2022). Moreover, juvenile children who are denied the opportunity to belong to a certain group are more likely to experience poor outcomes, such as disciplinary problems, drug misuse, dropout, and in severe cases, suicide (Balashova-Kostadinova, 2022). In addition, prior research gives evidence that learners who have strong relationships with extracurricular activities are less likely to take substances (Driessens, 2015). Furthermore, Driessens (2015) believes that a lack of interesting extracurricular activities for learners is a major contributing factor to the high rate of violence in secondary township schools.

It is being questioned how extracurricular activities affect violence in these schools. However, few studies have specifically explored the link between involvement in particular extracurricular activities and a drop in violent behaviour because it is simpler to pinpoint violent acts than to develop solutions. Many academics, though, have looked at the connection between learners' effective academic and behavioural outcomes and their participation in extracurricular activities in general. For example, Fujita (2018) discovered that students who participated in extracurricular activities and other pro-social endeavours consistently attained high academic standards and low rates of engaging in risky behaviour. Extracurricular activities, in the opinion of Dorsch, Smith and Dotterer (2016), may help learners to stay away from risky conduct, including drug use, gang membership and other bad tendencies. The development of violence among learners in inner cities is caused by drug misuse, which extracurricular activities help to reduce (Fujita, 2018).

2.17 Extracurricular activities to promote reflective learning

Barge (2015) believes that the new idea of education centred on sustainability is presently used to structure higher education. To achieve this, it is necessary to employ teaching and learning strategies that inspire learners and raise their awareness of the significance of sustainable development. Key topics, including disaster risk, poverty alleviation, and sustainable consumption, must be covered in this kind of teaching. Designing courses that not only put an emphasis on learner learning but also include reflective learning materials that encourage reflection on daily learning and encourage learners to act responsibly, holistically, and in the future is crucial (Abruzzo, Lenis, Romero, Maser, & Morote, 2016).

Forneris, Camiré and Williamson (2015) used the experiential learning model to define learning as a process of transforming experience into knowledge. Fujita (2018) has created a cyclical learning model with four stages: active experimentation, reflecting observation, tangible experience and abstract conception. The concept states that a process must be completed in which experience serves as the foundation for learning and reflection. Forneris et al. (2015) claim that learning happens when self-reflection enables a person to truly learn from their own experience.

According to Abruzzo et al. (2016), learning is more of a process of knowledge production, where reflective learning plays a crucial role. Thinking and action are in conversation because of this reflective activity. Learners who successfully combine theory and practice acquire specific abilities that help them to comprehend events more clearly and generate their own meaning. There are numerous definitions for the word reflection. Dorsch, et al. (2016) state that reflection is a mental process used when there is no obvious answer to a relatively complex or unstructured problem. Reflection, according to Abruzzo et al. (2016), enables learners to analyse their beliefs and sense of self.

Forneris et al. (2015) further emphasised that because reflection begins in a condition of uncertainty or perplexity, it is a search-and-inquiry process designed to uncover information that will dispel uncertainty and ease perplexity. For this reason, Forneris et al. (2015) argue that unstable and perplexing circumstances are where the reflective process typically starts. In these circumstances, a situation is assessed and understood by questioning and investigation as opposed to acting according to trial and error. Additionally, reflection gives rise to the opportunity to be conscious of one's own behaviours, learn from them, and enhance them.

Dorsch, et al. (2016) emphasise that there are two significant temporal components that pertain to the time of replication: reflection-in-action (during the experience) and reflection-on-action (after the experience). The first is the reflection that takes place while the action is being performed. The second gives an experience meaning after it has already happened. This type of reflection can take place during any of the two stages of the experiential learning model: the reflective observation stage, during which an event is given meaning, or the abstract conceptualisation stage, during which concepts or theories are developed.

Therefore, reflection may be characterised as engaging in a cognitive process to draw lessons from experiences. It can be carried out either by solitary reflection or in cooperation with others. Instruments like portfolios or reflective journals are utilized for individual reflective learning, where degrees of reflection can be assessed using narrative formats. The level of reflection in these tools varies depending on the learner's capacity to pose pertinent queries that would result in understanding (Abruzzo et al., 2016).

When it comes to reflective learning in groups, this might either involve interacting with peers or with an expert teacher who facilitates the process. Forneris et al. (2015) believe that learning is a process of joint building that takes place throughout interaction. In this sense, conversation is a crucial part of meeting someone since it enables the creation of shared meanings based on experience. It can be done using a variety of techniques, including focus groups, internet forums and lectures.

Communication, teamwork and feedback between teachers and peers are essential components of this kind of reflective learning. Learners encourage reflective processes that help them better understand themselves, their needs and issues, as well as their unique strengths and limitations, when dealing with others. Additionally, these procedures help learners find resources and ways to deal with their own disputes, difficulties and concerns. To give the participating learners security, it is crucial for this process to work that an atmosphere built on trust and positive ties be created (Dorsch, et al., 2016).

The process of reflection necessitates stimulation, encouragement, monitoring and instruction. As a result, the educational teacher's role is crucial in encouraging reflective learning. The teacher should foster an atmosphere in the classroom where learners feel comfortable in speaking their minds and reflecting on their actions through dialogue and the development of a culture of mutual trust (Weininger, Lareau, & Conley, 2015). Therefore, reflective learning must be introduced, developed and fostered by the teacher. Peer relationships are crucial to the learning process as well. To give the learning process and the learner experience meaning and ultimately to create reflective processes where other people's points of view are digested, traded, and studied, sharing reflections, feelings, ideas, and experiences with others, is an essential first step (Snellman, Silva, & Putnam, 2015).

The significance of reflective learning in academic areas connected to education, health, social work, and business has been extensively studied in the last two decades. Most of these studies have only covered academic topics. The potential for ECA to encourage introspection, however, is drawing more attention. ECAs are outlined as voluntary extracurricular pursuits that supplement academic instruction and advance the social, professional, and personal growth of learners (López Castedo, Lomba Portela, Pino Juste & Pumares Lavandeira, 2016).

Sports, cultural, humanitarian, spiritual, and aesthetic pursuits, as well as learner clubs, are included in this classification. ECAs excel in fostering environments that foster critical thinking, conflict resolution expertise and contemplation on moral principles. In fact, Fujita (2018) concluded that learners who engaged in ECA had higher reflective abilities than those who did not. Furthermore, it was asserted that taking part in ECA encouraged contemplation and allowed learners to get the most out of their extracurricular activities.

2.18 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the definition of extracurricular activity, the concept of academic performance and extracurricular activities and academic performance. It also discussed the international perspective on learner participation in extracurricular activities, the South African perspective on learner participation in extracurricular programmes and the theoretical framework employed in this study.

It further explained structured extracurricular activities versus non-structured, types of extracurricular activities, school climate and extracurricular activities. Also, the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities, physical benefits of extracurricular activities in secondary school learners, social and emotional learning impacts of extracurricular activities were discussed. The challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities, negative attributes of extracurricular activities and extracurricular activities to promote reflective learning were addressed. The next chapter will address the research methodology that will be used to collect data for this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights how I conducted this research step-by-step. Most importantly, it lays out processes that I followed when I gathered and analysed data (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the research approach, paradigm, design, target population, sampling strategies, data collection instruments, methods, and processes; data analysis; ethical considerations; study limitations and delimitations; and study significance are all covered in this chapter.

3.2 Research approach

Creswell and Creswell (2018) define a research approach as a collection of strategies and protocols for conducting research that vary from broad conjectures to methods for collecting, analysing and interpreting data. The research method is determined by the nature of the study problem. The section that follows describes the study design that was used using a qualitative method.

3.2.1 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative method was used because it is appropriate for social research that might have exhausted the participants' natural surroundings (Punch, 2015). Tuffour (2017) asserts that instead of focusing on the "how much" and "how many" queries that quantitative research favours, qualitative inquiries are inductive and seek to answer the "what," "why" and "how" questions. This kind of primary research, known as qualitative inquiry, entails collecting data straight from people (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine & Walker, (2019), through investigating and comprehending the interpretations individuals make of their experiences (Tuffour, 2017).

This study is categorised as qualitative. The use of qualitative methods enables a thorough investigation of the meanings, experiences and perspectives that learners and teachers ascribe to extracurricular involvement and how it positively affects academic achievement. The fundamental characteristics of qualitative method perspectives allude to conducting it in the participant's surroundings, relying on interviews conducted rather than books, being an insightful approach to understanding people's viewpoints, and maintaining a dynamic design as new data and additional

sources become available (Silverman, 2013). When undertaking a qualitative study, researchers deal with people's subjective experiences in the social realm. People's "understanding of reality" might alter over the years and in various social settings (Mireanu, 2021).

A qualitative inquiry mainly depends on the words or tales the participants provide to researchers to record and comprehend their viewpoints (Creswell & Poth 2018; Liamputtong 2020; Patton 2015). As noted by Liamputtong (2020), qualitative research has thus also been recognized as "the branch science." There are certain traits that set qualitative inquiry apart (Creswell & Poth 2018; Rossman & Rallis 2017). When it is necessary to give voice to the "silenced voices," qualitative research is used. Researchers can pose questions and get answers through qualitative inquiry that may be challenging or impossible to do using a quantitative technique (Hesse-Biber 2017; Liamputtong 2020).

Consequently, since the researcher is curious about the participants' opinions, sentiments and experiences concerning the impact of extracurricular involvement on learners' scholastic achievement in township secondary schools, the investigator employed a qualitative technique for this inquiry. This technique enhances the researcher's comprehension of individuals' views, opinions, actions, behaviours, viewpoints and values (Martens, 2015). Three research procedures are distinguished by qualitative researchers, namely, explanatory, descriptive and exploratory.

Explanatory research applies where a problem is well-defined and described; it may be intriguing to understand the rationale behind the present situation (Nayak & Singh, 2015). The goal of explanatory research initiatives is to explain "why." When conducting research to provide an explanation, the researcher looks for causes and rationales rather than merely focusing on or presenting a subject.

Nayak and Singh (2015) further highlight that descriptive research is an attempt to give a precise explanation of how a community's or a set of people's characteristics relate to their attitudes, beliefs, feelings and other characteristics. To get further insight into a phenomenon that the researcher is somewhat familiar with but would like to learn more about, the researcher will choose a descriptive research design. Descriptive research projects, therefore, need to include hypotheses (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

Reviewing existing research, data, and/or literature is the first step in exploratory research. Qualitative methods like focus in-depth interviews, casual conversations, focus groups and case studies can also be utilised. As a result, the information gathered is primarily qualitative in character (Nayak & Singh, 2015). It is not realistic to apply the findings of exploratory research to the whole population. Studies that conduct exploratory research lack a hypothesis.

Developing hypotheses or formulating an issue for a more focused inquiry are the goals of exploratory investigations. Although exploratory research yields inconclusive results, it can nonetheless yield important insights into a particular issue. It is also possible to conduct an exploratory study to increase the researcher's familiarity with the phenomenon they want to explore (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

Creswell (2007) argues that to research a population or group, find variables that can be measured, or uncover voices that have been silenced, the researcher must engage in exploration. These are all valid reasons why the researcher employed an exploratory approach to explore a topic instead of relying on outcomes from previous research studies or using preset information from literature.

The research paradigm for this study would be the focus of the section that follows.

3.3 Research paradigm

The word paradigm has been broadly defined by numerous academics. The Greek term, *paradeigma*, meaning pattern, is where concept originates (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For instance, a paradigm is defined as a viewpoint that influences the way researchers approach a research topic and frames it (Keeves, 2017). Allemang, Sitter and Dimitropoulos (2022) believe that a paradigm is a set of beliefs about the nature of an issue in question and an agreement on the most effective way for examining it.

Burns (2014) claims that a paradigm is an established approach of looking at a phenomenon under investigation or the world from a certain perspective. Paradigms, in their most basic form, are the researcher's worldview, set of values and methodology. The researcher's thoughts and beliefs about the subjects they investigated would then direct their efforts in terms of research. Stated differently, the paradigm that is employed guides the researcher's work, encompassing techniques for data gathering and interpretation.

Research paradigms comprise four philosophical components, which are methodology, axiology, ontology, and epistemology.

The process employed when conducting the investigation is known as methodology (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). How humans explore the world is another way to characterise methodology (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The central query in methodology is: *What is the process of knowledge acquisition?* (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). A study's methodological approach must align with its ontological and epistemological positions.

Axiology addresses the basis of ethical conduct. The Greek word, *axios*, which signifies value, is where this term comes. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) claim that it refers to ethical decisions that ought to be considered while structuring a study project. For this reason, it is referred to as the theory of value. It comprises recognising, evaluating, and understanding concepts of proper and improper behaviour in connection to the research. It considers the values the researchers will assign to the different study components, the participants, the data, and the audience with whom the findings are presented.

The study of ontology is concerned with existence (Gilyazova, 2019), social structures (Bryman, 2012) and the essence of reality (Gilyazova, 2019). Ontological perspectives, as laid out by Nayak and Singh (2015), represent various theories on what is and is not real. Antwi and Hamza (2015) provide more elucidation, defining ontology as the researcher's method of defining reality and truth. Lincoln and Guba (2013) declare that ontology deals with these questions: "*What is the nature of reality?*" and "*What is there that can be known?*" This study poses questions such as: "What are the effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities?", "What are the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities?" and "What are the challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities?"

The area of philosophy that studies knowledge and cognition is called epistemology. The Greek word for "*knowledge*," *ēpistemē*, is from which the name originates. The term "*theory of knowledge*" may also appear in literature (Benton & Craib 2010). Gray (2014) argues that the focus of epistemology is the legitimate and sufficient forms of knowledge. Nayak and Singh (2015) believe that what and how humanity can know about reality are the topics of epistemology. Ontology is, at the potential of oversimplification, the study of what is real or possible, whereas epistemology is the

study of knowledge. In fact, the Greek word episteme, which means knowledge, is where the English phrase originates.

When researchers inquire, "What is knowledge?" for example, "How can I learn things?" Epistemological queries are posed with "How can I be sure of my understanding? And to what extent is human understanding limited? For instance, this study sought to establish the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on academic attainment and to comprehend the effect of extracurricular activities on academics. Additionally, the study to identify what kinds of knowledge and skills learners acquire from extracurricular activities that benefit them in their academic endeavours.

Keeves (2017) reveals that research paradigms can be categorised as constructivism, positivism or interpretivism. Avramidis and Smith (2015) claim that constructivism is a philosophical perspective that holds that humans learn from their experiences and surroundings. Hesse-Biber (2017) adds that researchers who specialise in qualitative studies explore the meanings that people construct. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasise the interest that qualitative researchers have in how people interpret their experiences and the world around them. Rossman and Rallis (2017) maintain that researchers who use qualitative techniques are perceived as constructivists who seek real-world answers to their questions before interpreting what they observe, hear and read about their surroundings. They attempt to elevate the voices of those who are socially and politically marginalised.

A positivist paradigm relies on measurement and reason, maintaining that knowledge can be discovered by impartially watching behaviour, action or reaction. Positivism holds that if something is not quantifiable, it cannot be known with certainty. Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) further explain that reality is also said to be measurable, objective and given. In this way, the world is led toward a fundamental objective truth (Bunnis & Kelly, 2010). Reality is seen as unchanging and depending on universal laws, as opposed to static and fixed (Bunnis & Kelly, 2010). (Hughes, 2010).

Interpretivism is a "response to the over-dominance of positivism" (Abu, 2022). Interpretivism rejects the notion that there is a single, verifiable reality that exists independently. Interpretive ontology is anti-foundationalism. It declines to establish

any universal, stable (or basic) principles by which reality can be broadly understood (Abu, 2022). Conversely, interpretivists maintain that many realities are social constructs. Truths and realities are created, not discovered. One can never know reality exactly because it is constantly mediated by society's perceptions.

Burns (2014) asserts that research that adheres to the interpretivist theory frequently possesses the subsequent attributes. These include the admission that a person is unable to comprehend society from a personal viewpoint, multiple worlds are believed and reality is socially constructed. This also entails having an awareness that interactions between the researcher and study subjects cannot be avoided, knowledge and understanding depend on a grasp of the context. Lastly, there may be values associated with the idea that discoveries lead to knowledge; so, such values need to be stated explicitly.

This is an interpretative study because the researcher explored how involvement in extracurricular activities impacts learners' academic performance. Since the researcher adhered to the idea that "through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher" is how social issues should be examined (Devlin, 2018), interpretive methods were applied. Interpretative technique seeks to understand social phenomena in relation to their environment.

Qualitative data is obtained by methods employed by interpretive researchers. Although numerical data is not the main source of information, it may be used. Observations, field notes, personal notes, papers, and open-ended interviews with varying degrees of structure (standardized, semi-standardized, and informal conversational interviews) are a few instances of data collection methods that yield qualitative data (Rehman & Alharti 2016). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and had in-depth discussions with the participants for this study.

The following section would cover the research design.

3.4 Research design

Different techniques used to gather knowledge can be developed on top of a study design. The researcher's decisions and activities within the qualitative design result in the study design that is most appropriate throughout the study process (Devlin, 2018). Within the context of a qualitative study, "design" encompasses the whole process of

research, from ideation of a topic to drafting approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The qualitative study design is adaptable, unique and changes along with the approach. Consequently, there are no predetermined procedures that need to be followed and cannot be precisely repeated (Devlin, 2018).

This study employed a qualitative approach. When the qualitative method is used, the researcher's decisions and actions within the qualitative design result in the research methodology that is most appropriate to the inquiry throughout the research process (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). A phenomenological plan had to be put into practice to pinpoint the essence of participants' human experiences regarding development (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). This strategy was used because it was suitable for this specific subject matter: the impact of extracurricular participation on learners' scholastic achievement in township secondary schools. Establishing the essence or structure of an experience is the goal of phenomenology. The researcher can get as near to comprehending the phenomenon in question or the circumstances that gave rise to shared experiences as feasible by utilising important phenomenological ideas like epoch, phenomenology scaling down, horizontalization and creative variation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The next section delves into research methods and techniques, commencing with the intended target population and the sampling techniques.

3.5 Target population and sampling techniques

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) define a population as a group of people, things, or other entities from whom samples are drawn for measuring purposes. Panke (2018) argues that sampling in research is solely contingent on the researcher's judgment of which members of the population are most likely to possess the traits, viewpoints and experiences that will be useful for the study. In the same vein, ARC (2015) concurs that a sample comprises a subset of survey participants or respondents who are selected from a larger population. Bergin (2018) further explains a sample as a subset or collection of a larger cluster that is the subject of research. It has also been referred to as a group's representative "taste."

Nayak and Singh (2015) identify two common categories of sampling strategies, namely, probability and non-probability sampling. Random sampling can refer to

sampling with probability, while non-probability sampling can refer to non-random sampling. All members of the group being studied have an equal likelihood of being selected for the study in which probability sampling is used. Basic probability sampling procedures, such as typical random sampling, random stratified sampling and the sampling of clusters, allow researchers to form statistical inferences and generalise their findings to larger populations.

Non-probability sampling, which does not rely on random selection, does not guarantee that every person in the population has a fair opportunity of being chosen to participate in the study. Non-probability sampling selects units from a universe using a subjective method and is usually easy, quick and inexpensive (Mishra & Alok, 2017). This type of sampling is commonly employed when it is impossible or impractical to get a random sample. Non-probability sampling strategies include convenience sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling and deliberate sampling.

Convenience sampling entails selecting study participants who consent to participate and are easily accessible. Accidental or haphazard is another term for convenience sampling (Nayak & Singh, 2015). Maree (2020) concurs that samples that are taken because they are most commonly available are referred to as incidental or accidental. Accordingly, groups are utilised as representative samples of the population when they are convenient for the researcher to use or when other sampling strategies are not available. When it is difficult to locate a group of people to interview or question, this is a rather simple option for researchers. For example, by recruiting patients with a certain ailment from support groups, the research cohort is conveniently selected from the population for observation. Sloppiness is not acceptable, even though convenience sampling only covers those who are available and ready (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

According to Pandey and Pandey (2015), the technique of sampling wherein the sample keeps becoming increasingly larger as the observation or study goes on is known as "snowball sampling." In the view of Sigh and Nayak (2015), a "network" sampling technique is also known as a snowball sample. In the few instances where it is not possible to identify the population of interest other than by knowing that a particular individual possesses the required experience or qualities to be included, snowball sampling is employed. Snowball sampling also involves using members of

the group who have already been identified to find others who could have similar traits to the existing group.

Pandey and Pandey (2015) further claim that quota sampling combines probability sampling and judgment sampling. The percentage of the population that falls into each group is determined based on pre-existing knowledge, assumptions and judgment. To non-randomly choose groups according to factors like gender, age, race, and ethnicity, among others, quota sampling is a useful technique. Participants are chosen non-randomly in quota sampling based on their known percentage of the population. In addition to splitting the population group into subgroups, quota sampling assigns interviewers several units from each segment to choose from and interview (Sigh & Nayak, 2015). This is done depending on the proportions of the population.

ARC (2015) defines "purposeful sampling" as a deliberate effort to create sample representation by encompassing groups or common locations in a sample. Panke (2018) reveals that before choosing a case for the sample, researchers assess its typicality or the existence of the required elements. Sigh and Nayak (2015) concur that the method known as "purposeful sampling" refers to the process of selecting a sample that considers the researcher's own knowledge of the population, its constituents and the goals of the study. This deliberate selection of samples is commonly used in qualitative research. They do this to create an example that satisfies their specific requirements. The terms judgment or judgmental are other names for a purposeful non-probability sample. The most similar/dissimilar cases, typical cases and crucial cases are the three categories into which the purposeful sampling approach can be divided (Sigh & Nayak, 2015).

Using this approach in this approach, researchers create a sample that suits their specific requirements. Maree (2020) asserts that there are several uses for purposeful sampling in research, such as achieving representativeness, facilitating comparisons, focusing on specific, one-of-a-kind themes or situations and developing theory using the ongoing growth of data from diverse sources. Based on this assertion, the researcher used purposeful selection of participants for this investigation. Sampling techniques are usually non-random because qualitative research aims to give extensive descriptions of the experiences and actions of specific groups. The study followed this approach since the researcher conducted it with the purpose and goal of

finding secondary schools in a township with a larger percentage of learners not participating in extracurricular activities. For this study, a total sample of six participants which included both teachers and learners from Kutloanong township secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District was utilised. Learners were selected from grade 9 to 11. The sample for the study consisted of six individuals (three teachers and three learners) from the selected secondary schools.

Following this discussion, the data collection methods are also described below.

3.7 Data collection methods

Four types of data collection techniques that follow are used by researchers when organising data from qualitative research, namely, documents, video materials, interviews and observations (Panke, 2018).

Participants' interviews served as the primary instrument for gathering data for this study, as advocated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) for phenomenological studies. According to in the words of Lewis and McNaughton Nicholls (2013) and Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014), an interview usually consists of a one-on-one discussion between the researcher and the participants for this project, researcher carrying out interviews is an appealing option (Nayak & Singh, 2015). However, conversations alone are not enough to describe interviews. They entail a set of presumptions and comprehensions of the circumstances that are not often connected to a casual conversation. Although some individuals refer to interviews as oral questionnaires, they are more emotive than that. Whereas interview data is gathered directly from people during face-to-face interactions, questionnaire data is gathered indirectly because people are more reluctant to write than to speak (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

The aim of conducting an interview in this study was to learn more about the thoughts, feelings and motivations of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2018). According to Gill Panke (2018), research instruments for qualitative methods such as interviews are believed to provide a "deeper" insight of social phenomena than would be achievable with purely quantitative methods such as survey questions. Consequently, when little is understood about the phenomenon being studied or when the unique perspectives of each participant are required, interviews are most suitable. They are also

particularly appropriate for engaging in sensitive topics because some people may consider it uncomfortable to bring up such topics in a group environment.

Unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews are the three main categories of interviews (Bodgan & Biklen, 2018). An unstructured interview lacks any kind of standardisation or order, enabling the interviewee to steer the discussion in any direction and share any information they deem pertinent (Bodgan & Biklen, 2018). In this study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants for this inquiry. For phenomenological interviews, a semi-structured interviewing method is advised (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In semi-structured interviews, participants are contacted directly and requested to respond to questions about the research issue (Taylor & Bogdan, 2014).

Standardised interviews are designed to answer ordered, standardised, open-ended questions (Panke, 2018). In contrast, semi-structured interviews used in this study provided the researcher with the latitude in terms of uniformity and question sequence, enabling them to rephrase questions or ask more in-depth questions as needed to meet the objectives of the study. For this study, semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they allow respondents the freedom to voice their opinions on any subject brought up during questioning in a direct and understandable manner. Bogdan and Biklen (2018) claim that semi-structured interviews enable the interviewer to examine how the participants experience their involvement in certain activities in their own settings. The researcher used a protocol of predetermined interview questions when interviews were conducted to ensure consistency in asking questions. In line with Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the interview protocol was used by the researcher to guide the conversation but refrained from encouraging input on themes.

The next discussion would focus on data gathering procedures.

3.8 Data collection procedures

The researcher first got approval from the Lejweleputswa District and FRIC to collect data before visiting schools to gather information. For setting up meetings and study appointments with the participants, the researcher contacted the schools. The participant's questions about the interview and the confidentiality and anonymity procedures were answered by the researcher. Face-to-face interviews were arranged

by the researcher, who additionally established a connection with the participants, answered the prepared questions and listened intently to the participants' answers, and encouraged clarification or elaboration depending on the context.

The researcher personally gave the instrument to each participant who agreed to take part in the interviews. The interviewer spent approximately 30 minutes doing in-depth interviews with each participant at every secondary school. The main topics of discussion throughout this interview were the participants' opinions, knowledge and experiences about extracurricular activities and how they impact learners' academic achievement. The research questions guided the discussion on various themes. Encouraged by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the semi-structured interview style also provided the chance to delve into related subjects. The researcher used a cell phone to record the interviews and a notepad to collect field notes to capture participants emotions. The researcher then had the information gleaned from the interviews transcribed. This study's data were gathered over a period of eight weeks.

The final topic discussed under the data gathering methods and methods would be the data analysis procedures.

3.9 Data analysis procedures

Conforming to Vaismoradi and Seagrove (2019), qualitative research is an umbrella comprising several methods of data collecting and analytical techniques with the goal of describing and interpreting social phenomena in their cultural and contextual contexts. These study's methodologies all aid in the description and interpretation of events, even though there are differences in the data processing and findings presentation (Holloway & Galvin, 2017). A thematic analysis of data was used by the researcher to analyse data collected through face-to-face interviews. Thematic analysis is a process of identifying patterns in the data, with new themes serving as the analytical categories. Patel and Patel (2019) contend that finding themes, identifying fascinating or significant aspects in the data, and utilising these themes to tackle the study or clarify a point regarding an issue are the goals of a thematic analysis (Ormrod, 2023). Far from just presenting the facts, a powerful thematic analysis makes meaning of it and explains it. It is a common error to use the main interview questions as themes (Ormrod, 2023).

The inductive thematic analysis method was selected and used for analysing data for this study on the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance. The procedure for analysing and interpreting data occurs after the researcher has gathered and analysed the data. The researcher used the following data analysis procedure adopted from Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Terrell (2021) to analyse data.

- Data were gathered first and then synthesised inductively to generate generalisations, models or framework.
- The organised data were transcribed, anonymised and read.
- The researcher went through the transcribed data to look for words, phrases, issues, topics, ideas, or opinions that seemed to stand out in the data and divided them into workable units or segments to develop codes.
- All segments that have the same code were summarised in short sentences that give the essence of the information.
- Interpretation of data was narrated, and where possible the language, actions, expressions, terms and explanations were reported as communicated by the participants.
- The findings of the research were used to draw inferences, suggest generalisations, to develop a model or framework and to make conclusions.

The next section will explore the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

3.10 Trustworthiness of qualitative data

Ahmed (2024) claims that truth and rigour are always given the highest priority in qualitative research. Markus and Borsboom (2024) reveal that the level of confidence in the data, interpretation and procedures employed to guarantee the quality of research is known as the inquiry's trustworthiness or accuracy. Considering that qualitative findings are subjective, establishing their trustworthiness is important for demonstrating their credibility and reliability. However, Amankwaa (2016) asserts that for readers to think a study is deserving of consideration, researchers must determine the procedures and methodologies needed in each research. Markus and Borsboom

(2024) further highlight that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability belong to just a few of the key components that form the notion of trustworthiness in qualitative research.

3.10.1 Credibility

As stated by McMillan (2015), credibility entails accurately describing the perceptions, opinions and meanings of participants. Credibility or the level of trust in the study's validity and, by extension, its conclusions, is the most important aspect (Hwang, 2023). Internal validity in quantitative research is analogous to this concept. Credibility is established by member verification, peer debriefing, continuous observation when pertinent to the study, long-term interaction with participants and reflective journaling. The following techniques were applied by the researcher for this criterion:

- **Prolonged engagements:** The researcher gathered information from the participants for a period of eight weeks. The researcher, who was passionate about speaking engagements, went to schools to deliver motivational talks. Through a variety of initiatives, the research expanded the pastoral function to include the entire community. Certainly, in terms of interviews, this approach allowed participants to strongly bond with the researcher by taking part in community activities and events, which grew their intimacy and trust, and encouraged them to divulge more detailed information. As a result, after spending a long time interacting with the locals, I progressively changed from being an "outsider" to more of an "insider," making it easy for participants to strike up a conversation (Hung & Min, 2020).
- **Member checking:** Member checks provided an answer to the question: Is the participant accurately understood and interpreted by the researcher? Member checking also served as a means of building trust. According to Morse (2015), the study is "unreliable when the findings cannot be repeated" and if the researcher does not have a correct understanding of what happened (Morse, 2015). Therefore, to close this gap, the researcher carried out member checking during the data collection process to verify information across participants by giving them transcribed data to verify that their answers were accurately recorded.

3.10.2 Transferability

One component of transferability is applicability (Maree, 2020). However, Korstjens and Moser (2018) contend that a "thick description" of the study's subjects and methodology allows the reader to check whether your results are applicable to their own context. This is known as the transferability judgment. This shows that the reader determines the transferability, not the researcher, as the researcher is ignorant of their specific settings. Therefore, the researcher in this inquiry provided a detailed account of the descriptive data, covering the background of the search as well as the setting, sample size, approach, interview process, and subjects. This was done to enable the study's results to be applied to other comparable situations in township secondary schools, especially those where a large portion of learners are not involved do not participate in extracurricular activities.

3.10.3 Dependability

Qualitative researchers employ techniques to show that similar results would be obtained if the study was to be repeated with the same participants, procedures and context to establish dependability. However, these provisions present challenges for qualitative researchers in their work owing to the nature of the phenomena they examine (Salkind, 2018).

To ensure that the results of this study were dependable, the researcher made certain that all documentation of the research procedure, participant selection, interview transcripts, data analysis choices and accessibility were kept up to date. The researcher also described the procedures followed for gathering data, as well as how the analysis was conducted and interpreted. A motive trailed many decisions made at various points of the research process. The researcher documented the method of analysis that resulted in the obtained interpretations. The supervisor of the researcher examined the gathering, analysing and interpreting of the data. The primary goals are to assess the accuracy of the data and the extent to which they support the interpretations, conclusions and discoveries. It gave the supervisor the chance to contest a study's methodology and conclusions.

3.10.4 Conformability

Salkind (2018) believes that the problem of impartiality in quantitative research is analogous to the idea of conformability in the qualitative paradigm. The researcher must take action to make sure that, to the greatest degree feasible, the inferences are based on the thoughts and experiences of the participants and informants rather than the attributes and partiality of the researcher (Salkind, 2018). Following this assertion to ensure that the results of the study were confirmable, biases and favours are removed from the results. Korstjens and Moser (2018) attest that confirmability pertains to the neutrality feature. The inter-subjectivity of the data needs to be safeguarded. The facts, not the researcher's references and perspectives, must be used to support the interpretation. The primary focus here is on the interpretation process, which is a component of the analysis process. The technique needed to ensure dependability and confirmability is an audit trail.

To ensure that this study was confirmable, a comprehensive collection of notes detailing all decisions made during the study process, reflective thinking, the sampling process, research materials utilised, developing findings, and data management was provided by the researcher. This allowed the supervisor to review the transparency of the study path. The researcher demonstrated their confirmability by offering all the data and guaranteeing that it has not been changed or doctored in any manner.

The next section highlights ethical considerations that were observed when this study was conducted.

3.11. Ethical considerations

Bos (2020) explains "ethics" as the study of morality and must adjust to the traditional professional standards of study. Roshaidai and Arifin (2018) argue that appropriate ethical standards must be followed to protect human participants in any research project. Ethical concerns are particularly pertinent in qualitative studies since they are more detailed than quantitative ones. In the view of Maree (2020), ethics should influence views about what is correct and incorrect, proper or improper, sensible or unhealthy. The study was conducted with the highest ethical standards, making sure that all required procedures were adhered to. To ensure adherence to institutional regulations, the researcher secured authorisation from the Faculty Research and

Innovation Committee (FRIC). Reviewing and approving research proposals to make sure they adhere to the institution's ethical standards is the responsibility of this committee (*cf.* Appendix A, p.114).

Additionally, to receive FRIC permission, this study was carried out in compliance with the Research Ethics Framework (2016) of the Central University of Technology, Free State. This framework ensures that participants' rights and dignity are upheld by offering standards for doing research in an ethical and responsible manner. This research project was officially approved by the Free State Department of Education, which allowed the researcher to gather data at designated secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa district (*cf.* Appendix, p.147). Following departmental approval, the researcher requested the principals of the designated secondary schools for permission to carry out the study in their schools. Appendix C on p.148 contains a copy of the permission request.

When gathering information for a qualitative study, a researcher searches for a detailed account of a development. Additionally, participants are encouraged to explain details of their ongoing personal life events. High levels of participant disclosure and a tolerable degree of confidence are necessary for this strategy (Lincoln, 2015). Appendix D on p.150 contains consent forms that explicitly indicated that participation in the study was voluntary, was given to each participant. Participants were guaranteed that their privacy and dignity would be maintained and safeguarded during the research process, and that refraining from participating would not have any detrimental effects. Based on the premise that, this was a qualitative study, ethical considerations extended beyond choices made about data collection and analysis (Kara & Pickering, 2017). The basic tenets of the research held the researcher accountable for their moral choices, which included the following:

3.11.1 Informed permission

Throughout the research procedure, researchers frequently make decisions about whether to (or not to) request a portion of the investigation after being informed of the information that could possibly affect their choices. Participants are offered the option to refuse to offer half or to pull out once the research has commenced (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2016). However, Roshaidai and Arifin (2018) outline the procedures for gaining permission as follows:

- Individuals must grasp what is being sought of them;
- Permission must be freely given (voluntary); and
- Those involved must be eligible to grant consent.

This implies that people must be able to comprehend the information provided, be fully informed about the study and have the freedom to decide whether to engage to be allowed to participate in a research project. It is only after receiving a thorough description of the research procedures that participants provided their agreement to participate in this study. Each participant gave their written informed consent. A personal message outlining the goals of the study and the methodology for data collection was sent to each potential volunteer. They were given a satisfactory window of time to indicate any concern and ask questions. It was made clear that taking part in the study was entirely optional, declining to partake in it or withdrawing from it at the midpoint would have no negative consequences for them.

Information leaflet was made available for the participants that included more specifics about the research study. One week was allotted to the potential volunteers to go over the information sheet and decide whether to participate in the study. They were required to sign an informed consent form providing them permission to take part in the study before the interview, and this signature needed to be verified beforehand. The informed consent form was signed by potential participants, and they were made aware that they might withdraw from the research investigation at any moment. They were also asked for permission to have the interviews recorded.

Moreover, the researcher obtained permission from the principal to invite parents of learner participants, where the purpose and significance of the research, as well as its potential contribution to education were elaborated upon. The researcher explained the concept of informed consent and all that is detailed in it, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and that parents could withdraw their children at any time as participation is not compulsory. The parents were given an opportunity to raise concerns and ask questions before signing consent forms. Once the researcher had addressed their concerns and provided a thorough explanation of the process, the parents signed the consent forms.

3.11.2 Privateness rights

A person's right to privacy includes having the capacity to choose whether to participate in research, fill out a questionnaire or have an interview (Salkind, 2018). The more delicate the subject matter, the more protection is required for participants anonymity (Hwang, 2023). The participants were fully informed about the research process and made aware that their involvement was completely optional and that they might withdraw at any time without facing consequences.

3.11.3 Anonymity

The information given by participants should not be used to identify them. Therefore, if the researcher or another person cannot identify the participants or the issue, they are regarded as anonymous (Hwang, 2023). Accordingly, the researcher did not gather any information that revealed participants or associated their responses with their identities.

3.11.4 Confidentiality

This could be a method to safeguard a participant's privacy through confidentiality. This is a promise to protect participant information from being used in any manner that could lead to their identification or change how their identity can be deduced (Pascale, Lineback, Bates & Beatty, 2022). The study will adhere to the suggestions given (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015). The study locations where participants might feel coerced into participating must be avoided. The following procedure must be followed:

- Be mindful of participants' private rights.
- State the day and hour the researcher will arrive for the interview.
- Preserve their identity a secret.

The necessity of anonymity and confidentiality was made clear to the participants, and they were urged not to disclose their names. The aim of this study was also described so that the participants would feel free to offer factual and trustworthy data. In this regard, the names of the participants and any other private information were kept confidential by the researcher. Limitations, delimitations and significance of the study are addressed in the following section.

3.12 Limitations of the study

This study focused on the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance specifically in Kutloanong Township of Lejweleputswa District; hence, any conclusion drawn from it will not apply to other secondary schools. Another limitation of this study is the methodology. A qualitative approach was employed, which involved interviewing participants to collect data directly from them, thereby limiting the number of participants because of time constraints. Lastly, the availability of learners from different grades because Grade 12 learners are excluded from extracurricular activities owing to daily extra-classes and high volumes of academic curriculum and their shortened academic year.

3.13 Delimitations of the study

This study investigated the impact of learners' participation in extracurricular activities on their academic performance in secondary schools located in the Lejweleputswa District. Consequently, this study tends to be more oriented toward educational psychology. Data were gathered from five selected secondary schools in the Kutloanong Township. As Grade 12 learners must stay in class until late at night, the data were collected from learners in grades 8 to grade 11. Even though there are several stakeholders within the schools, only the perceptions of learners and educators will be taken into consideration.

3.14 Significance of the study

This study investigated the impact of learners' participation in extracurricular activities on their academic performance in secondary schools located in the Lejweleputswa District. The findings of this study might influence the drawing up of new policies and the amendment of existing policies to enhance participation in extracurricular activities. The findings might also provide both teachers and learners with the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities to enhance academic performance and encourage participation in extracurricular activities within secondary schools.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter offered a thorough description of the research methodology that served as a guide for gathering information from participants at schools. It also described the

techniques employed for data collection, sampling and ethical considerations. The chapter included an explanation of the justification for employing a qualitative research strategy. Furthermore, the study's limitations and delimitations were delineated precisely, which served as an initial foundation for the subsequent chapter's analysis and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the data collection methodology was discussed. This chapter explores data presentation, analysis and interpretation regarding the impact of extracurricular activity participation on academic performance among secondary school learners. A purposeful sample of six participants, namely, three teachers and three learners from Kutloanong Township secondary schools in Lejweleputswa District, where a higher proportion of learners do not participate in extracurricular activities, provided the data for this qualitative phenomenological study. A table and texts were used to present data in this chapter.

4.2 Procedure and instruments for data collection

The qualitative data gathered is represented and analysed in this section.

4.2.1 The process of generating interview schedules

Two interview schedules were created for this study: one for learners and one for teachers. Each interview session took 30 minutes and were conducted within the school premises; however, interviews were conducted after school hours.

4.2.2 Participants' biographical details

This section encompasses certain characteristics of the research participants. Three teachers and three learners from grade 9-11 from five secondary schools in the Kutloanong Township in the Lejweleputswa District participated in the study. The participants were teachers with varying from 2 to 25 years of teaching experience which ranged between 28 to 51 years old were all married, and their gender included one female and two male teachers. Only one of the three teachers was furthering his studies at the university doing a Bachelor of Education Honours in Educational Management degree. The first teacher possessed a Bachelor of Education degree in Mathematics Education and had 19 years' experience as a teacher. The second teacher held a Bachelor of Education degree in Languages, with specializations in English and Sesotho, and was pursuing postgraduate studies at the time of the

interview and had been teaching for the past 12 years. Finally, the third teacher interviewed had a Bachelor of Education degree in Economics and Management Sciences, with specializations in Economics and Business Studies and had 3 years working experience.

The two female and one male learner came from Kutloanong township and lived in different residential areas. One of the participants was in Grade 9, the other was in Grade 10, and the final one was in Grade 11. The participants' ages ranged between from 15 to 19 years old. Two of the participants have a fair pass record, while one had repeated grades prior to reaching grade 11. Owing to their in-depth knowledge of the subject and sufficient experience to exchange information on the phenomenon under investigation, the participants were ideal for the study. The interviews were conducted face-to-face after school hours. The researcher used a cell phone to record interviews' proceedings.

4.2.3 Kutloanong township secondary school teachers

Teachers from Kutloanong secondary schools were interviewed since they oversee supervising learners and making sure, they participate in extracurricular activities. The researcher also believed that teachers are largely responsible for identifying learners' talents and helping them develop the abilities that could enable them to participate in appropriate extracurricular activities. Moreover, as they interact with various learners on a regular basis, teachers are also knowledgeable about the impact of extracurricular activities for learners and their performance. Lastly, teachers are conscious of the obstacles that prevent learners from engaging in extracurricular activities and the consequences of a lack of participation in those activities.

4.2.4 Kutloanong township secondary school learners

Since they are the ones taking part in extracurricular activities, learners were also interviewed. The inability to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities, like other learners in private and previous Model C schools, this presented a direct obstacle for learners in township schools. These learners were familiar with the subject under investigation. Therefore, the researcher thought they would be relevant and well-informed to provide answers to the research questions.

4.3 Procedures for data analysis

4.3.1 Step 1 Data transcription

Data were diligently transcribed by the researcher, who had to provide translations when some respondents spoke in their mother tongue. Sutton and Austin (2015) encourage researchers to accurately transcribe every audio recording verbatim, regardless of how comprehensible the final product is after being read back. To give the researcher a comprehensive understanding of the participants' opinions, the responses were transcribed. Verbal cues were used, and the researcher got acquainted with the data.

4.3.2 Step 2 Understanding the data

To have a deeper understanding of the text, the researcher read it several times after transcription. To accurately transcribe the responses, voice note recordings were also played multiple times. According to Sutton and Austin (2015), the researcher can start to think about topics that could be explored in follow-up interviews during this process and can also start to acquire a sense of how the participants experienced the phenomenon in question.

4.3.3 Step 3 Coding

Coding came after every research interview was transcribed and verified. Sutton and Austin (2015) claim that coding is the process of identifying themes, problems, parallels and discrepancies that emerge from participant narratives and are interpreted by the researcher. After reading the data transcripts, the researcher jotted down the meanings in a different Word document. Following that, the researcher summarised the data and gave each data segment a unique code that accurately reflected its meaning.

4.3.4 Step 4 Developing themes

Sutton and Austin (2015) assert that the process of combining codes from one or more transcripts to convey the results of qualitative research in a logical and significant manner is known as producing themes. It is crucial to follow this method because, after

the process is finalised would be feasible to present the interview data using quotes from each transcript to show where the researchers got their conclusions. The researcher organised the saturation codes into a mechanism to interpret the data. The researcher developed themes after the transcripts were coded, and these would be addressed in Section 4.4.

4.4 Analysing and presenting the responses of teachers and learners from Kutloanong secondary schools

Both teachers and learners participated in semi-structured interviews to provide their experiences concerning the impact of extracurricular activity participation on academic achievement in township secondary schools. The themes and sub-themes drawn from the participants' responses are listed in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Themes that were developed from the responses of the participants

THEME	SUBTHEME
1 Limited extracurricular activities	1.1 Lack of extracurricular activities 1.2 Inactive clubs 1.3 Desire for more extracurricular activities
2 Importance of extracurricular activities	2.1 Personal growth 2.1.1 Break from academics 2.1.2 Physical and emotional wellbeing 2.1.3 Enhanced self-confidence 2.1.4 Sense of belonging 2.1.5 Discipline 2.2 Academic benefits 2.3 Talent discovery
3 Impact on academic performance	3.1 Better academic performance 3.2 Enhanced problem-solving skills 3.3 Improved discipline

	<p>3.4 Teacher- learner relationships</p> <p>3.5 Improved focus</p> <p>3.6 Language skills</p> <p>3.7 Negative impact</p>
4 Effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities	<p>4.1 Lack of focus</p> <p>4.2 Emotional and social effects</p> <p>4.3 Behavioural problems</p> <p>4.4 Substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, school dropout and gangsterism</p>
5 Challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities	<p>5.1 Inadequate resources</p> <p>5.2 Lack of support</p> <p>5.3 Lack of training</p> <p>5.4 Socio-economic factors</p> <p>5.5 Peer-pressure</p> <p>5.6 Parental involvement</p> <p>5.7 Child-headed households</p> <p>5.8 Age restriction</p>

The evaluated teachers and learners are identified as T1, T2, T3, and L1, L2, and L3, respectively. Limited extracurricular activities would be the first theme to be addressed.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Limited extracurricular activities

Theme 1 had three subthemes, and were discussed as follows:

4.4.1.1 Subtheme 1.1 Lack of extracurricular activities

Participants who were involved in the interviews for this study revealed that their schools do not offer enough extracurricular activities. Although there were not many extracurricular activities offered at their schools, soccer and netball were often

mentioned. L1 responded to a question about the active extracurricular activities within their school by saying “*soccer and basketball only*”. L2, when asked about participation in extracurricular activities, said: “*Yes, I am involved. However, they do not have much curricular activities. For example, we only have soccer and netball, and I participated in netball.*”

The sentiments about extracurricular activities being limited are also shared by L3 who added: “*Say we’ve got chess, its football, it’s debating, let me see, I think there are only three if I’m not mistaken.*” Learner participants expressed that they wind up participating in activities that already exist in the school, although there were activities they love and would enjoy, or are discouraged from engaging in activities because there were limited extracurricular activities. For instance, L2 expressed a love for debate, and when asked about the reasons for not debating, L2 said that there was no debate in their school.

Teachers also testified that there were limited extracurricular activities in Kutloanong Township secondary schools. T1 concurred, “*We have soccer, football, we have netball. Those are the profound ones.*” T1 further highlighted “*here, where I work, we’ve got limited sporting codes. So, as a result, not every learner is engaged in these codes.*” Given the information provided, learners were not afforded an opportunity to partake in extra-curricular activities because these limited sporting codes can only accommodate a limited number of learners. Other teacher participants concurred that only a few extracurricular activities, including netball and soccer, were dominant in their schools. Participants further indicated that there were some extracurricular activities that existed but were currently not active.

Interpretation: There are few extracurricular activities offered in Kutloanong township secondary schools, as can be drawn from the participants' comments. The shortage of extracurricular activities is preventing learners from taking part because only a limited number of learners are accommodated in the existing extracurricular activities. Anjum (2021) believes that learners should have a variety of extracurricular activities that fall into three categories: social, educational and physical. Contrary to this belief, physical activities like soccer and netball are given priority in Kutloanong Township secondary schools, according to participants' comments. This may be because these sports require little funding.

4.4.1.2 Subtheme 1.2 Inactive clubs

Concerns with inactive clubs were revealed by participants. According to their assessment, there were extracurricular activities in schools that were no longer in operation. Some of these activities were not being activated working because of the learners' lack of motivation, the teachers' lack of training and teachers taking leave from work.

When asked about active participation in extracurricular activities in the school, L1 had this to say: *"They don't have much interest in diketo (stone play) and skipping; they participated once in them, and it just ended just like that. As for soccer, there are many boys, that's motivating because many of them participate."* The participant also said, *"Chess was also being played, but I don't know what happened to it because it just stopped."*

T5 also expressed that certain activities were there in school, yet were not popular, and learners seem to have no interest in them. This is what T5 said, *"Yes, we do have chess, it exists. I remember yesterday they were playing in the neighbouring school. It's been existing, but it's quiet, it's not chess as before. Like primary schools. Primary schools, I know chess, it's active, but here the pace is very slow and most of the learners are not interested."*

T3 concurred with L1 and T1 that there were issues with inactive teams because of teachers taking leave by stating: *"For now, we don't have those debates because I don't know why, the English teacher who was conducting that debate, she's on sick leave."* This served as evidence that in that school, there were no other teachers with adequate skills to conduct debate sessions while the other were still temporarily at home.

Interpretation: According to the comments of the participants, there were inactive clubs in schools for a variety of reasons, including learners' lack of determination. The primary reason for this was that learners lack motivation since extracurricular activities were not given priority by the school. Since extracurricular activities in schools are usually created to encourage the gaining of skills and school participation, they constituted an excellent way to promote positive youth development, as argued by

Forneris, Camire, and Williamson (2015). The responses attest that although learners avail themselves for participation, after some time they got discouraged because they had no one to train them. The teachers did not put in much effort to ensure that a variety of extracurricular activities were active in the schools, neither does the management of the schools go an extra mile to encourage the involvement in extracurricular activities by learners. Based on the participants' responses, some extracurricular activities were more active in primary schools than in secondary schools.

4.4.1.3 Subtheme 1.3 Desire for more extracurricular activities

Participants also stated that they would like to see more extracurricular activities because they believed that they would benefit learners. L2 said: *"I wanted to debate,"* and when asked why they did not participate in debate, the learner responded, *"It's not there."* L3 also highlighted: *"Whenever the school says it's a sports day, they just go on doing their thing. They're not even playing sports. So, if we have more sports activities taking place at our school, I feel like something will work out for our learners."*

Other participants said they would like to introduce some activities to the school since they are knowledgeable and skilled in them, but they said there were no fields and the principal's office did not provide adequate support.

Interpretation: Participants' replies indicated that teachers as well as learners would want to see more extracurricular activities offered in their schools. Participants believed that schools would change if there were more extracurricular activities available. Lack of funding and principal support appeared to be the main obstacles to adding extra activities in their schools. Lang (2021) contends that the current state of South Africa's economy is causing schools to cut back on learners' activities, teaching staff, school budgets, and non-essential programmes like extracurricular activities. This might be the reason why schools were not properly catering to the desire of learners to have more extracurricular activities.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Importance of extracurricular activities

Three subthemes emerged from this theme, and they are fully explained below

4.4.2.1 Subtheme 2.1 Personal growth

4.4.2.1.1. *Break from academics*

The participants reported that extracurricular activities were important for learners as they need a break from academics.

When asked about the importance of extracurricular activities, L1 said: *“I think they are important, I think we cannot always be focusing on books, and every time being about books. When we come to school, we will be bored, because we don’t have free time, at least on Wednesdays it’s sports day and there should be hype of activities. I think many people, many children who dropout of schools do so because the focus is mainly on books and there is no time to go to enjoy sports on Wednesdays or have certain activities on Friday.”* In agreement with what L1 said T3 had this to say, *“If they are focusing only on academics, they are going to struggle to focus because their bodies will be tired.”*

Interpretation: It was evident from the participants' comments that extracurricular activities were crucial since they give learners a break from their studies; hence, Anjum (2021) argues that academic and extracurricular activities are equally vital. Learners complain that the lack of extracurricular activities makes school dull, and many of them quit since the school solely emphasises books and no other activities, which is too much to handle. In support of what learners are saying, Metzl and Shookhoff (2020) argues that academic scholars have focused particularly on learners' participation in extracurricular activities as a means of reducing boredom, lowering dropout rates and raising success levels.

Even teachers thought think that learners become weary and lose attention; so, they needed a platform to interact with others and show off their skills. If schools provide exciting activities, learners would be able to enjoy a variety of extracurricular activities. The comments provided evidence that when learners are under too much pressure

from books, they also require extracurricular activities because reading books alone would not make them smart. Extracurricular activities needed to work in tandem with education to ensure the holistic development of a learner

4.4.2.1. Physical and mental wellbeing

Participants believe that involvement in extracurricular activities was important for learners' mental and physical health.

L2 expressed the importance of extracurricular activities when he mentioned “Yes, they are important because the more you participate in extracurricular activities, the more you improve your mental health.” It is also added that “Playing sports is very important because it's part of exercising and a person needs to exercise for their physical fitness to avoid sicknesses, diabetes and all those stuffs.” T2 further explained that engaging in extracurricular activities helps learners to relieve stress from academics and relax their minds.

In addition, T3 said: “*The brain needs to be exercised*”, and supported the statement by saying that “*but the exercises that they have in their sports, help them to refresh their mind.*” and in agreement with other participants T3 said: “*You relax Ma’am, it helps to relax. You even forget a lot of things like stress; it helps with such. When you return, your mind is refreshed and you can study and do other things. When you take a break, just exercise. I think it helps to relax so that we are able to focus on our school things.*” In support of other comments, L3 mentioned, “*I normally play chess because I believe that it helps me to relax and have that thing that can make me, can actually make my mind work in a perfect way that can solve any problems that I may be encountering in my academic work.*”

Interpretation: Participants' remarks demonstrated the critical significance extracurricular activities play in learners' physical and emotional well-being. In support of the participants' remarks, Fujita (2015) confirms that engaging in physical extracurricular activities helps learners to cope with the stress that comes with studying too much. Learners maintain their mental and physical health. Additionally, they have a healthy body, which boosts their self-esteem and improves their perception of their attractiveness. Learners who participate in extracurricular activities

might be less likely to get sick since they would be exercising and staying in shape. Participation in extracurricular activities is crucial because it keeps learners refreshed and equipped to handle the pressures of school.

4.4.2.1. Enhanced self confidence

The participants' comments revealed that participation in extracurricular activities increases learners' self-esteem. Learners who engage in extracurricular activities, particularly those that include expressing themselves, are more likely to develop their self-confidence.

L1 had this to say about enhanced self-confidence: *"It boosts their confidence, they become people who can face other people, they are no longer shy and are no longer discouraged by what people say about them. They are people who are fully confident and do not care who says what, they just mind their own business."* L2 concurred by saying: *"They would really help a lot because when you are debating, you are standing in front of people. So, it will also help our learners to be bold and firm, you understand? Also, to speak without fear and it reduces stage fright. For us to go to varsities, for us to go far in life, we need to have the audacity to stand in front of many people and talk."*

Interpretation: The participants were adamant that extracurricular activities and learners' self-confidence are positively correlated. In accordance with the findings from the participants, Amand et al. (2017) contend that participation might help learners feel more confident about their physical and possibly social identities. Additionally, participants thought that learners' capacity to achieve in life would be significantly impacted by the increased self-confidence they have obtained while engaged in extracurricular activities.

4.4.2.1. Sense of belonging

As stated by participants, participating in extracurricular activities was more important because helped learners feel like they belong. This is what T1 said,

"They are very, very, very important. You know, there's a saying that says: All work, no play makes John a dull boy.' So now, what happens is, if these learners are busy engaging in their schoolwork, and they don't get a platform where they can socialise,

showcase their talent, then in the ultimate end, it's going to render education as boring and not appealing. So, we want to dodge the bullet and give them, you know, a sense of belonging, where they can also play, enjoy the different sporting codes, and so forth."

To add to what T1, L1 expressed frustration and commented: *"I think if we don't take part in those activities, we end up in the streets doing things that are not good."*

Interpretation: Based on the participants' views, extracurricular activities provided learners with a sense of belonging and allow them to genuinely enjoy attending school. They were convinced that learners who were denied access to extracurricular activities ultimately lack a sense of belonging and are forced to partake in unacceptable behaviours. In support of participants, Snyder, Hemmeter and Fox (2015) concur that participation in at least two activities increases learners' sense of connection to others at school and their sense of belonging.

4.4.2.1. Discipline

The participants believed that participation in extracurricular activities is crucial for enhancing discipline among learners and for training them to uphold discipline. When asked if participation in extracurricular activities plays a vital role in learners' behaviour, L3 noted, *"It does. It does because in sports, actually, in sports, the lesson, the most lesson in sports has to be discipline. You have to be disciplined. You have to listen to your coach because he's the one giving you instructions. So, if you're not having that mentor as your guide, you're not being guided, that means you can be loose. So, it does have an impact on how they behave around school."* Participant L2 continue to say that: *"We have to be disciplined when we are at the ground practicing. We must listen to the coaches."*

Interpretation: Participants asserted that engagement in extramural activities significantly contributes to a learner's discipline, as these activities necessitate adherence to discipline and compliance with the coach's directions. Extracurricular activities have significantly enhanced the learning environment in schools Snyder et al. (2015) as corroborated by the participants.

4.4.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Academic benefit

Participants maintained that participation in extracurricular activities was crucial because it improves academic performance. They all agreed that learners who engage in extracurricular activities improve their academic performance. When comparing the performance of those involved in extracurricular activities and those not participating, T1 commented, *“You can even check their academic performance. They are performing better than the ones that are not active.”* Some participants believe that learners engaging in extracurricular activities excel in their curriculum activities. Furthermore, T3 had this to say, *“We really encounter the problems with the behavioural problem, but you will find that learners who are participating in sports are always, always performing in the classroom. They are always performing better than those who are not participating.”*

Interpretation: Participants maintained that extracurricular activities were essential because they help learners perform to better academically. Sharing sentiments with the participants, Wiggins (2016) argues that involvement in extracurricular, voluntary activities boost academic performance. Participants reported that learners who participate in extracurricular activities perform better academically than those who do not, when comparing the two groups of learners. Justifying the participants' beliefs, Kanar and Bouckenoghe (2021) insist that extracurricular activities enhance their long-term educational success and reveal that involvement may lessen problematic behaviours. Because they have fewer behavioural issues, learners who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to achieve well than those who do not.

4.4.2.3 Subtheme 2.3 Talent discovery

Teachers and learners alike agreed that extracurricular activities are crucial for helping learners identify their interests and talents. Participants further believed that learners who are struggling academically might be given a chance to show off their special skills. In line with the foregoing statement, L1 had this to say about participation in extracurricular activities: *“I think to others it is important because we are different as people. I might be good in academics and the other one is good in sports. It might be that sports will open certain doors for them in life.”*

In addition, T1 said: *“So, if we have limited sporting codes, it therefore kept our learners, or maybe let me say, it does not allow them holistically a platform whereby they can showcase their different, unique talents.”*

Interpretation: It was clear from the participants' opinions that extracurricular activities are helpful in giving learners a platform on which to display their abilities. Based on the thoughts of the participants, learners who were struggling academically might have the chance to excel in extracurricular activities and go on to flourish in life. In agreement with the findings, Bradley and Conway (2016) affirm that extracurricular activities offer a fantastic setting for learners to hone their talents and put them into practice.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Impact on academic performance

This theme consists of seven themes, which are described in detail below.

4.4.3.1 Subtheme 3.1 Better academic performance

Participating in extracurricular activities has a beneficial impact on academic achievement, which was in line with the opinions of the participants. Participants believed that learners who participated actively in extracurricular activities perform better than those who do not.

Consistent with the above, T3 mentioned: *“Sometimes sports help them because you will find that sometimes the learners who are participating in sports; they perform better in class because they are focused. They are learners who are focused on education and academics.”*

In support of T3, T1 had this to say: *“They are a bit focused than the ones that are not actively involved. They are a bit focused. You can even check their academic performance. They are performing better than the ones that are not active.”*

Building on what T3 said, T1 added: *“They are much better than the ones that are not active or part of such debate and public speaking. They are much better because they are able to articulate themselves very well. Even their writing skills is improving because they do their research.”* T1 strongly believes that extracurricular activities like debate and public speaking improve academic performance. Consistent with this, T1 highlighted, *“They are exposed to reading; so, writing is going to improve, not using*

punctuations, and so forth. Creating sentence construction is going to improve. And their vocabulary, of course.”

When asked about how extracurricular activities like debate and public speaking impacted academics, L1 concurred by saying: *“I think they become bright, even someone who was very slow because it is more into books, they become clever and able to focus on their books.”*

Interpretation: Participants felt that involvement in extracurricular activities significantly influences learners’ academic achievement; the majority concurred that learners engaged in such activities tend to achieve superior academic outcomes as they are channelled towards better academic performance. Furthermore, participants asserted that extracurricular activities such as debate and public speaking positively influence learners’ academic performance, leading to enhanced academic outcomes. In agreement with the participants, Wiggins (2016) points out that involvement in extracurricular, voluntary activities boost academic performance.

4.4.3.2 Subtheme 3.2 Enhanced problem-solving

Participants reported that extracurricular activities improve learners’ capacity for problem-solving. L3 had this to say: *“Well, for me, you know, in chess, you must think a lot. It’s like you’re solving this particular problem. You’re only solving; you have to play with your mind. So, in reference to school, I could be doing accounting like I am right now. So, whenever I come across a complex question or something like that, I know, you know what? I have to use this strategy that I’m also using at the sport level to just try maybe get through this.”* L2 shares the same opinion by saying: *“Sports help us with how to solve problems because our minds are effective and that helps me to know how to get the solution.”*

Interpretation: Shaffer (2019) contends that learners learn the value of critical thinking, time management, academic and intellectual competence, and other skills during their participation in extracurricular. Consistent with this belief, participants concurred that participating in extracurricular activities, particularly those that call for creative thinking like chess, can improve learners’ problem-solving skills.

4.4.3.3 Subtheme 3.3 Improved discipline

In accordance with the information provided by participants, learners' participation in extracurricular activities has a favourable impact on their discipline, causing them to perform well in their schoolwork.

In line with the foregoing statement, L3 had this to say: *"I think it shapes me as this good learner, a disciplined learner, a learner who knows what they want in their academics, a learner who always knows that, you know, in life, you must work hard if you want to achieve something."*

T2 emphasised that participation in extracurricular activities was essential as it cultivates learners' discipline and instils a feeling of responsibility. In addition, when inquired about the significance of extracurricular activities, he elaborated: *"Yes, they are very much important. As I have said, they help learners develop their skills with regard to discipline as well as respect. Because there are lots of things that they learn from those extracurricular activities. Yes, because at some point, they'll be able to maintain as well as practise those responsibilities as well as those things that they have learned from those activities in the classroom. Okay. For instance, if we have a captain. For instance, a captain in a soccer team. That means that at some point, there will be disputes. Because at some point, in the soccer field, there may be a conflict. So, he's there to maintain discipline as well as communication between or among his teammates. So, basically, in the classroom, he will also do that."*

Furthermore, T3 concurred by saying: *"Learners who are doing sports are always disciplined. If the learner is disciplined even in their schoolwork, they are going to have the responsibility because they learn to have this responsibility in their sports. But if they are not playing, you will find that they are so problematic. The behavioural problem is becoming worse just because they don't have something that they keep themselves busy, like sports that will make them to participate in a good thing more than participating in the bad things like going to chill with their friends at the corner whereby they will be influenced with the bad things. But at their sports, they learn to be disciplined."*

Interpretation: The perspectives of the participants demonstrated that they firmly believed that participation in extracurricular activities influences learners' behaviour to be more disciplined and responsible. Participants believed that extracurricular

activities favourably impact on how learners conduct themselves at school and demonstrate accountability throughout their studies. Moreover, participants underlined that it was more effortless for learners to practice the patterns employed in sports activities for discipline in the classroom. Furthermore, disciplined learners exhibited discipline in their schoolwork which leads to improved academic success, because disciplined learners know what they want to achieve and focus all their energy on studying hard to reach those goals. Hughes et al. (2016) concur that those who take part in extracurricular activities appear to have a strong sense of responsibility and dedication.

4.4.3.4 Subtheme 3.4 Teacher- learner relationships

Participants indicated that engagement in extracurricular activities positively influences teacher-learners' connections. They articulated that involvement in extracurricular activities fosters bonds between teachers and learners. Concerning the type of relationship teachers have with learners who participate in extracurricular activities, L1 responded as follows: *"I think they treat them special, they become very close, even things like go to my car they send those who participate, even when they need copies. They are always talking about them; they prefer them."*

Building on what L1 has said, L2 added: *"As much as the teachers are strict in class, but when we go out to the field, they leave that behaviour behind. So, when we go to field, they are different people. People who can laugh, people who can say no, don't do that, jump like this, and do not jump like that. But I cannot say they are very strict when coming to the field because we are no longer in class. So, we get to know the other side of them."*

To respond to whether extracurricular activities foster stronger links between teachers and learners, L2 said: *"It does, it does, also to get to know them better because when you are in class, when a teacher is too strict, at some point you are afraid even though you have problems, you are afraid to approach the teacher and talk to her or him about your personal stuff but as soon as you go to the field, you see the other side of the teacher, that no man she is a fine person, you know."*

Extending on what L2 said, T2 added, *“You know what, man?” You associate very easily with a learner who is involved in a certain sporting code, especially when you are the teacher in that sporting code. You become like that learner's parent, brother, or sister. The relationship, the bond between the two, is a bit stronger than the learner who is not active. It is even the same in class. I'm telling you, I don't have favourite learners, but I'm telling you, a learner who is active in class, the relationship between that learner and a teacher, it is somewhat of a parent and a child, brother and a child. You become friendly with one another. The learner is not afraid to approach you with anything. It could be problems ranging from home, school, work, maybe, you know, or just the mere advice of what a learner might want to, a career a learner might want to pursue after finishing matric. But if a learner is not active, I'm focusing on sports now, or cultural activities, if a learner is not engaged, that learner is just there going to class, get the learner's book, and, you know, even a week will just pass without hearing that learner's voice. But if a learner is active in sports, comes here during break, can I go and collect equipment because after school we are practising? And then you want to report, you know, most of the time the learner is here, is here, is here. It makes a relationship very smooth, and I can say, if most learners would be engaged in sports, and I think it would assist because you as a teacher, the learner is close to you, you are able to monitor a learner whether a learner has been exposed to drugs, a learner has been, you know, under gangsterism, and so on and so forth, you understand.”*

T2 also mentioned, *“Yeah, it really does, from my experience from what I've seen. I do have a positive as well as healthy relationship between those who are playing soccer. Even those ones who are participating in athletics. As well as those who are in debate. We do have a positive relationship.”*

Lastly, L3 stated, *“Okay, well, there can be a teacher who loves whatever sport I'm playing. So, if he or she sees what I'm doing, and falls in love with what I'm doing, obviously, they will come up to me and tell me, you know what, I can see you really play. Our relationship starts with a bond over something that we both love. So, I think if only one certain teacher could be like that, it could really build a bond between a learner and a teacher.”*

In contrast, L2 further added, *“But if the teacher is just too ignorant that he is coaching the learners, after coaching, he's like, yeah, we're done. It's just that. It's nothing. It's no, good luck, you played well. No, no. In that way, it wouldn't really be a bond.”*

Interpretation: Learners are more likely to make connections and develop friendships the longer they engage in any one activity (Snyder, Hemmeter & Fox, 2015). Consistent with this argument, the comments from participants indicated that extracurricular activity participation improves teacher-learner connections. Extracurricular activities strengthen the bonds between teachers and learners, according to participants' consistent reports. The findings revealed that teachers' behaviour changes when they engage in extracurricular activities with learners.

According to learners' comments, when teachers are interacting with learners in extracurricular activities, they become more approachable and human. This shift in behaviour enables learners to see teachers in a different light, fostering a deeper understanding and respect for one another. Furthermore, the responses suggested that learners who take part in extracurricular activities are more inclined to talk to their teachers about personal issues or ask for assistance. Learners who engage in extracurricular activities and those who do not are contrasted in the information provided.

Learners who do not engage in extracurricular activities may miss a week of class interactions with their teachers. On the contrary, learners who engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to communicate with their teachers and have more cordial relationships. The findings also highlighted the limitations and challenges of building relationships between teachers and learners through extracurricular activities. One participant noted that a teacher's ignorance or lack of interest can hinder relationship-building. This emphasises the importance of teacher training and support to ensure that teachers are equipped to build positive relationships with learners.

4.4.3.5 Subtheme 3.5 Improved focus

The findings indicated that involvement in extracurricular activities positively influences learners' academic performance and focus. This is what participants had to say:

T1: *“They are a bit focused than the ones that are not actively involved. They are a bit focused. You can even check their academic performance. They are performing better than the ones that are not active.”*

In support of T1, L1 added: *“I think they become bright, even someone who was very slow because it is more into books, they become clever and able to focus on their books.”*

L2 concurred by saying: *“It helps you to be focused because when you play netball, you have to focus and same applies in academics. You have to have focus and then you have to know your path. You have to know, in a field, I go there, I don't go there. So, meaning you have to know your lane. As well as in your academics, you have to know what to do.”*

Interpretation: The replies from participants offered substantial evidence about the significance of focus and concentration in both extracurricular activities, such as netball and academic pursuits. This indicated that learners engaged in extracurricular activities cultivate vital skills such as improved focus and concentration advantageous in several aspects of their lives. In support of the comments from participants, literature affirm that participating in structured extracurricular activities can provide learners with a range of opportunities to promote their progress that are not necessarily available in the more constrained educational setting (Vukic & Zrilic, 2016).

Participants also observed that learners engaged in extracurricular activities exhibit superior academic performance compared to their non-participating peers, indicating that such involvement may enhance focus and intelligence, even among those who previously faced academic challenges. Participating in extracurricular activities allows learners to cultivate traits like self-control, organisation, delayed enjoyment, promptness, and focus (Morris, 2016).

4.4.3.6 Subtheme 3.6 Language skills

The responses indicated that participation in extracurricular activities, such as debate and public speaking, enhances learners' communication abilities, articulation, writing proficiency, sentence structure and vocabulary expansion.

T1 emphasised: *“They are much better than the ones that are not active or part of such debate and public speaking. They are much better because they are able to articulate themselves very well. Even their writing skills are improving because they do their research.”* T2 highlighted that, *“They are exposed to reading, so writing is going to improve, not using punctuations and so forth. Creating sentence construction is going to improve. And their vocabulary, of course. Being able to use words that are not used on a daily basis; it becomes easy for them to put them within the context when they speak or write.”*

Interpretation: Marginson (2016) believes that learners’ participation in extracurricular activities on a regular basis positively affects their academic performance. Participants concurred that learners who engage in debate and public speaking exercises have excellent articulation skills. Reading and conducting research helps them to become better writers. Additionally, they improve the formation of sentences: They get better at building sentences, including using punctuation correctly. Furthermore, as their vocabulary grows, they can write and speak using words that make sense. In line with what participants believe, Chakraborty and Roy (2021) concur that extracurricular activities are advantageous for learning the English language because they expose them to the language in real-life situations.

4.4.3.7 Subtheme 3.7 Negative impact

The findings revealed a potential disadvantage of learners’ involvement in athletics, particularly its adverse effect on their academic performance.

In this instance, T3 stated, *“But sometimes when they are engaged in sports, you find we were playing the whole day, they didn't do their homework, and sometimes they don't have time to study because they were at the practice for a long time.”* T1 said: *“So, that affects them sometimes. It affects them negatively. And others, they focus too much on the sports more than the education. Once they fall in love with sports.”*

Interpretation: Hughes, Cao and Kwok (2016) assert that engagement in extracurricular activities may adversely affect academic performance among learners. The findings revealed that there is competition between homework and sports. Sports

may take precedence over homework for learners, causing them to overlook their academic obligations. Moreover, there are time management difficulties. Owing to the time commitment needed for sports practice, learners might not have enough time for academics and may place too much importance on sports. Some learners could become so engrossed in athletics that they overlook their studies.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities

Four subthemes emerged from this theme and subthemes are discussed below.

4.4.4.1 Subtheme 4.1 Lack of focus

The findings underscored a potential obstacle with concentration difficulties in class that learners who do not engage in sports may have.

In this instance, this is what L2 stated: *“The learners are more playful when it comes to class, when it's time to be serious because they don't have enough time to play sports outside. So, when they are in class, they cannot concentrate.”*

L1 said: *“Giving that we are always focused on class and studying, the other might sleep in class and lose focus. You will even think of things outside the classroom, things like that because we cannot focus that much. If we had focus for the first periods after break, we are no longer there. We are now reflecting on things that happened during break; our minds are no longer interested in books.”*

Interpretation: Kholid, Urumsah and Hamdani (2018) argue that participating in activities that are specially designed by teachers in educational institutions, co-curricular activities, gives learners the chance to study outside of the classroom and develop in line with their requirements, potentials, skills and interests. Aligning with the literature, the findings revealed that learners who do not engage in sports may possess surplus energy and exuberance, which can hinder their ability to focus and adopt a serious demeanour during class. This research lends credence to the idea that extracurricular activities, like sporting activities, can be extremely beneficial in assisting learners in managing their energy and cultivating self-control, which in turn improves concentration and academic achievement. Moreover, evidence from the

participants indicated that because learners are unable to maintain focus, they find it difficult to stay focused during class, particularly after breaks. It might be difficult for learners to focus on academic subjects because their minds are prone to stray and consider topics outside of the classroom.

4.4.4.2 Subtheme 4.2 Emotional and social effects

Participants indicated that a lack of involvement in extracurricular activities adversely affects the emotional and social well-being of learners.

L1 confirmed by saying: *“I go home, and sleep. When I wake up, I study. When I rest from studying, I play with my phone and when I get bored, I sleep and then study. There is nothing I do like going out and going out to gym then come back. No, I get bored with books.”*

In support of L1, L2 added: *“It can cause depression and anxiety and lack of participation because focusing on books only can be overwhelming. So, one needs to refresh his or her mind.”*

Furthermore, L3 revealed, *“The consequences of not engaging in those activities are, I think I would mainly say you feel like you're always useless or something because you're not that much trusted when it comes to something. Let me make an example. If you know that you're playing something, some activities at your school, there's a certain day whereby maybe a teacher from another grade comes and says, Yoh, I'm looking for the chess players. We're going to have a meeting. You know, those learners, it feels like the school needs them. So, if you're not playing any sports at school, I feel like you're just wasting your time. You don't know what you want because this can benefit you. You don't know if maybe you've got talent at soccer or at chess. What if it's up to you? What if you can actually play at the Olympics one day? We just saw a few weeks ago that the Olympics were playing. We saw how young they were in there. They all got there through sports.”*

Interpretation: Research demonstrated that engaging in extracurricular physical activities can have a substantial positive effect on the emotional well-being of learners by reducing stress, encouraging fitness and improving self-perception (Bradley &

Conway, 2016). The findings also indicated that learners who concentrated exclusively on academics encountered monotony and boredom. In addition, the findings exposed that an excessive emphasis on academics may result in adverse outcomes, including depression, anxiety and diminished involvement. Participants believe it is essential to disrupt the conventional academic schedule and partake in extracurricular activities for rejuvenation. Moreover, the findings revealed that learners who participate in extracurricular activities might develop their confidence, feel wanted and uncover latent skills. In line with participants' responses, Reynolds (2019) believes that learners who engage in extracurricular activities at school are first thought to be more capable than those who do not. Finally, the evidence showed that a lack of participation in extracurricular activities can result in regret and wasted potential.

4.4.4.3 Behavioural problems

The participants asserted that lack of involvement in extracurricular activities affects learners' behaviour. When probed about the impacts of lack of extracurricular activities, L 3 said: *"They're bunking classes. They're just sitting out, just playing with their phones. It's just something like that. Some madness, but it's just something like that."*

In addition to what L3 said, T1 opined, *"So, what happens, they become victims of drugs, gangsterism. They become preys of such. So, I think the effects would be negative, and it would result in many learners not doing well at school. And so, we're having what we call a blockage. You come here, you are from primary school, you don't smoke, you were never exposed to drugs or maybe you saw them, you know them, but you've never actually had a first-hand experience or be exposed. Here at high school, you don't engage yourself in sports, you don't play soccer, you don't sing in choir, you don't spend time with learners who are practising debate after school. You have a lot of time on your hands. And then you know what they say, there are people who are willing to prey for such innocent souls. Even these learners, they don't actively take a role in making sure that other learners have been negatively influenced, but they participate indirectly so. Some of them, they don't know. Hence, why I'm saying they influence one another with bad behaviour."*

Interpretation: A troubling tendency among learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities was revealed by the findings. These learners are more susceptible to harmful influences like drugs and gangsterism if they do not have constructive outlets. Boredom, idle time and a feeling of alienation from their peers might result from this lack of participation. Learners might, therefore, become prime targets for harmful influences, which can have disastrous effects on their general well-being, mental health and academic achievement. According to the findings, learners might also indirectly influence one another by acting badly, which feeds a vicious cycle of negativity. Fujita (2018) argues that learners who engaged in extracurricular activities and other pro-social endeavours regularly had excellent academic performance and low rates of risky behaviour.

4.4.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, school dropout and gangsterism

The findings exposed that learners who are not participating in extracurricular are more likely to use substance abuse like drugs (Nyaope). They end up use substance abuse because they are not interested in sports and being active in school activities. L1 stated *“I think if we don’t take part in those activities, we end up in the streets doing things that are not good. Some fall pregnant, some turn into thieves, some turns into Nyaope boys, and I think it is also the reason why others are always angry. Because they focus only in schoolbooks so when they get home they are moody, because they do not catch a break to relax or do things that are relaxing so they end up being angry and moody. I think they affect us”*.

T2 concurred with L1 and said *“To say some of them, they are taking drugs. Yes, there are lots of drugs. Some of them, they are taking drugs. And it also affects their performance because of the day it leads to that.”* T2 continues to say, *“Because if one learner fails due to drugs, it means that learner is going to drop out of school.”*

Teenage pregnancy was a challenge in schools, as learners are not only focusing on the importance of academic, but they are also engaging in social relationship. However, there are programs in schools to keep learners busy while at school. Unfortunately, some learners chose not to be part of extracurricular activities and get

distracted and fall pregnant at the early age. T3 attested by saying *“The issue of teenage pregnancy. Most of the learners who are not participating in the sports, you will find that at an early age, they fall pregnant.”*

Another issue that has being highlighted was gangsterism, data pointed out that learners who were not participating in extracurricular become gangsters for they do not have much to do. T2 confirmed by saying *“Yes, gangs, because some of them are gangs’ members.”*

Interpretation: A lack of extracurricular activity participation among learners was directly associated to a higher risk of participating in criminal activity, substance misuse, absenteeism, school dropout and teenage pregnancy. The findings concluded that learners who are not part of extracurricular are increased number of teenage pregnancy and school dropout. Balashova (2022) contends that learners who are denied the chance to be a part of a certain group are more likely to suffer from negative outcomes such behavioural issues, substance abuse, dropping out, and in extreme situations, suicide. Furthermore, other studies have demonstrated that learners who have a close bond with extracurricular activities are less likely to use drugs (Driessens, 2015). Additionally, Fredricks (2017) argues that one of the main causes of the high rate of violence in secondary township schools is the absence of engaging extracurricular activities for learners.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities

Eight themes emerged from this theme, and they are all discussed below.

4.4.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1 Inadequate resources

Shortage of resources seem to be the huge challenge in township secondary schools. Some of the participants indicated that lack of resources prohibits learners to participate in extracurricular activities. Facilities as sports grounds are not conducive for learners to be involved in sports. T1 support by adding *“The biggest one would be*

facilities at any school.” T2 confirmed that truly there are not facilities, and they cannot do sports codes. *“We lack sports facilities for different sporting codes”.*

Some of the participants were stressed by the issue of budget which was not in place at their schools to support sports in terms of resources. T3 commented, *“We keep on talking every year and asking for the budget to involve those, because we don’t have the facilities. So, if we don’t have facilities, we cannot participate”.*

It was also stated that there were no playing balls to for different sports codes. This hindered learners’ effective participation in extracurricular activities. T3 continued to affirm this when he mentioned: *“if we want to play the rugby, there’s no field for the rugby. There’s no, I mean, the balls for rugby. We don’t have those balls for rugby.”*

Interpretation: The results showed that learners were unable to participate in a range of extracurricular activities in many township schools due to lack of resources. Insufficient or inadequate facilities limited many extracurricular activities that schools could provide. These findings align with the literature review, which stated that the primary reasons why learners are deterred from participating in sports are a lack of appropriate, accessible, and well-maintained facilities and equipment. Shaffer (2019) asserts that the school's facilities influence learners' choices of extracurricular activities and program admission. For example, if a school lacks a gymnasium, it may be difficult to offer sports teams or physical education programs (Mikaelsson, Rutberg, Lindqvist & Michaelson, 2020). Learners interested in those fields might have less options if their school does not have a science lab or art studio.

4.4.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2 Lack of support

Participants raised that they do not get extracurricular equipment such as balls, which simply means that the school does not support sport activities, and no one seemed to be bothered by that shortage. Participant T3 highlighted, *“We don’t have the ball. Even if you can raise that to the principal, to the SGB, no one.... They just don’t take you into consideration. They find it as if it’s a waste of money. Even now, I have the quotation for the attire for the netball.”*

Learners responded that teachers responsible for sports were not supported, and they ended up quitting sports. Findings also confirmed that teachers who were responsible

for sports were all by themselves and do not get any help to keep the sporting activities effective, as they coach many sports codes by themselves. L1 concurred by saying, *“He is alone in everything, netball, for soccer, basketball he’s the only one responsible. So even he gave up because of that, there is no one helping him. He doesn’t receive support.”*

Interpretation: The findings concluded that there was no support from the school management in terms of extracurricular activities as teachers are staff involved in sports raise their concerns, but they get no support. Sports considered as not important at schools as it is difficult to be supported. The literature review highlighted that the decision of young athletes to stop playing sports can also be influenced by hostile, violent, and abusive coaches. According to Jansen (2016) inadequate coaching is another reason why learners quit sports.

4.4.5.3 Sub-theme 5.3 Lack of training

In many township schools, sports coaches are not well trained. Anyone who wishes to be coach carries on with the coaching of the learners without being provided with relevant coaching training. This discourages learners some as they lose games due to lack of training. L1 confirmed, *“Most of the time in sports we don’t even practice if there is a tournament we are just taken to go and participate to say let us just go and participate. Then we play without practicing with people who practice.”*

Interpretation: There is a say that “practice makes perfect”. However, many township schools were not engaging in that as they do not give learners more time to practice. The findings revealed that learners participate in competitions without practicing or training. Teachers do not fully engage learners due to challenging factors such as lack of extracurricular activities resources.

In township secondary schools, most sports are run by an unskilled, unqualified, and untrained teacher who also enjoys playing a sport, usually soccer (Driessens, 2015). The availability of facilities, equipment, and opportunities to practice new sports skills both individually and in a team, setting have a direct impact on the quality of sports coaching and the experiences of learners.

4.4.5.4 Sub-theme 5.4 Socio-economic factors

Participants pointed out that it was difficult to participate in sports as there will be money needed to purchase certain sports attire. Some of the learners were from disadvantaged background and could hardly afford to buy any needed stationery, so it becomes more difficult to purchase sports attire. Some learners were good and excel in extracurricular activities, but their background disadvantage them. L3 shared, *“Let me just put it like this. I feel like it has to do with background that we from as a township school. Let me just put it like that. Let me make this example. You could love soccer, be good at it and then you have to go in training. You need the boots, cannot afford it. So that can actually affect your dream. T2 supported by saying “some learners don’t participate in sports due to socio-economic factors because some parents are not working and they don’t afford to buy what is required.”*

Interpretation: Findings demonstrated that some of the learners from disadvantaged background were not getting favourable opportunities such as show casing their talent as parents are unable to provide for them with necessary apparels. The findings further exposed that secondary schools from low socioeconomic backgrounds find it difficult to sponsor extracurricular programs. Low-income families cannot support their children full towards extracurricular as they do not have money to pay or contribute. Literature review state that learners who originate from low-income families and are exposed to unfavourable social influences frequently feel helpless (Shaffer, 2019).

However, Hughes, Cao and Kwok (2016) opine that teachers must find a way to unearth these learners' hidden talents and skills to help them achieve academic success. Therefore, it has been revealed that learners can achieve measurable achievement by participating in extracurricular activities, even though that their background sometimes fail them. It is stated that learners from low-income homes who participated in athletics tended to have higher educational aspirations than non-participants, (Hughes et al., 2016).

4.4.5.5 Sub-theme 5.5 Peer-pressure

Participants indicated that peer pressure takes toll at school as it influences most learners negatively. Learners are not participating in sports due to bad decisions made by their friends. They bunk classes and see sports as the waste of their time. L3 said,

“It has to be peer pressure, let’s bunk classes. It has to be, no my man, let’s not go there. That is not important. Let’s just go and chill this is a free period whereas it’s a sport day”. T1 also said that *“peer pressure hinders some of the learners from participating in sports as they are following their friends.”*

Interpretation: Data analysed revealed that peer pressure hindered the effective participation in extracurricular activities. Learners are negatively influencing one another not to participate in extracurricular activities but rather spend their spare time doing unlawful acts. Learners who are not participating in sports regularly misbehave in classes. Learners are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure throughout their school years because they frequently turn to their peers for comfort and plan to follow their lead without considering the potential consequences hence, they end up being influenced not to participate in extracurricular activities at their schools.

According to Mosha (2017) adolescence is a transitional stage of life that occurs when a child reaches the moment at which childhood ends, and adulthood begins. As a result, people fall for the contextualisation factors, such as interacting with people and engaging in activities like drinking and napping during school hours or bunking classes and not participating in any school (Kinderman, 2016). Additionally, it should be mentioned that during adolescence, learners focus primarily on their academics and interpersonal interactions to get ready for college entrance; as a result, they may view extracurricular involvement as a burden and a waste of time.

4.4.5.6 Sub-theme 5.6 Parental involvement

Participants indicated that many parents are not much involved or support sports at school. Parents seem to not understand the importance of sports in their children academic lives. Participant T1 supported by stating, *“Not a lot of parents are making it. We don’t know if learners are not giving the parents the message, but they do come, but not in great turnout.”*

L1 shared the same opinion that there was a lack of parental involvement in sports. Parents do not show any interest in encouraging sports at school. All they want is for their children to focus on their academics. L1 had this to say: *“Not at all, they will just tell us to study; to them everything is about studies. They tell us to let go of those things; they are taking us nowhere. I think it is because they lack knowledge.”*

However, some participants stated that there was a lack of parental involvement. Other participants said that there is parental involvement even though parents do not show up, but they were not against their children participating in sports. L2 added, *“No they do not come. They do not come. But when you ask, Mama, can I please go play sports. They don’t dispute, but they can’t come to school and watch the sport.”*

Interpretation: Participants stated that they were not getting enough support from their parents, and that demotivated them to participate in extracurricular activities. However, social influences, particularly those from parents, was claimed to be assisting learners in improving as individuals. Many parents did not encourage their children to participate in extracurricular activities. Literature review establishes that when families positively contribute to their child's extracurricular skill development, learners do better academically, behave better, graduate more frequently and enrol in higher education in greater numbers (Kamau, Rintaugu, Muniu & Amusa, 2015).

Hollander (2017) suggests that children view parental influence as either beneficial or bad to them. While perceived negative responses from parents may result in competitive anxiety, parent-child conflict, discouragement, burnout, and withdrawal from sport, reported positive replies from parents have increased athletes' enjoyment and involvement.

4.4.5.7 Sub-theme 5.7 Child-headed households

The findings highlighted that some of the learners were not participating in any extramural activities at school owing to their home setup. Some are responsible for their family, as they are from child-headed households and all they care about or concentrate on is the family. This family setup prohibits them some from being part of sports. T2 commented, *“It is because some of them are the heads of their households. Because they are dealing with lots and lots of things in our school. Two to three children might be the ones who are taking care of their siblings. They are taking care of their grandparents.”* L1 said that *“There are learners who do not participate in sports because they have a lot to do at home. They are staying with the young siblings, so they are always in a hurry to go home after school.”*

Interpretation: Learners' background plays a huge role in advantaging or disadvantaging learners' involvement in extracurricular activities. Findings revealed that learners from child-headed families have much responsibility, and extracurricular activities are not their priority. They must hustle and find ways for their families to survive; hence, they do not have time to participate at school. The literature review suggests that this might reflect how boys and girls are assigned different family obligations, where females are participating in extracurricular activities because they are too focused on domestic work and home chores that are typically delegated to them by their parents or home situation (Burnett, 2019). As a result, the girls' chances to participate in extracurricular activities at their schools are limited by family obligations.

4.4.5.8 Sub-theme 5.8 Age restriction

One of the participants indicated that they were not involved in sports owing to their age. Some sports code requires a certain age for learners to take part. On the other hand, there was an issue of gender where other learners were not participating as they see themselves as a grown-up. T2 said: *"It is because of age restriction."* Participant T3 states that *"sports have age that allows people to participate within. So, some learners are disadvantaged by age."*

Interpretation: According to the current study, most learners, especially female learners, show less interest in sports than their male counterparts, making it difficult to develop sports in schools. When young females reach puberty, they typically cease taking part in extracurricular activities. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, involvement in sports peaks between the ages of 10 and 13 and then steadily decreases until the age of 18 (Shaffer, 2019).

The participants revealed that when children advance in their education, they typically lose interest in extracurricular activities and sports, especially in township secondary schools. However, Burnett (2019) corroborates this conclusion by pointing out that South African teenagers have alarmingly high obesity rates and are not physically active. Since adopting healthy behaviours offers a great chance for intervention, it is imperative to promote sports involvement during this stage (Habib, 2018).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented five themes, namely, limited extracurricular activities, importance of extracurricular activities, impact on academic performance, effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities and challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities. All these themes have various subthemes which were also discussed in detail. The next chapter provides the summary, recommendations and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study examined how secondary school learners' participation in extracurricular activities affected their academic achievement. This chapter summarises the main findings and conclusions. For influencing policy, practice and future research, the chapter gives a thorough overview of the research findings and practical recommendations for every stakeholder involved, including teachers and learners in the Lejweleputswa District. This study was conducted in Kutloanong Township's secondary schools located in the Lejweleputswa District. Three teachers and three learners from five purposively selected secondary schools participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data to answer the research questions.

5.2 Overview of the study

Lack of extracurricular activities is thought to be a contributing factor in many secondary school's behavioural and disciplinary issues, drug misuse, teen pregnancy, gangsterism and poor academic achievement. Therefore, learners get impacted negatively in their academic performance. Even if there is a dearth of these extracurricular activities, the funding for the schools does not give them priority (*cf.1.2*).

This study offered significant insights into how extracurricular activities impacts secondary school learners' academic achievement. According to the findings of this study, several obstacles prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities, which eventually have negative effects (*cf.2.14*). On the contrary, the results highlighted the value of extracurricular activities in supporting learners' overall growth and wellbeing (*cf.2.12*). Given participation in extracurricular activities, learners might be positively impacted on their academic achievement. Therefore, it is important for secondary schools to prioritise extracurricular activities to support and unearth learners' skills and competencies. This study advances knowledge of the value of extracurricular activities in fostering learners' overall growth and academic achievement.

Through this study, the researcher has been able to formulate recommendations that the Lejweleputswa District's Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the schools can put into practice to help alleviate the current issues surrounding learners' lack of participation in extracurricular activities. Additionally, the researcher has been able to determine how to prioritise extracurricular activities in secondary schools and guarantee that learners actively participate in a range of extracurricular activities within the school.

5.3 Discussions and conclusions

The following section comprises data addressing the study's research questions:

- How can learners' involvement in extracurricular activities contribute positively to their academic performance?
- What are the effects of learners' lack of involvement in extracurricular activities?
- In which ways are learners hindered from taking part in extracurricular activities?

Additionally, a summary of the reviewed literature is included in this section.

5.3.1 Summary of the literature review

The definition of extracurricular activities and their connection to academic performance are explained in subsections 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.2.

5.3.1.1 Definition of extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities are those activities that significantly improve the learning environment but not required for academic credit (Morris, 2016). Extracurricular activities include things like volunteering, sports, singing, music, debate, dancing, theatre, and other pursuits. By directing the passion of both average and physically abled children into extracurricular activities that will aid in their personal development, schools can make a significant difference. Consequently, extracurricular activities are those activities that learners choose to participate in, add to the core curriculum and are not required for graduation. Activities that happen outside of the regular curriculum are referred to as extracurricular. Furthermore, academic or extracurricular activities

that take place outside of regularly scheduled class periods but are sponsored by the school and not covered in the curriculum are referred to as extracurricular activities (*cf.* 2.2).

There are three primary types of extracurricular activities offered by schools. The first group has a curricular focus and includes discussion boards, journalism and other forms of publication. The second group includes co-curricular activities, which usually include artistic pastimes like debate, music, dance and theatre. There are no extracurricular activities in the third category. It encompasses organisations, cheering squads, sports teams, and clubs with a range of interests, such as language classes, girl scouts, and boy scouts. In addition to offering educational opportunities not found in the standard curriculum, the school offers a third type of extracurricular activities that are either entertaining for the participants or competitive in character.

5.3.1.2 Extracurricular activities and academic performance

Examining the range of after-school activities that learners can participate in while considering how doing so could benefit them is vital. According to recent studies, participation in voluntary, extracurricular activities improves academic achievement (*cf.*2.4). Participation in pro-social peer groups, the development of social skills and healthy social standards, and a stronger emotional and social bond with one's school are the reasons behind this. Participation in extracurricular activities may improve learners' general welfare, academic achievement and school engagement. It can also improve their long-term academic performance and discover that participation may reduce negative behaviours.

Accordingly, it is important to understand that participants in extracurricular physical activities can enhance their mental health by reducing stress, maintaining their physical fitness and generally feeling better about their looks. Comparing those who engaged in these activities to those who did not, the former showed much higher self-esteem. Participation may also boost learners' self-esteem regarding their physical and potentially social identities, according to another theory (*cf.*2.4). In addition to promoting academic achievement, involvement in controlled extracurricular activities promotes social and intellectual development. Engaging in the school's music

programme fosters personal growth, fosters a bond between the family and the school, and lessens learners' feelings of alienation.

The type of extracurricular activity is one of several elements that influence learners' performance. For example, learners who participate in sports clubs tend to perform higher in reading, maths and science. Moreover, participation in extracurricular art and craft projects enhances academic achievement and workplace abilities. Additionally, participation in intellectual clubs leads to better academic performance. By assisting learners with understanding how participation in a variety of activities impacts academic development, teachers can assist learners in achieving their own academic goals (*cf.2.4*).

A higher-grade point average, fewer disciplinary referrals, lower absentee rates, a decline in dropout rates, a stronger sense of school loyalty, an improved perception of the school, enrolment in academically challenging courses, a higher likelihood of attending classes full-time, and graduation with higher aspirations for further education are just a few of the positive outcomes that are associated with involvement in athletics. Participating in various types of activities, like sports, provides significant advantages. Consequently, research showed that parents and teachers may get concerned that learners may become distracted from their studies if they become overly involved in extracurricular activities. Overbooked learners may be overcommitting to their studies, which could lead to them not spending as much time preparing for class and studying (*cf.2.4*).

The following discussion addresses the research question: How can participation in extracurricular activities contribute positively to learners' academic performance in township secondary schools?

5.3.1.3 The benefits of participating in extra-curricular activities

Extracurricular activities have significantly improved the educational environment in schools. One benefit of extracurricular activities is the development of learners who are well-rounded. Learners might gain from involvement in extracurricular activities in several ways. Therefore, extracurricular activity participants could develop important skills including problem-solving, leadership, teamwork and time management (*cf.2.11*). Learners who participate in extracurricular activities can take a break from

their academic routine and have an opportunity to unwind and rejuvenate. Engaging in extracurricular activities help learners' brains to grow and with their mental well-being. Furthermore, it sustains their academic success over time. Engaging in physical extracurricular activities might assist in reducing the tension that comes with strict study habits. Consequently, learners stay physically and mentally fit. Furthermore, their bodies are in excellent shape, which enhances their self-esteem and increases their perception of their looks. Furthermore, those who do not exercise at all lack these qualities (*cf.2.11*).

Findings revealed that learners who participate in extracurricular activities have a lower chance of engaging in criminal behaviour and becoming pregnant when they are high school learners (*cf.2.11*). As stated by Freeman (2017) one of the main causes of the high rate of violence in secondary township schools is the absence of engaging extracurricular activities for learners. However, some researchers have demonstrated that extracurricular activities have the opposite effect, despite growing evidence emphasising the benefits of participating in them (Koretz, et al., 2016).

Subsection 5.3.1.4 discusses the following research question: what are the effects of learners' lack of involvement in extracurricular activities?

5.3.1.4 Effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities

Learners may be impacted in several ways by not participating in extracurricular activities. Learners who do not engage in extracurricular activities may lose out on opportunities to develop critical skills like problem-solving, leadership, teamwork, and time management, according to the study's findings (*cf.2.16*). Research has shown that learners who engage in extracurricular activities improve their academic performance, develop closer relationships, promote work-life balance and eventually increase their resilience and well-being (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017).

In addition, literature shows that learners who do not engage in extracurricular activities miss out on the chance to take a break from their educational routine to rest and rejuvenate. Stress and emotional collapse may result from this (*cf.2.16*). Accordingly, by participating in activities they enjoy, learners can reduce stress,

enhance their mental health and increase their motivation for their studies. According to Holdsworth, Turner, and Scott-Young (2018), extracurricular activities are linked to resilience and stress management. Furthermore, the outcomes suggest that learners who do not engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to be left to act out, feel alone and slack off. Participation in extracurricular activities is linked to positive personality and social features because it increases one's sense of peer belonging (*cf.2.16*). Extracurricular activities also affect learners' behaviour, which affects their academic performance. Learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities exhibit a lack of discipline, which can manifest in a variety of ways, from being disruptive in class to skipping classes. As a result, extracurricular activities teach behavioural and disciplinary problems.

Lack of involvement in extracurricular activities is strongly associated with an increased risk of engaging in criminal action, substance misuse, absenteeism, school dropout, and adolescent pregnancy. When young children are denied the chance to be part of a particular group, they are more likely to suffer negative consequences like behavioural issues, substance abuse, dropping out, and in extreme situations, suicide (*cf.2.16*).

The following research question will be covered in subsection: In which ways are learners hindered from taking part in extracurricular activities?

5.3.1.5 Challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities

The literature's findings highlighted that many township schools lack the facilities necessary for learners to engage in extracurricular activities, including a variety of sports. (*cf.2.14.1*). Insufficient or subpar facilities may limit the variety of extracurricular activities that a school can provide. For instance, it could be challenging to provide sports teams or physical education classes at a school without a gymnasium (Fujita (2019). Meaningful participation in extracurricular activities may be restricted by a lack of equipment and resources (*cf.2.14.1*).

Research indicates that many parents did not motivate their kids to participate in extracurricular activities (*cf.2.14.4*). According to research, learners perform better

academically, behave better, graduate more frequently, and enrol in higher education in greater numbers when families positively support their child's development of extracurricular skills (Kinderman, 2016).

The findings and implications of the findings are presented in section 5.3.2.

5.3.2 Summary of findings and implications of interview data

The findings outlined in this section provide responses to the following interview questions, which address the study's three primary research questions as well as the three additional follow-up inquiries.

- What effect does lack of participation in extracurricular activities have on learners' academic performance?
- What are the challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities?
- How does active engagement in extracurricular activities enhance learners' academic achievement in township secondary schools?
- What can you say extracurricular activities mean in education?
- As a learner, are you involved in extracurricular activities?
- Do you consider extracurricular activities important in schools? Briefly explain.

To gather information, semi-structured interviews were used. Table 5.1 lists the five main themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 5.1: Themes that emerged from the replies of the participants.

Theme number	Themes
Theme 1	Limited extracurricular activities
Theme 2	Importance of extracurricular activities
Theme 3	Impact on academic performance
Theme 4	Effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities
Theme 5	Challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities

Subsection 5.3.2.2 presents the results related to Theme 1, which replies to the subsequent interview queries:

- As a learner, are you involved in extracurricular activities?
- What are the challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities?

5.3.2.2 Limited extracurricular activities

Responding to learner involvement in extracurricular activities, participants said that there are insufficient extracurricular activities offered by their Kutloanong Township secondary schools. Many schools do not offer many extracurricular activities. However, they frequently mention soccer and netball (*cf.4.4.1.1*). Participants also mentioned that the lack of extracurricular activities hinders learners from participating because there are not sufficient opportunities for all the learners who want to participate (*cf.4.4.1.1*).

Participants expressed concerns about inactive clubs based on the data. Their assessment indicates that certain extracurricular activities in schools have ceased operations. Because the school does not prioritise extracurricular activities, learners lack motivation, which is the main cause of this (*cf.4.4.1.2*). Some extracurricular activities are far more prevalent in primary schools than in secondary schools, according to the comments of the participants (*cf.4.4.1.2*). Subsequently, the findings suggest that both teachers and learners would prefer to see more extracurricular activities provided in schools. Participants think having access to more extracurricular activities would alter education (*cf.4.4.1.3*). Furthermore, insufficient funds and support from the principal seem to be the primary obstacles to providing other extracurricular activities in schools (*cf.4.4.1.3*).

The results pertaining to Theme 2, which addresses the following interview question, is demonstrated in subsection 5.3.2.3:

- Do you consider extracurricular activities important in schools? Briefly explain.
- What can you say extracurricular activities mean in education?

5.3.2.3 Importance of extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities are important because they allow learners to take a vacation from their studies. Additionally, the lack of extracurricular activities is criticised by learners as rendering school boring, and many drop out since the school only emphasises books and no other activities, which is too much for them to manage. To promote a learner's holistic development, extracurricular activities must complement academics (*cf.4.4.2.1. a*).

The comments made by participants highlighted the vital role extracurricular activities have in learners' mental and physical health. Extracurricular activities are crucial for assisting learners in supporting their physical and emotional well-being. Extracurricular activity participation is very important because it keeps learners refreshed and mentally ready to face the demands of the classroom (*cf.4.4.2.1. b*). The participants reported that there is a good correlation between extracurricular activities and learners' self-confidence. Furthermore, participants believed that the enhanced self-confidence that they have gained from participating in extracurricular activities have a substantial impact on their ability to succeed in life (*cf.4.4.2.1.c*).

Consequently, extracurricular activities provided learners with a feeling of belonging and enable them to truly enjoy their time in school. They firmly believed that learners who are excluded from extracurricular activities eventually experience a loss of belonging and are compelled to engage in harmful behaviours (*cf.*4.4.2.1. d). Participants expressed that because extracurricular activities require discipline and following coach instructions, they have a significant positive impact on a learner's discipline (*cf.* 4.4.2.1.e). Based on the participant's report when comparing the two groups of learners, those who engage in extracurricular activities do better academically than those who do not. More importantly, learners who engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to perform well than those who do not because they have fewer behavioural problems (*cf.*4.4.2.2). The findings obtained from the participants indicated that they believe extracurricular activities are beneficial in providing learners with a platform on which to showcase their skills. According to the participants' opinions, learners who have difficulties in school may have the opportunity to succeed in extracurricular activities and go on to have fulfilling lives (*cf.*4.4.2.3).

The following research topic is addressed by Theme 3, which is covered in a new paragraph 5.3.2.4: How does active engagement in extracurricular activities enhance learners' academic achievement in township secondary schools?

5.3.2.4 Impact on academic performance

The participants conveyed that participation in extracurricular activities has a big impact on learners' academic performance. Most agree that learners who participate in these activities typically attain better academic results because they are directed toward improved academic performance. Additionally, participants claimed that extracurricular activities like public speaking and debate have a good impact on learners' academic performance and improve academic results (*cf.*4.4.3.1). In line with existing research, participants agreed that extracurricular activities, especially those that require creativity, like chess, can help learners to become more adept at problem-solving (*cf.*4.4.3.2).

The views expressed by the participants revealed how strongly they feel that involvement in extracurricular activities impacts behaviour to become more

responsible and disciplined (*cf.4.4.3.3*). Another finding was that extracurricular activities have a positive effect on learners' behaviour in class and their ability to be accountable for their academic progress. Additionally, participants reported that disciplined learners demonstrated discipline in their schoolwork, which improves academic performance since disciplined learners are aware of their goals and put all their effort into studying hard to attain them (*cf.4.4.3.3*). The findings revealed that involvement in extracurricular activities strengthens the bonds between teachers and learners. The participants consistently reported that extracurricular activities improve the relationships between teachers and learners (*cf.4.4.3.3*). In addition, the findings indicate that learners who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to seek help or discuss personal matters with their teachers (*cf.4.4.3.3*).

Participants expressed that learners who participate in extracurricular activities score better academically than their peers who do not, suggesting that extracurricular activity participation may improve focus and intellect even in learners who have struggled academically in the past (*cf.4.4.3.5*). The participants agree that learners who participate in debate and public speaking activities have outstanding articulation abilities. Moreover, reading and research aid in their development as authors. Additionally, they enhance sentence construction: They become more adept at constructing phrases and accurately employing punctuation. As a result, as their vocabulary expands, they can use logical words in both writing and speech (*cf.4.4.3.6*).

In contrast, there was evidence that suggested a contradiction between homework and sports. For learners, sports may take precedence over homework, leading them to neglect their academic responsibilities. Moreover, they have challenges with time management, because participating in sports requires plenty of time, learners may not have enough time for their studies and might give sports too much weight (*cf.4.4.3.7*).

Subsection 5.3.2.5 presents the results pertaining to Theme 4, which addresses the subsequent interview query: What effect does lack of participation in extracurricular activities have on learners' academic performance?

5.3.2.5 Effects of lack of participation in extracurricular activities

The results showed that learners who do not play sports could be overly enthusiastic and energetic, which can make it difficult for them to stay focused and seem serious

in class (*cf.4.4.4.1*). Based on the research findings, learners who focused solely on their studies experienced monotony and boredom. Additionally, the findings suggested that placing too much emphasis on academics can have negative effects like anxiety, melancholy and decreased engagement. Therefore, the participants think that to recharge, it is necessary to break up the traditional academic routine and engage in extracurricular activities (*cf.4.4.4.2*).

The findings highlight a concerning trend among learners who do not engage in extracurricular activities. Without healthy outlets, these learners are more vulnerable to negative influences like drugs and gangsterism. Furthermore, other findings reveal that learners may also negatively influence one another indirectly by acting improperly, which feeds a negative feedback loop (*cf.4.4.4.3*). Finally, participants expressed that learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities are at a higher risk of engaging in criminal action, abusing drugs, missing school, dropping out of school, and teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates are higher among those who do not participate in extracurricular activities, according to the research findings (*cf.4.4.4.4*).

Theme 5, which responds to the following interview question, is covered in sub-section 5.3.2.6: What are the challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities?

5.3.2.6 Challenges preventing learners from participating in extracurricular activities

The research results demonstrated that many township schools lacked the facilities necessary for learners to engage in extracurricular activities in a variety of sports. Many of the extracurricular activities that a school might offer may be restricted by insufficient or inadequate resources (*cf.4.4.5.1*). The school administration does not encourage extracurricular activities since teachers and staff who participate in sports voice their concerns but receive no support. Sports are perceived as having no significance in schools since they are hard to fund (*cf.4.4.5.2*). Learners typically compete without any preparation or practice. Owing to difficult circumstances like a dearth of resources for extracurricular activities, teachers are not invested in helping learners practice (*cf.4.4.5.3*).

Research also shows that because their parents cannot support them, some of the learners from underprivileged backgrounds do not have access to favourable possibilities, such as showcasing their talents. As revealed by the findings, it was challenging for schools from low socioeconomic backgrounds to fund extracurricular activities (*cf.4.4.5.4*). Participants also mentioned how learners are pressuring one another to not participate in extracurricular activities and instead use their free time to engage in illegal activities like class bunking. Based on their assessment, the most misbehaving learners in the classroom were those who were not engaged in sports (*cf.4.4.5.5*).

Parents are allegedly not providing enough support for their children, which discourages them from participating in extracurricular activities. Social influences, especially those from parents, can help learners grow as people, though. When it came to encouraging their kids to participate in extracurricular activities, most parents fell short (*cf.4.4.5.6*). In addition, the findings implied that learners from child-headed households have many responsibilities and do not prioritise extracurricular activities. They have little time to participate in school since they must work hard and find ways to support their families (*cf.4.4.5.7*). Lastly, it was challenging to grow sports in schools since, according to the current study, most learners, particularly female learners, are less interested in sports than their male counterparts. Young girls usually stop participating in extracurricular activities as they reach puberty. The participants reported that learners generally lose interest in extracurricular activities and athletics as their schooling progresses, particularly in township secondary schools (*cf.4.4.5.8*).

5.4 Recommendations

Considering the results presented in Section 5.3, the following section offers recommendations.

5.4.1 Revive inactive sports groups and expand the number and diversity of extracurricular activities

Participants expressed that their Kutloanong Township secondary schools did not provide enough extracurricular activities. While soccer and netball are often mentioned, many schools do not offer many extracurricular activities (*cf.4.4.1.1*). Based on the research findings, participants raised concerns over clubs that are not

active. According to their assessment, certain school-based extracurricular programmes have terminated operations (*cf.*4.4.1.2).

With respect to these findings, this study recommends that to accommodate a variety of learner interests, schools should provide a variety of extracurricular activities in addition to soccer and netball. Anjum (2021) concurs that learners ought to participate in a range of extracurricular activities that can be divided into three groups, namely, social, academic and athletic. Schools should also determine the causes of clubs' inactivity and help bring them back to life so that learners have the chance to take part.

5.4.2 Ensure the availability of resources and facilities that are required

The findings of the study showed that many township schools do not have the resources needed to allow learners to participate in extracurricular activities in a range of sports. Inadequate resources may limit the number of extracurricular activities that a school can offer (*cf.*4.4.5.1). As demonstrated by Shaffer (2019) learners' decisions for extracurricular activities and programme admittance are influenced by the school's amenities.

Considering the outcomes, this study suggests that schools ensure that they provide the resources and facilities to offer a range of extracurricular activities. Principals and other school officials should have a proper financial plan to support extracurricular programmes and activities so that teachers and learners have the equipment they need to establish and maintain extracurricular activities. Moreover, to enhance extracurricular activities, the Department of Basic Education should make sure that schools from low socioeconomic backgrounds receive additional funding and resources.

5.4.3 Encourage teacher support

The administration of the school discourages extracurricular activities since staff members and teachers who play sports express their worries but are not given any assistance. Sports are seen as meaningless in schools since they are difficult to finance (*cf.*4.4.5.2). Usually, learners do not practice or prepare before competing. Owing to challenging situations, such as a lack of resources for extracurricular activities, teachers are not motivated to assist learners with practicing (*cf.*4.4.5.3).

Predicated on these findings, the study recommends that school administrators should support teachers and offer incentives to encourage them to support extracurricular activities. According to Jansen (2016), inadequate coaching is another reason why learners quit sports. Hence, the study suggests that the DBE should provide training and assistance to teachers to help them develop and oversee extracurricular activities, as well as clear policies and procedures for their implementation and support in schools.

5.4.4 Providing financial support

Shaffer (2019) declares that learners from low-income homes who are subjected to negative social influences often feel powerless. In agreement, most learners from disadvantaged families do not have access to favourable opportunities, including showing their abilities because their parents are unable to provide for them. It is, therefore, difficult for schools from low socioeconomic backgrounds to finance extracurricular activities, as the results show (*cf.*4.4.5.4).

This study recommends providing scholarships, grants or subsidies for learners from low-income households who want to engage in extracurricular activities. Schools should collaborate with nearby companies and organisations to afford learners from underprivileged backgrounds access to resources and opportunities.

5.4.5 Improve parental support

Based on the findings, it is believed that children are discouraged from participating in extracurricular activities because their parents do not support them sufficiently. Most parents did a poor job of encouraging their children to engage in extracurricular activities (*cf.*4.4.5.6). Research indicates that when families support their children's participation in extracurricular activities, learners do better academically, behave better, graduate more frequently, and enrol in higher education in greater numbers (Kamau, et al., 2015). To have a beneficial impact on learners, the study recommends that the school promote parental engagement and support. Parents should be encouraged to support and take part in extracurricular activities. To support learners' involvement in extracurricular activities, parents should offer the required resources and motivation.

5.5 Future research

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in the extracurricular activities on their academic performance. This study recommends the following to be considered for future research.

5.5.1 Learner empowerment through extracurricular activities

The findings suggest that learners from child-headed households do not prioritise extracurricular activities because they have many responsibilities. They must work hard and find means to maintain their families; so, they do not have much time for other activities in school (*cf.4.4.5.7*). The researcher suggests conducting research on the challenges encountered by learners from child-headed households when they participate in extracurricular activities and how can learners from child-headed homes and those who are at danger of dropping out be empowered through the utilisation of extracurricular activities as an intervention strategy.

5.5.2 Exploring strategies for maintaining learners' interest in extracurricular activities

Compared to their male counterparts, most learners, especially female learners, have a lower level of interest in athletics. When young females reach puberty, they typically stop taking part in extracurricular activities. The participants found that, especially in township secondary schools, learners typically lose interest in extracurricular activities and sports as their education continues (*cf.4.4.5.8*). Research ought to examine approaches to get learners more interested in and involved in extracurricular activities, especially female learners and learners from underprivileged backgrounds.

5.5.3 Reducing risk factors in secondary schools in Lejweleputswa Township

The likelihood of engaging in criminal action, substance abuse, absenteeism, school dropout, and adolescent pregnancy is closely linked to learners' lack of involvement in extracurricular activities. The findings revealed a higher rate of adolescent pregnancies and school dropouts among learners who do not participate in extracurricular activities (*cf.4.4.4.4*). Based on the findings, a study should examine the contribution of extracurricular activities to mitigate risk factors such as substance abuse, school dropout, teenage pregnancy and gang involvement among learners.

5.6 Challenges experienced while conducting this research

The researcher had difficulties getting access to participants because some of the principals were tardy in completing documentation approving the data collection. Teachers preferred to be interviewed during school hours when they had free time. However, the shared office setting was a drawback because co-worker disruptions and other school-related issues frequently interrupted interviews. Additionally, participants were unable to keep to their scheduled times because of unanticipated personal and scholastic obligations, even though the researcher tried to set up appointments with them. Lastly, some participants preferred to respond in their mother tongue because they felt uneasy in answering interview questions in English. Because of this, the researcher had to put in more work to translate their responses, which made the data analysis procedure more challenging.

5.7 Conclusions

The researcher has summarised the results and implications of the literature review and the results and implications of the interview data in this chapter, which addressed the primary research goal: The impact of involvement in extracurricular activities on learners' academic achievement. Furthermore, the researcher offered suggestions on how schools, the DBE and other stakeholders can collaborate to revitalise dormant sports organisations, increase the number and variety of extracurricular activities, guarantee the availability of necessary facilities and resources, support teachers, offer financial assistance and encourage parental involvement.

The findings of the research emphasised the value of extracurricular activities in fostering learners' socialisation, academic achievement and overall development in township secondary schools. According to the findings, learners who engage in extracurricular activities typically achieve better academically, show greater self-control and accountability, and acquire critical life skills like public speaking and problem-solving. On the contrary, learners who do not engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to suffer from behavioural issues, low academic performance, and a higher risk of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school. The analysis additionally demonstrated that socioeconomic limitations, a lack of parental and school administrator support and a lack of finances are some of the major obstacles that confront township secondary schools when it comes to offering

extracurricular activities. All things considered, the results highlight the necessity for teachers and legislators to give extracurricular activities top priority as an essential component of education, especially in underprivileged areas.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOL

ENQUIRIES: D.V. Mashabe

CELL: 0717705382

Email: dvmashabe@gmail.com

1854 K4

Kutloanong

Odendaalsrus

9483

Dear School Principal

Research on the impact of extracurricular participation on learners' academic achievement in township secondary schools

I hereby request to conduct research at your school. The purpose of this research is to obtain first-hand information from teachers and learners about their experiences in extracurricular participation. The interviews will also gather data which determine how extracurricular participation influences academic performance of learners. The research findings will provide insight into the expected support that should be made available to regarding extracurricular participation on learners' academic achievement.

Data obtained from the participants will be analysed and the findings will be reported in my study. The researcher will be grateful for their response and wishes to ensure that their response and your school will remain completely confidential and anonymous. Participants' participation is voluntarily, and they may withdraw at any time. Kindly refer to the attached consent form and general information form. If you have questions and problems related to the study, please feel free to contact me by cell phone at 071 770 5382.

Yours sincerely

D.V. MASHABE

PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to the teachers to participate in the study.

Name of the Principal: _____

Signature of the Principal: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS REQUESTING THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

Dear Participant

Research on the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance.

I hereby request to conduct research at your school. The purpose of this research is to obtain first-hand information from teachers and learners about their experiences in extracurricular participation. The interviews will also gather data which determine how extracurricular participation influences academic performance of learners. The research findings will provide insight into the expected support that should be made available to regarding extracurricular participation on learners' academic achievement.

Data obtained from the participants will be analysed and the findings will be reported in my study. The researcher will be grateful for their response and wishes to ensure that their response and your school will remain completely confidential and anonymous. Participants' participation is voluntarily, and they may withdraw at any time. Kindly refer to the attached consent form and general information form. If you have questions and problems related to the study, please feel free to contact me by cell phone at 071 770 5382.

Yours sincerely

D.V. MASHABE

Yours sincerely

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to the teachers to participate in the study.

Signature of the Participant: _____

Date: _____

**APPENDIX C: LETTER TO PARENTS REQUESTING THEIR CHILDREN TO
PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH**

ENQUIRIES: D.V. Mashabe

1854 K4

CELL: 0717705382

Kutloanong

Email: dvmashabe@gmail.com

Odendaalsrus

9483

Dear Parents/Guardians

**Research on the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in
extracurricular activities on their academic performance.**

I hereby request to conduct research at your school. The purpose of this research is to obtain first-hand information from teachers and learners about their experiences in extracurricular participation. The interviews will also gather data which determine how extracurricular participation influences academic performance of learners. The research findings will provide insight into the expected support that should be made available to regarding extracurricular participation on learners' academic achievement.

The interview session will be within 15-20 minutes with each participant. The researcher will be grateful for their response and wishes to ensure that their response and your school will remain completely confidential and anonymous. Participants' participation is voluntarily, and they may withdraw at any time. Kindly refer to the attached consent form and general information form. If you have questions and problems related to the study, please feel free to contact me by cell phone at 071 770 5382.

Yours sincerely

D.V. MASHABE

Yours sincerely

PARENT'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to the teachers to participate in the study.

Signature of the Parent: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE

Individual semi- structured interviews are to be conducted at times that best suit each participant.

Intended for the Teachers and Learners

Date of interview:

School:

Designation: Teacher **Learner**

OPENING.

Purpose of the interview:

As already stated in the invitation, the purpose of this interview is to determine the impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance.

Ethical considerations:

This interview is voluntary and is to last for half an hour. Information provided will be treated confidentially. There are no personal benefits or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. The interview will be tape-recorded to ensure that all information is captured.

Teacher's questions

1. What can you say extracurricular activities mean in teaching?
2. Do you consider extracurricular activities important? Briefly explain.
3. What effects does lack of participation in extracurricular activities have on learners' academic performance?
4. What are the challenges that prevent learners from participating in extracurricular activities?

5. How does active engagement in extracurricular activities enhance learners' academic achievement in township secondary schools?

Thank you for your participation.

Learner's questions

1. As a learner, are you involved in any extracurricular activities?
2. Do you think extracurricular activities are important in schools? Briefly explain.
3. What effects does lack of participation in extracurricular activities have on your academic performance?
4. What are the challenges that prevent you from participating in extracurricular activities?
5. How does active engagement in extracurricular activities enhance learners' academic achievement in township secondary schools?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX E: CUT ETHICAL CLEARANCE



RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

Date: 26 September 2023

This is to confirm that ethical clearance has been provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee **[01/06/16]** in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016.

Ethical clearance number:

[HREIC 01/23/11] ST.M.Ed

Applicant's Name and student number	DV Mashabe 211099503
Supervisor's Name for Student Project	Dr C Mphojane
Level of Qualification for Student's Project	M.Ed
Title of research project	The impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance
FRIC approval number	FRIC 01/23/11

All conditions as set out below have to be met as set out in your LS 262 a form.
As this research focuses primarily on human beings you will be ethically responsible for:

- protecting the rights and welfare of the participants;
- gaining the trust and co-operation of all the participants with the assurance that the information collected will be kept confidential;
- informing the participants from the outset that their participation will be voluntary, and that the data collected will be conducted with the consent of the relevant authorities at the participant schools;
- adhere to the principles of rigorous data collection, analysis and interpretation consistent with the design of the study;
- keeping a data trail for possible auditing purposes and safe-keeping of raw data for a period of three years after publication of the results/findings;
- respecting the confidentiality of the data.

We wish you success with your research project.

Regards



Prof JW Badenhorst
(Chairperson: Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics and Integrity Committee)

APPENDIX F: OFS DBE PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission: D. V. Mashabe
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



1854 K4 Kutloanong
Odendaalsrus
9483

Dear Mrs. D. V. Mashabe

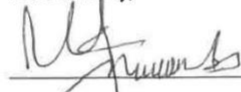
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Lejweleputswa Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the Central University of Technology are as follows:

Topic: The impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance.

1. **List of schools involved:** Seqhobong Secondary, Kutloanong High, Phehello Secondary, C Motumi Secondary and Rearabetswe Secondary.
2. **Target Population:** Fifteen educators and fifteen learners at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2024. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 04/03/2024

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Notification of research: D. V. Mashabe
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
Lejweleputswa District

Dear Ms. Zonke


NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Mrs. D. V. Mashabe has been granted permission to conduct research in the Lejweleputswa District under the auspices of the Central University of Technology. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: The impact of secondary school learners' involvement in extracurricular activities on their academic performance.

- 1. List of schools involved:** Seqhobong Secondary, Kutloanong High, Phehello Secondary, C Motumi Secondary and Rearabetswe Secondary.
- 2. Target Population:** Fifteen educators and fifteen learners at the selected schools.
- 3. Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2024. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- 4. Research benefits:** This study will add to the body of existing knowledge in relation to the effects of extracurricular activities on academic achievements. It will influence greatly the drawing up of new policies and the amendment of existing policies to enhance participation in extracurricular activities. It will provide both teachers and learners with the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities to enhance academic performance.
- 5.** The Sub-directorate of Research and policy will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 04/03/2024

APPENDIX G: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

22 Osche Street

The Reeds

Centurion

0157

29 August 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate serves to confirm that I have edited DV Mashabe's dissertation titled, "**THE IMPACT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.**"

I found the work easy and intriguing to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language, which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors' Guild.

Hereunder are my contact details:



Jack Chokwe (PhD – University of Leicester (United Kingdom))

Contact numbers: 072 214 5489

jackchokwe@gmail.com

Professional
EDITORS
Guild



